

**NEITHER ‘DIRECT REALIST’ NOR ‘REPRESENTATIONALIST’:
THOMAS AQUINAS AND *SPECIES INTELLIGIBILIS* AS PRINCIPLE FOR
METAPHYSICAL AND INTELLECTIVE ACTS**

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*I dedicate these efforts to Carmen Rose, my pride and joy,
who has patiently endured the madness of much learning.*

Τὰ πολλά σε γράμματα εἰς μανίαν περιτρέπει.

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Abstract

Many prevailing philosophical interpretations of Aquinas's account of human cognition follow what this thesis calls the "Standard Model," wherein *species intelligibilis* is abstracted or derived through agent intellect, received or "deposited" in possible intellect, retained there, and subsequently instrumentalized in concept formation, judgment, reasoning, and further intellectual operations. Despite significant differences between "Direct Realist" and "Representationalist" interpreters, both frequently retain this explanatory architecture.

This MA project challenges that Standard Model by arguing that it reflects what Therese Scarpelli Cory calls a "fundamental misconstrual" of the role of *species intelligibilis*. Building on Cory's "Formal Constituent View," the thesis restores *species intelligibilis* to the metaphysical order of form and formal principle: that by which possible intellect is actualized and from which intellectual operations proceed, rather than a produced "third thing" subsequently put to use. *Species intelligibilis* remains genuinely *similitudo*, or *likeness*, but likeness belongs to a formal, metaphysical order rather than functioning as an additional cognitive instrument.

The thesis then extends this metaphysical approach by highlighting recent works by Gloria Frost, Martin Kostecky, and Bernard Lonergan and examining Aquinas's account through metaphysical terms such as act and potency, reception and activity, development, operation, object, and end. Although these accounts differ over the ordering and termini of intellectual operations, taken together they support an alternative in which *species intelligibilis* remains the formal principle of an internally differentiated act whose operations are specified by their respective objects and ends.

The result challenges the production–deposit–retention model itself and argues that *species intelligibilis* is the principle from which intellectual operations proceed, not a derived product deposited in intellect and instrumentalized within them.

Keywords: Thomas Aquinas's cognitional theory; *Species intelligibilis*; "Direct Realism" vs. "Representationalism"; Cory's "Formal Constituent View," Aquinas's metaphysics, intellectual operations and procession

De nombreuses interprétations courantes de la théorie thomasiennne de la cognition humaine suivent ce que cette thèse appelle le « modèle standard », selon lequel la *species intelligibilis* est comprise comme un élément abstrait par l'intellect agent, reçu ou « déposé » dans l'intellect possible, y étant conservé puis utilisé dans des opérations intellectuelles ultérieures. Malgré des différences réelles entre les interprètes dits « réalistes directs » et « représentationnalistes », les deux « camps » conservent souvent cette structure sous-jacente.

Cette thèse remet en cause ce modèle standard en suivant Therese Scarpelli Cory, qui soutient que le « modèle standard » repose sur une « erreur d'interprétation fondamentale » (fundamental misconstrual) de la *species intelligibilis*. Dans l'interprétation de Cory, la *species intelligibilis* est un principe formel qui actualise l'intellect possible et fonde la procession des opérations intellectuelles, et non une « troisième chose » produite ou dérivée, ni un dispositif psychologique. Tout en demeurant véritablement *similitudo*, ou ressemblance, elle est comprise dans son caractère de ressemblance comme appartenant à l'ordre formel et constitutif, sans fonctionner comme un instrument cognitif sui generis.

La thèse prolonge cette approche métaphysique en s'appuyant notamment sur Frost, Kostecky et Lonergan, et en appliquant les catégories thomasiennes de puissance et d'acte, de mouvement et d'altération, d'opération et d'objectum. Les lectures proposées par ces auteurs situent la *species intelligibilis* du côté originaire de l'intellection, tandis que les différentes opérations sont spécifiées par leurs objets et leurs fins.

Le résultat remet en cause le modèle même de production–dépôt–rétention, de sorte que la *species intelligibilis* est comprise comme le principe à partir duquel procèdent les opérations intellectuelles, plutôt que comme un produit dérivé déposé dans l'intellect puis instrumentalisé au sein de celles-ci.

Mots-clés: Théorie thomasiennne de la cognition ; *species intelligibilis* ; « réalisme direct » et « représentationnalisme » ; « Formal Constituent View » de Cory ; métaphysique d'Aquin ; opérations intellectuelles et procession

Index of Titles of Aquinas Works and Abbreviations

<i>CT</i>	<i>Compendium theologiae</i>
<i>De prin. nat.</i>	<i>De principiis naturae</i>
<i>DEE</i>	<i>De ente et essentia</i>
<i>DeVirtCom</i>	<i>Quaestio disputata de virtutibus in communi</i>
<i>DeVirtCARD</i>	<i>De virtutibus cardinalibus</i>
<i>DM</i>	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de malo</i>
<i>DPot</i>	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de potentia</i>
<i>DVer</i>	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de veritate</i>
<i>In De causis</i>	<i>In librum De causis expositio</i>
<i>InPostAnal.</i>	<i>Expositio libri Posteriorum Analyticorum</i>
<i>InDA</i>	<i>Sentencia libri De anima</i>
<i>InDivNom</i>	<i>In librum Beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus expositio</i>
<i>InMeta</i>	<i>In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio</i>
<i>InPerierm</i>	<i>Expositio libri Peryermenias</i>
<i>InPhys</i>	<i>In VIII libros Physicorum</i>
<i>QDDA</i>	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de anima</i>
<i>QDSC</i>	<i>Quaestio disputata de spiritualibus creaturis</i>
<i>Quodl</i>	<i>Quaestiones de quolibet</i>
<i>SBDT</i>	<i>Super Boetii De Trinitate</i>
<i>SadR</i>	<i>Super ad Romanos</i>
<i>ScG</i>	<i>Summa contra gentiles</i>
<i>Sent</i>	<i>Scriptum super libros sententiarum magistri Petri Lombardi</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Summa theologiae</i>

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Ch 1: Neither ‘Direct Realist’ nor ‘Representationalist’ – Aquinas and the Role of *Species Intelligibilis* – An Introduction

In numerous places throughout his voluminous works, Thomas Aquinas presents and discusses the activities and operations involved in the act of human intellection; that is, the way in which extra-mental being comes to be known reliably “in” the essentially unified human soul, through ordered intellectual activities and operations.

For Aquinas, the object of human understanding is the truth of extra-mental being. Human cognition does not, as its ultimate end, aim to understand its own ideations, constructs, likenesses, or operations. Rather, it aims to understand *ens*; that is, being as encountered in sensation, experience, inquiry, judgment, and understanding.

1.1 Introduction to *Species Intelligibilis*

As do many of his predecessors and contemporaries in the Western medieval philosophical tradition, Aquinas posits an account ofhylomorphic being. That is, beings comprise both individuating materiality and the determining pattern, form, or quiddity that specifies them as the particular beings that they are. In actualizing themselves in and through determinate form, beings manifest not only that they are, but also what they are. Thus, a stone is a stone in virtue of its materiality and the determining form that particularizes it as a stone.

For Aquinas, the human intellect is ordered toward receiving and cognizing these forms, not by becoming materially identical with the things cognized, but by receiving them in a manner proportioned to intellect’s own modes of operation. When the intellect knows the stone, it does not itself become a stone. Rather, it receives, immaterially, the stone’s form, quiddity, or

intelligibility, according to the mode of the receiver. When form or *species* is considered in this intellectual mode, it is termed *species intelligibilis*.

It is here that one of the enduring problems of Aquinas's account of cognition emerges. If the intellect receives the intelligible form of extra-mental beings, how does that form come to be "in" the intellect in such a way that cognition attains the truth of the thing itself rather than merely some inner product or shadow of its own activity? Once *species intelligibilis* is present in the intellect, how does that presence lead to understanding? What secures the reliable correlation between cognition and extra-mental being? And what prevents the intellect from terminating in its own internal representations rather than in the truth of what is?

1.1.1 The 'Debate' and its Resolution in the Metaphysical Approach

In the current English literature on Aquinas's account of cognition, these questions are often gathered under what is commonly styled as the "'Direct Realist' vs. 'Representationalist' 'Debate.'" On the one side are interpreters whose main concern is that Aquinas's account not make *species intelligibilis* the primary thing known by intellect, since the act of understanding is ordered toward the truth of extra-mental being and not toward the mind's own contents. On the other side are interpreters who emphasize that Aquinas repeatedly characterizes *species intelligibilis* as a *similitudo*, or *likeness*, and who argue that the notion of *species intelligibilis* must entail some sort of representation through which the thing becomes present to intellect.

In different ways, both sides attempt to preserve for Aquinas a robust realism while also accounting for the indispensable causal role of *species intelligibilis* in cognition. The 'Debate' therefore identifies authentic differences among interpreters of Aquinas yet, as this project will

argue, those differences unfold within a common framework, and that framework gives rise to some of the very points of contention that divide them.¹

Many interpreters on both sides of the ‘Debate’ continue to operate, in varying ways, within what may be called a “Standard Model” of *species intelligibilis*. Among proponents in the ‘Debate’ there is broad agreement that cognition begins in sensation, depends upon phantasm, requires the work of the agent intellect, and culminates in the actualization of the possible intellect by *species intelligibilis*.

The difficulty arises in the way this sequence is often imagined and the roles of the constituent parts. Within the shared framework, *species intelligibilis* is frequently treated as some sort of abstracted likeness produced by the active part of cognition and then received, impressed, stored, retained, or otherwise made available within the passive part, where it becomes the basis for further acts such as concept formation, composition and division, judgment, and reasoning. Even where the different interpreters disagree about the explanatory burden assigned to *species intelligibilis*, they often retain the assumption that it is a produced inner likeness subsequently instrumentalized by later activities. While Direct Realist interpreters resist treating the *species intelligibilis* as something first known or first attended to, they nevertheless continue to describe it as an abstracted likeness that must secure cognition’s access to extra-mental being. Likewise,

¹ Among works that treat the ‘Direct Realist’ versus ‘Representationalist’ ‘Debate’ over Aquinas’s cognitive theory as a discrete interpretive problem, see especially Leen Spruit, *Species Intelligibilis: From Perception to Knowledge*, vol. 1, *Classical Roots and Medieval Discussions*, Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History 48 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), and Han Thomas Adriaenssen, *Representation and Scepticism from Aquinas to Descartes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017). For helpful overviews, see Ndubuisi Ezenwaka, *La théorie cognitive de Thomas d’Aquin : entre réalisme direct et représentationalisme* (MA thesis, University of Ottawa, 2024); and Sandro R. D’Onofrio, *Aquinas as Representationalist: The Ontology of the Species Intelligibilis* (PhD diss., State University of New York at Buffalo, 2008).

while Representationalist interpreters press the same produced-likeness structure in another direction, they too often retain the assumption that *species intelligibilis* is a produced inner likeness with an explanatory role beyond its function as principle.

This project argues that this shared assumption is the hinge on which the problematic turns, and suggests that when *species intelligibilis* is interpreted through the metaphysical idioms of form, principle, act, potency, operation, object, and end, its role in Aquinas's account becomes clearer.

The metaphysical approach makes possible three connected insights. First, *species intelligibilis* is a formal principle rather than a “Psychological Device,” or an inner “third thing” that cognition produces. It is the principle of the act of cognition—or, as this project intentionally terms it in later chapters—the ‘act of human intellection.’

Second, Aquinas frequently describes *species intelligibilis* as a likeness, but he does not specify as fully as one might wish whether its character as likeness adds anything to its ordinary role as a principle. Third, this claim can be developed further by considering the many instances in which Aquinas describes analogies between act *qua* act and the act of intellection. On this account, the act as a whole is interpreted as comprising a multiplicity of operations, each of which has its own *obiectum*, which do not include *species intelligibilis* itself.

The use of the word “object” in this project requires an explanatory note. In the contemporary ‘Debate,’ the worry that *species intelligibilis* becomes an “object” often means that it becomes an inner item, proxy, representation, or thing first known by cognition. In the later metaphysical sections of this project, however, “object” translates *obiectum* and names that

toward which a power, act, or operation is ordered, and by which it is specified. In this latter sense, an object is not a thing placed before the mind, but the aim, end, or specifying correlate of an act. This distinction is essential, because the project argues both that *species intelligibilis* is not an inner thing-known and that it is not the *obiectum* of the act or operations of intellection.

The metaphysical approach allows these relations to be intentionally distinguished, in that it separates principle from product, likeness from *likeness-as-operative-principle*, and principle from *obiectum*. *Species intelligibilis* is not first a produced likeness that then explains cognition, but is rather the originating formal principle by which possible intellect is actualized for intellectual operation. Its likeness-character is real, but *likeness-as-likeness* is not what actualizes the intellect, specifies the operations, or supplies the act with its object or end.

1.1.2 Therese Scarpelli Cory and the “Formal Constituent View”

In many works, contemporary Aquinas interpreter Therese Scarpelli Cory claims that the “‘Direct Realist’ vs. ‘Representationalist’ ‘Debate’” (henceforth, the ‘Debate’) rests on a “‘fundamental misconstrual.’” In her work “Aquinas’s Intelligible Species as Formal Constituents,”² Cory writes

My intention is not to add to the already massive heap of studies arguing for realist or representationalist readings of Aquinas. Rather, the goal of this study is to challenge the longstanding scholarly project itself of attempting to fit Aquinas into this framework. I contend that the whole controversy has been resting upon a fundamental misconstrual of the role of mental species in Aquinas’s cognition theory. Scholars on both sides —

² Therese Scarpelli Cory, “Aquinas’s Intelligible Species as Formal Constituents,” *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* XXXI (2020): 261–309.

‘realists’ and ‘representationalists’ of all stripes — have incorrectly taken for granted that Aquinas holds something that I will call the ‘Psychological Device View.’³

Here and in many other recent works Cory provides a corrective to the shared framework of the ‘Debate.’ Cory rejects the notion that *species intelligibilis* is a “third thing,” an inner product, a psychological device, or a *sui generis* intermediary standing between mind and world. Instead, she argues that *species intelligibilis* is the formal principle by which intellect is actualized and from which intellectual operations proceed.⁴

This project therefore follows Cory in arguing that *species intelligibilis* is best understood as the formal, originating principle of action for the act of human intellection as a whole. This project also develops the argument that, while Aquinas often described *species intelligibilis* as a *similitudo*, that *similitudo* is not produced, manipulated or instrumentalized. Rather, it is an element that can be discerned within the formal procession of the act, as intelligible being is actualized in the intellect and as understanding proceeds toward its *obiectum*, bearing formal sameness to that from which it proceeds.

Finally, Cory’s same re-formulation also requires a fuller account of operation. If *species intelligibilis* is the formal principle by which intellect is actualized, and the act of intellection as a whole is ordered toward the truth of being, then the operations proceeding from that actuality must be distinguished by something other than the *species intelligibilis* itself. Their

³ Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 261.

⁴ Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 261–63, 279, 291.

differentiation must be sought in their objects and ends, their predicamental aspects, and their temporal modes.

1.2 Constructive Application of the Themes as Developed in the Project

To further apply the themes developed in this document, the project unfolds in four parts. The first reconstructs the ‘Debate’ as a tension arising within a broadly shared interpretive framework. Here the project identifies the positions that constitute the ‘Debate,’ traces the way those positions present themselves as competing, and demonstrates where the shared framework begins to produce strain from within itself.

The second movement turns to Cory’s work, because her metaphysical approach re-frames the premises grounding the ‘Debate.’ Cory’s Formal Constituent View restores *species intelligibilis* to the order of form and principle and thereby makes possible a more adequate description of cognition. Here the project considers the work of J. O’Callaghan as an amplification and complement to Cory.

Cory’s corrective intentionally employs a metaphysical approach and asks how intellect comes to be actualized and what operations proceed from that actuality. In the same movement, Cory’s treatment of likeness clarifies why *species* can be called a likeness without being assigned a second psychological or instrumental role.

The third movement applies the method and themes developed by Cory. Drawing on Aquinas interpreters such as Brock, Frost, and Miller, the project describes possible intellect, agent intellect, and the capacity of *species intelligibilis* to intensify over time, as conditions of possibility for the act of intellection as a whole. It also considers the predicamental aspects of that

act, insofar as it can be described under the relations of mover and moved, agent and patient, all of which frame the discussion that follows.

These sets of conditions and aspects set the stage for describing Aquinas's account of the necessity of a multiplicity of operations within the "act" as a whole, whether that be act *qua* act or the act of intellection.

The fourth movement turns to operations and the significance of *obiectum*. Drawing especially on Kosteletzky, Cory, and Lonergan, this project argues that the act of intellection as a whole is ordered toward being and truth, while its distinct constituent operations are specified by their own objects and ends, thus completing the project's central claim. Cory and Lonergan converge on this metaphysical re-framing—*species* as formal principle rather than a deposited inner instrument—while differing over the status of the first actuality from which properly intellectual operations proceed.

The trajectory of the project as a whole is both reconstructive and constructive. It reconstructs the contemporary 'Debate' in order to identify the shared assumptions shaping it, and then re-frames the question through Cory's metaphysical approach.

Ultimately the project applies the themes as developed by showing that the act of intellection itself, when described in terms of act, potency, operation, object, and end, confirms the project's aims, namely, to demonstrate that in Aquinas's accounts of act *qua* act and the act of intellection, *species intelligibilis*, as principle, stands at one end of the relation between itself and object. As principle, it grounds the actuality from which the relevant potencies, operations, acts, and ordered relations to objects and ends can be understood.

1.2.1 Plan of Work

Chapter 2 argues that ‘Direct Realist’ and ‘Representationalist’ interpreters disagree in important ways with each other, but that their disagreement often unfolds within a common sequence.

Beginning from commonly accepted foundations as expressed by Eleonore Stump, the chapter describes her “Standard Model” as a point of reference and comparison for the ensuing discussion.

Chapter 2 then turns to ‘Direct Realist’ interpreters such as Lawrence Dewan, Dominik Perler, Max Herrera, Elena Baltuta, and Giorgio Pini, and demonstrates how they resist allowing *species intelligibilis* to become an inner thing-known, proxy, or mental terminus while still granting it an indispensable causal role. The chapter then considers ‘Representationalist’ interpreters such as Claude Panaccio, Han Adriaenssen, and Robert Pasnau, showing how they emphasise the explanatory role of *species intelligibilis* as an internally operative likeness. The chapter concludes by identifying the problematic that characterizes the ‘Debate.’

Chapter 3 turns to the work of Therese Scarpelli Cory and defends the first two major claims of the project; namely, that *species intelligibilis* is a formal principle and not a “Psychological Device,” an inner object, or a produced “third thing” that is further instrumentalized, and second, that *species intelligibilis* is a likeness, but does not function as principle in virtue of being a likeness.

Chapter 3 demonstrates how Cory’s Formal Constituent View reorients the problem by asking how intellect comes to be actualized and what operations proceed from that actuality. It then clarifies the status of likeness within that reorientation, arguing that likeness is discerned within the formal procession of the act and in what is educed through that procession, rather than

functioning as an instrumental item produced and used by cognition. Chapter 3 therefore marks the transition from the language of the ‘Debate’ to the language of metaphysical constitution.

Chapter 4 begins the third major claim by examining the conditions of possibility for the act of intellection and the predicamental aspects as a whole. Drawing on the work of Aquinas interpreters Brock, Frost, Miller, and others, Chapter 4 considers possible intellect, agent intellect, and the capability of *species intelligibilis* to intensify over time as conditions of possibility for the act of intellection.

Likewise, the identification of metaphysical relations among potency, act, motion, passion, action, moved, and mover establishes the foundations for understanding why Aquinas’s account necessitates a description of the multiplicity of operations, and that these operations should be interpreted not in spatial-mechanical-material terms, but as sets of interacting and interwoven characteristics and activities, often occurring simultaneously.

Chapter 5 completes the third major claim by turning to objects, ends, and operations. Drawing especially on Kostecky, Cory, and Lonergan, Chapter 5 argues that the act of intellection as a whole is ordered toward being and truth, while the distinct operations of intellect are specified by their own objects and ends. Here “object” is used in the metaphysical sense of *obiectum*: that toward which an act or operation is ordered, and by which it is specified. Since *species intelligibilis* is not the *obiectum* of the act as a whole and not the *obiectum* of any of the operations that proceed in the act of intellection, it cannot be considered as a ‘thing’ that is produced in the act of intellection so as to perform some role above and beyond its role of

principle. As principle, *species intelligibilis* stands to the act of intellection as formal principle rather than object, terminus, or final cause.

Ch 2: *Species intelligibilis* and the ‘Direct Realists’ vs. ‘Representationalist’ ‘Debate’

For Thomas Aquinas, human knowing begins in sensory experience and unfolds through activities ordered toward apprehension and inquiry into “objects,” whether those might be abstract concepts, sensory experience, the data of consciousness, or extra-mental being. One aspect of those inquiries, especially with respect to the latter, pertains to what those things really are, what makes them the kinds of things they are, and how it is that they are ‘this thing’ rather than ‘that thing.’

When asking about this kind of “whatness,” in terms that have been handed down through the Western philosophical and theological traditions, the ‘object’ under inquiry is the ‘thingness’ of extra-mental being, which continues to be termed in various ways, such as τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι (what it is to be), *quod quid erat esse*, or *quidditas*.⁵

Within this process, *species intelligibilis* plays an indispensable role as both a principle of action and the proper form of the intellect. In Aquinas’s account of cognition, as described through various interpretive lenses below, *species intelligibilis* is the *means by which* the intellect comes to understand the *quiddity* of extra-mental being which—given the innate capacities of the

⁵ For an overview of these terms, see Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, vol. 2 of *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), especially 29–36. Lonergan distinguishes *quod quid est*, *quod quid erat esse*, and *quidditas* as related ways of naming essence, essential definition, and quiddity, while emphasizing that *quod quid erat esse* has a special reference to the ground of essential definition, namely formal cause. In this sense, the phrase connects essence or quiddity to the formal principle by which a thing is what it is. Lonergan references *DEE*, c. 1; *InDA* II, lect. 2, §239; lect. 4, §§271–75; lect. 24, §§555–57; *InDA* III, lect. 2, §598; *InMeta* I, lect. 4, §70; lect. 11, §§175–78; lect. 13, §§202–203; lect. 17, §272; *InMeta* IV, lect. 7, §§625, 627; *InMeta* V, lect. 2, §764; lect. 3, §§779, 786; lect. 7, §864; lect. 10, §§902, 904; lect. 19, §1048; *InMeta* VII, lect. 1, §1269; lect. 2, §§1270, 1275; lect. 3, §§1308–10; lect. 4, §§1331–34, 1339–41, 1352–55; lect. 5, with specific references to §§1363, 1366, 1378; lect. 6, §1404; lect. 7, §§1421–22; lect. 9, §1473; lect. 10, §§1484, 1487, 1491, 1493; lect. 13, §§1567, 1577; lect. 15, §§1606, 1608; lect. 17, §§1648–49, 1667–68, 1672–80; *InMeta* VIII, lect. 1, §1685; lect. 3, §1709; *InMeta* IX, lect. 5, §1828; *InPhys* II, lect. 4; lect. 5; lect. 10 ad fin.; *InPostAnal.* II, lects. 7–8; lect. 9; *Sent* I, d. 8, q. 5, a. 3, sol.; and *ST* I, q. 76, a. 8, ob. 3 and ad 3.

human soul in its intellectual aspects of knowing and willing—it actually can come to know. Furthermore, the human intellect’s innate elasticity and desire to know allow it to inquire into a potentially unlimited range of things within its purview.

The soul is also capable of self-reflection, knowing itself as knowing through its own cognitional acts. In this way, the human subject knows both what it knows and itself as the unified knower presupposed in every act of knowing.

Among interpreters of Aquinas, there are important interpretive differences over the role of *species intelligibilis*, and as Chapter 1 introduced, much of the scholarly literature tends to align interpretations according to whether Aquinas’s account casts him as a “Direct Realist” or a “Representationalist.”

This chapter examines the hallmarks and conclusions of those designations, highlighting both their points of divergence and their areas of rapprochement. It also begins to show that the later points of contention in the ‘Debate’ arise not only from differences between the two positions, but also from the shared sequence and assumptions within which both sides often continue to work.

2.1 The Notions of Divergence and the Concerns of Each ‘Side’

This project argues at length that the labels ‘Direct Realist’ and ‘Representationalist’ blur more than they clarify, and that insofar as adherents of both “sides” generally follow the general account described below by E. Stump, the two sides of the ‘Debate’ often overlap so extensively that their real disagreement can be difficult to isolate.

As well, it seems that at times both sides may be responding to caricatures or inherited anxieties rather than to the actual positions of their opponents. Thus, the overlap suggests that later points of contention may begin *within* this shared model, not simply between unrelated accounts.

For many Thomist interpreters on all ‘sides’ of the ‘Debate,’ the worry is that *species intelligibilis* will become the primary object of cognition, an inner proxy standing in for extra-mental reality. On this view, the mind would first know its own likenesses and only indirectly reach being. What haunts this worry is not mediation itself, but the spectre of idealism and the loss of direct truth between knower and known.

For example, in *Being and Some Philosophers*⁶ and again in *Thomist Realism and the Critique of Knowledge*,⁷ Étienne Gilson argues that, under Cartesian and then Kantian pressure, some Thomist interpreters made Aquinas more fashionable by beginning from thought, doubt, or critique rather than from being as first given in sensation. In Gilson’s view, once that misguided shift occurs, knowledge of the external world is no longer primordial, but something to be recovered through reflection on the mind. For Gilson, this distorts Aquinas’s starting point. Whereas idealist and skeptical philosophers may begin with the mind’s second-order reflection

⁶ Étienne Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, 2nd ed., corrected and enlarged (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952).

⁷ Étienne Gilson, *Thomist Realism and the Critique of Knowledge*, trans. Mark A. Wauck (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986).

and try to deduce reality from it, in Gilson's view Aquinas privileges the reality of being and the human effort to know it through sensation, experience, reason, habit, and good judgment.⁸

On the other side, "Direct Realist" readings are portrayed as suspect in different ways. Their appeal to "identity" or "isomorphism" between "the known" and "the knower" has struck some as implausible, as echoed in Putnam's assessment that such doctrines are a "hangover from a set of medieval doctrines,"⁹ in which "some occult rays, call them 'noetic rays,' connect words and thought-signs to their referents."¹⁰

It is also significant and sometimes overlooked in philosophical accounts that Aquinas frequently explains human cognition in contrast with divine knowing. Aquinas's discussions of intellect, *species intelligibilis*, and *verbum*—or "word"—are often tied to broader efforts to understand procession, unity, and distinction in God. Through these analogies Aquinas describes how activities and process might be heuristically imagined, especially with respect to the ways in which human knowing, understood as a set of intellectual emanations within the essentially unified human soul might produce "something understood," that is, a *noeton*, that is *distinct* from the act from which that *noeton* emerged, while maintaining an essential unity. For that reason, any account of Aquinas's theory of human cognition that brackets its theological background risks flattening the depth and contours of his position, which may also lead to divergences, as

⁸ Gilson, *Thomist Realism*, 29–31, 41–42.

⁹ Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 75.

¹⁰ Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History*, 51.

interpreters may approach Aquinas's theory of cognition through predominantly philosophical or theological lenses.

The Direct Realist and Representationalist 'sides' are therefore already framed by shared concerns. Both seek to preserve realism, and both grant that *species intelligibilis* is causally indispensable. Both must explain likeness, and their divergences concern the characteristics of *species intelligibilis* and its causal role.

Significantly, it should be noted that all of the 'Direct Realists' and 'Representationalists' identified in this project converge in their acceptance of the '*id quo*' thesis, according to which *species intelligibilis* is not that which (or what) is known in cognition ('*id quod*'), but rather that by which ('*id quo*') cognition knows. They likewise deny that *species intelligibilis* is an inner object first known.¹¹

¹¹ All of the interpreters surveyed in this project engage Aquinas's *id quo/id quod* distinction, but they disagree about what follows from it. 'Direct Realist' interpreters generally treat *species intelligibilis* as a tool or principle rather than an apprehended first object, and 'Representationalists' generally insist on some sort of present entity or token. Pasnau straddles both, saying that it is first an object that is apprehended, although transparently, and used as a tool, and Adroaemssen emphasizes Aquinas's early texts in which *species* are described as first objects of apprehension. On *species intelligibilis* as the *id quo* of intellection, "that by which" the intellect understands, rather than the *id quod*, "that which" is primarily known, see Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 85, a. 2. For interpreters in the 'Direct Realist'/'Representationalist' debate, see Elena Baltuta, "Aquinas on Intellectual Cognition: The Case of Intelligible Species," *Philosophia* 41, no. 3 (2013): 589–602, esp. 590–92, 597–98; Lawrence Dewan, "St. Thomas, Ideas, and Immediate Knowledge," *Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Association* 18, no. 3 (1979): 392–404, esp. 393, 399–401; Max Herrera, "Arabic Influences in Aquinas's Doctrine of Intelligible Species" (PhD diss., Marquette University, 2010), esp. iv, 28–29; Dominik Perler, "Essentialism and Direct Realism: Some Late Medieval Perspectives," *Topoi* 19 (2000): 111–122, esp. 112–15, 119; Giorgio Pini, "Species, Concept, and Thing: Theories of Signification in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 8, no. 1 (1999): 21–52, esp. 28–29; Claude Panaccio, "Mental Representation," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Robert Pasnau and Christina Van Dyke, 346–356 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), esp. 349, 351; Robert Pasnau, "Aquinas and Direct Realism," in *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages*, 195–219 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), esp. 198, 211–12; Robert Pasnau, "Id Quo Cognoscimus," in *Theories of Perception in Medieval and Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Simo Knuuttila and Pekka Kärkkäinen, 131–149 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008), esp. 135, 145; Han Thomas Adriaenssen, *Representation and Scepticism from Aquinas to Descartes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), esp. 20–26; and Therese Scarpelli Cory, "Aquinas's Intelligible Species as Formal Constituents," *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 31 (2020): 261–309, esp. 285–87. For a broader later-medieval/Scotist extension of the *id quo/id quod* issue, see

2.2 The “Standard Model” of Aquinas’s Account of Cognition as Presented by Eleonore Stump

To ground the following discussions, Eleonore Stump’s presentations in her 1998 article “Aquinas’s Account of the Mechanisms of Intellective Cognition”¹² and the chapter “The Mechanisms of Cognition” in her 2003 book *Aquinas*¹³ provide reliable starting points.

Although Stump does not explicitly align herself with either ‘side,’ her account presents the shared sequence of the “mechanics of intellection” that both sides of the ‘Debate’ broadly recognize and agree to. Stump’s account, hereafter referred to as the “Standard Model,” is therefore useful both as a foundation for the discussion that follows and as a way of showing how this “Standard Model” itself generates later difficulties.¹⁴

To begin, as noted, Aquinas often presents human cognition in relation to divine knowing.

As Stump remarks,

Dominik Perler, “Things in the Mind: Fourteenth-Century Controversies over ‘Intelligible Species,’” *Vivarium* 34, no. 2 (1996): 231–253, esp. 232, 241–42. See note 14, below.

¹² Eleonore Stump, “Aquinas’s Account of the Mechanisms of Intellective Cognition,” *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 52 no. 204 (2) (June 1998): 287–307. [Hereafter referenced as “Aquinas’s Account of Mechanisms”].

¹³ Eleonore Stump, “The Mechanisms of Cognition,” in *Aquinas* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 244–276 [Hereafter referenced as *Mechanisms*].

¹⁴ On parallel formulations of the standard sequence described above, in which sensible reception and phantasm provide the basis for agent-intellect abstraction, production, and ‘deposit,’ (or transposition) of *species intelligibilis*, “in” the possible intellect so as to ground further intellectual operations, see the sources listed here. While Stump explicitly says the agent intellect ‘deposits’ *species* in the possible intellect; Pini speaks of production and impression; Panaccio, in “Aquinas on Intellectual Representation,” says the *species intelligibilis* is ‘deposited’ in the possible intellect as a result of the agent intellect’s action and then stored there; Herrera speaks of producing a similitude and *transferring or communicating* the *ratio* or *intentio* across modes of being. See especially Baltuta, “Aquinas on Intellectual Cognition,” 590, 599–600; Dewan, “St. Thomas, Ideas, and Immediate Knowledge,” 399–402, for the species as the form or origin by which possible intellect is given form and then forms definition, composition, and division; Herrera, “Arabic Influences,” iv, 172; Herrera, “Understanding Similitudes,” 17–19, 21–22; Perler, “Essentialism and Direct Realism,” 112–13; Perler, “Things in the Mind,” 232; Pini, “Species, Concept, and Thing,” 27–28; Pini, “Two Models of Thinking,” 13–16; Panaccio, “Aquinas on Intellectual Representation,” 188–89; Panaccio, “Mental Representation,” 348–49, 351; Panaccio, “From Mental Word to Mental Language,” 127; Pasnau, “Thomas Aquinas,” 22, 24–25; Pasnau, “Aquinas on Thought’s Linguistic Nature,” 559; Pasnau, “Abstract Truth,” 45–46; Pasnau, “Aquinas and Direct Realism,” 211–12; and Adriaenssen, *Representation and Scepticism*, 20–26, for *species* as immaterially received form, principle or source of cognitive acts, and means by which the object is apprehended. The strongest formulations of production, depositing, or impressing the species in possible intellect are Pini, “Two Models of Thinking,” 13–15; Panaccio, “Aquinas on Intellectual Representation,” 188–89; Panaccio, “From Mental Word to Mental Language,” 127; and Herrera, “Understanding Similitudes,” 18–19.

If by ‘direct cognition’ we mean that the cognizer apprehends the object of cognition in one indivisible act of cognition, without anything that counts as a means of cognition or a mechanism causing cognition, then on Aquinas’s account perhaps only God knows anything directly. Similarly, if what we mean by ‘unmediated’ is that there is no intermediary process of any sort, including such processes as representation, between the cognizer and what she cognizes, then here, too, for Aquinas God alone will count as having unmediated cognition.¹⁵

Stump’s first point, then, is that Aquinas’s account of human cognition is irreducibly mediated under material, mundane, and non-divine conditions.

Stump therefore begins with the senses. Human cognition starts with the five external senses, each ordered to its proper sensible, while also apprehending common sensibles such as motion, rest, number, shape, and size. As Stump puts it, “the senses when they are active are of singular things which are outside the soul.”¹⁶

Alongside the external senses, Aquinas posits internal senses, including common sense, which enables the perceiver to “discern the white from the sweet,” imagination, the estimative power, and the memorative power. In Stump’s interpretation, sense already occupies a mediating position between intellect and world and she recites Aquinas’s assertion,

[Our] knowledge, taking its start from things, proceeds in this order. First, it begins in sense; second, it is completed in the intellect. As a consequence, sense is found to be in some way an intermediary between the intellect and things; for with reference to things, it is, as it were, an intellect, and with reference to intellect, it is, as it were, a thing.¹⁷

¹⁵ Stump, *Mechanisms*, 245.

¹⁶ Stump, *Mechanisms*, 247.

¹⁷ Stump, *Mechanisms*, 248. Stump references Aquinas *DVer*, 1.11.

Within this sensory-intellective sequence, Stump distinguishes form as it exists naturally in extra-mental things from *species intelligibilis*, which is that form received in cognition. The difference concerns the mode of being.

Sense receives *species* under material conditions, whereas intellect receives *species intelligibilis* immaterially, in a mode proportioned to universal apprehension. Since what is intelligible must be present in the soul apart from matter and individuating conditions, the cognitive power receives the *species* “without the matter.” The more immaterial the receiving power, the more universal the mode of reception.

Aquinas makes this point repeatedly and consistently. For example, in his *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas writes “For it is clear that whatever is received in something is received in it according to the mode of the receiver.”¹⁸ Again in *de Veritate*, Aquinas writes “Whatever is received in something is received in it according to the mode of that in which it is received,”¹⁹ and in *Super ad Romanos* Aquinas writes “Everything received by something exists in it according to a mode of the recipient.”²⁰

Stump accordingly distinguishes two manners of reception. In one, the recipient becomes the kind of thing the form configures. Heat makes matter hot, and the form of a stone makes something a stone. In the other, proper to cognition, *species intelligibilis* is received immaterially or intentionally. On this reading, sensible *species* can convey information about external objects

¹⁸ Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 75, a. 6.

¹⁹ Aquinas, *DVer*, q. 18, a. 4, reply 13

²⁰ Aquinas, *SadR*, ch. 5, lect. 3, n. 407

without transforming the sense organ into those objects. Form can be received in a nature capable of receiving it without being instantiated in the same kind of matter.

Stump here uses the language of “configuration” and “configurational” with respect to a map analogy. If the configuration were received “naturally,” the paper would become a physical replica. So the map preserves the spatial configuration of streets without the materiality. Stump extends the same point to other representational cases (blueprints, wiring diagrams) and to cases where representation is not one-to-one, such as DNA. As Stump remarks, “What Aquinas refers to as the spiritual reception of an immaterial form, then, is what we are more likely to call encoded information.”²¹

This framework leads directly to Stump’s account of *species intelligibilis*. Following Aquinas’s terminology, Stump describes it as an immaterial form, a means of cognition, and a *similitudo* of the extra-mental thing. Thus, “The *similitudo* of a thing that is understood — which is *species intelligibilis* — is a form in accordance with which the intellect understands.”²²

Thus, the *species intelligibilis* is not what the intellect primarily knows. Rather, “the *species intelligibilis* is related to the intellect such that it is that by means of which (“*id quo*”) the intellect understands.” As Aquinas writes in the *Summa theologiae*, “intelligible *species* is related to the

²¹ Stump, *Mechanisms*, 253.

²² Stump, “Aquinas’s Account of Mechanisms” 290. Stump references *ST I*, q. 85, a. 1. c.

intellect as that by which it understands.”²³ Only secondarily, by reflection, can *species intelligibilis* itself become an object of awareness.²⁴

Thus the locus of this account depends on how *similitudo* is understood. Stump insists that *similitudo* is not a picture-like duplicate. Rather, it relies on “an agreement in or sharing of forms.”²⁵ For that reason the *species intelligibilis* is received “in accordance with the mode of the knower,” by “spiritual or immaterial or intentional reception,” and not according to the natural mode in which the form inheres in the thing.²⁶ *Species intelligibilis* as likeness is the presence of the thing’s form in a new mode of being, and in that mode it can actualize intellect for cognition of the thing itself without being itself an inner object.²⁷

Stump also gives this account an ordered sequence, writing

The active part, generally called ‘the agent intellect,’ abstracts the *species intelligibilis* from the phantasms and deposits them in the passive part of the intellect, which is generally called ‘the potential intellect’ or ‘the possible intellect.’²⁸

Stump’s “deposit” language, that is specifically and frequently repeated in many of the interpreters of the ‘Debate,’ appears to gather together several elements that Aquinas himself states separately. A sampling of these passages is provided below.

²³ Aquinas, *ST I* q. 85, a. 2, c.

²⁴ Stump, “Aquinas’s Account of Mechanisms” 290. Stump references *ST I*, q. 85, a. 2 c. This is the famous “*id quo*” formulation, referred to repeatedly by all Aquinas interpreters in this project, and notably not the only time Aquinas refers to *species intelligibilis* as a form. See footnote 12.

²⁵ Stump, “Aquinas’s Account of Mechanisms” 254–255. Stump references *ST I*, q. 4, a. 3 and *DVer* q. 2, a. 3, ad 9.

²⁶ Stump, “Aquinas’s Account of the Mechanisms of Intellectual Cognition,” 290. Stump references *ST I*, q. 85, a. 5, ad 3.

²⁷ Stump, “Aquinas’s Account of Mechanisms” 290–291. Stump references *ST I*, q. 4, a. 3; *ST I*, q. 85, a. 5, ad 3, *ST I*, q. 85, a. 1, 2, and 5, ad 3; *ST I*, q. 4, a. 3; *DVer* q. 8, a. 8; *DVer* q. 2, a. 3, ad 9.

²⁸ Stump, *Mechanisms*, 264.

First, in the *Summa theologiae* Aquinas writes

But phantasms, since they are images of individuals, and exist in corporeal organs, have not the same mode of existence as the human intellect, and therefore have not the power of themselves to make an impression on the potential intellect. This is done by the power of the agent intellect which by turning toward the phantasm produces in the potential intellect a certain likeness which represents, as to its specific conditions only, the thing reflected in the phantasm. It is thus that the intelligible species is said to be abstracted from the phantasm; not that the identical form which previously was in the phantasm is subsequently in the potential intellect, as a body transferred from one place to another.²⁹

And again later in the *Summa theologiae* Aquinas writes

But the agent intellect abstracts intelligible species from phantasms, insofar as through the power of the agent intellect we are able to receive/take up in our consideration the natures of species without individual conditions, according to the likenesses of which the possible intellect is informed.³⁰

As well, in *De veritate*, Aquinas writes

Hence the one understanding does not stand as agent or patient except accidentally, insofar, namely, as in order for the intelligible to be united to the intellect, some action or passion is required: action, indeed, insofar as the agent intellect makes the species to be actually intelligible; passion, however, insofar as the possible intellect receives intelligible species, and sense receives sensible species.³¹

The question of whether Aquinas's language necessitates the interpretation that the agent intellect "deposits" or "impresses" the *species intelligibilis* in the possible intellect is a subject for

²⁹ Aquinas, *ST* 1 q. 85, a. 1, ad. 3.

³⁰ Aquinas, *ST* I q. 85, a. 1, ad. 4. The Latin is important here: [*Abstrahit autem intellectus agens species intelligibiles a phantasmatis, inquantum per virtutem intellectus agentis accipere possumus in nostra consideratione naturas specierum sine individualibus conditionibus, secundum quarum similitudines intellectus possibilis informatur*].

³¹ Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. 8, a. 5, c.

a brief treatment in Chapter 4, where this project argues for interpreting these passages in a metaphysical approach that envisages agent and possible intellect as sets of interacting operations rather than as spatial-material-mechanical places and persons. For present purposes, it is enough to note that this “deposit” language, or closely related language of production, possession, storage, and instrumental use, recurs in greater or lesser degrees in the works of the ‘Debate’ proponents surveyed in this project.

According to Stump, this ‘deposit’ is the beginning and not the terminus of intellective activity. Here Stump cites Aquinas’s assertion in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*,

the intellect, informed by the species of a thing, forms in itself by an act of intellect a certain intention of the thing intellect; this intention is the nature (*ratio*) of the thing, which the definition signifies ... Since this intellect intention is as it were the terminus of an operation of the intellect, it is different from the *species intelligibilis* that actualizes the intellect; the *species intelligibilis* should be considered as the source (*principium*) of an operation of the intellect.³²

For Stump, *species intelligibilis* is therefore not the completed concept, but the formal source from which the intellect proceeds to form an “intellected intention,” “concept,” or “internal word.” In this sense, the abstraction of *species intelligibilis* is only “the beginning or source of an act of intellection,” not its completion.³³

In Stump’s reading there arise in cognition two further operations; namely, the second operation as “compounding and dividing,” and the third as discursive reasoning.³⁴ Thus, at this

³² Stump, *Mechanisms*, 266-267. Stump references *ScG* I, c. 53.

³³ Stump, *Mechanisms*, 266-267. Stump references *ScG* I, c. 53 and *ScG* IV, c. 11.

³⁴ Stump, *Mechanisms*, 260-261, 266, 270. Stump references *ST* I, q. 85, a. 5; *ST* I-II, q. 90, a. 1, ad 2

point the shared model is already visible in a determinate form; that is, sensation and internal sense provide the sensible presentation of the thing, and phantasm makes that presentation available in imagination. The agent intellect then abstracts *species intelligibilis* from phantasm and “deposits” it in the possible intellect, thereby actualizing it.

In Stump’s standard model, *phantasm* is indispensable because it mediates between sense and intellect. It belongs to the sensitive soul and preserves what is given in sensation as the conscious presentation of particular things. It also provides the source from which the agent intellect abstracts *species intelligibilis*. Human understanding therefore never bypasses *phantasm*, since the intellect depends on it for access to determinate sensible content and for the abstraction of universal form from material and individuating conditions. *Phantasm* thus serves as both source and anchor for intellection, keeping cognition directed toward extra-mental reality even though the intellect knows by means of immaterial *species* rather than by direct material reception.

Species intelligibilis thus actualizes the intellect and directs it toward the extra-mental thing itself. At the same time, Stump maintains that the intellect’s proper object is universal, while knowledge of particulars depends on the continuing coordination of sensory and intellectual powers through *phantasm*. Cognition therefore proceeds through a standard sequence in which the form of the thing is first received in sensation, preserved in phantasm, abstracted by the agent intellect as *species intelligibilis*, and received by the possible intellect as its incipient actuality. From that actuality follow definition, judgment, and discursive reasoning. In this model, *species*

intelligibilis acts as the *id quo* of understanding, insofar as it is the formal principle by which the intellect is actualized for knowing.

Precisely because Stump presents this sequence so clearly, her account reveals both the common ground of the later ‘Debate’ and the assumption that drives it; namely, that *species intelligibilis* is something produced, deposited, and instrumentalized in subsequent activities. While that assumption does not yet force either a ‘Direct Realist’ or a ‘Representationalist’ reading, it nevertheless suggests that the next challenge is to articulate the status and function of a derived or produced likeness in a normative sequence.³⁵

2.3 Introduction to ‘Direct Realists’ and their Characterization of *Species intelligibilis*

In the literature on Aquinas’s account of cognition presented in this project, Lawrence Dewan, Dominik Perler, Elena Baltuta, Max Herrera, and Giorgio Pini all self-identify, to varying degrees, as proponents of the ‘Direct Realist’ side of the ‘Debate.’

As described below, Perler, Baltuta, and Pini emphasize double existence and the non-pictorial meaning of likeness, while Dewan and Herrera emphasize the ‘intentional,’ ‘rational,’ and ‘proportional’ instrumentality of likeness insofar as it is a kind of isomorphism.

While there are noticeable differences in their interpretations, however, these ‘Direct Realists’ share (along with the ‘Representationalists’) and highlight a common worry; that is, that the notion of *species intelligibilis* represents a ‘veil’ that might obfuscate the truth of being and the veridicality of the human cognition of that truth.

³⁵ Stump, *Mechanisms*, 270-273. Stump references *ST I*, q. 84, a. 7; *ST I*, q. 79, a. 4, ad 4; *DVer* q. 10, a. 4.

2.3.1 The “Veil of Ideas” Worry

In “Essentialism and Direct Realism: Some Late Medieval Perspectives,”³⁶ Perler explicitly thematizes the anti-veil sentiment through his account of *species intelligibilis* as content-bearing likeness.

Perler frames the “veil of ideas” theme by first presenting a familiar (though not entirely fair) opposition between Direct Realism and Representationalism. As Perler describes, ‘Direct Realists’ hold that intentional states are “normally directed toward things in the extra-mental world” as their “immediate objects,” whereas ‘Representationalists’ hold that intentional states are directed primarily toward “mental items” and only “secondarily” toward the extra-mental things “represented by these items.”³⁷

In that setting, Perler presents Thomas Reid, the 18th century philosopher, as the classic expositor of a “theory of ideas,” quoting Reid’s claim that ideas are “internal and immediate objects” while the external thing is “remote or mediate.” Perler quotes Reid’s diagnosis,

...given that we have “no immediate epistemic access to the extra-mental world,” we cannot compare ideas to things, and one is pushed toward the skeptical question, ‘Does representationalism not lead to skepticism about the external world?’³⁸

In tracing the history of the “veil” concern, Perler notes that “shortly after Aquinas” some interpreters, most notably the “radical and serious” Olivi, began to treat the *species intelligibilis* as a possible “inner object.” As Perler recounts, Olivi “explicitly used the veil metaphor,”

³⁶ Dominik Perler, “Essentialism and Direct Realism: Some Late Medieval Perspectives,” *Topoi* 19, no. 2 (2000): 111–122.

³⁷ Perler, “Essentialism,” 111.

³⁸ Perler, “Essentialism,” 111.

arguing that anything placed between attention and object “would veil (*velaret*) the thing.” On Olivi’s “simple act theory,” cognition requires only “an object present” and the “attention” directed toward it, so “no additional entities are required.” Olivi’s worry then, according to Perler, was that if a *species* were inserted into the act of cognition, it would take on “the character of a first object” rather than functioning as an intermediate principle.³⁹

Perler then shows how the “veil of ideas” worry became a standard lens for reading medieval debates. He notes L. Spruit’s claim that a “veil of species” theory is “comparable to the early modern ‘veil of ideas’ theory,” observes that Panaccio finds “crucial elements of representationalism” in Aquinas’s theory of *species*, and alleges that Pasnau’s contemporary view accords with early modern ideas that Aquinas’s account casts *species intelligibilis* as the “immediate and direct objects of cognitive apprehension are our internal impressions.”⁴⁰

In Perler’s reconstruction of the historical context he validates his own interpretation of Aquinas as defending a “modified version of direct realism,” in which the intellect’s immediate objects are the forms of things, while *species* are “nothing more than cognitive means” for grasping those forms.⁴¹

³⁹ Perler, “Essentialism,” 116-118.

⁴⁰ Perler, “Essentialism,” 112. Perler quotes R. Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 293. Perler accurately quotes Pasnau’s formulation on 293; however, in the view of this project, that formulation does not by itself capture the qualifications Pasnau develops elsewhere; compare Pasnau’s qualifications in “Aquinas and Direct Realism,” 195–219.

⁴¹ Perler, “Essentialism,” 112-113. Perler references *InDA* Bk 2, 12. “But the nature itself, namely the nature of a human being, has a twofold mode of being: one, indeed, material, according to which it exists in natural matter; the other, however, immaterial, according to which it exists in the intellect.”

Further, Perler explains why Aquinas can still look “veil-like” to modern readers. While Aquinas often calls *species* “*similitudes*,” which can suggest inner images, Perler argues that *similitudo* is not a mental “doppelgänger” but a technical term grounded in “agreement or sharing of forms.” Perler also addresses texts where Aquinas seems to say the *species* is “the first thing cognized” and the thing “second.”⁴²

Perler argues that this is not an inner-object-first model, because the “first thing cognized” is a similitude, and the real contrast is between “two ways of being of one and the same form,” first in the intellect and then in the thing. *Species* can therefore function as representations without becoming a veil. Here Perler’s clarifying remark is that “what we are interested in when we are looking at the *species* is its content.”⁴³

In his article “St. Thomas, Ideas, and Immediate Knowledge,”⁴⁴ Lawrence Dewan is concerned with how Aquinas can preserve the thing-oriented character of first-order cognition while still assigning *species intelligibilis* a necessary formal role. Situating his concern within an anti-idealist position, Dewan maintains that “knowledge of things other than ourselves comes about inasmuch as we are influenced and formed by the things themselves,” so that the immaterial form present as *species intelligibilis* “gives rise to an operation which is entirely

⁴² Perler, “Essentialism,” 114-116. Perler quotes Aquinas, *Sent. II.*, dist. 17, q. 2, art. 1, ad 3, “the understood species can be considered in two ways: either according to the being it has in the intellect, and in that case it has singular being; or according to the fact that it is a likeness of such an understood thing, insofar as it leads to knowledge of it, and from this side it has universality.” See Perler’s notes 14–15 for *Quodl VIII*, q. 2, a. 2 and *Sent II*, d. 17, q. 2, a. 1, ad 3.

⁴³ Perler, “Essentialism,” 114-116. Perler references *Sent II*, d. 17, q. 2, a. 1, ad 3 ; and *Quodl VIII*, q. 2, a. 2.

⁴⁴ Lawrence Dewan, “St. Thomas, Ideas, and Immediate Knowledge,” *Dialogue - Canadian Philosophical Association* 18, no. 3 (1979): 392–404.

thing-oriented.”⁴⁵ *Species intelligibilis* is “not, in its own proper role, a ‘thing known,’” and so it is not a medium in the sense of an intervening known object.⁴⁶ It is only in the latter stages of cognition that we form ideas or notions of things as mental contents available for inspection, and here Dewan says Aquinas is “in something like agreement with Locke as to what sort of thing an idea is,” while differing radically about its role, since ideas presuppose rather than mediate first knowledge.⁴⁷

On Dewan’s reading, Aquinas says that *species intelligibilis* “can be considered in two ways,” either according to “the existence it has in the intellect” or insofar as it “is a likeness of a cognized thing.” In the first respect, it is a “singular accident of the intellect” and a “cognitive means.” In the second, its content “is nothing but the universal form of a thing, assimilated in the cognitive process.”⁴⁸

Thus, as does Perler, Dewan interprets *species intelligibilis* as a content-bearing likeness while insisting that likeness is “a technical term,” namely, “x is a similitude of y if and only if x and y share the same form.”⁴⁹

In her work “Aquinas on Intellectual Cognition: The Case of *Species Intelligibilis*,”⁵⁰ E. Baltuta places Aquinas’s account within the dispute between ‘Direct Realists’ and

⁴⁵ Dewan, “Ideas and Immediate Knowledge,” 393, 399–402; see especially his discussion of *ST I*, q. 85, a. 2 at 399–401.

⁴⁶ Dewan, “Ideas and Immediate Knowledge,” 402. Dewan references *ST I*, q. 15, a. 2; *ST I*, q. 84, a. 2; *ST I*, q. 85, a. 2.

⁴⁷ “Ideas and Immediate Knowledge,” 402. Dewan references *ST I*, q. 15, aa. 1–3; *ST I*, q. 85, a. 2, ad 3.

⁴⁸ Perler, “Essentialism,” 114–116. Perler references *Sent II*, d. 17, q. 2, a. 1, ad 3 ; and *Quodl VIII*, q. 2, a. 2.

⁴⁹ Thus Dewan would support the quote here from Perler, “Essentialism,” 115. Perler references *ST I*, q. 4, a. 3; and *DVer* q. 8, a. 8.

‘Representationalists,’ especially Panaccio and Pasnau. Baltuta argues that the direct-realist reading remains strongest because *species intelligibilis* plays primarily a causal rather than primary cognitive role in cognition.

Baltuta further distinguishes between the singular inherence of *species intelligibilis* in a particular mind and the universal content by which it “leads to cognition,” so that the *species intelligibilis* can be singular as accident yet universal in the formal content it communicates.⁵¹

Baltuta’s account stands close to Perler’s, though she places greater weight on the direct-realist consequences of formal identity

In the chapter entitled “Aquinas’s Solution to the Aristotelian Aporia,”⁵² Max Herrera reaches the same general destination from a different starting point, emphasizing Aquinas’s account of “the soul’s spirituality and its role as form of the body.”⁵³ For Herrera, because “there is a part of the soul that transcends the body,” the possible intellect is “capable of receiving intelligible forms” and remains “unaffected by matter.” Yet this creates an “ontological rift between the body and the intellect,” since “nothing from the material world is able to impress itself directly upon the possible intellect.”⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Elena Baltuta, “Aquinas on Intellectual Cognition: the Case of Intelligible Species,” *Philosophia* 41, no. 3 (2013): 589–602.

⁵¹ Baltuta, “Intellectual Cognition,” 590-592. Baltuta quotes Aquinas, *ScG* III, c. 49, n. 2 and *Quodl* VIII, q. 2, a. 2, co.; *ScG* I, c. 46; *Sent* II, d. 17, q. 2, a. 2, co.; d. 17, q. 2, a. 1, ad 3.

⁵² Max Herrera, “Arabic Influences in Aquinas’s Doctrine of Intelligible Species,” PhD diss., Marquette University, 2010.

⁵³ Herrera, “Aquinas’s Solution,” 126.

⁵⁴ Herrera, “Aquinas’s Solution,” 151-152.

Further, in his article “Understanding Similitudes in Aquinas with the Help of Avicenna and Averroes,”⁵⁵ Max Herrera repeats that *species intelligibilis* thus enters the account as the form in which material content becomes proportioned to immaterial reception.

Herrera’s distinctive vocabulary here is *ratio* and *intentio*. As Herrera says, “A *species* is a type of form that intentionally specifies and determines its subject by communicating a *ratio*, also known as *intentio*, to its subject.”⁵⁶ For Herrera, the telling point is the relationship between sameness of *ratio* and sameness of mode of being. The *species intelligibilis* is a likeness because the same formal content now exists immaterially, and it is also, in one sense, identical with the thing because the *ratio* communicated through the *species intelligibilis* is the same *ratio* found in the form-matter composite.⁵⁷ Hence, on Herrera’s reading, if one considers *species intelligibilis* and *thing* from the point of view of ratio, there is identity; if one considers them according to mode of being, there is likeness.⁵⁸

Herrera appeals to the principle that “What is received is in the receiver in the way of the recipient,” and “not in the way of what gives it” as allowing him to say that “the *species intelligibilis* is a likeness of the essence of a thing and, in some manner, it is the very quiddity and nature of the thing according to intelligible being, not according to natural being inasmuch as

⁵⁵ Max Herrera, “Understanding Similitudes in Aquinas with the Help of Avicenna and Averroes,” in: *Universal Representation and the Ontology of Individuation, Proceedings of the Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics* 5 (2005), ed. Gyula Klima and Alexander W. Hall, 5-23. (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011).

⁵⁶ Herrera, “Understanding Similitudes,” 15-16.

⁵⁷ Herrera, “Understanding Similitudes,” 15-16. Herrera references *DEE* cap. 2; *Quodl* 8, q. 2, a. 2, resp.

⁵⁸ Herrera, “Understanding Similitudes,” 21-22. Herrera references *Sent*, d. 36, a. 4; *ST* I, q. 84, a. 1. See especially *Quodl* VIII, q. 2, a. 2 at 22 n. 50.

it is found in things.”⁵⁹ For Herrera, direct apprehension is preserved because the *species intelligibilis* communicates the thing’s own *ratio* under intelligible conditions.

In “*Species, Concept, and Thing*,”⁶⁰ Pini defines *species intelligibilis* directly as “the intelligible similitude of an extra-mental thing which is in the soul as in its subject.”⁶¹ Pini presents *species intelligibilis* through an account of a two-fold operation that unites interior actualization and intentional determination.

In “Two Models of Thinking,”⁶² Pini clarifies this account through Aquinas’s distinction in *De veritate*; that is, a cognitive form may be considered according to its being in the cognizer, where it ‘makes’ the knower actually cognizing, and according to its relation to the thing of which it is a likeness, where it ‘determines’ cognition to a definite object.⁶³

Thus Pini reads Aquinas as asserting that *species intelligibilis* is both the inner form by which the possible intellect is brought into act and the likeness by which cognition is specified to an extra-mental thing. Pini grounds this interpretation in Aquinas’s claim that “the understood is in the intelligent by its own likeness,” so that the likeness of the thing understood is the form of the intellect in act.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Herrera, “Understanding Similitudes,” 21–22

⁶⁰ Giorgio Pini, “Species, Concept, and Thing: Theories of Signification in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century,” in *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 8 (1999): 21–52. Pini reports Scotus’s definition and then recounts Aquinas’s *species* theory.

⁶¹ Pini, “Species Concept Thing,” 27.

⁶² Giorgio Pini, “Two Models of Thinking: Thomas Aquinas and John Duns Scotus on Occurrent Thoughts,” in *Intentionality, Cognition, and Mental Representation in Medieval Philosophy*, edited by Gyula Klima, 81–103, New York: Fordham University Press, 2015.

⁶³ Pini, “Two Models,” 84, 91. Pini references *DVer.* q. 10, a. 4.

⁶⁴ Pini, “Two Models Thinking,” 84 n. 9, 88. Pini references *ST I*, q. 85, a. 2, ad 1.

Thus, even where these interpreters agree that *species intelligibilis* is an abstracted likeness and instrumental principle of cognition, they do not explain likeness in the same way. However, their accounts may be read within a sense of two overlapping tendencies, where one secures realism through formal sameness across modes of being, the other through the directed and operative role of *species* within cognition.

2.4 ‘Direct Realists’ on How *Species intelligibilis* -as-Produced-Likeness Causes / Secures Unobstructed Access to Extra-Mental Being

The final issue concerns why the *species intelligibilis*, precisely as a produced likeness, secures rather than obstructs cognition. All five interpreters reject any model in which the intellect first apprehends an inner surrogate and then reaches the extra-mental thing by inference.⁶⁵ Their accounts converge on that denial even though they explain the causal role through different formulas.

Dewan gives the most explicit rejection of the imagery that would turn the *species intelligibilis* into a pictorial representation. Dewan’s concern is that words such as “through” and “medium” can easily mislead readers into picturing the *species* as something first inspected by the intellect. To differentiate his account, Dewan interprets *species intelligibilis* as a sort of tool by which the intellect knows the thing, and not a mental object placed before the mind.⁶⁶

Perler and Baltuta secure the same directness by emphasizing formal continuity across two modes of being. Perler argues that one and the same form can have a “double existence,”

⁶⁵ See footnote 12, above.

⁶⁶ Dewan, “Ideas and Immediate Knowledge,” 393-402.

materially in the thing and immaterially in the intellect. Baltuta develops the same point through the language of likeness, where likeness means “agreement or sharing of a form” rather than pictorial resemblance. On this reading, the *species intelligibilis* has the same formal content as the object’s essential form, so cognition reaches the extra-mental thing itself under its intelligible mode rather than stopping at an intermediary object.⁶⁷

Herrera explains this directness through the *communication* of the *ratio* across different modes of being by means of a normative sequence, namely, the material composite, the *species in medio*, the sensible *species*, the phantasm, the *species intelligibilis*, and finally the concept. In Herrera’s account, the possible intellect cannot be moved by matter as matter, yet it is not confined to merely subjective contents. What preserves objectivity is the continuity of one formal content as it passes through the sequence. The *species intelligibilis* is therefore internal to the knower, but its content remains anchored in the extra-mental thing.⁶⁸

Pini’s contribution is to distinguish causal priority from objective priority. In ordinary cognition, the *species intelligibilis* plays “a causal role in knowledge” and is “that by which the intellect understands the extra-mental thing, or, more precisely, the essence of the extra-mental thing.” In Pini’s account the *species intelligibilis* may become known, but only in a subsequent reflexive act, when the intellect turns back upon its own operation and attends to “the means by which the extra-mental thing is understood.” The *species* is therefore indispensable to the occurrence of cognition without becoming the ordinary terminus of cognition.

⁶⁷ Perler, “Essentialism and Direct Realism,” 112-119. Baltuta “Aquinas on Intellectual Cognition,” 590-592.

⁶⁸ Herrera, “Understanding Similitudes,” 7-9, 16-22.

Pini further clarifies this point by distinguishing two ways Aquinas can explain intentionality. According to Pini, in one model, Aquinas claims that the act is about its object because it is caused by a *species intelligibilis* directly related to the extra-mental thing. In another, a later concept functions as an inner term of thought. Yet even in the second model, the concept is related to the object only because the intellect has already been assimilated to the thing through the prior *species intelligibilis*. The *species intelligibilis* remains the first internal form that both makes intellection occur and anchors what intellection is about.⁶⁹

‘Direct Realists’ converge, then, in their refusal to construe *species intelligibilis* as an inspected intermediary object. For these interpreters, *species intelligibilis* mediates cognition formally and causally, but it does not insert an inner surrogate between intellect and world. Dewan emphasizes the thing-oriented character of intellectual operation, Perler and Baltuta appeal to formal continuity across two modes of existence; Herrera explains this continuity through the communication of *ratio* into intelligible being; and Pini distinguishes the causal priority of the *species* from the objective priority of the extra-mental thing known.

Their shared conclusion is that *species intelligibilis* causes cognition by making the thing itself intelligibly present. It actualizes and determines the possible intellect toward the extra-mental thing, whether this is explained through formal continuity, communicated *ratio*, or causal instrumentality.

⁶⁹ Pini, “Two Models of Thinking,” 88, 90–92; see 91 n. 29 (*ScG I*, c. 53) and 92 nn. 30–32 (*DPot* q. 8, a. 1).

Nevertheless, because these accounts continue to describe *species intelligibilis* as produced, received, and internally operative within the same broad sequence, the central tension of the ‘Debate’ remains alive; that is, while the *species* is not treated as an object known, it is still assigned the role of an indispensable inner likeness through which cognition reaches its object.

2.5 Introduction to ‘Representationalists’ and their Characterization of *Species intelligibilis*

While all the ‘Representationalists’ agree that a “likeness” is necessary, and emphasize the ontic presence of *likeness qua likeness*, they differ over the constitution of likeness and the explanatory work that it does. Thus the ‘Representationalist’ interpretations of Aquinas’s account of *species intelligibilis* open onto new possibilities.

Working from the same broad mechanisms, and with the same concern for truth and veridicality, Panaccio, Adriaenssen, and Pasnau maintain the shared sequence and, more or less, deny that cognition focuses on inner images but argue, as a group, that Aquinas’s texts require a stronger account of *species intelligibilis* as an ontic representation.

In “Aquinas on Intellectual Representation,”⁷⁰ C. Panaccio makes the produced character of *species intelligibilis* inseparable from representational presence and firmly asserts Aquinas’s recurring principle that “a cognition takes place only insofar as a *similitude* of the cognized thing

⁷⁰ Claude Panaccio, “Aquinas on Intellectual Representation,” in *Ancient and Medieval Theories of Intentionality*, edited by Dominik Perler. *Studen und Texte Zur Geistesgeschichte Des Mittelalters*, 185–202. Leiden, Boston and Koln: Brill, 2001.

is in the cognizer,” and again that “something is cognized insofar as it is represented in the cognizer.”⁷¹

On that basis, Panaccio presents the *species intelligibilis* as a likeness “by representation” rather than “according to an agreement in their very nature.” The same point governs his claim that when a quiddity is intentionally in the mind, this “means nothing more than that there is a likeness of it in the mind.” *Species intelligibilis* is therefore a produced likeness through which the thing becomes present to intellect without any duplication of natural being.⁷²

In his work *Representation and Scepticism from Aquinas to Descartes*⁷³ Han Adriaenssen also begins from likeness but explains it in a different way. Adriaenssen argues that *similitudo* is best understood through the claim that “there is similitudo insofar as things share, or agree in a form.”⁷⁴ On that basis, the *species intelligibilis* of an object is the object’s own form as instantiated in the cognizer under a different mode of being rather than a separate representational device interposed between mind and thing.

On Adriaenssen’s reading, when Aquinas says that agreement in nature is “not required,” and that what is required instead is “similitudo with regard to representation,” Adriaenssen interprets this as a distinction between the mode in which form exists in intellect and the mode in which it exists in matter, not as a denial of formal sameness. In Adriaenssen’s reading, *species*

⁷¹ Panaccio, “Intellectual Representation,” 187–188. Panaccio references *ScG*, c. 77; *ST I*, q. 88, a. 1; *DVer* q. 11, a. 5.

⁷² Panaccio, “Intellectual Representation,” 196–198, Panaccio quotes Aquinas, *DVer* q. 2, a. 3, ad 9.

⁷³ Han Thomas Adriaenssen, *Representation and Scepticism from Aquinas to Descartes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

⁷⁴ Adriaenssen, *Representation and Scepticism*, 22. Adriaenssen references *DVer* q. 2, a. 3, ad 9.

intelligibilis is a produced *similitude* because the thing's *form* is received cognitively under a distinct mode of being.⁷⁵ At this point Panaccio and Adriaenssen converge in that both treat *species intelligibilis* as proportioned to intellect by its mode of immateriality.

In his work "Mental Representation,"⁷⁶ Panaccio says that *species intelligibilis* are "abstract compared to sensible *species*," that sensible *species* are "singular representations of particular material things," and that *species intelligibilis* refers the mind to "the common natures – or quiddities – of things."⁷⁷ Panaccio describes cognition as moving from sensation to intellect until there emerges "an even more purely spiritual sort of likeness, an *intelligible species*."⁷⁸

In their highly dematerialized but nonetheless present state, *species intelligibilis* function as "mental tokens endowed with semantic content." Panaccio adds that "what has to be in our intellect is their *species intelligibilis*, in virtue of which the intellect comes to be in act."⁷⁹

Han Adriaenssen states the same cognitive suitability in another mode, and claims that "the form of the thing that is understood is not received in the intellect in a material and individual way, but rather in an immaterial and universal way," adding that "sense and intellect need to be informed by *species* in order to engage in cognitive acts," so that *species intelligibilis* are "the sources or principles of cognitive acts."⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Adriaenssen, *Representation and Scepticism*, 22–23. Adriaenssen references *DVer* q. 2, a. 3, ad 9.

⁷⁶ Claude Panaccio, "Mental Representation," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, 346–56, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

⁷⁷ Panaccio, "Mental Representation," 348. Panaccio references *ST* 1, q. 84–85.

⁷⁸ Panaccio, "Mental Representation," 348. Panaccio references *ST* 1, q. 84–85.

⁷⁹ Panaccio, "Intellectual Representation," 189. Panaccio references *InDA* III, lect. 7 and *ScG I*, c. 53.

⁸⁰ Adriaenssen, *Representation and Scepticism*, 20. Adriaenssen references *ST I*, q. 76, a. 1, arg. 3; *Sent IV*, d. 49, q. 2, a. 1.

What makes Panaccio and Adriaenssen ‘Representationalists’ is their insistence on the indispensable *presence* of an ontic—even if transparent and/or immaterial—thing. The presence—as representational likeness—is the *sine qua non* for cognition.

In a handful of works, Robert Pasnau asserts that Aquinas’s doctrine of *species intelligibilis* is poised between Direct Realism and Representationalism, since the language of likeness can either be read in a fully “sophisticated” way or as committing Aquinas to a more psychologically mediated account of cognition.⁸¹ Thus regarding Pasnau’s works and positionality, he has come to be termed a “Representational Realist.”

Pasnau’s distinction between a “naïve” and a “sophisticated” *species intelligibilis* theory underscores his point. In Pasnau’s view, on the “naïve account” of Aquinas’s views, *species intelligibilis* are “themselves the objects of cognition,” “pictures, almost.” On the sophisticated account, *species intelligibilis* are only “causal intermediaries,” functioning “at an entirely subcognitive level.” On Pasnau’s reading Aquinas occupies a “semi-naïve” or “semi-sophisticated” position because *species intelligibilis* mediate cognition “not just causally but psychologically,” so that they are “in some sense the objects of apprehension.”⁸²

Thus, Pasnau’s approach is that Aquinas’s account of *species intelligibilis* renders it as a necessary likeness that acts as a “psychological” (that is, “cognitional” or “mental”) tool. It is less

⁸¹ See Robert Pasnau, “Aquinas and Direct Realism,” in *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 195-197; Robert Pasnau, “Id Quo Cognoscimus,” in *Theories of Perception in Medieval and Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Simo Knuuttila and Pekka Kärkkäinen, *Studies in the History of Philosophy of Mind* 6 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008), 131; Pasnau, “Abstract Truth in Thomas Aquinas,” in *Representation and Objects of Thought in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Henrik Lagerlund (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 33–63. Pasnau references *ST* 1 q. 85, 2 c.

⁸² Pasnau, “Aquinas and Direct Realism,” 195.

of a “picture” than a necessary object that allows cognition to perform a cognitive, or as Pasnau terms it, a “psychological” role.

For this, Pasnau appeals to Aquinas’s claim that the likeness of the visible thing is that “in virtue of which sight sees,” and that the *species intelligibilis* is “the form in virtue of which intellect cognizes,” while “that which is intellectually cognized first” is “the thing of which the *species intelligibilis* is a likeness.”⁸³ Thus, for Pasnau, it seems that in perceiving the *species-intelligibilis-as-produced-similitude*, certain psychological—or cognitional—states are activated; thus rendering *species intelligibilis* as an authentic causal force. According to Pasnau, here the *species intelligibilis* is “causally more immediate to the cognizer than is the external object,” and for that reason Aquinas can call it a “source” or “medium.”⁸⁴

At the same time, it remains a likeness of the external thing, which, virtue of its being a tool, is a *sine qua non* requirement that is acknowledged (cognized) “first.” Pasnau’s reading therefore holds together two claims that sit in some tension. *Species intelligibilis* is a produced similitude with a robust internal role, yet it remains ordered to the extra-mental object as primary.

Pasnau’s later reconsideration of *species intelligibilis* as “that by which we cognize” makes that internal tension even more explicit. According to Pasnau, this phrase may name an intrinsic or adjectival state of the power, a distinct actualizer of that state, or something apprehended within the act itself.⁸⁵ Likeness is necessary on any of these models because *species intelligibilis*

⁸³ Pasnau, “Aquinas and Direct Realism,” 198. Pasnau references *ST* I, q. 85, a. 2, c.; see his n. 5 for *ScG* II, c. 75, §1550; *InDA* III, lect. 8, §§717–18; *QDDA* a. 2, ad 5; *QDSC* q. 9, ad 6, and n. 6.

⁸⁴ Pasnau, “Aquinas and Direct Realism,” 198.

⁸⁵ Pasnau, “Id Quo Cognoscimus,” 132–135.

must explain why cognition is of this object rather than another. Still, likeness alone does not settle whether *species intelligibilis* is merely an intrinsic state, a distinct actualizer, or an “object model.” The result is a produced similitude whose causal efficacy is clear, even though its precise psychological status remains contested.⁸⁶ This is Pasnau’s “act-object” doctrine, in virtue of which he is termed, by himself and others, a “representational realist.”⁸⁷

2.5.1 *Species intelligibilis* as Indispensable Device: Transparent Monocle or Wax Tablet

Just as these interpreters agree that *species intelligibilis* is, first, an abstracted likeness and that, precisely as a likeness it is indispensable for cognition, they also agree that it must be an indispensable, entative—even if immaterial and transparent—presence.

Broadly speaking, and with the recognition that there is some overlap among positions, these differing emphases may be gathered under two general depictions.⁸⁸ On one model, the *species intelligibilis* is understood as a transparent but necessary tool, perhaps like a transparent ‘monocle’ that must be present in order to apprehend the extra-mental content. As an entative presence it is required for cognition, but it is not itself what cognition attends to. Adriaenssen and Pasnau would fall into this category.

On the other model, the *species intelligibilis* is understood more like an (albeit immaterial and transparent) ‘wax tablet;’ that is, as a quasi-material or token-like item that represents,

⁸⁶ Pasnau, “Id Quo Cognoscimus,” 131, 134–135, 145–148.

⁸⁷ Pasnau, “Id Quo Cognoscimus,” 131; see Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 303–05 for discussion of early *species* texts and justification that species might be at least recognized or acknowledged as indispensable for cognition.

⁸⁸ These descriptions are the interpretations of the author of this project, and are not described in these terms by the authors studied.

conveys, and “stores” semantic content “in” parts of cognition. Panaccio would fall into this category.

2.6 ‘Representationalists’ on How *Species intelligibilis* -as-Produced-Likeness Causes / Secures Unobstructed Access to Extra-Mental Being

All three interpreters grant *species intelligibilis* a genuine causal role in cognition. The disagreement concerns the kind of causality it exercises and how that causality preserves cognition’s orientation toward the world rather than toward the mind’s own states.

Panaccio treats *species intelligibilis* as an indispensable internal condition of cognition and insists that representationalism “must prevail in the last analysis,” because Aquinas assigns a “crucial and indispensable role to some sort of mental representation” to “intermediate mental entities.”⁸⁹ As Panaccio insists, on this account access to extra-mental being is preserved because the representation is a likeness of the thing’s quiddity and because its semantic content is what makes determinate thought possible in the first place. As a kind of “wax tablet,” *species intelligibilis* is also preserved—and needed for future use, insofar as *species intelligibilis* are “needed in addition as preconditions for intellectual acts to occur.”⁹⁰

Adriaenssen presents *species intelligibilis* as securing true access to extra-mental being in a different way, emphasizing that the same form exists in two modes and that the “*species* of the thing” is “the same as the thing itself” insofar as it is the thing’s form under a cognitive mode. This is why, for Adriaenssen, turning toward *species* in cognition is “the same” as turning toward

⁸⁹ Panaccio, “Intellectual Representation,” 185–86; Panaccio references *ScG* I, c. 47; I, c. 77; *ST* I, q. 16, a. 1; I, q. 14, a. 1; *QDDA* II, 12; *DEE* II.

⁹⁰ Panaccio, “Mental Representation,” 349. Panaccio refers generally to Aquinas, *ST* I, questions 84–85.

the *species* of the extra-mental thing. For Adriaenssen, then, the causality of *species intelligibilis* therefore lies in making the thing formally present in intellect under another manner of being. Unobstructed access is preserved because the internal likeness is not a rival terminus of knowledge.⁹¹

Pasnau preserves the causal indispensability while pressing hardest on whether cognition must involve an *a priori* apprehension of an internal likeness. As mentioned above, Pasnau begins from the same official commitment to the extra-mental thing as what is cognized “first” and “immediately,” while assigning *species intelligibilis* a robust causal role and a strong likeness-character. For Pasnau, *species intelligibilis* are the intermediate mechanism that makes cognition possible, and he insists that Aquinas also says that the thing of which the intelligible *species* is a likeness is what is understood first.⁹²

Pasnau’s distinctive move is to hold both claims together while acknowledging the tension between them. *Species intelligibilis* is more causally immediate to the knower than the external object, and in that sense it functions “psychologically” (that is, as some sort of psychic or cognitional tool) as well as causally. At the same time, because it is a likeness of the thing, its internal presence does not sever cognition from the world but rather determines cognition toward that world. This is why Pasnau can describe Aquinas as “semi-sophisticated;” the *species*

⁹¹ Adriaenssen, *Representation and Scepticism*, 22–27. see 22 n. 36 (*DVer* q. 2, a. 3, ad 9), 23 n. 40 (*Sent* I, d. 27, q. 2, a. 3), and 24 n. 41 (*Sent* II, d. 4, q. 1, a. 1, ad 4).

⁹² Pasnau, “Aquinas and Direct Realism,” 198–200, 213–219.

intelligibilis is necessary, noticed, and used, but it is not a substitute for the extra-mental being to which cognition attends.

The “Representationalists” therefore agree that *species intelligibilis* causes cognition as an inner likeness without making the mind’s own state the terminus of knowledge. They also agree that extra-mental being remains what cognition is about. Their disagreement concerns the mode of causality by which this is secured.

2.6.1 Blurred Distinctions

Before proceeding further, this project highlights, with Cory’s help, a note of caution. If the descriptions above seem to blur the distinction between what the ‘Direct Realists’ and ‘Representationalists’ hold, that is because the positions themselves, and not merely the descriptions of them, are blurred. As Cory writes,

The scholarly battles that have raged on this topic have thoroughly laid waste to the textual territory. As the dust has settled, readers of Aquinas have been left with three interpretations, conventionally labeled ‘representationalism’, ‘direct realism’, and ‘representational realism.’ A newcomer to the discussion might get the impression from the literature that these interpretive options are ‘cleaner’ than they actually are. In reality, under the appearance of shared vocabulary, the theoretical boundaries are so blurred that it is nearly impossible to articulate precisely what a theory must do in order to earn a given label.⁹³

If the ‘Direct Realists’ want to interpret Aquinas as saying that *species intelligibilis-as-produced-similitude* effects cognition because, as likeness, it represents to cognition the same content that exists in extra-mental being, how is this different from what Panaccio says about

⁹³ Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 266.

species intelligibilis as “any symbolic token existing in some individual mind and endowed within this mind with a semantic content”?⁹⁴

Cory expresses the question this way,

The defender of Aquinas’s direct realism could respond that direct realism merely requires that I encounter what ferns have, even if I do not encounter it as it is in living ferns. But that response eviscerates the case for preferring direct realism over representationalism: If the species is an instance of fern-nature, and direct realism merely requires that we grasp fern-nature in some occurrence, then a representationalist account in which the species is itself ‘what is cognized’ will turn out to satisfy the requirements for direct realism. There would be no point distinguishing ‘that which’ and ‘that by which’ we know.⁹⁵

Before proceeding into the next Chapter, in which Cory re-grounds the entire conversation, it may be helpful to conclude this Chapter with an attempt to offer at least one response to the questions Cory raises.

2.6.2 How Each Side “Earns its Label.” Concluding Observations

Direct realism earns its name, purportedly, when *species intelligibilis* remains an unacknowledged but indispensable, “produced” internal likeness that is formally the same as the extra-mental being.

As discussed above, for all of the interpreters who self-identify as proponents in the ‘Debate,’ the *species intelligibilis* is produced by the agent intellect by means of phantasm, wherein the agent intellect communicates the content of the likeness to the possible intellect, thereby setting in motion further cognitional processions toward the *quiddity* of the extra-mental

⁹⁴ Panaccio, “Intellectual Representation,” 185.

⁹⁵ Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 270.

being. For the ‘Direct Realists,’ *species-intelligibilis-as-produced-likeness* is *action-oriented* rather than *picture-oriented*; this aspect of double-existence affords “a kind of psychological wormhole or portal to reality”⁹⁶ that allows the mind or cognition to exercise its innate activities toward the aim of truth and veridicality through “sharing of forms,” “formal sameness,” or “double existence.” In this framework, *species intelligibilis* is the intrinsic principle “by virtue of which” the act occurs, while the extra-mental quiddity remains the primary object.

Representationalism earns its label only when the same basic sequence requires *species intelligibilis-as-produced-likeness* to have an ineluctable and requisite *presence* before any act can occur. Even if this presence is invisible and immaterial, *species intelligibilis* must be some sort of “symbolic token [] endowed with semantic content,” and a likeness through which the thing is represented in the cognizer.⁹⁷

2.7 Concluding Observations: The ‘Debate’

This Chapter reveals a ‘Debate’ that is less delineated than its ‘sides’ might wish. Both share the same broad Thomistic sequence, affirm the indispensability of *species intelligibilis*, and reject the caricature of “little inner pictures.” The real disagreement concerns whether *species intelligibilis*, as a formal principle of operation, satisfies Aquinas’s descriptions, or whether *species intelligibilis-as-produced-likeness* must also be granted the status of a retained entative presence with a representational role.

⁹⁶ See Pini, “Two Models of Thinking,” 85–86; Panaccio, “Intellectual Representation,” 188–89; Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 276.

⁹⁷ Panaccio, “Intellectual Representation,” 185, 187–189.

Ch 3: From the ‘Debate’ to Therese Scarpelli Cory’s ‘Metaphysical Model of Mind’

As Chapters 1 and 2 have described, for Aquinas, human intellection is ordered toward the truth of extra-mental being, not toward the mind’s own ideations, constructs, likenesses, or operations.

Yet Aquinas also insists that the possible intellect must be actualized by *species intelligibilis*, and this is both the form by which the intellect understands and the likeness of the thing understood. The question, then, was how extra-mental being comes to be known reliably “in” the essentially unified human soul without cognition terminating in an inner product, shadow, or proxy of its own activity.

Chapter 2 showed how this question becomes categorized in the contemporary literature as the “‘Direct Realist’” vs. “‘Representationalist’” Debate. Both ‘sides’ seek to preserve Aquinas’s realism and both grant that human cognition begins in sensation, depends upon phantasm, requires the work of agent intellect, and culminates in the actualization of possible intellect by *species intelligibilis*. Both also resist the crude caricature of little inner pictures.

Yet both sides, in different ways, retain what Chapter 2 describes as the shared assumptions of the “Standard Model,” namely, that *species intelligibilis* is a produced inner likeness that is then impressed, deposited, retained, instrumentalized, or otherwise made available within the possible intellect for later acts of cognition. As demonstrated, some interpretations of *species intelligibilis* have given rise to unresolved problematics, and in response to these challenges, Chapter 3 turns to the work of Therese Scarpelli Cory, precisely because of Cory’s re-framing of the question.

In her work “Aquinas’s Intelligible Species as Formal Constituents,” Cory states the contrast in terms that give this chapter its governing claim:

I argue, in contrast, that for Aquinas, *species* perform their cognitive work entirely in virtue of their being forms, i.e., forms that constitute in us certain kinds of real being that are distinctively mental. I will call this account the ‘Formal Constituent View.’ On the Formal Constituent View, a cognitive power is a potential for mental being. It has to be formed — acquiring a certain kind of actuality, being, structure — in order to perform its proper operation and enter into certain relations. *Species* are precisely the needed forms.⁹⁸

This chapter argues, following Cory, that *species intelligibilis* is formal principle rather than a “Psychological Device,” inner object, produced “third thing,” or deposited item further instrumentalized by cognition. It also argues that *species intelligibilis* is indeed likeness, but that it does not function as principle in virtue of being likeness. *Species* functions as principle because it is form; likeness belongs to the ordinary metaphysical order of form, causality, and actuality.

This distinction also prepares the later chapters of this project. If *species intelligibilis* is the formal principle by which possible intellect is actualized, then the act of intellection as a whole must be described by distinguishing principle from product, likeness from *likeness-as-operative-principle*, and principle from *obiectum*.

In the contemporary Debate, the worry that *species* become “objects” often means that they become inner items, proxies, pictures, or things first known by cognition. In the later constructive sections of this project, however, *obiectum* will name that toward which an act or operation is ordered, and by which it is specified.

⁹⁸ Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 262.

Chapter 3 therefore establishes the prior point required for that argument; namely, that *species intelligibilis* is neither the inner thing-known nor the *obiectum* of the act of intellection; it is, rather, the formal principle through which the possible intellect is brought into act.

The chapter proceeds in six movements. It begins with Cory's "Metaphysical Model of Mind," since her account of *species* cannot be understood apart from her broader methodological critique of spatio-connective models. It then turns to her account of *species intelligibilis* as a principle of operation. Third, the chapter considers Cory's critique of the "Psychological Device View." Fourth, it draws on J. O'Callaghan's critique of the "Third Thing Thesis" to clarify why *species* must not be treated as a produced inner object or as an efficient cause of cognition. Fifth, it develops Cory's interpretation of likeness as belonging to the eduction and constitution of intelligible being, rather than as the instrument by which cognition performs its act. Finally, the chapter briefly touches on Cory's idiosyncratic but illuminating presentation of "noetic being" as the actuality in which intellect-in-act and intelligible-in-act are one.

3.1 Cory's "Metaphysical Model of Mind"

In her book *Aquinas's Metaphysical Mind: Knowing as Being*,⁹⁹ Cory employs an approach which she terms "Aquinas's metaphysical model of mind" and discusses the multiplicity of distinct but interacting acts and operations that constitute human intellectual life as a whole.

Cory's "metaphysical model of mind" begins from the claim that philosophical reflection is always guided by models, whether acknowledged or not. Such models shape "what counts as a

⁹⁹ Therese Scarpelli Cory, *Aquinas's Metaphysical Mind: Knowing as Being* (Draft mss). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (forthcoming). Draft manuscript supplied by author.

satisfying explanation,” set the problems to be solved, and determine which features of a phenomenon come to the fore.¹⁰⁰

As Chapter 5 develops below, this “metaphysical approach” is not wholly unprecedented and has also been employed, in distinct ways, by current interpreters such as G. Frost, Kosteletzky, and early twentieth century interpreters such as Miller and Lonergan.

As Cory insists,

Models, then, are not theoretically idle. They implicitly set up theoretical and practical problems to be solved [and] constrain what counts as a satisfying explanation in that domain... Yet we philosophers often fail to reflect on the models that may be in play, leaving them to do their theory-shaping work from the background.¹⁰¹

This matters because, while Aquinas does describe human cognition as beginning in sensation, depending upon phantasm, requiring agent intellect, and involving the actualization of possible intellect, the intellectual problem arises when that sequence is imagined through what Cory calls “spatio-connective models.”¹⁰²

In that framework, mind and world are imagined as separated items that must be linked. Cognition is described through spatial images of “reaching, grasping, accessing,” or “presenting, displaying, appearing,” and the mind becomes an “inner space or container, populated by ideas, impressions, contents.” Spatio-connective models therefore give rise to theories of cognition as

¹⁰⁰ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 7-8.

¹⁰¹ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 8.

¹⁰² Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 8-9.

connection. In accord with the underlying model, cognition becomes a matter of how a mind grasps a world standing at a distance from it.¹⁰³

These do seem to be the terms and categories in which the proponents of the ‘Debate’ operate. ‘Direct Realists’ worry that *species* will become a veil, an inner thing-known that obstructs the intellect’s access to extra-mental being. ‘Representationalists’ worry that *species intelligibilis*, precisely as likeness, must be an internal condition of cognition. Both concerns are intelligible. Yet both become distorted when the *species* is imagined as a produced item standing between an inner subject and an outer world.

In contrast, Cory’s “Metaphysical Model” of mind, hereafter “the metaphysical approach,” employs terms and categories that treat cognition not as a psychological mechanism but as belonging to the same metaphysical order that explains existence in terms of natures, modes of being, and operation. As Cory remarks:

Importantly, such theories prioritize a metaphysical analysis of mental realities. The story of knowing, perceiving, desiring, imagining, is to be told using the same metaphysical analysis that accounts for hot water cooking an egg, or ice chilling a cooler full of beer, or plants unfolding their leaves toward the sun—it is a story of being and doing. The mental and the non-mental are integrated into a single realm of being, with a single unified metaphysical structure.¹⁰⁴

Thus, the metaphysical model distinguishes itself from spatial, mechanical, conceptualist, and psychological approaches by beginning with *being* and *doing* rather than inner contents,

¹⁰³ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 8-9.

¹⁰⁴ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 9.

bridge-problems, or mental machinery. Its aim is “a unified metaphysical vision” that applies “the same metaphysical tools that can be applied to anything else.”¹⁰⁵

For that reason, Cory resists treating “the mental as a realm apart,” analyzable through a separate vocabulary of “concepts, faculties, ideas, contents, aboutness, attitudes, mental states, intentionality, qualia,” or as a “faculty theory” in which “a complicated psychological machinery” produces experience. Her aim is instead “a unified metaphysical vision encompassing the mental and non-mental in a single explanatory scheme,” one that preserves “the reality of the mental” while using “the same metaphysical tools that can be applied to anything else.”¹⁰⁶

If knowing, understanding, and cognizing name forms of *being* and *doing*, they must be analyzed metaphysically rather than spatially. The metaphysical approach therefore asks what is being actualized, by what principle, through what operation, and toward what end.

Thus, a change in model changes the questions asked of Aquinas. If cognition is imagined as connection, then *species* will be asked to solve a bridge problem and will naturally be imagined as a connector. If, on the other hand, the act of intellection is interpreted as a kind of *being* and *doing*, then *species* must be approached through the metaphysical grammar of potency, form, act, actuality, operation, object, and end.

¹⁰⁵ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 39.

¹⁰⁶ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 35-39.

3.2 Cory's Recasting of Species *Intelligibilis*

As Cory argues emphatically in her article “Aquinas’s Intelligible Species as Formal Constituents,”¹⁰⁷ *species intelligibilis* functions as a principle of action and belongs to the order in which it constitutes actuality and grounds operation.¹⁰⁸ Cory argues extensively that Aquinas’s account of intellection becomes clearer when one intentionally and specifically understands *species intelligibilis* as formal principle of action. As she ponders,

What would happen if [...] we took seriously the species’ metaphysical role as the intellect’s form, and considered how much of Aquinas’s theory of knowing could be accounted for in terms of the species’ behaving in precisely the manner of any ‘ordinary’ form?¹⁰⁹

Cory aims to restore *species intelligibilis* to the metaphysical role of form. More precisely, as constituting an actuality and as grounding the operation that follows from that actuality.¹¹⁰ In this view, *species intelligibilis* is the form through which the possible intellect is constituted in the relevant actuality and, as such, the principle from which intellectual operation proceeds.

Cory recalls that form has a twofold role in Aquinas’s metaphysics. First, it formally constitutes a thing’s actual being, or first actuality. Second, because being is ordered to action, form is responsible for the powers and operations whereby a thing acts.

As Cory asserts,

¹⁰⁷ Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 261–309.

¹⁰⁸ Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 261–65, 278–79, 286–89. Cory references *ST I*, q. 85, a. 2, ad 1; *ST I*, q. 85, a. 2; *ST I*, q. 55, a. 1; *QDSC*, q. 9, a. 6; *DVer*, q. 8, a. 6.

¹⁰⁹ Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 279. For the Aquinas loci underlying the ensuing account of form and actuality, see 281, 286–87: *ScG II*, c. 98; *ST I*, q. 55, a. 1; *QDSC*, q. 9, a. 6.

¹¹⁰ Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 279–281.

In order to understand the philosophical weight of Aquinas's claim that the species is the "form of intellect," we need to be clear on what form does, generally, for his metaphysics. Briefly, the role of form is twofold: (1) It formally constitutes a thing's actual being (first actuality). This individual moss's substantial form is responsible for its actually being a moss; its accidental forms are responsible for its actually being this shade of green, actually being unusually thriving, etc. And as the example shows, creatures never just have "being, period." Their being is always determined to some kind—mossy, green, extended, etc. (2) Because being is ordered to action, form is also responsible for the powers whereby a thing acts (second actuality). "Every agent acts insofar as it has some form."¹¹¹

Further, Cory points out that form is already a "principle of action" in Aquinas's broader metaphysics. An x-form makes a subject be an x-type being, and because a thing acts insofar as it is in act, forms also account for the kinds of actions a thing can perform.

As Cory reads it, this is the main significance of Aquinas's "*id quo*" language. "That by which we know" identifies the form through which the act of knowing proceeds, just as other acts proceed through the form that actualizes their agent. The language directs attention to an intrinsic principle of operation; that is, "that by which we know" in precisely the same sense that a knife cuts by its sharpness.¹¹² As Cory asserts,

When Aquinas says that the *species intelligibilis* is "that by which we know" he is making a perfectly straightforward metaphysical claim: The *species intelligibilis* is a form that makes the human knower be 'in act' in a certain way, constituting in her a new being or actuality in virtue of which she performs the operation of understanding.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 206-207.

¹¹² Cory, "IS as Formal Constituents," 280, 286–87. Cory references *ScG* II, c. 41; *ScG* III, c. 85; *DVer*, q. 8, a. 6; *ScG* I, c. 46; *QDSC*, q. 9, a. 6; *ST* I, q. 55, a. 1; *ST* I, q. 85, a. 2.

¹¹³ Cory, "IS as Formal Constituents," 286–287. Cory references *DVer*, q. 8, a. 6; *ScG* I, c. 46; *QDSC*, q. 9, a. 6; *ST* I, q. 55, a. 1; *ST* I, q. 85, a. 2.

This is the point at which Cory’s metaphysical approach most directly reorders the ‘Debate.’ The “*id quo*” is the formal principle through which the intellect is brought from potency to act and not a thing looked at, nor a content inspected, nor a tool used by an already actual inner observer.

For Cory, then, *species intelligibilis* is the form by which the intellect is made actual in intelligible being and from which the act of understanding proceeds. The next section draws the polemical consequence of this claim. If *species* does its cognitive work precisely as form, then Cory cannot accept the common assumption that *form* and likeness name two separate roles, one metaphysical and one psychological.

3.3 The ‘Psychological Device View’ and the ‘Formal Constituent View’

As discussed in Chapter 2, both Direct Realist and Representationalist readings treat *species intelligibilis*, once “produced” by the agent intellect, as a novel, *sui generis* cognitional device, entative presence, or tool.

Cory calls this the “Psychological Device View” and describes it as a “fundamental misconstrual.”¹¹⁴ As Cory asserts,

These surprising convergences point to a fundamental substructure shared by all warring factions, which I would like to call the ‘Psychological Device View’ of *species*. On the Psychological Device View, the *species* is *id quo cognoscitur* — something whereby we know — in the sense of being an instrument for causing cognition. This instrument stands ‘between’ an inner viewer and the otherwise inaccessible extra-mental world, making the extra-mental world accessible to the mind. The fundamental question posed by the

¹¹⁴ Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 261.

Psychological Device View is thus how this special entity provides access to extra-mental objects.¹¹⁵

Cory's alternative is the "Formal Constituent View," according to which *species intelligibiles* "perform their cognitive work entirely in virtue of their being form," that is, as forms that "constitute in us certain kinds of real being that are distinctively mental."¹¹⁶ As Cory asserts, the role of *species* in cognition is wholly reducible to its being the formal constituent for mental kinds of being."¹¹⁷

Cory asserts that *species intelligibilis* performs, in the act of intellection, in precisely the way *species* performs in every act; namely, it constitutes actuality, grounds operation, and thereby explains the relation of intellect to what it knows.¹¹⁸

For example, as Cory claims, in the "Formal Constituent View," with respect to the example of "fern-knowing," *species intelligibilis*

accounts for the kind of being we acquire (intellectual-intelligible), the determinacy of that being (fernish), the kind of operation we perform (knowing), and the determinacy of that operation (fernish). What I acquire from the *species* [...] like water acquiring heat, is a new instance of fernish being, from which immediately proceeds an act of fernish understanding, as a final, completing perfection of the human knower. The *species* requirement is thus just an application of the general metaphysical requirement that a subject must be in a certain way (fernishly intellectual-intelligible) in order to act in a certain way (fernishly knowing).¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Cory, "IS as Formal Constituents," 277.

¹¹⁶ Cory, "IS as Formal Constituents," 262-263.

¹¹⁷ Cory, "IS as Formal Constituents," 262-263.

¹¹⁸ Cory, "IS as Formal Constituents," 261-263; 281-282. Cory references *ST* I, q. 85, a. 2, ad 1; *ScG* II, c. 98; *ScG* IV, c. 19; *Sent* IV, d. 49, q. 2, a. 1.

¹¹⁹ Cory, "IS as Formal Constituents," 291.

Further, Cory rejects what this project terms the “two hats” doctrine that appears frequently in the interpretations of the ‘Debate.’ In this view, *species intelligibilis* is interpreted as *both produced-likeness-as-tool*, or *produced-likeness-as-representation*, and then it is a principle. Thus it wears the first hat as being an entative “third thing”—a “Psychological Device” and then it is a principle. Cory’s stated refutation, as she makes clear in her “Formal Constituent View,” is to describe one—and only one—role of *species intelligibilis* in cognition; that is, as metaphysical principle. As Cory remarks,

But in reality, the Psychological Device and Formal Constituent Views are not descriptions of two roles of the *species*, such that one can then ask whether those roles are compatible or not. Rather, they are two accounts of a single role for the *species* — namely, its role in cognition. And they explain that role in opposing ways. For the Psychological Device View, the *species* fulfills its cognitive task in virtue of some feature it has over and above being a form in the ordinary sense, i.e., insofar as it is a ‘representation’, ‘concept’, ‘formal sign’, ‘x in intentional being’, ‘intentional state’, ‘content-bearer’, or whatever other label scholars have used to differentiate vehicles of cognition from ordinary forms. Thus the scholarly commonplace that ‘form’ and ‘likeness’ describe two roles for species — its metaphysical role as mental accident vs. its psychological role as cognitive instrument — whether or not these roles are construed as compatible, itself already expresses the Psychological Device View.

The Formal Constituent View, in contrast, asserts that the *species* fulfills its cognitive task precisely in being a form in the ordinary sense, by doing no more and no less than any ordinary form does. To call it a likeness is not to assign it any distinctively cognitive ‘work’ over and above that of any ordinary form. Grounding metaphysical relations of likeness is simply one of the ordinary tasks of ordinary forms.¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 264. Note, the “two hats” formulation is the interpretation of this project. Cory herself does not use this formulation, simply calling “two roles” for the same entity.

That is why Cory treats the “Psychological Device View” as the governing “misconstrual” in the “Direct Realist” vs. “Representationalist” ‘Debate.’ Cory’s concern is that both sides often construe *species intelligibilis* as a *sui generis* item charged with representation, content-bearing, intentionality, or some other internal function beyond ordinary metaphysics.

Because *species intelligibilis* belongs to the constitution of actuality itself, Cory resists every heuristic in which the intellect “contains,” “looks at,” or “looks through” *species intelligibilis*, claiming

On the Formal Constituent View of *species*, then, the story of knowing is the story of the constitution of mental being. The plot unfolds without needing to have recourse to any sort of psychological device like a “mental representation” or “concept” or “inner presentation.” The *species* is not “contained in” the intellect, or “looked at,” or “looked through,” or “contacted” in any way.¹²¹

Thus, whether Panaccio and Stump describe *species intelligibilis* as “deposited within the possible intellect” and retained as “available knowledge,” or Dewan warns against the “mirror-situation,” such idioms can still leave intact the picture of an already actual observer set over against an already produced inner object.

In Cory’s alternative “Formal Constituent View,” because the act must be described both from the side of the principle received and the actuality constituted, *species intelligibilis* cannot be collapsed into the picture of a prior produced item, as the discussions against the *sui generis* “third thing” make explicit.

¹²¹ Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 291.

3.4 The “Third Thing Thesis”

In his work *Thomist Realism and the Linguistic Turn: Toward a More Perfect Form of Existence*,¹²² O’Callaghan describes and argues against the notion that the agent intellect produces something over and above itself, a novel, *sui generis* “Third Thing” between intellect and *res extra animam*, claiming “The intelligible in act is not a mental entity distinct from the act of intellect, but is rather the act of intellect itself informed by the *species intelligibilis*.”¹²³

As Cory acknowledges, O’Callaghan’s treatment of the “Third Thing Thesis” strengthens Cory’s overall objection by showing that the “third thing” worry depends upon a mistaken reading of the grammar of intellect, form, and act.¹²⁴ Working in a similar vein to Cory, O’Callaghan treats notions such as “in the soul” and “extra-mental being” as non-spatial. Drawing on Aquinas’s doctrine of the two modes of existence of a nature, O’Callaghan argues that the contrast is between modes of being. Thus “*species*” can ground a O’Callaghan in the soul and be a principle of knowing *in anima* without becoming an inner object.¹²⁵

O’Callaghan’s corrective is to insist that Aristotle and Aquinas use “in” in more than one sense. The relevant sense is not spatial enclosure, as though *species* were contained in the soul like an object in a room. Rather, it is the formal-subject sense. As O’Callaghan writes:

As used by St. Thomas, when *in anima* and *extra animam* are said of the concept and the *res* of which it is a natural similitude, respectively, they are to be understood not in the

¹²² John P. O’Callaghan, *Thomist Realism and the Linguistic Turn: Toward a More Perfect Form of Existence* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003).

¹²³ O’Callaghan, *Thomist Realism*, 170–171. O’Callaghan references *ST I*, q. 14, a. 2, c.; *CT I*, c. 83.

¹²⁴ Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 262 n. 5; O’Callaghan, *Thomist Realism*, 165–167, 173–175.

¹²⁵ O’Callaghan, *Thomist Realism*, 165–166. O’Callaghan references *DEE*.

spatial senses but in the formal-subject sense—“in it just as a form, as it were, in matter.”
The *species* “in” the intellect is the formal principle of intellectual operation.¹²⁶

This confirms a point already implied by the discussion in Chapter 1 about the reception of form according to the mode of the receiver. To say that form is “in” the intellect is not to locate an object in an inner space, it is, rather, to describe a mode of being. As O’Callaghan explains, when Aquinas distinguishes the two modes of being of a nature, in the soul and in singular things, “the use of ‘in’ is clearly an existential sense.” Natures exist through singular things or through the intellect. For example, to say that human nature is in Abelard’s intellect is not to locate it inside an inner container. It is to say that the nature exists according to the mode of intelligible being. The dividing line between *in anima* and *in singularibus* “distinguishes modes of existence, not modes of location.”¹²⁷

Further, O’Callaghan differentiates the two operations of intellect (discussed at length in Chapter 5 of this project) to claim that “forming” in the intellect is not the production of a new inner object—in that a definition is not something over and above defining—nor is a composition something over and above composing. Aquinas’s early claim that intellect and the likeness of the thing become one complete actuality in the intellect understanding in act supports this position consistently throughout his works.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ O’Callaghan, *Thomist Realism*, 165.

¹²⁷ O’Callaghan, *Thomist Realism*, 165.

¹²⁸ O’Callaghan, *Thomist Realism*, 166–174. O’Callaghan references *Sent* II, d. 3, q. 3, a. 1, c.; *Sent* I, d. 35, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3.

This is also why O’Callaghan reads the claim that “intellect in act is the understood in act” as excluding mental proxy theory. The thing is actually understood when its *species* informs the possible intellect, so that the act is formally determined by the thing known.¹²⁹ Thus for O’Callaghan the act is formally one with the thing understood in the act of intellection, while remaining distinct in mode of being.

O’Callaghan then turns to the question whether concepts, definitions, or *species* should be construed as “third things.” O’Callaghan cites John Haldane’s warning that there is a “common tendency to assume that the existence of a process implies the existence of a product distinct from it,” and especially to suppose that forming a thought or making a representation implies “the manufacture of a third thing to which consciousness is then directed.”¹³⁰

O’Callaghan’s affirmation is to deny that Aquinas’s language of forming definitions, divisions, and compositions requires such a product. The danger, for O’Callaghan, is that the nominalization of an act can make us look for a thing corresponding to it. For example, when we speak of a “grasp,” we can be tempted to imagine something distinct from the hand’s grasping and the thing grasped. But this is misleading. As O’Callaghan writes:

If I grasp the pen in my hand, then I can certainly say that my grasp is of a pen, and not of a ball. In the antecedent of this conditional, “grasp” functions as a verb, while in the consequent “grasp” functions as a noun. Do I need, then, to posit a third thing between the pen and my grasping hand—the grasp itself—a third thing named by the use of “grasp” as a noun? There is no third thing that exists between hand and pen—or in the non-spatial mode of making the point, there is no third thing that is other than the pen and my

¹²⁹ O’Callaghan, *Thomist Realism*, 170-171. O’Callaghan references *InDA III*, lect. 8, n. 700.

¹³⁰ O’Callaghan, *Thomist Realism*, 166.

grasping hand. Similarly, there is no third thing other than the conceiving intellect and the *res extra animam*.¹³¹

This passage is especially useful because it clarifies the grammar of the “third thing” worry. If we say that the intellect “forms” a definition, we need not imagine that the intellect has manufactured a thing distinct from its defining. If we say that the intellect conceives, we need not imagine a concept as an item interposed between intellect and world. The act can be analyzed reflectively, but such analysis does not require a new internal object.

O’Callaghan applies this directly to Aquinas’s claim that “the intelligible in act is the intellect in act.”¹³² This phrase might seem to suggest that the actually understood thing is a mental thing distinct from the act of intellect. It can appear that the *res extra animam* is known only by being converted into a *res in anima* formally identical with it. But O’Callaghan denies that interpretation:

The “intelligible in act” is not a mental entity distinct from the act of intellect, but is rather the act of intellect itself informed by the *intelligible species*. Thus, a *res extra animam* is rendered actually intelligible insofar as its form actually informs the act of intellect; it is not that a mental entity has been fashioned by the act of intellect, a mental entity with which the *res extra animam* is formally identical.¹³³

Here O’Callaghan’s account dovetails with Cory’s, as he explains that “the act is formally the *res extra animam* that it actually understands.”

¹³¹ O’Callaghan, *Thomist Realism*, 169-170.

¹³² Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 14, a. 2, c.

¹³³ O’Callaghan, *Thomist Realism*, 171-172. O’Callaghan references *ST I*, q. 14, a. 2, c.; *CT I*, c. 83.

O'Callaghan reinforces the same point through the relation of act and potency. When one recognizes that a concept is related to intellect as act to potency, it makes little sense to treat intellect and concept as two independent things requiring a further bond. O'Callaghan quotes Aquinas's early claim that from the intellect and the likeness of the thing "is made one complete thing, which is the intellect understanding in act," and that from the union of *species* and intellect "one perfect thing is brought about, which is the intellect in act." O'Callaghan's conclusion is direct: "the intelligible in act is the same thing as the intellect actually understanding, not a *res in anima* distinct from it. The concept is the intellect's act."¹³⁴

Thus, with respect to the 'Debate,' O'Callaghan therefore denies—against Pasnau—that when Aquinas says the *species* "makes" the knower actually cognize or is a *principium cognitionis*, Aquinas is assigning it efficient causality.

As O'Callaghan argues, in *De Veritate* Aquinas asserts that the same form is considered according to the being it has in the knower and according to its relation to the thing of which it is the likeness. In the first respect, it actualizes cognition; in the second, it specifies cognition to a determinate object. This is why O'Callaghan returns to the notion of form as principle. Unlike efficient cause, form is intrinsic and the *species*, precisely as form, is not the efficient producer of an inner object but the intrinsic principle by which the act is what it is.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ O'Callaghan, *Thomist Realism*, 173. O'Callaghan references *InMeta* VIII, lect. 5, n. 1767; *Sent* II, d. 3, q. 3, a. 1, c.; *Sent* I, d. 35, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3; *InMeta* IX, lect. 8, n. 1865.

¹³⁵ O'Callaghan, *Thomist Realism*, 179-180. O'Callaghan quotes Aquinas, *DVer*, q. 10, a. 4, c., references *InMeta* V, lect. 1, nn. 756-762, and invokes *De prin. nat.*

In O’Callaghan’s reading, Aquinas’s use of *facit* works the same way; that is, the *species* “makes” the knower actually cognize as form “makes a thing to be,” and “makes a being actual and a this something.” The result is a single form with a double relation: as present in the knower, it actualizes intellect; as likeness of the thing, it determines the act to that thing. There is therefore no third inner object, only intellect informed by *species* and thus in act of the thing itself.¹³⁶

Cory’s and O’Callaghan’s denial of the “Third Thing Thesis” reframes the ‘Debate.’ Cory’s critique of the Psychological Device View shows why *species intelligibilis* should not be treated as a special cognitive instrument, while O’Callaghan shows why the metaphysical grammar itself does not require such an instrument. For Cory and O’Callaghan, then, The “third thing” problem therefore falls away once the metaphysical structure is kept clear. There is the extra-mental nature existing outside the soul; there is the possible intellect, in potency to intelligible being, and there is the *species intelligibilis* as *form*, by which the possible intellect is actualized. From there is the operation of understanding that proceeds from the constituted actuality. None of these requires a separately produced inner object that cognition must first grasp in order to reach the thing. The *species* is intrinsic to the actualization of intellect.

¹³⁶ O’Callaghan, *Thomist Realism*, 179–82. O’Callaghan quotes Aquinas, *DVer*, q. 10, a. 4, c., and references *InMeta* V, lect. 1, nn. 756–762; *ScG* I, c. 26; *ScG* II, c. 58; *ScG* IV, c. 81; *ST* I, q. 77, a. 6, c.; *DPot*, q. 3, a. 9, ad 9; *QDSC*, q. 1, a. 1, ad 9; *ST* I, q. 75, a. 5, ad 3; *DPot*, q. 5, a. 1, c.; *Quodl* I, q. 6, ad 2. O’Callaghan also invokes *De prin. nat.*

3.5 *Species intelligibilis* as Principle and Likeness as the Eduction of Intelligible Being

For Cory, just as *species intelligibilis* names the formal principle of action, so intelligible being names the actuality constituted through that principle. To preserve the strength of Cory's argument, one must therefore distinguish clearly between *species intelligibilis* as formal principle and intelligible being as the actuality into which intellect is brought.

Cory states the distinction sharply when she writes that *species intelligibilis* is "neither an intelligible nor an intellect, properly speaking."¹³⁷ Whereas *species intelligibilis* is the form through which the human subject becomes actual in intelligible being, actual intelligibles belong to the genus of intelligibles, either as naturally subsisting realities or as noetic actualities accidentally constituted in us.

In Cory's view, Aquinas reads *In Metaphysicam XII* and the *Sentences* as indicating that actual intellect and actual intelligible are one because one noetic actuality is constituted in which knower and known are one in act. As Cory describes Aquinas's hylomorphic account, the possible intellect stands "as it were" as matter, the *species intelligibilis* "as it were" as form, and intellect actually understanding is "as it were" composed of both. What exists in the completed cognitional episode is not first a stored inner likeness and then a later act built from it, but one constituted noetic actuality in which intellect is brought into intelligible being. This is why Cory can say that *species intelligibilis* "formally constitutes in us" both "intelligible being" and "intellectual being."¹³⁸ Further, as Cory distinguishes,

¹³⁷ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 87.

¹³⁸ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 215–216. Cory references *Sent* I, d. 35, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3; *Sent* IV, d. 49, q. 2, a. 1; *ScG* II, c. 59; *DVer*, q. 8, a. 6; *InMeta* XII, lect. 8, n. 4.

By this point, it should be no surprise that what [Aquinas] names [*species intelligibilis*] is nothing other than the form whereby the soul [is] actualized in noetic being. I say “nothing other than” quite deliberately. Aquinas famously describes intelligible species as form and likeness: “The likeness of the known thing is the form of intellect.” With a connective model of the mental operating in the background, his readers have tended to focus on “likeness” as Aquinas’s way of assigning to the *species* a distinctively cognitive role as the connector linking our intellect to the outside world.¹³⁹

Cory then makes explicit the connection between this point and her “Formal Constituent View,” writing

Against this view, I have argued that Aquinas holds what I call the “Formal Constituent View” of species, on which Aquinas’s theory of species is from start to finish a theory of intellectual form. Even the label of “likeness” is meaningful exclusively within the framework of his general theory of form: All forms are likenesses, and likeness is a perfectly ordinary metaphysical relation, not a specially cognitive mode of mediating presence. Thus the intelligible *species* can fulfill its entire cognitive role simply in virtue of being a form—the formal constituent of noetic being in our souls.¹⁴⁰

Where *species intelligibilis*, as principle, accounts for formal causality, emergent intelligible or noetic being accounts for actuality. Once that distinction is lost, *species intelligibilis* is easily mistaken for a produced intermediary, and the whole account begins to drift toward the picture of a prior inner object waiting to be instrumentalized.

In Cory’s interpretation of Aquinas, the intellect receives *species intelligibilis* as the form through which it becomes actual in intelligible being. Because the act must be described both from the side of the principle received and from the side of the actuality constituted, *species*

¹³⁹ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 206.

¹⁴⁰ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 206.

intelligibilis cannot be collapsed into the picture of a prior produced item, as the discussions against *sui generis* “third things” make explicit. Rather, *species intelligibilis* belongs to the actualization in which intellect becomes intellect-in-act and intelligible-in-act as one unified activity.

Once the order of cognition has been re-centered, one can ask more precisely what *species intelligibilis* properly names in the cognitive process. Cory’s answer is that *species intelligibilis* names the formal principle in virtue of which the act occurs. The *likeness* that belongs to *species* is not a second psychological function added onto form; it is, rather, a formal and metaphysical relation grounded in the actuality constituted through the *species*.

As this project has described at length in the preceding chapters, the notion of likeness does a great deal of work in the ‘Debate,’ and the particular understanding of likeness that underlies the hermeneutic often defines the entire interpretation. Here it may be helpful to pause, and note the temptation to reify *species intelligibilis* precisely when the term itself is doing the most work, that is, when it is envisaged as a “thing” that, once “produced,” “does something.” Cory insists that Aquinas’s language of likeness belongs inside a theory of form and asserts that *species intelligibilis* relates the mind to things “by securing ordinary metaphysical relations of likeness,” and does so “in the manner of every caused form” rather than through a distinctively psychological mechanism. “To call it a likeness,” Cory writes, “is not to assign it any

distinctively cognitive ‘work’ over and above that of any ordinary form. Grounding metaphysical relations of likeness is simply one of the ordinary tasks of ordinary forms.”¹⁴¹

Cory treats likeness as following from this formal production. That is, the determinacy of *species intelligibilis* is intrinsic. Cory’s “fernishness” example clarifies the order. As Cory remarks, “the reason that fern-species is (internally) fernish is that ferns play some causal role in educating those forms in us.”¹⁴² The *species* is thus not an otherwise neutral item that becomes cognitive by being related to ferns; rather, its relation to ferns follows from its already being fernish: As Cory remarks,

But the fernishness of the *species* does not consist in a relation to ferns; rather, the relation results from its already being fernish. In sum, Aquinas’s metaphysical analysis of knowing is rigorously parallel to his metaphysical analysis of physical substances. Shaun inherits his sheepness from his sheep parents, and in virtue of being a sheep, he stands in certain relations to other sheep — but his being a sheep is not reducible to that origin or those relations.¹⁴³

Cory appeals here to Aquinas’s metaphysical doctrine that “an agent makes its patient like itself” and assigns it an intellectual correlate. Ferns and stones act on sense powers—in us—to “educate” sensible forms—in us. Cory quotes Aquinas’s key assertion, “The human soul receives from things the likenesses whereby it cognizes those things,” not because the agent “poured into

¹⁴¹ Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 264.

¹⁴² Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 293. Cory references *DVer* q. 10, a. 6, ad 7.

¹⁴³ Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 294.

the patient the numerically same species that it has in itself,” but because it “generates what is like itself, by educing it from potency to act.”¹⁴⁴

This point preserves continuity with Chapter 2’s discussion of Stump’s Standard Model but modifies its imagery. The agent intellect does not “deposit” a thing into a passive container. Rather, agent intellect and phantasm belong to the causal order by which intelligible form is educed in the soul and possible intellect is actualized. Cory quotes Aquinas, in *De veritate*, to illustrate the point,

In the reception by which the possible intellect receives the *species* of things from the phantasms, the phantasms stand as an instrumental or secondary agent, while the agent intellect stands as the principal and primary agent. And therefore the effect of the action is left in the possible intellect according to the condition of both, and not according to the condition of only one of them. And therefore the possible intellect receives forms as actually intelligible through the power of the agent intellect, but as likenesses of determinate things through the cognition of the phantasms.¹⁴⁵

Thus for Cory the likeness is real because the form is really caused, and the caused form has a degree of unity with its source. That is why she concludes that mental forms are “femish” or “stone,” and because of their degree of unity with extra-mental natures they “ground weak relations of likeness to those natures.”¹⁴⁶ As Cory says,

Since they have some degree of unity with extra-mental natures, they also ground weak relations of likeness to those natures. These likeness-relations occur in us whenever we are

¹⁴⁴ Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 295–298. Cory references *InMeta* V, lect. 17; *Sent* I, d. 19, q. 1, a. 1; *Sent* I, d. 48, q. 1, a. 1; *Sent* I, d. 19, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2; *ST* I–II, q. 27, a. 3; *ST* I, q. 4, a. 3; *Sent* IV, d. 17, q. 1, a. 4; *Sent* I, d. 8, q. 5, a. 2, ad 5; *ST* I, q. 6, a. 1; *DVer*, q. 28, a. 7; *ScG* III, c. 49; *QDSC*, q. 3; *ST* I, q. 13, a. 5; *Quodl* VIII, q. 2, a. 1..

¹⁴⁵ Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 293. Cory quotes Aquinas, *DVer* q. 10, a. 6, ad 7.

¹⁴⁶ Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 308; see also 295–300.

properly actualized [...]. But likeness-relations are not a specially cognitive kind of relation, and they do not affect the character of our experience.¹⁴⁷

In *Aquinas's Metaphysical Mind*, Cory widens that claim into a general doctrine of actuality. There Cory characterizes the relation secured in cognition as “formal likeness” and asserts that “this noetic being is precisely what secures our relationship of formal likeness to the known thing.”¹⁴⁸ Cory’s treatment of “noetic being” is discussed further below, but for the present purposes it suffices to note that likeness names the relation founded by noetic being itself, not a secondary label attached after the fact.

This is the major force of Cory’s approach. As Cory asserts, “any agent draws out form from matter, or actual being from being in potency,” and that in human cognition agent intellect and phantasm together “draw...out an intelligible form in the soul,”¹⁴⁹ She adds that noetic being is educed in the soul, and that the phantasm constrains that noetic being to be determinate.

Cory then clarifies what “drawn out” means by contrasting it with cruder pictures of insertion. Robin-form should not be imagined as “inserted” into matter, but as “drawn forth” (*eductus*) from matter, that is, through the drawing of potency into actuality. Cory immediately applies that model to intellectual cognition by saying that “the intelligible species is the form drawn out from the potency of the soul, whereby that potency comes to be actualized.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 308.

¹⁴⁸ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 104.

¹⁴⁹ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 197. Cory references *DPot*, q. 3, a. 9, ad 9; *Quodl VIII*, q. 2, a. 1; *Sent I*, d. 17, q. 1, a. 4; *DVer*, q. 20, a. 3; *ScG II*, c. 75; *ST I*, q. 14, a. 6.

¹⁵⁰ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 214. Cory references *De prin. nat.*, c. 2; *Sent I*, d. 35, q. 1, a. 1.

The significance of this assertion cannot be overestimated. Cory highlights that “having the power to bring forth A is already a way of having A within oneself,” because “every agent makes something like itself,” and the effect is “the expression or manifestation or reflection of what is already in the agent’s power.” That is why Cory can say, in her discussion of acquired knowledge, that forms do not merely wait to be uncovered. Cory contrasts the thought that forms “merely need to be revealed” with Aquinas’s own view that substantial forms, virtues, and scientific forms “must be educed from the potency of their ‘matter’ by the right kind of agent.” Rejecting the heuristic of “revealed,” Cory’s Aquinas consistently prefers brought forth, drawn out, and educed.¹⁵¹

Thus Cory asserts that “Agents necessarily draw their patients into a certain unity with themselves, because by acting they are doing nothing other than expressing their own form.” That is why relationships to the extra-mental known, though real, “are not what knowing consists in.” For Cory, knowing consists in the actuality of intelligible-intellectual being, and that actuality is educed and, in a sense, reflected by form.¹⁵²

Cory’s most important terminological and metaphysical corrective is, therefore, that one should not begin with a produced likeness and ask how it manages to connect intellect to reality. Rather, one should begin with form as principle of action and with intellect actualized in

¹⁵¹ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 241–42, 250. On the acquired knowledge passage, Cory references *DVer*, q. 11, a. 1; *InPostAnal.* I, lect. 1, §8; *InPostAnal.* I, lect. 3, §6; *DVer*, q. 11, a. 1, ad 12.

¹⁵² Therese Scarpelli Cory, “Likeness and Agency in Aquinas: A Study,” in *Summa metaphysicae ad mentem Sancti Thomae: Essays in Honor of John F. Wippel*, ed. Therese Scarpelli Cory and Gregory T. Doolan (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2024), 173. See esp. 166–68. Cory references *In De causis*, prop. 12; *InDivNom* IV, lect. 5, n. 340; *ScG* I, c. 31; *Sent* II, d. 15, q. 1, a. 2, ad 4; *Sent* III, d. 1, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3; *DVer*, q. 2, a. 3; *InDivNom* II, lect. 2. See also Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 104.

intelligible being. Only then does it become clear what *species intelligibilis* names in cognition and why the doctrine does not require a “third thing.”

Cory expresses this concern in explicitly methodological terms:

This language of ‘likeness’ has exercised a powerful attraction on readers, convincing them that Aquinas’s species are psychological devices, no matter how much they may also be forms. But this powerful attraction should be resisted. It is mere interpretive habit, I contend, that has us assuming that the language of ‘likeness’ snatches us abruptly out of the metaphysical framework of ‘form’ and deposits us in a new framework of the psychological / representational / intentional.¹⁵³

And again:

There is [...] nothing in Aquinas’s own writings that obviously compels us to hold that *species intelligibilis* are likenesses in any other sense than the usual metaphysical sense in which every form in an effect is a likeness of the form of its cause.¹⁵⁴

Thus, while Direct Realists often speak of formal identity, sameness of *ratio*, or double existence, they nonetheless risk imagining that the “sameness” between what is “out there” and what is “in here” consists in the latter as a sort of derived “thing” that matches up to its origin in extra-mental being. Similarly, Representationalists understand the likeness language as a transparent ontic item that, though invisible and immaterial, is necessary for cognition to exercise its activities, either as a tool or an object. Cory’s corrective is that likeness is real, but it is not the instrument by which the *species* functions. The *species* functions because it is form. Likeness

¹⁵³ Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 294. Cory references *DM*, q. 6, ad 13; *DM*, q. 16, a. 8, ad 10.

¹⁵⁴ Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 294–298. Cory references *InMeta* V, lect. 17; *Sent* I, d. 19, q. 1, a. 1; *Sent* I, d. 48, q. 1, a. 1; *Sent* I, d. 19, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2; *ST* I–II, q. 27, a. 3; *ST* I, q. 4, a. 3; *Sent* IV, d. 17, q. 1, a. 4; *Sent* I, d. 8, q. 5, a. 2, ad 5; *ST* I, q. 6, a. 1; *DVer*, q. 28, a. 7; *ScG* III, c. 49; *QDSC*, q. 3; *ST* I, q. 13, a. 5; *Quodl* VIII, q. 2, a. 1.

follows from, or is grounded in, the formal and causal order in which the *species* is educed and the intellect is actualized.

Thus this chapter leads to a significant distinction in the project. *Species intelligibilis* is likeness, but likeness is not the role by which *species* operates as principle. *Species* is not a produced likeness that then explains cognition; it is, rather, the formal principle by which possible intellect is actualized in intelligible being. Its likeness-character is real, but likeness-as-likeness is not what actualizes the intellect, specifies the operations, or supplies the act with its object or end.

3.6 Noetic Being, Unity, and Intelligible Being as the Form of the Intellect

For Cory, *species intelligibilis* is the formal principle for “noetic being.” Insofar as this “noetic being” is intellectual and self-manifesting; it is the actuality in which intellect-in-act and intelligible-in-act are one.¹⁵⁵

In that sense, Cory’s formulation helps prevent a subtle confusion. If *species intelligibilis* and intelligible actuality are collapsed into one another, *species* can again begin to appear as a produced inner item. If they are distinguished, however, *species* remains principle, while noetic being names the achieved actuality in which intellect-in-act and intelligible-in-act are one. Noetic being therefore completes the architecture of Cory’s position, but it does not displace *species intelligibilis* as the first explanatory principle. Once that order is kept clear, Cory’s language of

¹⁵⁵ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 120–123, 214–216. Cory references *DVer*, q. 8, a. 6; *ST* I, q. 54, a. 1, ad 1 and ad 3; *Sent* IV, d. 49, q. 2, a. 1; *ScG* II, c. 59; *InMeta* XII, lect. 8, n. 4. Cory expressly says that abstraction and reception “prepare for” intelligere, composition/division, and reasoning by supplying the noetic being required for those operations; on 123 Cory calls the reception of noetic being a “prior metaphysical stage.”

noetic being can be received as a broader description of the actuality attained in cognition, while the central metaphysical claim remains fixed on *species intelligibilis* as formal principle of action.

Admittedly, this is one of Cory's most idiosyncratic assertions, and it is difficult to find, to date, other interpreters of Aquinas who support Cory's rendering of "noetic being"—in precisely those terms—as that which actualizes the possible intellect in its unity with the human soul. Nevertheless, Cory's formulation does not affect the point that is relevant in this project, namely, Cory's interpretation of *species intelligibilis* as the formal principle of action setting into motion the operations and activities of the act of intellection, in which the possible intellect is perfected in the actuality in which intellect-in-act and intelligible-in-act are one.

3.7 Concluding Observations - Cory and the Re-Casting of the 'Debate'

In Cory's "metaphysical" approach, *species intelligibilis* is the formal principle by which intellect is actualized for its proper act, not a *sui generis* cognitive object or explanatory device. As Chapter 2 has demonstrated, the "Direct Realist" vs. "Representationalist" 'Debate' involves genuine "familial disputes," but it also rests on a common foundation that Cory, along with some other interpreters, challenge. On Cory's reading, *species intelligibilis* should be understood through the metaphysical categories of form, act, perfection, and operation.

For Cory, in the "metaphysical approach," *species intelligibilis* is a principle of action that educes, in the perfection of the possible intellect, intelligible being that bears the genetic, formal likeness of its originating principle. *Species intelligibilis* belongs within this account as the formal principle through which that actuality is constituted. For that reason, *species intelligibilis*

as principle must be distinguished from any picture of *species intelligibilis* as a produced “third thing,” a deposited inner item, storehouse-content, or specially theorized internal object.

From there it becomes possible to say more exactly what *species intelligibilis* names in cognition. In Cory’s reading of Aquinas, it names the form-likeness operative in the constitution of noetic actuality. Cory supports a caused intelligible form having a degree of unity with its extra-mental cause and thereby grounding formal likeness.¹⁵⁶ Likeness is therefore already secured within the order of form itself, and follows from the metaphysical relation established through reception and actuality.

As Cory concludes, “The plot unfolds without needing to have recourse to any sort of psychological device like a ‘mental representation’ or ‘concept’ or ‘inner presentation.’”¹⁵⁷

Ultimately, Cory then states the larger implication:

So does the Formal Constituent View make Aquinas’s *species intelligibilis* doctrine more direct realist or more representationalist? Neither. The question only makes sense if we assume that the purpose of the *species intelligibilis* was to create a bridge to the world outside.

Cognition is having and living the life of mental being, which we first have only in potency and actualize little by little throughout our life.¹⁵⁸

In this approach, *species intelligibilis* cannot act as a “veil,” and so one of the concerns of the “Direct Realists” is allayed from the beginning. Similarly, the metaphysical approach demonstrates and preserves the many places where Aquinas describes *species intelligibilis* as a

¹⁵⁶ Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 298–300; 308. See also Cory, *Metaphysical Mind*, 104.

¹⁵⁷ Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 291.

¹⁵⁸ Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 308.

likeness. Yet, to allay the concerns of the ‘Representationalists,’ in the ‘metaphysical approach’ there is no question as to how the “likeness” itself effects the procession of cognition; it simply does not. *Species intelligibilis*, as likeness, is not the cognitive mechanism by which it functions as principle.

In the act of intellection, with *species intelligibilis* as principle, there is no need to explain the nature, characteristics, or functional role of *species-intelligibilis-as-produced-similitude*. It is not an object demanded by the act (as Pasnau claims), not an entative token that reflects or communicates the content of extra-mental being (as Panaccio claims), and it is not a condition of double existence in which the immaterial possession of formal content is itself sufficient to explain knowledge of extra-mental being.

This chapter therefore marks the transition from the language of the Debate to the language of metaphysical constitution. The following chapters move beyond the Debate without abandoning the questions that made it urgent. If *species intelligibilis* is formal principle, then the next task is to ask how possible intellect, agent intellect, phantasm, potency, act, motion, action, and passion function as conditions or predicamental aspects of the act of intellection as a whole. If *species intelligibilis* is neither the thing known, nor an object in the modern sense, nor the *obiectum* in the metaphysical sense, then one must also ask how the distinct operations of intellect are specified by their own objects and ends.

Thus the metaphysical approach therefore does more than dissolve the Debate. It opens the way to a more precise account of intellection itself, in which *species intelligibilis* stands as formal principle rather than object, terminus, or final cause.

Ch 4: **Conditions of Possibility and Structural Analogies Between Aquinas's Accounts of Act *qua* Act and the Act of Intellection**

The preceding chapters have shown why the Debate turns repeatedly on the status of *species intelligibilis* within cognition, and how Cory's metaphysical approach recasts *species* as a formal principle of operation rather than as a *sui generis* "Psychological Device."

If *species intelligibilis* is not a produced inner likeness, stored item, or "third thing," but rather the formal principle by which possible intellect is actualized in intelligible being, the next question concerns the act of intellection as a whole. What must be true of that act if *species* is to function as principle rather than object, product, or instrument?

This chapter begins the constructive application of Cory's metaphysical approach by examining some conditions of possibility and predicamental aspects of the act of intellection. The chapter argues that Aquinas's account of intellection can be described in the same metaphysical grammar that governs his broader account of act *qua* act, namely, potency and act, form and operation, motion and reception, action and passion, mover and moved, and the intensification or remission of accidental form. These categories make it possible to describe the act of intellection as one living act that is internally complex without being fragmented into separate inner entities.

The chapter proceeds in four steps. It first clarifies agent intellect, possible intellect, and *species intelligibilis* as conditions of possibility for the act of intellection within the unity of the human soul. It then turns to act *qua* act and the grammar of potency, motion, action, and passion. Third, it considers how these metaphysical structures illuminate the act of intellection under the predicamental aspects of reception, operation, perfection, and procession. Finally, it draws on Frost's account of accidental forms to show how one and the same *species intelligibilis* can

remain the formal principle of intellectual life while the intellect develops, intensifies, and proceeds into further acts. In this way, Chapter 4 prepares the later account of objects, ends, and differentiated operations without yet undertaking that full argument.

4.1 **The Metaphysical Approach and Conditions of Possibility for Operations and Act**

As discussed in Chapter 3, Cory's metaphysical approach sidesteps the heuristic that imagines the mind as an "inner space or container, populated by ideas, impressions, contents."¹⁵⁹ The metaphysical approach instead asks what is actualized, by what principle, through what operation, and according to what mode of being. Agent intellect, possible intellect, potency, action and passion, and the intensification or remission of *species intelligibilis* are therefore not incidental topics. They are conditions of possibility for intellection to unfold as one act within the unity of the human soul, rather than as a sequence of items moved between interior compartments.

4.2 **Agent Intellect**

In a metaphysical approach, *agent intellect* names the principle under which, or the condition of possibility for, what is only potentially intelligible becomes actually intelligible in human intellection. Aquinas's own language, as gathered in Cory and Lonergan, describes it as "*ut habitus quidam, sicut lumen*" ("as a kind of disposition, like light") and as that by which

¹⁵⁹ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 8.

potentially intelligible things become actually intelligible “*per lumen intellectus agentis*,” or (“by means of the light of the agent intellect.”)¹⁶⁰

Cory accordingly resists reducing agent intellect to a mechanical sorter or extractor. For Cory, agent intellect is not a machine-like homunculus, scurrying in the back of the mind’s eye to produce *species intelligibiles* and deposit them in some designated space. Rather, Cory describes it as “the per se principle of self-manifesting being”¹⁶¹ and, more locally, as the condition of possibility that assures the right mode of being, though not the determinate content. Lonergan makes the same positive point in a more processional manner when he says that agent intellect and phantasm concur in effecting the act of intellection as a whole, while each contributes something different. Phantasm provides the determinacy, while agent intellect conditions the actualization of intelligibility in act.¹⁶²

In his chapter “The Agent Intellect and the Energies of Intelligence,”¹⁶³ D. Haggerty extends this point by describing agent intellect not merely as the faculty responsible for an initial abstractive step, but as a more pervasive principle of illumination within intellectual life as a whole.

Drawing on Aquinas’s descriptions of agent intellect as a power “essentially in act,” as a dynamic principle “flowing from the essence of the soul,” and as analogous to art as an abiding

¹⁶⁰ Aquinas, *InDA* III, lect. 4; *DVer*, q. 10, a. 6.

¹⁶¹ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind*, 16–18, 197–201.

¹⁶² Lonergan, *Verbum*, 91–94. Lonergan references *InDA* III, lect. 10, §§737–39; *DM*, q. 16, a. 12, ad 1–2; *ScG* II, c. 77; *ST* I, q. 79, a. 4, ad 4; *QDSC*, a. 10, ad 4; *QDDA*, a. 5.

¹⁶³ Donald Haggerty, “The Agent Intellect and the Energies of Intelligence,” in *Beauty, Art, and the Polis*, ed. Alice Ramos (Washington, DC: American Maritain Association; distributed by the Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 20–33.

intellectual *habitus*, Haggerty argues that the *intellectus agens* should be understood as a primal inner light and source of energy that affects “the entire range of the intellect’s operations.”¹⁶⁴ In this way, Haggerty casts agent intellect not only in the traditional light metaphor but also in a stronger sense, in which agent intellect manifests as a “spontaneity of preconscious intelligence at work,” a persistent interior illumination grounding the soul’s ceaseless ordination toward intelligibility.¹⁶⁵

4.3 Possible Intellect

Possible intellect names the receptive condition under which intelligible being can be received. Cory and others point to Aquinas’s own comparisons to support that reading. As Aquinas asserts, the possible intellect stands in potency to intelligible being as prime matter stands in potency to sensible form. Cory’s most concentrated formulation describes it as “the human soul’s sheer unactualized potential for all noetic being.” It is, in her terms, ‘just potency (*potentia tantum*)’ for intelligible being, comparable to ‘prime matter in the genus of sensibles.’”¹⁶⁶ Before actualization, possible intellect is the receptive potency that must be informed, rather than an already fully active cognitive engine.

Lonergan accepts the same basic structure when he describes possible intellect as essential passive potency that, once informed by *species* as first act, becomes operative potency for

¹⁶⁴ Haggerty, “Energies of Intelligence,” 22–25. Haggerty references *ST* I, q. 79, a. 4 and ad 5; *InDA* III, lect. 10, 431a17–18; *QDDA*, a. 15, ad 9.

¹⁶⁵ Haggerty, “Energies of Intelligence,” 23–25.

¹⁶⁶ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 166–168.

understanding as comprising subsequent operations.¹⁶⁷ Thus, whereas Cory interprets the resulting first actuality as actual noetic/intellect-intelligible being from which *intelligere* proceeds, Lonergan treats reception of the *species qua* as the first operation and *intelligere* as the consequent second operation.

Possible intellect therefore belongs to the conditions of possibility precisely as receptive potency for first actuality. It is not a storehouse for a collection of *species intelligibiles* standing ready to be instrumentalized in further acts of cognition.¹⁶⁸ Rather, it names the soul's capacity to be actualized in intelligible being.

This receptive potency is ineliminable from the act of intellection. If agent intellect names the principle under which the potentially intelligible becomes actually intelligible, possible intellect names the capacity in the human soul to receive that intelligible actuality. Together, agent intellect, possible intellect, phantasm, and *species intelligibilis* belong to the conditions under which intellection can occur as one act within the essentially unified soul.

Actual self-knowledge can be noted here only as a consequence of this structure. Since the possible intellect becomes actual through *species intelligibilis*, the intellect becomes manifest to itself in and through the act by which it knows something other than itself. While that fuller account of self-knowledge belongs to the later discussion of operations and reflection, here the

¹⁶⁷ Lonergan, *Verbum*, 149–53, 177, 188–89. Lonergan references *DPot*, q. 1, a. 1, c.; *DVer*, q. 3, a. 2, c.; *ST I*, q. 79, a. 2, c.; *ST I*, q. 85, a. 2, c. and ad 3.

¹⁶⁸ With respect to *species intelligibilis*, see also Cory's remarks "Similarly, the intelligible *species* is not some independent immaterial "product of abstraction" that is manufactured by the agent intellect and left to rattle around in the possible intellect like a bead in a drawer. Rather, the intelligible *species* is the form drawn out from the potency of the soul, whereby that potency comes to be actualized." *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 214.

important point is that possible intellect remains receptive potency for intelligible actuality, not an inner subject already equipped with contents that it then inspects.

4.4 **Act *qua* Act and the Grammar of Potency, Motion, Action, and Passion**

In Aquinas's metaphysical account of act *qua* act, one and the same actuality can be considered under different predicamental aspects. Whereas the spatial-mechanical-material imagination tends to divide act into separate items or containers—as though action, passion, motion, reception, and actuality were independent entities—the metaphysical approach resists that division and asks how a unified act can manifest different characteristics, activities, and relations without fragmenting into separate things.

This point matters for the act of intellection, insofar as the multiplicity of operation does not automatically entail multiplicity of entities. A set of operations ordered to reception, another ordered to the perfection of the knower, and another ordered to the production of something notionally distinct may all belong to the same living act of intellection. One operation may ground the emergence of another, and one aspect may be intelligible only in relation to another, but this ordered multiplicity remains the multiplicity of one act considered under different formal descriptions.

Terms such as agent intellect, possible intellect, potency, act, and operation designate principles, operations, and termini within the intelligible life of the soul, rather than objects moved from one mental container to another. The act of intellection as a whole can therefore be considered under different predicamental aspects according to the operations, relations, and ends that belong to it. It can be described as reception, insofar as the possible intellect is actualized by

an intelligible form; as activity, insofar as the intellect operates from within its own formal actuality; as perfection, insofar as understanding remains in the knower as the actuality of the intellectual power; and as procession, insofar as intellectual operation gives rise to a word, concept, judgment, or other notional term distinct from the operation that produces it.

This way of speaking also requires caution about sequence. Although the account may describe potency as coming “before” actuality, or reception as preceding operation, the act itself need not unfold as a strict succession of separate stages. As with action and passion, or mover and moved, the same act may be described under several aspects at once. For that reason, the characteristics and operations that constitute act are best understood as distinct but interwoven, rather than as separate items arranged in a linear order.

This prepares the more precise analyses that follow; namely, Brock clarifies how potency belongs within the account of act and form, Frost clarifies how motion and causal interaction involve both active and passive powers, and Miller clarifies how action and passion can be distinct predicaments of one motion.

4.5 From Potency to Act, From Act to Potency

In his recent work “Created Form as Act and Potency in the Metaphysics of Thomas Aquinas,”¹⁶⁹ Brock demonstrates why potency belongs within the analysis of act itself and why the same

¹⁶⁹ Stephen L. Brock, “Created Form as Act and Potency in the Metaphysics of Thomas Aquinas,” in *Summa metaphysicae ad mentem Sancti Thomae: Essays in Honor of John F. Wippel*, ed. Therese Scarpelli Cory and Gregory T. Doolan, 177–206, *Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy* 68 (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2024).

metaphysical reality may be considered under different aspects without being divided into separate things.

Brock begins by asserting that “few distinctions are more fundamental, or have wider ranges of application, than the distinction between potency (*potentia*) and act (*actus*).”¹⁷⁰ He justifies this claim by observing that Aquinas takes *ens* as the subject of metaphysics, and that one cannot advance very far into Aquinas’s metaphysics without encountering the distinction between potency and act. Following Aristotle and Aquinas, Brock observes that potency most properly means a principle of motion, whether active or passive, but its range is not limited to local or bodily change. It also extends to other kinds of act: matter stands in potency to form, sight stands in potency to seeing, and Aquinas adds that potency and act are also found “in intellectual things.”¹⁷¹

Brock’s point is therefore not merely physical but metaphysical: potency signifies “nothing other than a principle of some act,” whether the act in question is motion, form, sensory operation, or intellectual actuality.¹⁷²

Brock then addresses a difficulty in Aquinas’s presentation of created form as both act and potency. On the one hand, Aquinas repeatedly says that “form insofar as it is form is act,” and that form “by its essence is act.” He likewise emphasizes that form is “that by which” something is in act, that form is the “primary cause of being,” and that being follows upon form

¹⁷⁰ Brock, “Form as Act and Potency,” 177.

¹⁷¹ Brock, “Form as Act and Potency,” 180. Brock references Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IX.1, 1046a9–15, 1045b35–1046a2, 1048a25–30; Aquinas, *InMeta* IX, lect. 1, n. 1770; lect. 5, n. 1824.

¹⁷² Brock, “Form as Act and Potency,” 180. Brock quotes *ST* I, q. 41, a. 4.

immediately. On the other hand, created form can also be described as receptive with respect to being, so that the relation between potency and act cannot be handled in a crude either-or fashion.

Quoting *De spiritualibus creaturis*, Brock stresses Aquinas's formulation:

Therefore, if the foundation of matter is removed, and there remains some form of a determinate nature subsisting in itself, not in matter, it will still be related to its own act of being as potency to act. I do not mean, however, as a potency separable from act, but as one that is always accompanied by its act.¹⁷³

Brock's conclusion is therefore not that created form hovers ambiguously between potency and act, but that "created form, then, does not at all straddle the division between being in potency and being in act. In itself, created form is entirely on the side of being in act." This is precisely the kind of distinction the present argument requires. A created form can be considered as act insofar as it is form, while also being considered with respect to its relation to *esse*. Likewise, in the act of intellection, *species intelligibilis* can be considered as the formal principle by which the possible intellect is made actual, while the act of intellection as a whole can also be considered under the aspect of receptive potency, operation, perfection, and procession. The same metaphysical whole may be spoken of under different aspects without being divided into separate things.¹⁷⁴

4.5.1 Act as Change, or Motion, and Motion in its Two Predicamental Aspects

While Brock clarifies why form, act, and potency can be distinguished without being divided into separate things. Frost extends that grammar into the order of causal interaction, where one and

¹⁷³ Brock, "Form as Act and Potency," 195. Brock quotes *QDSC*, a. 1.

¹⁷⁴ Brock, "Form as Act and Potency," 203-204.

the same actuality can be considered in relation to agent and patient, active power and passive potency, action and passion. This matters for intellection because the possible intellect's reception of intelligible form must be understood as a real actualization without being imagined as the movement of an object into an inner container.

In her recent work "Aquinas' Ontology of Transeunt Causal Activity,"¹⁷⁵ G. Frost demonstrates that Aquinas explains change through the coordinated structure of act and potency, form and matter, agent and patient. As Frost frames the problem, Aquinas must be read as holding both that "the actualization of an agent's active potential is the motion that it causes in its patient" and that "action and passion are the same motion," even as Aquinas also says that action differs from passion and that action is in the agent as subject.¹⁷⁶

Similarly, in her article "Aquinas on Passive Powers"¹⁷⁷ Frost extends this account by showing that causal interaction requires not only active power but also passive potency. Causal action involves an agent communicating form to a patient, while "the patient can only undergo the agent's action" through a corresponding passive potentiality. In her words, "matter is that which receives or is informed by form," and both matter and the forms that actualize it give rise to passive potentialities.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Gloria Frost, "Aquinas' Ontology of Transeunt Causal Activity," *Vivarium* 56, nos. 1-2 (2018): 47-82.

¹⁷⁶ Frost, "Ontology of Transeunt Causal Activity," 47-49. Frost references *InPhys* III, lect. 3-4; *ST* I, q. 28, a. 3; *Sent* I, d. 32, q. 1; *Sent* II, d. 40, q. 1, a. 4, ad 1; *ScG* II, c. 9.

¹⁷⁷ Gloria Frost, "Aquinas on Passive Powers," *Vivarium* 59, no. 1-2 (2021): 33-51.

¹⁷⁸ Frost, "Passive Powers," 35-36. Frost references *ST* III, q. 13, a. 1; *ScG* I, c. 37; *Sent* I, d. 4, q. 1, a. 1; *DPot*, q. 2, a. 1; *ScG* III, c. 69.

Further, in her recent full-length book *Aquinas on Efficient Causation and Causal Powers*,¹⁷⁹ Frost gathers these lines of argument into a fuller reconstruction in which active powers, passive powers, finality, action and passion, and motion as the common actuality of mover and moved all appear as parts of a single integrated theory. By the time Frost reaches action and passion, she can summarize Aquinas's view as holding that "a single actuality fulfills and completes" both the agent's active potentiality and the patient's passive potentiality.¹⁸⁰

Frost's treatment of passive powers is especially relevant because it clarifies the predicamental aspect of reception. Matter gives the general capacity to receive, while form disposes that capacity in determinate directions. As Frost states, "material substances have the passive potentiality to receive form in virtue of their matter," while "qualitative forms dispose a substance toward the reception" of determinate forms.¹⁸¹ Receptivity therefore belongs to the very subject whose potency is being actualized, and it is specified by the forms and dispositions through which that subject is able to receive further actuality.¹⁸²

The works of Brock and Frost are complementary, insofar that Brock clarifies the reach of potency in Aquinas's account of form and act, while Frost shows how these metaphysical characterizations are instantiated in causal action, reception, and the communication of form. These reflections on passive potency are indispensable because they keep receptive capacity at

¹⁷⁹ Gloria Frost, *Aquinas on Efficient Causation and Causal Powers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

¹⁸⁰ Frost, *Causation and Causal Powers*, 169–70. Frost references Aquinas *InPhys* III, lect. 5.

¹⁸¹ Frost, *Causation and Causal Powers*, 141, 145, 157. Frost references *DeVirtCom* q. 1, a. 1, ad 9; *ST* I, q. 77, a. 7, ad 2; *DPot* q. 3, a. 7; *ST* I–II, q. 55, a. 2; *InDA* q. 12; See also Frost, "Passive Powers," 49–50.

¹⁸² Frost, "Passive Powers," 49.

the center of the account from the outset. If the possible intellect is genuinely actualized by intelligible *species*, then reception cannot be treated as incidental to intellection but rather as belonging to the structure of the act itself.

4.5.2 Motion, Reception, and the Common Actuality of Agent and Patient

The next point concerns motion itself. If motion is the act of what exists in potency precisely as in potency, then actualization can be understood as a real but incomplete actuality ordered toward further perfection.

Insofar as act is motion, or alteration, and not necessarily a once-and-done, complete and perfected actuality, “act” names the incomplete actuality of what is in potency, when and as it is in potency. As Aquinas writes in his commentary on Aristotle’s *Physics*,

That by which something previously existing in potency becomes actual is an act. But something becomes actual when it is being moved, although previously it was in potency. Therefore, motion is an act.¹⁸³

Frost has attended closely to this feature of Aquinas’s account of act *qua* act. Across her works Frost describes movement or alteration, as “the act of what exists in potency insofar as it is in potency,” and one and the same movement, or alteration, is the common act of mover and moved.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Aquinas, *InPhys* III, lect. 2.

¹⁸⁴ See Frost, “Passive Powers,” 48–49. See also Frost, *Causation and Causal Powers*, 156, 159–70. Frost references *InPhys* III, lect. 2, n. 3; lect. 3; lect. 5.

In “Aquinas’ Ontology of Transeunt Causal Activity,”¹⁸⁵ Frost states the point directly: although “there is just one actuality,” that actuality can constitute “two specifically distinct types of accident.”

This matters for the act of intellection because actualization need not be conceived as a single instantaneous completion after which nothing further remains to be explained. If motion is the act of what is in potency as it remains in potency, then actualization can proceed toward fuller perfection over time.

That point prepares the way for the later and highly significant claim that one and the same *species intelligibilis* can remain the formal principle of intellectual life while further acts and inner terms are elicited. Before that claim can be reached, however, the predicamental distinction between action and passion must be clarified, since it shows how one actuality can be considered under different aspects without being divided into separate things.

4.5.3 The Predicament of Action and Passion

In Frost’s interpretation of Aquinas’s account of act *qua* act, “act” can refer to the incomplete actuality of what is in potency and can therefore be described both as an ongoing reception in the patient and as a simultaneous grounding of the patient’s own agency. Frost thus reads Aquinas as insisting that transeunt or transitive activity is genuinely the agent’s exercise of power even though its actuality exists in the patient. As she summarizes the point, the actuality “exists in the patient,” while active potentiality is fulfilled by “arising from it.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Gloria Frost, “Aquinas’ Ontology of Transeunt Causal Activity,” *Vivarium* 56, nos. 1-2 (2018): 76.

¹⁸⁶ Frost, *Causation and Causal Powers* 170. Frost references *InPhys* III, lect. 5.

At this point the work of M. Miller becomes pertinent. In her two-part work “The Problem of Action in the Commentary of St. Thomas Aquinas on the Physics of Aristotle,”¹⁸⁷ Miller clarifies how Aquinas can maintain the unity of motion while also preserving the real distinction between action and passion.

As does Frost, Miller emphasizes Aquinas’s definition of motion as “the act of a being in potency insofar as it is in potency,” and adds that “the act that is motion is in the mobile, though caused by the mover.” As Aquinas writes, “But motion is called action insofar as it is the act of the agent as from this; and it is called passion insofar as it is the act of the patient as in this.”¹⁸⁸

Miller therefore preserves Aquinas’s explanation that one act can belong to two things if it is one *secundum rem* while differing in *secundum rationem*; that is, one and the same act can belong to two things when it is one in reality, (*secundum rem*), but differs according to its intelligible aspect, (*secundum rationem*).¹⁸⁹

Miller’s further contribution is to explain how action and passion nevertheless remain distinct predicaments; that is, being is divided into predicaments according to different modes proportionate to different modes of predication. Thus the patient is spoken of in terms of receiving motion from another, whereas the agent is spoken of in terms of the effect proceeding from it into another. As Aquinas writes, and Miller quotes, “Action, precisely as action, is

¹⁸⁷ Marianne Therese Miller, “The Problem of Action in the Commentary of St. Thomas Aquinas on the Physics of Aristotle,” *The Modern Schoolman* 23, No. 3 (1946): 135–167; and No. 4 (1946): 200–226.

¹⁸⁸ Miller, “The Problem of Action,” 136. Miller references *InPhys* III, lect. 5. [*Motus autem dicitur actio secundum quod est actus agentis ut ab hoc; dicitur autem passio secundum quod est actus patientis ut in hoc.*]

¹⁸⁹ Miller, “The Problem of Action,” 203. Miller references *InPhys* III, lect. 5.

considered as proceeding from the agent; but insofar as it is an accident, it is considered as existing in the agent as its subject.” Miller therefore concludes that the relation connoted by action is in the agent, while relation connoted by reception is in the patient.¹⁹⁰

Frost presents the same point in similar terms. Movement, or alteration, is one and the same actuality, and it must be one if the actualization of each potency is to remain tied to the subject whose potency it is. At the level of the categories, however, this same movement, or alteration, gives rise to two distinct accidents, because categories divide the different ways in which actualities belong to substances. In Frost’s reading of Aquinas, action is the movement, or alteration, taken together with its order of arising from the agent, and passion is the movement, or alteration, taken together with its order of existing in the patient, or of being received from another.¹⁹¹

Furthermore, Frost insists that these are real, mind-independent orders in reality, not just two ways we happen to think about the same thing. In Frost’s reading, when Aquinas says that action and passion “agree in the substance of movement, or alteration” and differ according to diverse relations, Aquinas is locating that movement between two real ways in which one movement, or alteration, belongs. That is why the claim that passion is the effect of action can also be preserved. Passion depends on action because the movement, or alteration’s being received in the

¹⁹⁰ Miller, “The Problem of Action,” 204–05, 208. Miller references *InMeta* V, lect. 9 and *DPot*, q. 7, a. 9, ad 7.

¹⁹¹ See Frost, “Ontology of Transeunt Causal Activity,” 73–74, 82; Frost, *Causation and Causal Powers*, 177–80. Frost references, among others, *DVer*, q. 26, a. 1–2; *ScG* II, c. 57; *ST* I, q. 44, a. 2, ad 1; *ST* I, q. 45, a. 2, ad 2.

patient depends on its arising from the agent, even though there is no temporal succession between them.¹⁹²

4.5.4 Predicamental Aspects of Action, Passion, Mover, and Moved in the Act of Intellection

These clarifications show how Aquinas uses analogous structures to describe how intellect is actualized by form and then operates from that actuality; that is, the same metaphysical grammar of potency and act, mover and moved, action and passion can be carried into the intellectual order.

Similarly, here the relevance of the distinction between “mover” and “moved” becomes pertinent to the act of intellection. Aquinas asserts that for act, understood as motion, to occur there must be at least two interacting sets of activities; one pertaining to the mover, and one pertaining to the subject being moved.¹⁹³ As Aquinas has observed, “For, as is proved in the Physics 8.10, 257a33, whatever moves itself is divided into two parts, one of which is the mover and the other is the moved,”¹⁹⁴ and in his commentary on Aristotle’s *Physics*, Aquinas writes

Therefore, if there is anything that does not have in itself the principle of its own motion but its principle of motion is from without, it is clear that it is being moved by some other. However, if there is a mobile which does have in itself the principle of its own motion, there could be doubt whether it too is being moved by some other.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² Frost, “Ontology of Transeunt Causal Activity,” 73–74; Frost, *Causation and Causal Powers*, 177–80.

¹⁹³ Aquinas, *InDA* I, lect. 6 (on Aristotle, *De anima* I, 406b11–23) (*In movente enim se ipsum duo sunt, unum movens et aliud motum, et impossibile est quod illud quod est movens moveatur per se.*)

¹⁹⁴ Aquinas, *DVer* q. 22, a.3.C (*For, as is proved in the Physics 8.10, 257a33, whatever moves itself is divided into two parts, one of which is the mover and the other is the moved*)

¹⁹⁵ Aquinas, *InPhys* VII, Lecture 1, commenting on Aristotle at *Physics* VII, 241b34.

These statements can be interpreted as affording structural analogies with respect to the act of intellection, as Aquinas writes

In [...] movement, the mover is that which gives the form which is the principle of motion; similarly, one is said to move the intellect who causes the form which is the principle of the intellectual operation. In the intelligent being there are two principles of the operation of the intellect: one is the intellectual power itself (which is a principle even in the one who understands in potency); the other is the likeness of the thing understood (which is the principle of understanding in act)¹⁹⁶

With respect to the relevance of the action/passion aspect and intellection, Lonergan offers one of the strongest formulations, saying, “Aquinas had the habit of quoting Aristotle to the effect that ‘*intelligere est quoddam pati*.’” Lonergan then quotes Aquinas’s own inference: “*Sic igitur patet quod intelligere nostrum est quoddam pati, secundum tertium modum passionis. Et per consequens intellectus est potentia passiva.*”¹⁹⁷ That is, the analogous metaphysical structure of act in general, and of the act of intellection in particular, includes not only the side of perfected operation but also the side of receptive potency. Lonergan insists that understanding itself remains in some sense *pati communiter* because it is the act of a passive potency receiving intelligible influence.^{198 199}

¹⁹⁶ Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 105, a. 3.

¹⁹⁷ Lonergan, *Verbum*, 141-142. Lonergan references Aristotle, *InDA III*, 4, 429a13-15, 429b22-25; Aquinas, *InDA III*, lect. 9; *ST I*, q. 79, a. 2.

¹⁹⁸ Lonergan, *Verbum*, 117; 121. Lonergan references *DVer* q. 26, a. 1; *ST I*, q. 79, a. 2; I-II, q. 22, a. 1.

Cory also, pointing to *De veritate*, reads Aquinas as affirming that the first operation of intellection “follows upon this action or passion, as effect [follows] cause.”²⁰⁰

These distinctions show why understanding involves both receptive potency and perfected operation. Under one aspect, the intellect is actualized by intelligible form. Under another, understanding remains in the knower as immanent perfection. Under still another, intellect may proceed to produce a concept, word, judgment, or other notional term. These are not separate inner objects. They are distinguishable descriptions of one living act of intellection, considered according to different principles, relations, and termini.

4.6 The Capability of *Species intelligibilis* to Intensify or Recede as Another Condition of Possibility

The final condition of possibility concerns the capacity of *species intelligibilis* to sustain development while remaining the same formal principle. Here Frost’s work “Aquinas on How Accidental Forms Vary in Themselves”²⁰¹ becomes especially relevant. Frost argues that Aquinas’s basic account is participatory: a subject becomes hotter, healthier, more virtuous, or more skilled not by adding parts to a form, but by participating more perfectly in the same form.

¹⁹⁹ Both Lonergan and Jacobs-Vandegeer highlight the conceptual difficulty, for interpreters of Aquinas in particular and for general understanding. While it may be relatively straightforward to envisage a selfsame act as both a passion and an action – i.e., “I am walking” and “I am receiving the experience of walking,” it is difficult to extrapolate that structure to the act of understanding. In the first-person experience of understanding, the “I” is ordinarily experienced as the active subject doing the action. If “I” were “receiving” the act of understanding, from where? And from whom or what? Yet, for Aquinas as read by Lonergan, understanding must be described in this way insofar as the act of intellection *is* an act. Insofar as the act of intellection is an “act,” the “I understand” of ordinary experience does not disappear, but the metaphysical analysis beneath it includes receptive potency, actualization by intelligible form, immanent perfection, and further intellectual operation. See Lonergan, *Verbum*, “Procession and Related Notions,” esp. 116–118; see also Christiaan Jacobs-Vandegeer, “Reading the Actio of Cognitional Acts in Bernard J. F. Lonergan and Joseph Owens,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 88, no 1 (2014), 84–86.

²⁰⁰ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 120–21. Cory quotes Aquinas, *DVer* q. 8, a. 6.

²⁰¹ Gloria Frost, “Aquinas on How Accidental Forms Vary in Themselves,” in *Summa metaphysicae ad mentem Sancti Thomae: Essays in Honor of John F. Wippel*, ed. Therese Scarpelli Cory and Gregory T. Doolan (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2024), 207–226..

Aquinas therefore allows certain accidental forms to increase in themselves, especially forms that are orders or proportions and some habits or sciences.

Frost's account is relevant because it clarifies how one and the same formal principle can underwrite growth, clarification, and ordered multiplicity without becoming a numerically new form at each stage.

As this project has argued throughout, *species intelligibilis* is not the object known but the formal principle by which the possible intellect is made actual. For that reason, the subsequent unfolding of the act of intellection need not be explained by intrinsic additions to the *species* itself. Through that same form, the already actualized intellect can be brought to a more perfect mode of intellectual actuality, as distinct operations and inner terms are elicited under distinct objects and in relation to distinct ends.

Thus, the capacity of *species intelligibilis* to intensify or recede becomes another condition of possibility for the structural analogy between act *qua* act and intellection. Just as one quality can remain numerically one while a subject participates in it more perfectly, so one *species intelligibilis* can remain the formal principle of intellectual life while the intellect proceeds from first actuality to more explicit acts of understanding, judging, defining, and reflecting. In this way, as alteration is ordered from potency toward fuller act, intellection is ordered from less explicit understanding toward fuller possession of the truth of extra-mental being.

Frost begins from a precise metaphysical question: when a subject's heat, color, skill, or virtue becomes more or less intense, what exactly changes? Only the subject, or the quality "in

itself?”²⁰² Frost’s guiding thesis is that Aquinas’s apparently shifting remarks become consistent once one distinguishes kinds of accidental form and senses of “increase.” One and the same accidental form can remain stable while the subject’s possession of it varies in degree.²⁰³

As Frost explains, in Aquinas’s ontology of accidental qualities, every determinate way a substance exists depends on an inhering form: “existing as white is from whiteness,” and it is unintelligible that a wall be white without whiteness inhering in it.²⁰⁴

Yet forms do not subsist as subjects. Whiteness is said to exist because something has “existence-as-white by it,” not because whiteness exists on its own.²⁰⁵ In Frost’s reading, Aquinas also holds that numerically distinct substances have numerically distinct forms, even when those forms are specifically the same, because sameness of *species* is grounded in sameness of account or *ratio* rather than numerical identity across subjects.

Against this background, Frost reconstructs Aquinas’s “participation” account by first presenting the rival “addition to form” theory that Aquinas rejects. On that rejected view, intensifiable accidental forms are quantitatively divisible into separable parts, so that increase in intensity is literally the addition of form-parts and decrease the removal of parts.

Aquinas rejects this because it threatens the unity and indivisibility of the specific principle. If a form gains or loses anything intrinsically, the *species* must change.²⁰⁶ More generally, the

²⁰² Frost, “Accidental Forms,” 207-208.

²⁰³ Frost, “Accidental Forms,” 208-209; 214–16. Frost references *ST* I-II, q. 52, a. 2; *ScG* I, c. 43; *Sent* I, d. 17, q. 2, a. 2.

²⁰⁴ Frost, “Accidental Forms,” 210; Frost quotes Aquinas, *Sent* I, d. 17, q. 1, a. 1.

²⁰⁵ Frost, “Accidental Forms,” 210. Frost quotes Aquinas, *Quodl* IX, q. 2, a. 2.

²⁰⁶ Frost, “Accidental Forms,” 211–213. Frost references *ST* I-II, q. 52, a. 2; *DeVirtCARD* a. 3; *ScG* IV, c. 41.

specific principle must be “indivisible,” since differences at that level “vary the species,” and Aquinas explicitly compares *species* to numbers: just as adding or subtracting a unit changes the number, so too intrinsic addition or subtraction would necessarily change the *species*.²⁰⁷

Given that constraint, Aquinas locates the “flux” of intensification not in the form itself but in the subject’s relation to a form. On Frost’s reconstruction, one and the same form can perfect its subject to varying degrees because the form, considered in itself, does not determine a fixed intensive degree of perfection in the subject. The form fixes the nature or *species* of the quality, while the individuating conditions, including a determinate degree, arise from the way the form is received.²⁰⁸

Frost highlights Aquinas’s principle that “whatever exists in another exists in it according to the mode of the receiver,” so that an act inhering in another is limited by what receives it. On this account, limitation comes from reception, not from any intrinsic “degree” built into the form itself. Intensification is therefore possible without intrinsic form-change: the subject, already informed, can be disposed to receive the same form more perfectly.²⁰⁹

Frost then restates this dynamic in the language of potency and act, later redescribed as participation. A subject that is already hot is not in potency to acquire the form of heat, since it already has it, but is in potency to “a more perfect mode of participation,” which an agent can actualize. The change at issue is therefore not the acquisition of a new form or a new part of a

²⁰⁷ Frost, “Accidental Forms,” 212. Frost quotes Aquinas, *DeVirtCARD* a. 3.

²⁰⁸ Frost, “Accidental Forms,” 213–16. Frost references *Quodl* VII, q. 4, a. 3; *ST* I, q. 5, a. 5; *ScG* I, c. 43; *ST* I, q. 7, a. 1; *Sent* I, d. 17, q. 2, a. 2; *ST* I–II, q. 52, a. 2, ad 2–3; *DeVirtCom*, a. 11.

²⁰⁹ Frost, “Accidental Forms,” 214–15. Frost quotes Aquinas, *ScG* I, c. 43 and references *ST* I–II, q. 52, a. 2, ad 3.

form, but the further actualization of a potential for more perfect existence through the same inherent form.²¹⁰ As well, Frost notes a terminological development in Aquinas; namely, earlier texts describe intensification as being “educated from imperfect toward perfect” act, while later texts prefer the idiom of “participating more” in one and the same form. Aquinas explicitly aligns these idioms by identifying form with act: to receive more of a form is to be reduced more into the act of that form.²¹¹

The application to *species intelligibilis* is analogical. Frost’s account concerns accidental forms, qualities, participation, and intensification. Yet if *species intelligibilis* is treated, following Cory, as the formal principle that actualizes possible intellect, then Frost’s account provides a metaphysical grammar for explaining how one formal principle can ground development without becoming a new object, a new inner item, or a newly produced form at each stage.

Applied to *species intelligibilis*, this means that the *species* can underwrite a multiplicity of distinct but interacting acts and operations without itself becoming a sequence of unrelated forms and without becoming the object of later operations. *Species intelligibilis* can thus remain the principle of the entire operation, including its intensification and development, while remaining principle rather than object. Considered from the predicamental aspect of reception, the intellect is made actual through intelligible form; from the aspect of perfected operation, that actualization remains in the knower as understanding. Considered from the aspect of procession, further inner

²¹⁰ Frost, “Accidental Forms,” 215–16. Frost references *Sent* I, d. 17, q. 2, a. 2; *ST* I–II, q. 52, a. 2; *ST* I–II, q. 52, a. 2, ad 3; *DeVirtCom*, a. 11a. 11214–16.

²¹¹ Frost, “Accidental Forms,” 215–16. Frost references *Sent* I, d. 17, q. 2, a. 2; *DeVirtCom*, a. 11; *ST* I–II, q. 52, a. 2, ad 2.

terms may arise, and from the aspect of intensification, the same formal principle can ground a more perfect participation in intellectual actuality without ceasing to be the same formal principle.

4.7 **Concluding Observations: The Act of Intellection as One Act Under Multiple Aspects**

Having established the foundations of Aquinas's account of the act of intellection through agent intellect, possible intellect, potency, motion, action and passion, mover and moved, and the intensification of accidental form, the main point is that the metaphysical approach allows the act of intellection to be understood as one living act considered under multiple predicamental aspects. It receives, acts, is perfected, proceeds, and develops, but it does not thereby fragment into a set of entities. The multiplicity of aspects belongs to the intelligible richness of the act itself.

On this account, *species intelligibilis* is not a stored item passed between inner containers. It is the formal principle by which the possible intellect is made actual. Through that same principle, the intellectual life of the soul can unfold into distinct operations, distinct objects, and distinct inner terms while remaining the act of one unified intellect. Chapter 4 has therefore extended Cory's metaphysical approach beyond the rejection of the Psychological Device View and into the structure of the act itself. The next step is to ask how the operations proceeding from this actuality are specified by their objects and ends.

Ch 5: Multiple Operations of the Act of Intellection as Ordered to Ends

Chapter 4 demonstrated that once *species intelligibilis* is understood as formal principle rather than as a produced inner item, the act of intellection can be described as one living act under multiple predicamental aspects. The act is first receptive and then develops and proceeds as perfectible, without fragmenting into separate inner entities. The present chapter asks what follows from that account for the operations of intellect themselves.

If *species intelligibilis* is the formal principle by which possible intellect is actualized, then the operations proceeding from that actuality must be distinguished by something other than the *species* itself, and this chapter of the project argues that they are distinguished by their objects and ends. That is, the act of intellection as a whole is ordered toward being and truth, while its distinct operations are specified by the objects, termini, and completions toward which they proceed.

In this sense, in a penultimate position before the project's conclusion, Chapter 5 completes one of this project's central claims; namely, that *species intelligibilis* is necessary for intellection as formal principle, but it is not the *obiectum* of the act as a whole, nor of any of the operations that proceed within it.

This chapter proceeds in three movements. It first establishes that act and operation are ordered to objects and ends. It then turns to Kostelecky's account of *obiectum* in order to distinguish the proportional object of human intellect from the wider formal horizon of being and truth. Finally, it considers Aquinas's account of multiple intellectual operations through Cory and Lonergan, showing how those operations remain within one unified act of intellection while being differentiated by their own termini and ends.

5.1 The Act of Intellection, and Its Operations, are Ordered to Ends

Having described several conditions of possibility for the act of intellection, the next step is to consider its object and end. For Aquinas, act is not intelligible apart from that toward which it is ordered. As he remarks, “Every act takes its *species* from its object.”²¹² The object is therefore that by which the act is specified, but not an accidental addition to it.

The same point can be stated in terms of final causality. Motion and operation are never without orientation, since the end moves the agent as that for the sake of which it acts. Aquinas accordingly calls the end “the cause of causes.”²¹³ As Aquinas writes in *De principiis naturae*,

... The efficient cause is called a cause with respect to the end, since the end is actual only by the operation of the agent. But the end is called the cause of the efficient cause, since the efficient cause does not operate except by the intention of the end.²¹⁴

This teleological structure also governs intellection. If acts are specified by their objects, then the act of intellection must be read through that to which its constituent parts are ordered.

In the broadest sense, intellect is ordered to “that which the intellect first conceives [as] being,”²¹⁵ and to “contemplation of truth.”²¹⁶ As Aquinas writes in *Summa contra Gentiles*,

The last end of anything is that which it strives to obtain by its operations. Now man by all his well ordered and right operations strives to attain the contemplation of truth: for the operations of the active powers are so many preparations and dispositions to the

²¹² Aquinas, *ST I-II*, q. 18, a. 2.

²¹³ Aquinas, *InPostAnal.*, lect. 7, II n. 481.

²¹⁴ Aquinas, *De prin. nat.*, c. 4

²¹⁵ Aquinas, *DVer*, q. 1, a. 1.

²¹⁶ Aquinas, *SBDT*, q.1, a.3.

contemplative powers. Therefore, the end of man is to arrive at the contemplation of truth.²¹⁷

If the act of intellection is ordered toward being and truth, and if its operations are specified by their own objects and ends, then *species intelligibilis* cannot be what specifies those operations. *Species* belongs to the order of formal principle; object and end belong to the order of specification and completion. The remaining task is therefore to clarify what “object” means in this metaphysical context.

5.2 Kostelecky and Objects as Distinguishing Operations and Acts

With respect to the specifying role of objects and ends, M. Kostelecky’s work “The Object of the Intellect and Self-Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas,”²¹⁸ is especially pertinent. In Kostelecky’s reading of Aquinas, *obiectum*, “at least in its primary meaning,” is something “essentially and constitutively related to a power.”²¹⁹

Because “[p]ower,” as Kostelecky writes, “is ordered toward act,” and because a power can be brought into many acts, there must be some principle by which those acts belong together and by which the power is distinguished from other powers, and that principle is the proper *obiectum* of the power. Hence Kostelecky formulates *obiectum* as “the conceptual nexus” between *potentia*

²¹⁷ Aquinas, *ScGs* II, c. 83, n. 26.

²¹⁸ Matthew Kostelecky, “The Object of the Intellect and Self-Knowledge in Thomas Aquinas,” manuscript version published online April 18, 2025, forthcoming in *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 99, no. 1 (2025): 19–42. Page numbers here refer to the online version.

²¹⁹ Kostelecky, “Object of the Intellect,” (*mss*) 3–5. K. references *ST* I, q. 77, a. 3, co.; *ST* I-II, q. 18, aa. 2, 5, 10; q. 54, a. 1. ad 1.

and *actus* and “the conceptual means by which one, in accounting for acts and powers, moves from acts to powers or from powers to acts.”²²⁰

This is the sense of “object” needed for the present argument. *Obiectum* does not name an inner item placed before the mind, but rather that toward which a power or act is ordered, and by which that power or act is specified. Once this sense is restored, *species intelligibilis* can be distinguished more precisely from the object of intellection. *Species* is the formal principle by which intellect is actualized; *obiectum* is that toward which the act or operation is ordered.

On this basis, Kostecky’s central claim is that “the object of the intellect conditions self-knowledge in a basic way,” and that this becomes visible only when Aquinas’s account of object is recovered in its proper metaphysical aspects.²²¹

This matters because Aquinas does not speak univocally when he speaks of the object of intellect. On the one hand, the object of the human intellect is the quiddity of the material thing, the quiddities of material things, or the forms that intellect abstracts from images.²²² On the other hand, Aquinas also says that *being* is the proper object of intellect, the first intelligible, and that under which all things cognized by intellect are included. Kostecky clarifies this by distinguishing the proportional object from the formal object.

²²⁰ Kostecky, “Object of the Intellect,” (*mss*) K. references *ST* I, q. 77, a. 3, co.; *ST* I-II, q. 18, aa. 2, 5, 10; q. 54, a. 1, ad 1.

²²¹ Kostecky, “Object of the Intellect,” (*mss*) 1-2.

²²² Kostecky, “Object of the Intellect,” (*mss*) 8–9, 11, 17. K. references *ST* I, q. 84, a. 7; q. 84, a. 8; q. 85, a. 6; *SBDT* q. 1, a. 3, co.

The *proportional object* is what belongs to a given intellect according to its natural proportion toward intelligibility. In the case of the human intellect, this means that quiddities of material things are first known through sensible experience, imagination, phantasm, and abstraction. The formal object, by contrast, is what belongs to intellect as intellect, namely *ens*, or being, together with what is convertible with being, such as truth.²²³

The wider formal horizon of the human intellect, as Kosteletzky interprets, “is modulated by and through the proportional object of the intellect.”²²⁴ Human intellection is therefore ordered toward being and truth, but it reaches that horizon in a sense-dependent and discursive mode.²²⁵

Kosteletzky further shows that the human intellect’s access to its object is inseparable from phantasms and discursive reasoning. The human soul, in its intellectual aspect of knowing, does not know from within its own essence, but from without, through sensible experience, imagination, phantasm, abstraction, and the discursive operations that unfold from intelligible actuality.²²⁶

This bears directly on the chapter’s claim. The proportional object determines the human route of apprehension, abstraction, and understanding; the formal object determines the wider horizon under which all intellectual acts fall. Reflective self-knowledge is therefore not the object

²²³ Kosteletzky, “Object of the Intellect,” (*mss*) 8-19. K. references *ST* I, q. 5, a. 2, co.; *DVe* q. 1, a. 1, co.; *ST* I-II, q. 94, a. 2, co.; *ScG* II, c. 83; c. 98 *ST* I, q. 84, a. 7; q. 84, a. 8; q. 85, a. 6; *SBDT* q. 1, a. 3, co. *ST* I, q. 87, a. 3, ad 1.

Kosteletzky, “Object of the Intellect,” (*mss*) 14.

²²⁵ Kosteletzky, “Object of the Intellect,” (*mss*) 14-15. K. references *DVer* q. 2, a. 2, ad 2; *SBDT* q. 6, a. 1.

²²⁶ Kosteletzky, “Object of the Intellect,” (*mss*) 13-15, 25; K. references *ScG* II, c. 98.

of a separate power, but a distinct act returning upon a prior act already actualized through cognition of what is other than itself.²²⁷

Once *obiectum* is restored to this technical role, operations are specified and differentiated by their objects and ends because object is the conceptual nexus by which powers and acts are analyzed. The multiplicity of intellectual operations therefore follows not from psychological mechanisms, but from the metaphysical structure of object itself.

The act of human intellection does not attain the truth of being in an unconditioned or immediate way. It proceeds toward truth under the conditions of its proportional object, through acts elicited, ordered, and specified according to distinct objects and ends. *Species* is required for these acts, but it does not specify them as their object. It remains the formal principle from which they proceed.

This leads to the next question: if the act of intellection is ordered toward being and truth, and if its operations are differentiated by objects and ends, how does Aquinas distinguish those operations within the unified act of intellect?

5.3 Aquinas's "Two-Fold" Act: That Which Remains and That Which Proceeds

Once the act of intellection as a whole has been placed under the wider horizon of being (*ens*) and truth, one must still ask why Aquinas's account requires distinct operations of intellect at all.

²²⁷ Kostelecky, "Object of the Intellect," (*mss*) 24–25; K. references *DVer* q.10, a.8, co. and ad 1.

The response appeals, first, to Aquinas's own consistent and oft-repeated distinctions between the different sets of operations that are involved in the "two-fold act." For instance, Aquinas asserts

As the Philosopher treats *actions*, some go outward into exterior matter, on which they bring about some effect, as is clear in natural actions, like when fire heats wood, and in actions pertaining to art, like when a builder makes a house out of materials. And in such things the action is received, in what comes to be, through the manner of a passion, insofar as a movement, or alteration is in what is moved as in a subject. And therefore in such things one finds the action really in the agent, and really in the patient. But there are some actions that do not go outward into exterior matter such that they produce any effect in it, as is clear in vision, which, since it is the action of the one seeing, brings about no effect really in the thing seen. And such actions, which are properly called 'activities,' are only in the very one's performing them.²²⁸

and in *de Potentia* Aquinas states,

There is a twofold operation: there is an operation passing from the operating agent into something extrinsic, as heating does from fire into wood, and this operation is not a perfection of the operating agent but of the thing that is operated upon. For fire acquires nothing on account of its heating something. Rather, the thing heated acquires heat. There is another operation that does not pass into something extrinsic, but remains in the agent that operates, for instance, understanding, sensing, willing, and the like."²²⁹

And in *De veritate*, Aquinas writes

there are two types of action. One proceeds from the agent and goes out to an exterior thing, which it changes. An example of this type is illumination, which can properly be

²²⁸ Aquinas, *Sent* IV, d. 49, q. 2, a. 1.

²²⁹ Aquinas, *DPot* q. 10, a. 2, c 2.

called an action. The second type of action does not go out to an exterior thing but remains in the agent as its perfection. Properly speaking, this is called operation.²³⁰

With respect to structural analogies between “metaphysical” and “intellective” act(s),

Aquinas writes

Action is of two kinds (as is said in Metaphysics IX [1050a23–b2]): one that remains in the agent, like seeing and thinking, and one that passes into external things, like heating and cutting. Each occurs in virtue of some form. An action reaching toward an external thing occurs in virtue of a form that is a likeness of the action’s object. The heat of the thing heating, for instance, is a likeness of the thing heated. Likewise, an action remaining in the agent occurs in virtue of a form that is a likeness of its object. So the likeness of a visible thing is that in virtue of which sight sees, and the likeness of the thing being thought about, an intelligible *species*, is the *form* in virtue of which the intellect thinks.²³¹

At this point, a difficulty naturally arises. Since understanding is one of Aquinas’s own examples of an operation that remains in the agent, it would be misleading to imagine intellection as proceeding outward into exterior matter in the way heating proceeds into wood. The relevant question is more precise: how can an intellectual operation remain in the knower as perfection while also giving rise to something notionally distinct, such as a concept, word, judgment, or other term of understanding?

Cory and Lonergan are useful here because both preserve the unity of the act while distinguishing ordered operations within it. While Cory frames these within a metaphysics of noetic being and subsequent intellectual *doings*; Lonergan distinguishes *intelligere* from *dicere* and the inner words that proceed from acts of understanding. Their vocabularies differ, but both

²³⁰ Aquinas, *DVer* q. 8, a. 6.

²³¹ Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 85, a. 2.

accounts highlight that the operations that proceed from intellect actualized by *species intelligibilis* are ordered operations with their own termini, perfections, and ends.²³²

While there is disagreement—even among Aquinas interpreters aligned with the “metaphysical approach”—about what precisely transpires in that “proceeding,” most interpreters agree that this procession terminates with the unification of the intelligizing agent and the intelligized object, as will be discussed further below.²³³

²³² See Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 120–123, 215–216; Lonergan, *Verbum*, 136–138, 152–153. Cory references *DVer*, q. 8, a. 6; *ST I*, q. 54, a. 1, ad 3; *Sent IV*, d. 49, q. 2, a. 1; *ScG II*, c. 59. Lonergan references *DVer*, q. 4, a. 2, ad 4–7; *DPot*, q. 8, a. 1, c.; q. 9, a. 5, c.; *ST I*, q. 34, a. 1, ad 2–3. Lonergan's own account says that *intelligere* is operation in the sense of act, whereas *dicere* concerns one act grounding another; he explicitly distinguishes *species* as principle from the inner word (*verbum*) as term.

²³³ Interpreters such as Lonergan and Cory broadly agree that, in the special case of the human soul's intellectual operations, both “remaining” and “proceeding” belong *within* the essentially unified act of intellection. Cory identifies these with Aquinas's immanent and transeunt/transitive act, while Lonergan, following Aquinas's theological trajectory, interprets the *verbum* as proceeding from the act of understanding as something notionally distinct from the act that produces it, without thereby becoming an external product in the way “a cut” is produced in the thing cut. Aquinas writes: “The intellect, however, has something in itself that proceeds from it, not only in the manner of an operation, but also in the manner of a thing that is the term of an operation” (*DVer* q.4, a.2, ad 7); “For whenever we understand, by the very fact of understanding there proceeds something within us, which is a conception of the object understood, a conception issuing from our intellectual power and proceeding from our knowledge of that object” (*ST I*, q. 27, a. 1, co.); and “word alone signifies that which emanates from another. For what the intellect forms in its conception is the word. Now, the intellect itself, according as it is made actual by the intelligible species, is considered absolutely; likewise the act of understanding ... does not signify an act going out from the intelligent agent, but an act remaining in the agent. Therefore when we say that word is knowledge, the term knowledge does not mean the act of a knowing intellect, or any one of its habits, but stands for what the intellect conceives by knowing” (*ST I*, q. 34, a. 1, ad 1). For a recent interpretation along similar lines, see Shinsuke Kawazoe, “Verbum and Epistemic Justification in Thomas Aquinas,” in *The Word in Medieval Logic, Theology and Psychology: Acts of the XIIIth International Colloquium of the Société Internationale pour l'Étude de la Philosophie Médiévale*, ed. Tetsuro Shimizu and Charles Burnett (Brepols, 2009), 273–289. Lonergan also glosses Aquinas's modification of the “external” locus by adding “or in the self as other,” (see Lonergan, *Verbum*, 122–123), which indicates the manner in which the procession of the word to remain within the essential unity of the intellectual subject while still being notionally distinct from the act from which it proceeds. While Lonergan notes Aristotle's definition of efficient potency as a principle of movement or change “in the other or, if in self, then in self as other” (*Verbum*, 122–123), Lonergan emphasizes that Aquinas's more general account of *processio operati* does NOT retain the Aristotelian restriction *in alio vel qua aliud* (Lonergan, *Verbum*, 205–206). This makes possible an intelligible procession in which the inner word proceeds from the act of understanding as a distinct term while remaining within the unity of the intellectual subject. For this point discussed in the two ranges, Lonergan references Aristotle, *Metaphysics* V, 12, 1019a15–21; *Metaphysics* IX, 1, 1046a9–16; *Physics* II, 1, 192b21–23 and Aquinas, *InMeta* V, lect. 14, §955; *InMeta* IX, lect. 1, §§1776–77; *InPhys* II, lect. 1, §5; *DVer* q. 4, a. 2, ad 7; *ST I*, q. 27, a. 1, c. and ad 2–3; q. 27, a. 2, ob. 2; *ScG IV*, c. 11, §§1–7.

Just as the convergences and divergences between the ‘Direct Realists’ and the ‘Representationalists’ are instructive and illuminating with respect to how Aquinas can be interpreted differently, so too are they instructive and illuminating here, in describing how, even within the “metaphysical approach,” two interpreters might read things differently.

5.3.1 Cory on What “Remains” and What “Proceeds” in Terms of *Actus Imperfecti* and *Actus Perfecti*

Cory treats the distinction between multiple operations as indispensable to Aquinas’s account of cognition. Her broader claim is that intellection belongs within a metaphysics of “*being and doing*,” in which the intellect first comes to be actual in intelligible being and then operates from that actuality. The three operations of intellect therefore become clear only when Aquinas’s account of cognition is understood through a metaphysics of form, actuality, and operation.

In *Aquinas’s Intelligible Species as Formal Constituents*, Cory argues that the intelligible *species* “renders the possible intellect actual in intelligible being” and that, once intellect “receives the intelligible,” “it comes to be acting and operating, [...] and understanding.”²³⁴

Cory therefore treats the first operation as following prior actualization rather than as identical with reception itself. In her discussion of *De veritate* q. 8, a. 6, Cory writes that “some action or passion is required” for the intelligible to be united to intellect, and that “intelligizing...follows upon this action or passion, as effect [follows] cause.”²³⁵

²³⁴ Cory, “IS as Formal Constituents,” 285. Cory references *InMeta* XII, lect. 8, n. 717; *ScG* II, c.98.

²³⁵ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 121. Cory references *DVer* q. 8, a. 6.

That framework governs Cory's formal definitions of the operations. In Cory's reading of Aquinas, she claims that Aquinas "assigns intellect three kinds of operations."²³⁶ The 'first operation' is "contemplating ('simple apprehending') while human intellect also performs "two further kinds of operations," namely "constructing propositions ('composing and dividing') and "drawing conclusions from premises ('reasoning')."²³⁷ The first operation, then, is the simple act of *intelligere* itself, the contemplative actuality of an intellect already formed in noetic being.

The distinction between *actus perfecti* and *actus imperfecti* gives Cory a metaphysical vocabulary for explaining how these operations differ without becoming separate inner entities. *Actus imperfecti* names the act of what is still incomplete: the act of a subject that remains in potency to some further actuality. In bodily change, transitive action "is from an agent but inheres in the patient," and Aquinas calls it "the act of the imperfect" because it "unfolds in a subject that has unrealized potential."

By contrast, *actus perfecti* names the act of what is already in act, the kind of act that remains in the agent as its own perfection. Here "the agent not only originates the action, but is also the subject perfected by the action," so Aquinas calls such action the "perfection of the agent" and the "act of the perfect (*actus perfecti*)."²³⁸

²³⁶ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 116; See note 244, below.

²³⁷ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 245–246; Cory references *InPerierm*, Prooemium, *InPostAnal.*, Prooemium; *DVer* q. 15, a. 1, ad 5.

²³⁸ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 124–125. Cory references Aquinas *ST I*, q. 18, a. 3, ad 1; *Sent IV*, d. 17, q. 1, a. 5, sol. 3, ad 1; *InMeta IX*, lect. 8.

In Cory's reading, "the second actuality 'caps' first actuality as a perfection within the agent itself,"²³⁹ whereas in heating and similar cases the action brings about a perfection in something else. Because "acting presupposes being," "nothing acts except according as it is actual," and "being tends toward and is completed in acting," the distinction clarifies how intellect can first be actualized in intelligible being and then operate from that actuality.

With this distinction in place, Cory's account of the second and third operations can be read as an account of intellectual development within an already actualized knower. The later operations do not require *species intelligibilis* to become a new object, instrument, or inner item. Rather, they proceed from the actuality constituted through *species intelligibilis* and are distinguished by their own modes of completion.

For Cory, the second operation, composition and division (*composition et division*), is the act by which intellect first constructs propositional complexity. Although other interpreters sometimes call it 'judgment,' Cory notes that Aquinas treats composition and division as distinct both from judgment and from merely cognizing a complex. Cory therefore defines the second operation as "the action of assembling a proposition for the first time." What takes place here is an internal increase of complexity. In this act, "intellect causes some new complexity in itself," and this new complexity is ordered toward a "more perfect" assimilation to reality. Composition and division are therefore operations of internal noetic formation. They are acts through which intellect restructures itself into a more complex order. In this respect, composition and division

²³⁹ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 124-125. Cory references *InMeta* 9.8; *Sent.* 4.17.1.5.3, ad 1:

are differentiated by the complexity and propositional order they introduce, not by making *species intelligibilis* into a new object of cognition.²⁴⁰

Cory's treatment of the third operation, which she calls "reasoning" [or *considerare*], affords the fullest picture of intellectual self-development. Reasoning affords the fullest picture of intellectual self-development and is not a higher version of composition. According to Aquinas, reasoning "discourses from one to another, in order to arrive at what is unknown, from what is known," and for that reason it is "a motion-like process" rather than merely a higher-order composition.²⁴¹

Reasoning unfolds through multiple stages toward a terminus and thus resembles bodily motion more than the first operation does, though its field remains internal noetic being.²⁴² Through reasoning, Cory writes, "intellect introduces a stabilizing order" into itself, an order directed toward certitude and closure. At its strongest, this development culminates in "determination to one," that is, stable and explanatory certitude. The third operation therefore continues the self-development already begun in the second: one introduces complexity, the other stabilizes it.²⁴³

²⁴⁰ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 259-260; Cory references *ST* I, q. 16, a. 5, ad 1; *Sent* I, d. 19, q. 5, a. 1, ad 7; *DVer* q. 14, a. 1; q. 8, a. 14; *InDA* III, lect. 5.

²⁴¹ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 267. Cory references *InPostAnal.*, Prooemium; *ST* I, q. 58, a. 3; *Sent* II, d. 3, q. 3, a. 4, ad 2.

²⁴² Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 268-271. Cory references *Sent* IV, d. 17, q. 1, a. 5, qc. 3, ad 1; *ScG* I, c. 57; *InMeta* V, lect. 1.

²⁴³ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 270-275. Cory references *DVer* q. 14, a. 1; *ST* I-II, q. 14, a. 1, ad 2; *DVer* q. 10, a. 19, ad 5; *Sent* III, d. 31, q. 2, a. 4.

Reasoning is therefore ordered toward certitude and closure, while remaining an operation of an intellect already actualized through *species* as formal principle. Cory's final synthesis keeps all three operations in ordered relation. "The three operations of intellect are intertwined," she writes; the third "aims to conclude the work of the second," and the second brings intelligibles into relation so that they can be simultaneously actualized in the first. The first operation remains the intellect's "rest," "the act most proper to intellect," namely "intelligizing" itself.²⁴⁴ The second and third operations serve that more proper act by generating complexity and stability within intellect itself.

Thus Cory presents Aquinas's account of cognition as an ordered account of three operations within a single metaphysical framework of form, actuality, and operation. The first operation follows prior actualization in virtue of the reception of intelligible being and remains the intellect's proper contemplative act, while the second and third operations develop intellect through composition, division, and reasoning. This confirms the chapter's central point: once intellect is actualized through *species intelligibilis*, its subsequent operations are distinguished by their own modes of completion, not by assigning new object-like or instrumental functions to *species* itself.

²⁴⁴ Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 275. Cory references *InPerierm*, Prooemium.

5.3.2 Lonergan on “What Remains” and “What Proceeds” in Terms of *Actus Imperfecti* and *Actus Perfecti*

Lonergan begins his consideration of “*what remains*” and “*what proceeds*” by noting that Aquinas’s terminology for these operations is fluid. Terms such as *actio*, *operatio*, *motus*, *factio*, and *actus secundus* are not always distributed in exactly the same way across Aquinas’s works.

Yet for Lonergan, this terminological fluidity does not obscure the underlying structure. In Lonergan’s interpretation, Aquinas continues to distinguish between an act that remains in the agent as its perfection and an act that proceeds to a term. As Lonergan says,

In the *Sentences* and in the *De Veritate* an attempt is made to reserve *operatio* for the act that remains and *actio* for the act that goes forth [and in] the *Contra Gentiles*, *factio* is proposed for the act that goes forth and *operatio* or even *actio* for the act that remains.²⁴⁵

Lonergan further distinguishes the many places where Aquinas terms these two aspects *duplex operatio* (and sometimes *duplex actus secundus*), finally noting that the fluidity not only applied to Aquinas’s usage but also Aristotle’s.²⁴⁶

Nevertheless, Lonergan’s point is that a consistent thematic distinction remains beneath the shifting vocabulary. Aquinas distinguishes between the act that remains in the agent as perfection and the act that proceeds to a term. When Lonergan turns directly to this distinction in Aquinas, he emphasizes Aquinas’s contrast between *operatio* and *motus*; that is, *motus* or movement is “the act of the imperfect,” while *operatio* is “simply so called is of the completed.”²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ Lonergan, *Verbum*, 129-130.

²⁴⁶ Lonergan, *Verbum*, 130.

²⁴⁷ Lonergan, *Verbum*, 114. Lonergan references Aristotle, *De anima* III, 7, 431a5–8; Aquinas, *InDA* III, lect.12, §766.

In Lonergan's reading, *actus imperfecti* is movement, because what is moved is not yet complete in the relevant respect. *Actus perfecti*, by contrast, is "actus existentis in actu," indeed "actus existentis in actu secundum quod huius modi," and is therefore specifically complete, an *operatio consequens formam*.²⁴⁸

For Lonergan, the first set of activities, after the reception of the species qua in the possible intellect, is ordered toward understanding the quidditas presented through the data of experience and phantasm. This first movement is discursive and consists in activities-on-the-way; it has the character of *actus imperfecti* and pertains to the question *quid sit*, but they should not be described as taking species intelligibilis as their object.

For Lonergan, reasoning belongs to "thinking to understand." It is understanding-on-the-go and terminates in *intelligere* rather than constituting *intelligere* itself. As long as reasoning continues, the inner word remains unuttered; understanding and inner word are simultaneous when that movement reaches its term. The discursive work of reasoning belongs to this set, remains within the cognizing agent as it interacts with phantasm, and tends toward the perfection of an immanent intellectual capacity. In this respect, the activities of this first set have the ongoing temporality of *actus imperfecti* and involve both activity and receptivity, that is, both *pati* and *actio*. As long as something remains an object for understanding, it remains the object of these activities of understanding. As Lonergan remarks,

As long as the reasoning, the fluctuation of discourse, continues, the inner word is as yet unuttered. But it is also true that as long as the reasoning continues, we do not as yet

²⁴⁸ Lonergan, *Verbum*, 114–15; Lonergan references *ST I*, q. 18, a. 3, ad 1.

understand; for until the inner word is uttered, we are not understanding but only thinking to understand. Hence [complete] understanding and inner word are simultaneous, the former being the cause of the latter.²⁴⁹

In Lonergan's view, the second definitive operation, which he calls "formative abstraction," is the activity of articulation, assent, or "judgment." As he says, "intellect actually understanding is able to utter, constitute, produce its inner word of definition or judgment."²⁵⁰ This operation (which Lonergan associates with *dicere*), is grounded by *intelligere* and is ordered toward answering the question *an sit*. It is the completing judgment in which the intellect attains rational assurance concerning what has been understood, and thus gives form to the content of the act of understanding, the thing understood. Formative abstraction is thus the rationally conscious act of meaning or defining that proceeds from apprehensive abstraction and, as Lonergan says, "as ground of this procession, *intelligere* is named *dicere*."²⁵¹ *Dicere* accordingly names understanding insofar as it grounds an inner word: directly, the word of definition or conceptualization; reflectively, after a further reflective *intelligere* grasps sufficient evidence, the word of judgment.

²⁴⁹ Lonergan, *Verbum*, 51, 77, 153. Lonergan references *ST I*, q. 79, a. 8, c. Lonergan's exact conceptual point is that reason is "understanding in process" and terminates in an act of understanding; for judgment, reflective reasoning likewise terminates in and "pivots" with reflective *intelligere*. See Lonergan's assertion "this pivoting and production is no mere matter of some metaphysical sausage machine, at one end slicing species off phantasm, and at the other popping out concepts; it is an operation of rational consciousness." *Verbum*, 48.

²⁵⁰ Lonergan, *Verbum*, 137.

²⁵¹ Lonergan, *Verbum*, 77, 136–38, 152–53, 188–89. Lonergan references *DVer*, q. 4, a. 2, ad 4–5 and ad 7; *DPot*, q. 8, a. 1, c.; q. 9, a. 5, c.; *ST I*, q. 34, a. 1, ad 2–3. For the reflective *intelligere* from which the inner word of judgment proceeds, Lonergan references *DVer*, q. 3, a. 2, c.; q. 4, a. 2, c.; *DPot*, q. 8, a. 1, c.; q. 9, a. 5, c.; *Quodl V*, a. 9, c. Lonergan's chapter summary states expressly that *dicere* is rational consciousness understood as the act of understanding "as ground and origin" of inner words of both conceptualization and judgment.

Here again, the *object* and terminus of the operation must be distinguished from the formal principle of the act. The act proceeds from *species intelligibilis* as principle, but it is ordered toward ‘the understood’ and the judgment or word that expresses it.

Lonergan’s distinctions also prevent *species* from being identified with the inner word. *Species qua* is the form that actuates possible intellect; *species quae* names the preconceptual object of insight, the universal in the particular; the formed definition or judgment is the inner word that proceeds from an act of understanding. As Lonergan describes,

So too the word which is conceived in our mind does not pass from potency to act except insofar as our intellect passes from potency to act. But neither does the word arise from our intellect except insofar as it exists in act; but as soon as intellect exists in act, the word is conceived in it ... the intellect in act is never without a word.²⁵²

Like Cory, Lonergan treats this completed act as having the character of *actus perfecti*; that is, its end is co-terminous with its activity. The constituted act grounds the emergence—or “emanation” of the *verbum*, or inner word, which is the terminus of the act of understanding. What emerges at the end of this dynamic process is not *species intelligibilis* as an object, but the *verbum* or concept in which understanding is expressed. Insofar as the ultimate aim of the act of intellection as a whole, the *verbum* (emerging in the mode of intellectual emanation) is the terminus act as a whole, wherein the intellect expresses what has been grasped in prior operations.

²⁵² Lonergan, *Verbum*, 23. Lonergan references *ScG IV* c.14 §3.

To distinguish this likeness as emerging from the act, Lonergan uses the term “*species quae*,” that is, the reflected essential form, the pattern of intelligibility genetically related to its principle, but without materiality. This should not be confused with *species intelligibilis* as the formal principle of actualization.

Thus, while both Lonergan and Cory emphasize that Aquinas describes distinguishable operations in the act of human cognition, set into motion and determined by *species* as principle and resulting in ‘a certain being of reason,’ they disagree about order and the manner of procession.

Thus, Cory and Lonergan converge more than their different vocabularies suggest. Significantly, neither treats *species* as a finished product manufactured by agent intellect alone, deposited in possible intellect, and then instrumentally used. Rather, both Cory and Lonergan situate *species* within a metaphysical account of potency, act, form, operation, phantasm, and intellectual light. They also understand intellectual actuality as reflexively present to itself. Their principal difference concerns the status and ordering of first actuality and *intelligere*. For Cory, agent intellect and phantasm concur in educating the *species* by which possible intellect is actualized as a noetic intellect-intelligible unity; *intelligere* and the later operations proceed from this prior noetic actuality.

Lonergan likewise requires reception of the *species qua* as first act, but *intelligere* is the consequent first operation of the second act—apprehensive abstraction or insight into phantasm—which grounds the subsequent operations of the second act, namely formative abstraction, *compositio/divisio*, and the procession of the inner words of definition and

judgement. The difference is therefore local to the internal ordering of intellection, not to the project's governing claim that *species* is formal principle rather than object or later instrument.²⁵³

For the purposes of this project, both Cory and Lonergan emphasize the metaphysical approach and the multiplicity of operations, distinguished by their objects and temporal modes and proceeding from *species* as principle. While the order of operations, manner of procession, and the type of emergence or emanation differ, both of these interpreters challenge the "Standard Model," wherein agent intellect produces or derives the *species intelligibilis* that is then "deposited into" the possible intellect so as to be instrumentalized by subsequent operations.

5.4 Concluding Observations: Operations, Objects, and Ends

The argument of this chapter has completed the movement begun in the preceding chapters. Once *species intelligibilis* is restored to the order of form and principle, and once the act of intellection is described as one living act under multiple predicamental aspects, the remaining question concerns the differentiation of its operations. Aquinas's account of object and end supplies the requisite answer; namely, the act of intellection as a whole is ordered toward being and truth, while its operations are specified by their own objects, termini, and modes of completion.

²⁵³ See Cory, *Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 110–111, 120–123, 197–200, 214–216; Lonergan, *Verbum*, 176–178, 188–89. Lonergan references *ST I*, q. 85, a. 1, ad 3; q. 85, a. 2, c. and ad 3; *QDSC*, a. 9, ad 6. These passages clarify the *species qua/species quae* distinction and distinguish *species quae* from the formed inner word. Cory references *DVer*, q. 8, a. 6; *DVer*, q. 10, a. 6, ad 7; *QDSC*, a. 10, ad 4; *ST I*, q. 54, a. 1, ad 1 and ad 3; *Sent IV*, d. 49, q. 2, a. 1; *ScG II*, c. 59; *InMeta XII*, lect. 8, n. 2539. Lonergan references *ScG II*, c. 77; *ST I*, q. 85, a. 2, c. and ad 3; *ST I*, q. 79, a. 8, c.; *DVer*, q. 4, a. 2, ad 4–7; *DPot*, q. 8, a. 1, c.; *DVer*, q. 22, a. 5, ad 8; *ST I*, q. 14, a. 4, c. While Lonergan does sometimes say that a similitude is "produced" in possible intellect and identifies it with *species qua*; what he does not support is the manufacture-by-agent-intellect-alone, deposit, and instrumental-use interpretation. (See the "sausage machine" assertion, note 251.) Cory's rejection is even more explicit, as Cory asserts "Similarly, the intelligible *species* is not some independent immaterial "product of abstraction" that is manufactured by the agent intellect and left to rattle around in the possible intellect like a bead in a drawer." (*Metaphysical Mind* (draft mss.), 216.

Kosteletzky's account of *obiectum* clarifies this significance. An object, in the metaphysical sense, is not an inner item placed before the mind, but that toward which a power or act is ordered and by which it is specified. Human intellect reaches its wider formal horizon of being and truth through its proportional object, the quiddity of material things, and through the discursive operations proper to embodied intellectual life. The multiplicity of operations therefore follows from the structure of intellect itself, not from the need to assign further cognitive work to *species intelligibilis*.

Cory and Lonergan then show how intellectual operations proceed from actuality constituted through *species* as principle. For Cory, possible intellect is first actualized in noetic being and its later operations develop that already constituted actuality. For Lonergan, reception of the *species qua* from the data of sensory experience constitutes first act and *intelligere* follows as the first operation of the second act, grounding the subsequent operations of the second act, including formative abstraction and the inner word. In both accounts, *species* remains formal principle rather than object, deposited instrument, or later cognitive product. In both accounts, operations proceed from *species* as principle and educe a differentiated state of affairs; for Cory, intellectual “being” and “doing,” and for Lonergan, the *Verbum*.

Thus, in Aquinas's account of human intellection, *species intelligibilis* is the formal principle by which possible intellect is actualized and from which intellectual operations proceed. It grounds the actuality required for those operations and is neither the object of intellection in the modern sense nor the *obiectum* in the metaphysical sense.

This interpretation of *species intelligibilis* thus affords a satisfactory resolution of the ‘Debate.’ Once principle, object, terminus, and end are distinguished, *species intelligibilis* no longer needs to be treated as a produced likeness that performs a further cognitive function. It stands, as principle, at the origins of intellectual actuality, not at the end toward which intellection is ordered. The difference between Cory and Lonergan, therefore, is local to the ordering and interpretation of first actuality and *intelligere*; it does not alter the project’s governing claim that *species intelligibilis* functions as formal principle rather than *obiectum* or instrument. For both Cory and Lonergan, the act of human intellection proceeds from *species* as principle, through ordered operations, toward being and truth.

Ch 6: Aquinas, the “Metaphysical Approach,” and *Species Intelligibilis* – Concluding Observations

This project has aimed to account for the role of *species intelligibilis* in Aquinas’s account of human intellection by moving from the contemporary ‘Direct Realist’ vs. ‘Representationalist’ ‘Debate,’ through Cory’s metaphysical re-framing of that debate, and into a constructive application of the themes of act, potency, motion, operation, object, and end. Its governing claim has been that *species intelligibilis* is most adequately understood as formal principle: that by which possible intellect is actualized in intelligible being, and that from which the ordered operations of human intellection proceed.

The first stage of the project demonstrated that the ‘Direct Realist’ and ‘Representationalist’ interpretations disagree in significant ways, but that their disagreement often unfolds within a shared account of the sequence of cognition. In that sequence, human cognition begins in sensation, depends upon phantasm, requires the agent intellect, and culminates in the possible intellect’s reception of *species intelligibilis*. From that point, later operations of concept formation, judgment, reasoning, and reflective return proceed.

The difficulty identified by this project lies in the way that sequence is often imagined. Once *species intelligibilis* is treated as a produced likeness deposited in, retained by, or otherwise made available to the intellect, it begins to acquire an additional explanatory burden. It must then be explained as a likeness that somehow causes cognition, secures access to extra-mental being, avoids becoming an object, and yet remains sufficiently internal to do the cognitive work assigned to it.

In this sense, the hinge between the “Psychological Device View” and the “Formal Constituent View,” as Cory describes them, is the interpretation which reads *species intelligibilis* as a produced likeness that must then be instrumentalized.

Aquinas does term *species intelligibilis* a ‘likeness,’ and an adequate account must preserve that claim. However, on that assumption, the ‘Direct Realist’ interpreter must explain how this produced likeness opens directly onto extra-mental being without becoming a veil, while the ‘Representationalist’ interpreter must explain how the internal presence or representational character of the likeness does not trap cognition within its own mechanisms. Thus, even when both sides intend to preserve Aquinas’s realism, the shared produced-likeness structure continues to generate the worry it then attempts to resolve.

The second stage of the project turned to Cory because her metaphysical approach re-frames the terms in which the question is asked. Cory’s Formal Constituent View restores *species intelligibilis* to the order of form, actuality, and principle. On this account, *species intelligibilis* performs its cognitive role by being form, and by doing what form does; namely, constituting actuality in a subject and grounding the operations that proceed from that actuality. It is not a *sui generis* inner item, not a special psychological device, and not a “third thing” placed between the intellect and extra-mental being. It is the formal principle by which intellect comes to be actual in intelligible being.

This re-framing also clarifies the status of likeness. *Species intelligibilis* is a likeness, but it does not function as principle in virtue of its being a likeness. Its likeness-character follows from the metaphysical order in which form grounds actuality, wherein actuality bears a formal relation

to the principle from which it proceeds. In Cory's account, likeness is discerned in the eduction of intelligible being in the soul. The intellect is brought from potency into act; intelligible being comes to be in the intellect according to the mode of intellect; and within that procession there emerges a formal likeness to the intelligibility of the thing known. Likeness, then, is not an instrument first produced and then used. It is the formal similitude that belongs to the actuality constituted through *species intelligibilis* as principle.

The third stage of the project applied this metaphysical approach to the act of intellection as a whole. Once *species intelligibilis* is restored to the order of formal principle, the relevant questions change. The problem is no longer how an inner likeness bridges a distance between "mind" and "world," but what kind of actuality is constituted in intellect, by what principle, through what operations, and toward what end. Possible intellect, agent intellect, phantasm, potency, motion, action, passion, and the intensification of *species intelligibilis* therefore become intelligible as conditions and predicamental aspects of one living act of human intellection.

This is the significance of the project's turn to act *qua* act. The "metaphysical approach" allows possible intellect and agent intellect to be understood neither as little containers nor as interior homunculi, but as conditions of possibility for the actualization of intelligible being in the soul. It also allows motion, action, and passion to be understood as predicamental aspects of one and the same act, considered according to different relations.

The act of intellection can therefore be described as receptive and active, moved and moving, perfected and proceeding, without being fragmented into several separable interior events. The point is not to reduce Aquinas's account of intellection to a general metaphysics of

motion, but to show that the same metaphysical grammar makes the act of intellection intelligible as an ordered actualization of potency through form and into operation.

The appeal to intensification further strengthens this account. If one and the same accidental form can remain stable while the subject participates in it more or less perfectly, then *species intelligibilis* can remain the formal principle of intellectual life while the act of understanding develops, clarifies, intensifies, and proceeds through further operations. Development in understanding does not require the multiplication of inner objects or the replacement of one *species* by another at every later stage. The same formal principle can undergird an imperfect and developing act, whose later articulations are real without being separate things created and deposited in the mind. In this way, the metaphysical approach makes it possible to account for growth in understanding without converting *species intelligibilis* into a retained representational item or a sequence of cognitive tokens.

The final stage of the project turned to objects, ends, and operations. If acts and operations are specified by their objects, and if the act of intellection as a whole is ordered toward being and truth, then *species intelligibilis* cannot be the object of that act. Nor can it be the object of the distinct operations that proceed within it. The intellect is ordered toward quiddity under the conditions of human knowing, toward composition and division, toward judgment, toward the inner word, toward reasoning, and toward self-knowledge in act. These operations are differentiated by their objects and ends. *Species intelligibilis* stands at the originating side of this order. It is the formal principle by which intellect is actualized for these operations, not the obiectum toward which they are ordered.

In this respect, the project has aimed to show that Cory's metaphysical approach can be developed further. Cory's central corrective establishes that *species intelligibilis* is formal constituent rather than psychological device. The later chapters have sought to carry that corrective into a fuller account of the act of intellection, showing how the categories of potency, act, motion, action, passion, operation, object, and end further clarify why *species intelligibilis* cannot be interpreted as object, terminus, final cause, or instrumental likeness.

Accordingly, the project returns to the 'Direct Realist' vs. 'Representationalist' 'Debate' with some proposed resolutions. The 'Direct Realists' are right to resist an interpretation of Aquinas's account of cognition in which *species intelligibilis* becomes the primary thing known or a veil between intellect and being. The 'Representationalists' are right to insist that Aquinas's language of likeness cannot be ignored or treated as dispensable.

Nevertheless, both concerns are better addressed when likeness is restored to the order of form and formal procession. *Species intelligibilis* is likeness because the actuality educed through it bears a formal relation to the intelligibility from which it proceeds.

In this way, the contribution of the project lies in identifying the precise points at which the inherited terms of the 'Debate' begin to mislead. Thus, the project has aimed to demonstrate that Aquinas's own metaphysical account of act provides a more satisfactory way of interpreting the constituent characteristics and interacting operations of intellection, rather than advocating for Aquinas as either a 'Direct Realist' or a 'Representationalist.'

The act of human intellection, in this interpretation, is ordered toward the actualization of an intellectual potency through form, into operation, toward being and truth. Within that order,

species intelligibilis is indispensable, and this project has aimed to open up new ways to interpret what Aquinas had in mind in describing *species intelligibilis* as the “*id quo*,” that is, the formal principle by which the relevant potencies are actualized and from which intellectual operations proceed.

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