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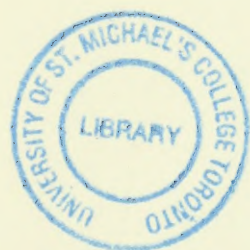
THE FUNCTION OF THE PHANTASM IN
ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

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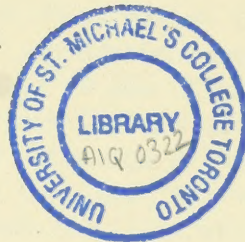
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The task that I put myself to work at was to try to find out what connexion there is between the intellect and the phantasm in the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas. What started me on this line of thought was that I could not see how we could have sensible phantasms for such ideas as unity, being, causality and the like. I used to be under the impression that according to scholasticism we derived our ideas from sense representations and once in possession of these ideas, which were purely intellectual, there was no further use intellectually for the phantasm. My problem then was, how can I have a sensible impression of the idea of being, or any of the other ideas like it. As I went into this subject, I found that my interpretation of the expression in Aristotle and St. Thomas, 'No idea without a phantasm', was wrong. I found it was not only true that there is no idea without a corresponding phantasm, but that furthermore the corresponding phantasm must always accompany the idea in consciousness. Whenever we are conscious of an idea, a sensible representation of that idea must be present also in consciousness. Why is this so? This is the question that naturally arises and it seemed to me worth while to try to find out what Aristotle's greatest interpreter held on this point.

Within the narrow limits of this paper is compressed a short survey of a large field. The paper attempts to show

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what is meant by saying that the intellect understands only universals. Then the text of St. Thomas is examined and it is seen that he finds from experience that the intellect cannot think without at the same time turning to the phantasms of the things thought, although that by which we think is the likeness of the object thought, which is in the intellect. Why the intellect needs to turn to phantasms, he tries to explain but in a most unsatisfying way. The main views opposed to his are then taken up and shown to be unsatisfactory. It is then shown that St. Thomas fits in better with the text of Aristotle and what is lacking in the former is found also lacking in the latter.

It should hardly be necessary to do so, but it may not be out of place to run over a brief summary of the theory of abstraction. The sensible object in the external world sets up a motion in the medium between the object and the eye. The medium conveys the motion to the eye. By the combined action of the motion and the sense organ, the sensation of sight results. After the removal of the object, experience tells us that a sense representation of the sensation remains in the imagination. According to the theory of St. Thomas, the intellect has the power of bringing this phantasm into contact with itself. It renders it intelligible. As the colour in the object is not visible without light and without the organ of seeing, so the phantasm is not intelligible except it be made intelligible by the intellect. The intellect, then, both makes the phantasm capable of being understood, of being known; and at the same time understands it and knows it. These two powers of the intellect are called the *Intellectus Agens* and the *Intellectus Possibilis*, the active and the possible intellects. The active intellect renders the phantasm capable of being understood. The possible intellect understands. The active intellect makes the phantasm intelligible by abstracting from

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it that by which it understands. Something, then, is abstracted from the phantasm and taken up by the possible intellect. This something is called the Species Intelligibilis and it is not the thing understood, not the thing known, but that by which the thing is known. There seems to be no doubt that this Species Intelligibilis is an intellectual likeness or representation of the thing understood. It is universal; it is equally representative of the universal form wherever it is found in the external world. When we know a bell, what we have in our intellect is applicable to all bells in the world and to all the bells that ever can be in the world. The Species Intelligibilis is the likeness in the intellect of the object outside by which we know the object outside. What is in the intellect is stripped of all individualizing qualities. The Species Intelligibilis in me is different from that in you for the same idea, different in number but exactly alike and an instrument by which I know the one universal existing in external objects.

The intellect directly knows universals and only by very obscure and complicated reasoning can Aquinas bring the intellect to know particulars. On meeting this at first, it strikes us as rather ridiculous to say that it is difficult to explain how man as an intellectual creature can know individuals. We think that we do know individuals. As a matter of fact, a little reflection will show that the real difficulty is to explain how even in sense knowledge an animal can ever know the individual. Aristotle says that the intellect grasps only the universal. No man since his time more perfectly assimilated this than Thomas Aquinas. One could wish that Aristotle too had considered a point of view and a very important one, on which he is silent.

It can be seen as follows what it means to say that the intellect grasps only the universal. Every word in a language

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is the expression of a thought in the mind. This gives us the mental word, *verbum mentale*. Every spoken word and consequently every thought in general is applicable to an indefinite number of spoken sentences or organized groups of thought besides the one in which at any time it happens to be used. If we say or think, 'Tom Vahey is six foot three in height', any one of the words can be used in an indefinite number of other sentences. This is what is meant by a universal. People of different tongues think the same thought when they think the same object, while the spoken and written words differ. French and German have the same thought in mind when they think the law of gravitation. They express it differently. The number of words in expression is not necessarily the same. We must be careful, then; there must be something in the mind to correspond to each spoken or written word. It may, however, not be simple but a compound. Even in the same language the same thought may be adequately expressed by one, two or more words. 'Immediately' and 'at once' may be good enough for examples. All words and all thoughts are universals. We can only designate the particular by a group of universals which occurs but once in nature. Even proper names are universals. There are many Toms, and even quite a number of Vaheys. There may be only one Tom Vahey and in that case the designation is sufficient. If there are more, we must add some other universal such as, 'the billiard expert.' If there are several Tom Vaheys who are expert billiard players, we may add 'of Toronto'. We can narrow down ultimately to a given position in space and time before we have the individual sufficiently separated from all others. Even the space and time positions taken separately are universals. There are many men living now and many men have lived even in the very space occupied by Tom Vahey now. All that can be said of an individual object, or thought of it,

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not all that one could wish. It is proper for an angel, he says, to understand without phantasms, directly through intelligible species, because it is an intelligible substance itself and without any body. It is natural for man as united with the body to learn of individual objects through individual phantasms rendered intelligible by the intellect. We apprehend the individual through the senses and the imagination. And then, he says, for the intellect to understand, it must of necessity turn to the phantasms.

To say that it is natural for the soul to understand without turning to phantasms, would be to run into Platonism and say that the union of body and soul does not benefit the soul but the body. This in his opinion is absurd. The union of body and soul is natural and therefore good for the soul. To turn to phantasms is natural and good for the soul. Such is his answer. Granting this, we should like to ask, in just what way is it done and how is it good for the soul? The question presented itself to him. 'But here again a difficulty arises. For since nature is always ordered to what is best (and it is better to understand by turning to simply intelligible objects than by turning to phantasms) it might seem that God would so order the soul's nature as to make the nobler way of understanding natural to it, and not to level it down for that purpose to the body.' (*Sum. Theol.*, Part I, q. 89, a, 1).

The answer in substance says that the nobler way would not be suitable to the inferior nature of man. Nature comprises a minutely graded series of beings from lowest to highest and the nobler is not suited to the less noble.

In the seventy-third chapter of the second book of the *Summa Contra Gentiles* we are so near the point that we become excited. '[The potential intellect] understands immaterial things, but views them in some material medium; as is shown by the fact that in teaching universal truths particular

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examples are alleged, in which what is said may be seen.' Note that this is a fact of consciousness. 'Therefore the need which the potential intellect has of the phantasm before receiving the intellectual impression is different from that which it has after the impression has been received. Before reception it needs the phantasm to gather from it the intellectual impression. . . . But after receiving the impression, of which the phantasm is the vehicle, it needs the phantasm as an instrument or basis of the impression received.' An understanding of the last clause would answer the question of this essay. 'And in this phantasm the intellectual impression shines forth as an exemplar in the thing exemplified, or as in an image.' He seems to have exactly the same view as Aristotle. We must use particular examples when reasoning on universal truths. It is a fact and that settles it.

Such is the way in which Aquinas expounds Aristotle's philosophy of the activity of thought in so far as it is connected with the phantasm. There is another exposition of Aristotle's meaning, diametrically opposed to this, holding that there is nothing in the intellect. The intellect sees the universal in the phantasms and takes nothing out of them. Remove the phantasms and thought ceases.

The two opposing views are closely connected with the question of the unity of the intellect and immortality. If thought is looking at phantasms, when the body perishes and with it all phantasms, there is no possibility of an after life. The battle over Aristotle's meaning raged in the middle ages between the two sides far more than is the case in our day. Theophrastus' few remarks as preserved in Themistius and the interpretation of Aristotle by Alexander of Aphrodisias had immense influence in spreading among the Arabians the doctrine of one intellect for mankind. Avicenna held that the active intellect is common to mankind, Averroes that both

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intellects are common. In either case the intellect sees the individual, concrete being in the phantasm. Although immortality should logically be inconsistent with this view, many Arabians and scholastic Averroists, particularly in Italy, maintained the immortality of the soul.

The majority of modern scholars favour the anti-Thomistic view. Windelband accepts it without reserve. Zeller tries to hold it and at the same time is convinced that there is an intellectual something. He is most obscure. Trendelenburg is pretty much scholastic. Brentano, in spite of his scholasticism, seems to be influenced. Adamson, who in my opinion reaches the heart of Aristotle better than anyone else, says that the intelligibles are not really separable from matter and cannot be apprehended except in concrete things. Rodier maintains that the intellect is the receptacle of forms and that the concept and consequently the scholastic species intelligibilis is quite apart from the sensible image. All admit the impossibility of establishing with any degree of certainty the true meaning of Aristotle.

The reason for the importance attached in this essay to the anti-Thomistic exposition is, first, because it is the only alternative: either there are intellectual impressions in the intellect by which we know the original objects or there are not; secondly, because according to it the necessity of turning to phantasms when thinking is obvious and, on the other hand, taking the Thomistic side no reason appears for the need of turning to phantasms in thought.

The anti-Thomistic exposition, continued along lines kindred to the mediaeval Arabians, does not seem so consonant with the facts of experience or as much in the spirit of Aristotle's language. Before trying to prove this statement, a word or two on Grote might be appropriate. I cannot find myself able

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to follow him with any satisfaction at all. He presses hard Aristotle's analogy of a figure on paper.

There is not even a triangle in general in the mind in any way. As we receive the sense impressions of a number of triangles, we group them together in the imagination, and when we use the general term triangle, what we mean is 'one of those.' This is true of all general terms and consequently of all words in the language. They signify no more than that what we mean is 'one of those' in that particular group of impressions joined together by a common likeness. The weakness of Mill and his followers is a failure to analyse thoroughly the concept of like and unlike. To say that like impressions group themselves together and then to pass on is to ignore the most profound question in philosophy. What is the meaning of like and unlike?

Let us now attempt to see how far the anti-Thomistic opinion in general fits the facts of experience and is in agreement with Aristotle. By it the intellect sees in the phantasm (and only one phantasm of a species is sufficient) the universal nature of the thing or quality; sees it as universally applicable to other individuals.

We talk about the triangle ABC, about A and B and C, about AB, BC, CA, about angle ABC. We turn away from the board and talk about it; we rub it out and still talk about it. Besides the triangle on the board, there is the thought in the mind, the triangle in the mind. When we leave the outside, enter the mind and consider thought, how does the analogy work? The phantasm is present and the mind considers it. When one thinks, is there a thought separate from the phantasm? When the figure on the blackboard is absent, we talk about and think about the sensible representation in our minds. Within the mind itself, is there an intellectual representation separate from the sensible phantasm? Or is

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thinking merely the mind looking at different aspects of the phantasm, looking at the shape and ignoring all else, looking at the size and ignoring all else, etc., etc.? In that event, it would be analogous in sensible knowledge to pointing.

To make this clear, let us suppose two men with only one phantasm between them and that outside of both, as an external object, or a figure on a blackboard. There is no idea or representation in the soul of either man. Is not this a close analogy to the above interpretation of the use of the phantasm in thought? How would it work? If the external phantasm, or external object, consisted of two houses, how could one man communicate to another that one house is larger than the other? Thinking is talking to oneself. If one thinks, one can express his thought in language. One phantasm, and that outside the men, is taken so that we can get at what takes place in the soul. If there were a phantasm in each, in communicating each would mean his particular phantasm. If the same man both indicates and receives, talks and listens, he possesses only one phantasm. In our supposed case, the two are taken in order to see what takes place in one when one talks to oneself, that is when one thinks. The man comes to the decision that this house is larger than that. Is it not equivalent to saying to himself, 'this is larger than that'? How can he say that? With the two phantasms in him, or with one phantasm in him which includes the two, he says, 'this one is larger than that'. Consider the two phantasms as outside of him. He will say to himself or to another, 'this is larger than that'. He will not use words expressive of ideas whether vocal or signs, because, according to the theory, there is no representation accompanying the phantasm. Perhaps an easier example could be taken. I cannot think of an easy one. He could point to each phantasm. It would be rather difficult by pointing to indicate quantity and that one quantity is different

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from another. He might draw his foot around the extremity of each phantasm, thereby covering the shapes. One might infer that he meant that one object was circular and one square. It is vital to remember that there is no thinking apart from the pointing and that there is no inference back of it. If the man points to red and blue and red, what would that mean? It certainly would not signify that the first is like the third and unlike the second. Remember we are trying to analyse what goes on within the intellect. If for the present, we allow ourselves the use of some difficult 'words' like big, small, like, different, is, a, the, motion, space, time, and their modifications; if we take it for granted that we have phantasms for them, we might be able to illustrate knowledge according to this theory. To think, 'red is different from blue', the man would point to the phantasm red, put in from somewhere or other the difficult 'is' and 'different from' and point to the phantasm blue. Leaving aside for the moment the difficult words, this should give us some grasp of thought. It is hardly necessary to call attention to its inadequacy.

Even at that we are confronted by a further tremendous difficulty according to this theory. If one man is going to communicate a judgement to another, must he not be conscious of the judgement beforehand? I know that not only in animals, but in man too, a great part of our thoughts come automatically, mechanically. If I am making myself clear, there is a big difficulty. How can the man, before he selects the phantasm necessary for his judgement, know which one to select? According to our illustration, it is impossible to bring to bear on it any knowledge apart from the phantasms. Memory cannot give any help. Memory is a storehouse of phantasms. The phantasms of the distant past stand on the same footing, as far as this point is concerned, as the recent phantasm. There must be some power to draw from memory

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and there must be knowledge of what to draw. Thinking is an arrangement of phantasms, an orderly arrangement of phantasms. (I am avoiding the question of true and false.) What makes it orderly? There is no thought, no idea apart from the phantasms. They are the ideas or thoughts or whatever you will call them and there is nothing else except the power of looking at them, selecting them and arranging them in an orderly way. Is man so fortunate as to arrange them properly? I might add that this problem is not peculiar to the explanation of thought which we have now under consideration. Brentano sees the difficulty and says it is the will. Of course it is the will, but does that explain the difficulty? How is one to will to call up a phantasm which is not present and cannot be thought of until it is present?

For those who interpret Aristotle as giving to the phantasm the function of a figure on a blackboard, in the sense that there is no intellectual idea apart from the phantasm, all the difficulties here mentioned present themselves. It is hardly worth while criticizing on this point Grote's attempt to make Aristotle an English Empirical Philosopher. With the others who claim that the intellect can do its work with only one phantasm of a species before it, we have a view more in the spirit of Aristotle, but still with the same difficulties to overcome. As I read them, although they use such terms as 'the intellect grasping the universal', 'abstracting', 'separating', they use the examples of the visible geometrical figure and push it to the extreme limit; they emphasize Aristotle's insistence that the universal is only found individualized in the concrete objects of the species. This may be logical. It is another question whether Aristotle so thought. According to this interpretation, thought is the act of the intellect looking at the phantasm, or some quality of the phantasm. In sense knowledge, an animal sees an object and carries away a repre-

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sentation of it. In intellectual knowledge, the intellect sees a universal in the phantasm but carries nothing away, takes nothing out of it. In thinking, there is nothing in the intellect but the power of seeing the universal in the phantasm. Take away the phantasm and thinking goes with it. At once we are faced by the difficulties which the above-mentioned example was intended to illustrate. Thought is the arrangement and contemplation of phantasms or aspects of phantasms. A sentence or the organized group of thoughts of which it is the expression, would be like the eye looking at the different objects in a room in an orderly manner, if we could eliminate the conscious thought behind the eye. Perhaps it would be a better comparison, though still halting, to imagine first a number of words on a blackboard and something pointing to one after another in such order as to make sense.

What must be firmly grasped is, that there is no thought back in the intellect which looks, corresponding to the object seen. It is true that we know that we know and that this fact is hard to corner. What stands out above all is that there is no thought in the mind apart from phantasms.

It is true that Aristotle insists that the individual alone exists (that is, the concrete object), and so seems to lend support to this theory. In the next breath he says that in sense knowledge, the form enters without the matter. In the sense the soul possesses the identical object outside stripped of matter. According to his own words clearly stated and to be seen in a score of places, the form does exist apart from the concrete external object. The form, whether the individual form or the species form, is both inside the mind and outside the mind at the same time. With an understanding of immateriality, this presents no difficulty. When Aristotle is harping on the impossibility of Plato's Ideas being 'separate'

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is a group of universal words or thoughts. Is this group individual? Aside from the combination of space and time marks, taken together, the group, however numerous the predicates or universals, could be found elsewhere at a different time or in a different point in space. Although this particular Tom Vahey occupies this particular point in space at this particular point in time, it was possible for another to be the one; and all that we can now say of this one, we would have been able say of the other.

If you define Tom Vahey as the six foot three man, etc., and go on to say 'who was in a certain part of a certain room at ten o'clock on May the 16th, 1922', you have a particular. This group of universal characters could never be predicated of more than one extended object at the same time. It is the only case where we can get the particular. Even in this case, we do not know the particular. We know that what we see now we see now and no other, but which one we see now we cannot know. Assuming a number of men exactly like the one described, and assuming that I see one of them at a given spot at ten o'clock, May 16, 1922, how can I know which one is present? There is something peculiar and individual to each concrete object in the sense that no other object possesses it or could possess it. But how can we know it? This is what Aristotle meant when he said that the intellect knows only the universal.

What Aristotle failed to notice, and St. Thomas after him, was the difficulty experienced in explaining how sense knowledge knows only particulars. At first sight this looks easier. A little consideration reveals a lot of trouble. When I go to my mother's home at intervals of weeks or months, I resume acquaintance with the family Irish terrier, Ginger. Ginger does not hide his light under a bushel when he is engaged in his great function of guarding the house against

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strangers. His savage bark, except for the favoured few, is well known around the neighbourhood. No stranger day or night can step inside the precincts without a hostile demonstration from Ginger. I can, after an absence of months, walk boldly, even on the darkest night, right to the door. If he feels like it, he will stretch himself and come quietly out for a silent greeting, or he may decide to remain in his kennel and wait till morning. He knows my walk. If a perfect stranger should walk just like me, would he not mistake him for me? Of course he would, and is it not conceivable that a number of men should walk like me? My walk is universal. He knows my face, my clothes, the look in my eyes, my voice. Another man comes who wears clothes like mine, the same shape, size, his face is just like mine and his voice, the look in his eyes, every movement of the body, every expression of the face, every word that he speaks is just as it would have been with me then. Would Ginger know the difference? Ginger could not possibly know. There could be a thousand men like me and how could either reason or sense know me, know the particular? If this is not what is meant by knowing the particular, then what does it mean? For me, at any rate, there is a real problem here. It surely seems that even sense can only say that this individual A is a member of a class. It is true that there may be no other member of the class, but it would be possible to have many members and then the sense knowledge of the animal could not tell the difference between them, and so how does it ever know the particular?

However, St. Thomas faithfully reproduces the doctrine of Aristotle when he claims that sense knows particulars, the intellect knows universals. He holds that the intellect knows universals by means of the species intelligibiles which it possesses. It is important to establish (1) that these species intelligibiles are likenesses in the intellect of the objects

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outside the soul which are known by them, (2) that these species are in the intellect quite apart from the phantasm and are preserved in the intellect even after the soul is separated from the body and consequently from the phantasms which are in the sensible imagination and perish with the body. Assuming that some may read this who would be frightened off from Scholastic Latin through unfamiliarity with it, I am going to take the liberty of giving St. Thomas in English and I am going to use the Dominican translation of the *Summa Theologica* and Rickaby's Translation of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*. The English of the other passages is my own.

(1) In the *Opusculum De Unitate Intellectus*, St. Thomas says: 'But when this (Species) is abstracted from its individuating principles, it does not represent the thing according to its individual condition but according to its universal nature only. For there is nothing to hinder, if two qualities are united in a thing, that one of them can be represented even in sense without the other.' No comment is necessary to show that the species in this passage represents the concrete external object. Again in the *Opusculum De Natura Verbi Intellectus*, there are a couple of passages worth quoting: 'Just as in the beginning of the intellectual activity, the intellect and the species are not two but the intellect itself and the species intellectually illuminated are one, so also in the end one thing remains, namely the perfect likeness [of the thing]'. 'Intellection terminates in that very thing in which the essence of the thing is received, nay from the very fact that it is itself, the likeness of the essence.' 'For the mental word (that is the thought in the mind which is expressed by the spoken word) is not begotten by the act of the intellect, nor is its likeness nor even the likeness of that species by which the intellect is informed . . . but the likeness of the thing'.

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De Differentia Verbi Divini et Humani: 'From this we can gather two things concerning the mental word, namely that the word is always something proceeding from the intellect and existing in the intellect and that the word is the nature and likeness of the thing understood . . . the concept which anyone has of a stone is only the likeness of a stone but when the intellect understands itself, then such a mental word is the nature and likeness of the intellect.' The concept is not the species; but if the concept is the likeness only of the thing, then the species too is the likeness of the thing. *De Sensu Respectu Singularium et Intellectu Respectu Universalium*: 'All knowledge takes place through the fact that the thing known is in some way in the one knowing, namely, according to its likeness . . . the intellect receives in an immaterial and incorporeal way the likeness of that which it understands . . . it is clear therefore that the likeness of the thing which is received in the sense represents the thing according as it is individual, but when received in the intellect it represents the thing according to its universal nature.' *De Ente et Essentia*, c. 4: 'And although this nature understood has a universal side when compared with things which are outside the mind because there is one likeness of all, nevertheless according as it has existence in this intellect or in that, it is a definite particular species understood.' *Summa Theologica*, Part I, q. 85: 'The thing understood is in the intellect by its own likeness and it is in this sense that we say that the thing actually understood is the intellect in act, because the likeness of the thing understood is the form of the intellect as the likeness of a sensible thing is the form of the sense in act.' *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book II, c. 59: 'The understanding as apt to understand and its object as open to representation and understanding are not one. . . The effects of the active intellect are actual representations in understanding.' *De*

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Potentiis Animae: 'Therefore the substance of a thing is that which the intellect understands, but the likeness of that thing, which is in the soul, is that by which the intellect formally understands the thing outside.' 'So understanding takes place through the possible intellect as receiving the likeness of the phantasm, through the operation of the active intellect abstracting the immaterial species from the phantasm and through the phantasm itself impressing its likeness on the possible intellect.' *Summa Theologica*, Part I, q. 87, a, 1: 'As the sense in act is the sensible in act, so likewise the intellect in act is the thing understood in act, by reason of the likeness of the thing understood which is the form of the intellect in act.' *Ibidem*, q. 87, a, 2: 'Material things outside the soul are known by their likeness being present in the soul and are said, therefore, to be known by their likenesses.' *Ibidem*, q. 78, a, 2: 'Knowledge requires that the likeness of the thing known be in the knower, as a kind of form thereof.' It seems to me sufficiently clear without further comment that according to St. Thomas, the intellect knows things outside by likenesses of them which are in itself.

(2) Let us now show that these likenesses exist whole and entire apart from phantasms. In the sixth and seventh articles of the seventy-ninth question in the First Part of the *Summa Theologica*, Thomas proves that besides sense memory, there is an intellectual memory which stores ideas. They are preserved in the intellect when not present in consciousness; but to obtain a clear-cut view, no better way can be found than by considering the case of the soul after death, when the body with all sensible organs including the imagination and its phantasms no longer exists. For an understanding of the psychology of Aquinas, his treatise *De Angelis* and the different places where he treats of souls separated from their bodies are invaluable. Separated souls understand not only

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as well as in this life and that without any phantasms to which to turn; but indefinitely better. The mode of understanding after death is different from the mode of understanding while the soul is united to the body. When the soul is united to the body, it can only acquire new knowledge through the sensible impressions conveyed in the phantasm and it can have no thought without a corresponding phantasm. After death the soul retains the species intelligibiles of all the thoughts which it had in this life but these in perhaps every case, certainly in nearly every case, form but a very small portion of the knowledge which the separated soul possesses. The new knowledge gained does not come through phantasms but by the direct infusion of species intelligibiles. A few quotations will suffice to establish this. *De Unitate Intellectus*: 'It is evident that the species are preserved in the intellect; for it is as the philosopher [Aristotle] had said above, the place of species, and again, knowledge is a permanent habit.' *Contra Gentiles*, Book 2, c. 73: 'Nor can those impressions formally received into the potential intellect have ceased to be, because the potential intellect not only receives but keeps what it receives.' *Ibidem*: 'He [Avicenna] says that intellectual impressions do not remain in the potential intellect except just so long as they are being actually understood. And this he endeavours to prove from the fact that forms are actually apprehended so long as they remain in the faculty that apprehends them . . . but the faculties which preserve forms, while not actually apprehended, he says, are not the faculties that apprehend those forms but storehouses attached to the said apprehensive faculties . . . hence (because it has no bodily organ) Avicenna concludes that it is impossible for intellectual impressions to be preserved in the potential intellect, except so long as it is actually understanding. . . So it seems (according to Avicenna) that the preservation of intellectual

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impressions does not belong to the intellectual part of the soul, but, on careful consideration, this theory will be found ultimately to differ little or nothing from the theory of Plato. . . . Intellectual knowledge is more perfect than sensory. If, therefore, in sensory knowledge there is some power preserving apprehension, much more will this be the case in intellectual knowledge. This opinion [of Avicenna] is contrary to the mind of Aristotle, who says that the potential intellect is the place of ideas; which is tantamount to saying, it is a storehouse of intellectual impressions, to use Avicenna's own phrase. . . . The potential intellect when it is not considering them [intellectual impressions] is not perfectly actuated by them but it is in a condition intermediate between potentiality and actuality.' *De Anima*, a, 15: 'Separated souls will also have definite knowledge of those things which they knew before, the intelligible species of which are preserved in them.' *Ibidem*: 'We must say that separated souls will also be able to understand through the species previously acquired while in the body but nevertheless not through them alone but also through infused species.' *De Natura Verbi Intellectus*: 'For that which is understood can be in the intellect and remain in the intellect without being actually understood.' In the fifteenth article of his treatise *De Anima* in the *Quaestiones Disputatae*, he deals with the question whether a separated soul can understand. Twenty-one objections are given and the matter is treated thoroughly. There is no doubt in his mind that the soul can think as in this life only much better and without any phantasms.

There remains the real problem of this paper. If the soul retains in the intellect the intellectual impressions by which it knows things and if when separated from the body it can think and understand without turning to phantasms, why should it have to turn to phantasms every time that it thinks?

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St. Thomas anticipated us in asking this question. In the seventh article of the eighty-fourth question in the first part of the *Summa Theologica*, he asks: Can the intellect actually understand through the intelligible species of which it is possessed without turning to the phantasm? The answer is, no: 'the philosopher says (*De Anima*, 3) that the soul understands nothing without a phantasm'. The intellect does not make use of a corporeal organ. If it did not use the body or the sensible part of the soul in some way, there would be nothing to hinder the soul from its activity in the intellect after the lesion of a corporeal organ. We know, he says, as a matter of fact that this is not so. In cases of frenzy, lethargy, loss of memory, a man cannot think even of the things of which he previously had knowledge. Again any man for himself can see that when he tries to understand something, he forms phantasms to serve him by way of example.

In a nutshell, then, the reason why St. Thomas holds that we cannot think without turning to phantasms is because we know from experience that it is a fact. Our own experience will bear him out in this when it is a question of the great mass of all thought. Whether it is so obvious with the more general notions, such as unity, being, good, etc., it is not so easy to say.

At any rate, we know that St. Thomas holds that to be conscious of any thought we must at the same time turn to the phantasm in our imagination in which is imbedded the particular representation from which that universal thought was drawn, and secondly the reason why he claims that this is so is because it is a fact of experience.

One might then naturally inquire, what is the explanation? Granted that it is true, why does the soul have to turn to phantasms? St. Thomas answers this too. His answer is

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from things in the world of sense and pressing hard that his Forms are in things, he was not thinking of the intellectual thought in the mind; he was fighting against the universal being set up as a separate metaphysical existence, presumably, independent of mind and sensible object. If sense knowledge is like the imprint of a seal on wax and if intellectual knowledge is analogous to sense knowledge, should not the impression of the phantasm, (in whatever way the sensible-intellectual chasm is spanned) leave an impression of some kind on the intellect, should there not be in the intellect a representation of the phantasm, as the phantasm is a representation of the object? Could it not be that the form, the essence, since it does exist at the same time in the object and in the phantasm, exists also, in a still purer form, in the intellect? True, the definition of Socrates which formed the basis for Plato's metaphysical Idea and for Aristotle's Form was expressible in words and it would seem that to be consistent, if we know the essence, we should be able to express our knowledge in words and the old question could be put, do we ever know the inner essence of things? Not completely, but we do define, classify and to that extent know the essences of things. It need not mean more than that the intellect would assign an object to a class. It might be asked, 'Why do you assign it to that class? Why do you say that that is its essence?' and the reply might be given, 'I cannot explain the reason why, but I know it is one of that class.' Is it not true that we do a lot of apparently mechanical work that way? If we knew more about the internal mechanism of the mind, we might find out that what we glibly call the laws of association of ideas are merely expressions of such operations. It is easy to say that like idea calls up like idea. How is it that like ideas become connected in the mind? They are not connected by a conscious, intentional operation. The mind by an uncon-

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scious movement classifies every object which it meets. This is a fact which needs no proof. To say that A is like B is to express the essence of A to that extent. The mind may do this consciously. It certainly does it unconsciously too. To classify is to define, to define is to give the essence. The mind unconsciously classifies like with like and thereby, it seems to me, shows that it grasps the essence. To know the essence in this manner, to grasp the essence, does not mean that the mind sees the complete inner nature of a substance with the eye of omnipotence. With all my books on the floor, I undertake to place them in the shelves. How do I go about it? I put the Greek books together, the Latin ones together, etc. They are all books; they belong to one genus. To classify the members of this genus into species, I take the books which are 'alike' which have a specific difference in common. To define the essence of this particular member, all that is necessary is to name the genus and that in which the members of its class are alike, e.g., the Greek language. To define, then, to express the essence, it is sufficient to know resemblances and differences. The mind does this as unconsciously as we assimilate food, every time it receives a new impression, grouping it with others which possess with it a common character. Any object or any event may be put in a number of different classes at the same time. The phenomenon is so ordinary, so universal that it fails to excite wonder. According to Aristotle's own words, then, the form enters the mind and is apart from the individual and the intellect can know this form, the essence.

Space does not permit of a very lengthy investigation into the text of Aristotle for the purpose of establishing how far the interpretation of St. Thomas agrees or conflicts with his master. It is hardly necessary to do so now. Trendelenburg, Adamson, Piat and Brentano,

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notwithstanding differences among themselves, agree that there is something intellectual in Aristotle's idea. They give no clue as to why the intellect should need the phantasm once it is in possession of the idea. Surely no apology is needed for saying that the case is not yet settled against the pure intellectual impression in the Thomistic sense.

It will have to suffice to examine briefly two passages in Aristotle, which strike me as two of the strongest against Aquinas' interpretation:

(a) τὰ μὲν οὖν εἶδη τὸ νοητικὸν ἐν τοῖς φαντάσμασι νοεῖ (*De Anima*, 431 b 2).

The sentence looks very much as meaning that the intellect sees the universal as it is in the phantasm and that there is never any intellectual impression of the object in the intellect. The word *νοεῖ* is the cause of the trouble. How would it be to translate: 'The intellect intelligizes the forms in the phantasms'? The meaning is not very clear. It is just as clear as the Greek. All our work is an attempt to establish what Aristotle meant by *νοεῖ*. If we knew that, we should know whether the universal is in the phantasm alone and in no way in the reason and we should know how the intellect uses the phantasm in thinking. Consequently we cannot use the word *νοεῖ* to prove that it means surveying universals which are in *φαντάσματα* and not in *νοῦς*, until we know the meaning of *νοεῖ*.

(b) ὅταν τε θεωρῆ, ἀνάγκη ἅμα φάντασμα τι θεωρεῖν· τὰ γὰρ φαντάσματα ὥσπερ αἰσθηματά ἐστι, πλὴν ἄνευ ὕλης. *De An.*, 432 a 7.

I must admit that this passage shook my confidence in the interpretation of St. Thomas. It seems to do away with imageless thought. My objections still held but they were then objections to Aristotle. The word *θεωρεῖν* certainly does lend

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support to those who deny the intellectual impression apart from the phantasm. The case hinges largely on the word $\tilde{\alpha}\mu\alpha$. Without $\tilde{\alpha}\mu\alpha$ the meaning would be that whenever a man contemplates an idea, he contemplates the phantasm and sees the idea in it. With $\tilde{\alpha}\mu\alpha$ it means, whenever a man contemplates an idea, he must at the same time contemplate the phantasm. Are these two contemplations, one of the idea, which is apart from the phantasm, and one of the phantasm? Why it should be necessary for the mind to look at the idea, if it is separate, and then at the phantasm, I fail to see. Yet what is $\tilde{\alpha}\mu\alpha$ doing there? We find ourselves in Aristotle facing the identical problem we are investigating in St. Thomas. No answer is afforded in Aristotle any more than in Aquinas but they do seem to agree.

And these are I think among the strongest passages favouring a difference between them. In all probability no explanation will explain all the difficulties of the subject. The theory which makes the intellect merely gaze at phantasms brings in its train insuperable objections; and, in spite of some passages which, taken in isolation, would lend themselves to support that theory, does not seem to be the mind of Aristotle.

Our results may be summed up as follows. The intellect, according to St. Thomas, cannot think without turning to phantasms. The intellectual impressions, the species intelligibiles, which the intellect gathers from phantasms, are in the intellect apart from phantasms, are preserved in the intellect when not in consciousness, and after death are sufficient for the exercise of thought, without turning to the phantasms. We know as a fact that we do turn in this life to phantasms when we think. We use examples to illustrate universal truths. We draw geometrical figures, particular ones, on the blackboard, and reason and talk of universal ones.

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But on the question, why this should be so, the answer is not satisfactory. A study of Aristotle and his commentators justifies one in holding that in this there is no opposition between 'The Philosopher' and his great admirer and greatest expositor. Aristotle, too, recognized as a fact that images accompany our thoughts, and that we use particular sensible examples to illustrate general truths. This led him to lay down that there is no thought without a phantasm, and he left it at that. St. Thomas went further than Aristotle in probing the difficulty. It may be that it cannot be solved and that he went as far as any man can go.

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