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# The Function of the Vis Cogitativa in Preparing the Phantasm for the Act of Abstraction According to St. Thomas Aquinas

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THE FUNCTION OF THE VIS COGITATIVA IN PREPARING  
THE PHANTASM FOR THE ACT OF ABSTRACTION  
ACCORDING TO ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

by

Daniel Leo Flaherty, S.J.

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of The Graduate School  
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the Requirements for the Degree of  
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## LIFE

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Taking their cue from modern science, whose technological marvels far exceed the wildest dreams of the seventeenth century experimental scientists who laid their foundations, Logical Positivists in general, and certainly the influential Vienna Circle in particular, have consistently laid stress on the method of the experimental sciences as the proper method for progress in knowledge. Pragmatically enough, their argument usually consists in showing the great progress of experimental science in the last three hundred years or so, as contrasted with the sorry state of philosophic muddling which has gone on through the ages, and finds philosophy no further advanced now, and with possibly even less agreement among philosophers, than at its inception at the dawn of reason.

Freely assuming, therefore, that the difference in progress between science and philosophy is due to the difference in the method of each, and not to the subject matter, they extoll the "Scientific method" as the only sure and practical means of advancing knowledge, and berate the intuitionism or abstractionism

of the philosopher. "Essences" and "forms" are meaningless mental constructs of the ancients, have never been found in nature, and merely serve to obstruct the progress of knowledge by causing the philosopher to expend energy on a will-o-the-wisp. Moreover abstraction, or the process whereby the ancient philosopher thought he was intuiting "essences", is no longer required to explain knowledge if we once accept the fact of the illusoriness of "essences" or "forms" at the heart of all creatures. Philosophy, and philosophers, would do much better to accept that fact and build a new and progressive science of philosophy on the scientific theory of knowledge and criterion of truth.

I do not intend here a critique of Logical Positivism. I rather mention its statements against "intuitionism" to emphasize the growing modern tendency of impatience with the naive view of scholastic abstraction as something automatic and faultless--as if in any one presentation of an object the mind knifed immediately to the essence of the thing, and drew it forth to form its own infallible idea of that object in the mind. Certainly no Scholastic holds such a naive view. One will nowhere find it even hinted at in a textbook of Scholastic philosophy. But there is an unfortunate tendency among us, in various contexts, to speak of "abstracting essences" in such a way that would lead many to conclude that we hold just such a view.

St. Thomas himself, for instance, seems to say precisely

that in many places, such as this statement in the Summa Theologiae: "Intellectus humanus non statim in prima apprehensione capit perfectam rei cognitionem; sed primo apprehendit aliquid de ipsa, puta quidditatem rei, quae est primum et proprium obiectum intellectus; et deinde intelligit proprietates et accidentia, et habitudines circumstantes rei essentiam."<sup>1</sup> At a casual reading this text would certainly seem to say that the intellect, in the first apprehension of any object through the medium of the senses, immediately knows the essence, or quiddity, of that object.

But this text, as always, must be understood in the context of St. Thomas' whole doctrine on the act of perception and intellection. It specifically does not mean that the intellect knives immediately to the essence of the object. It does mean that in the first perception of an object the intellect is aware that there is an essence in the object according to which it exists. Thus the vaguest perception possible is expressed in the judgment "it is." Intellect does not know what the "it" may be--a man, a horse, a tree, etc.; but it does know that there is something existing. Intellect is aware that there is a subject there for the act of existing, and that subject of existence is called by the Thomistic term "essence." Hence St.

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<sup>1</sup>s.T. 1, q.85, a.5. Sancti Thomae Opera Omnia, Leonine Edition, (Rome, 1888). (All references to St. Thomas' works in this thesis, unless otherwise specified, refer to this edition.)



Thomas says here that the intellect, in that first apprehension of an object, does not have "perfectam rei cognitionem", as it would if it knew the essential definition of the object. It does not, possibly could not, define the object. But it can and does know that this object has an essence in so far as it is a subject of the act of existing.

Perhaps the major source of this misunderstanding of the scholastic position among moderns are the texts which treat of the metaphysics of the act of abstraction, wherein the progress of the act is treated in a somewhat linear fashion through sensation, operation of the agent intellect, formation of species, and enunciation of the concept. This analysis of the operation is in itself an abstract, including no references to the time it takes a man to reach the various stages of the development, and merely outlining the steps of the process. Yet it is often construed to mean that the process itself is automatic, and that given the sense data the active and passive intellects push on inexorably to the formation of a concept of the essence of the object.

On the other hand, the psychological facts derived from our own experience of the act of ideation are otherwise. When we reflect critically on our own processes of forming an idea of something, we discover first of all a prolonged period of mulling over the data, then a pre-occupation with several outstanding or

pertinent points of the data, and then in a flash of understanding we figuratively snap our mental fingers and come to a realization of the concept. Now it is this seeming contradiction between the personal psychological experience of acquiring knowledge and the quasi-automatic metaphysical explanation of the same process by the textbooks that make many moderns reject the so-called "conceptualist" position as basically untrue.

Yet in actuality, the scholastic position is not far from the "scientific method" of the Positivist in the way in which it specifically delineates the process of abstraction. For in any full evaluation of the position, in which the complete process from sensation to ideation is analyzed, the facts of psychological experience are fully accounted for, even in the metaphysical abstract. But as with so much else, the little bit that the scholastic does differ from the Positivist can be called, in all the fullness of the original Chestertonian term, a "tremendous trifle". For that little bit of difference makes all the difference between a realism and a subjectivism, and safeguards the notion of objective truth and certitude against the Positivist's position of practical truth and high probability.

With regard to this particular criticism, then, the most important step in the processes of abstraction in the Aristotelian-Thomistic position lies in the hard to analyze processes of the mind between sense cognition and actual intellection. It is fre-

quently this precise step in the process of abstraction that is overlooked in textbook explanations. For while all the texts agree in quoting St. Thomas as to the necessity of having an "apt phantasm in the process of abstraction, very few take the time to point out, even in the metaphysical abstract of the process, just precisely how the phantasm is prepared or made "suitable." It is therefore the purpose of this thesis to study this process of preparing the phantasm, this process of making the phantasm apt for abstraction.

That this is to be done, as we shall see more in detail later, is easily proved from the texts of St. Thomas himself. How it is done is a somewhat more difficult problem, and indeed the heart of the thesis. On the main points of the argument, however, St. Thomas has been explicit, and indeed it is the purpose of the thesis to show that the use of the vis cogitativa to account for the psychological data to be explained in the process of abstraction is not only in accordance with the mind of St. Thomas, but flows necessarily from his writings on the subject. Accordingly, it will be our contention that this preparing of the phantasm is done under the influence or guidance of the vis cogitativa, one of the four internal senses listed by St. Thomas.

In this discussion we take our cue from certain more recently published studies in the cognitional doctrines of St. Thomas which have made much of the operation of the vis cogitativa,

principally those of Fr. Bernard Lonergan<sup>2</sup> and Julien Peghaire.<sup>3</sup> Only with reluctance do we admit to finding ourselves somewhat at variance on this one point with Fr. George Klubertanz, whose published doctoral dissertation on The Discursive Power<sup>4</sup> is possibly the most definitive modern work on the vis cogitativa, tracing its development in doctrine from Aristotle to St. Thomas through all the commentators and major philosophers of that period.

The point of variance is simply this: Klubertanz arrives, after a long examination of the Thomist texts, at the conclusion that the principal work of the vis cogitativa is not in preparing the phantasm for the act of abstraction, or for speculative knowledge in general, but rather in a return from speculative knowledge to the particular act, sc. practical knowledge. That is to say, after the intellect has made a judgment and wishes to put its decision into practice, it must return to the singular, concrete act with the help of the collative and comparative function of the vis cogitativa, in so far as this power

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<sup>2</sup>Lonergan, S.J., Bernard, "The Concept of Verbum in the Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas", Theological Studies, VII (September, 1946), 349-392.

<sup>3</sup>Peghaire, Julien, "Forgotten Sense, the Cogitative: According to St. Thomas Aquinas", The Modern Scholman, XX (March, 1943), 123-140.

<sup>4</sup>Klubertanz, S.J., George P., The Discursive Power: Sources and Doctrine of the Vis Cogitativa According to St. Thomas Aquinas, (St. Louis, 1952)

lines up and compares the various possible and separate acts under the influence of the intellect. But as far as this power's being necessary to prepare the phantasm for abstraction, he finds only a very limited function for it to play.<sup>5</sup>

No one who has read Klubertanz' dissertation could readily dispute this first function of the vis cogitativa in practical knowledge, and it is not our intention to do so. On that point we agree. But it is our contention in this thesis that the role of the vis cogitativa is also extremely important in speculative knowledge, in so far as it is necessary to prepare the phantasms for the act of abstraction prior to the formation of a concept.

Perhaps it would be better to say, in the sentence above, prior to the formation of a definition, since the vis cogitativa seemingly is not necessary to any great extent in the formation of the first immediate concepts, such as the concept of essence referred to on page three of this thesis. Hence, when we talk of the formation of concepts hereafter in this thesis, it will be well for the reader to bear in mind that we are talking of the formation of definitive concepts, in which the mind is looking

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 290. "As far as practical knowledge is concerned, we have seen that this function derives easily and naturally from the proper act of the discursive sense. How does this sense prepare phantasms for speculative knowledge? There is obviously a difference in this that the objects of practical knowledge are more or less immediately sensible goods. The same cannot be said for the objects of speculative knowledge...What is there here for the discursive sense to grasp?"

for a definition of the object in question. It is in this process of searching for an explanation or definition of an object, this process of abstraction of the common note or universal, that the vis cogitativa plays a prominent and necessary part.

To state this view is one thing; to prove it, of course, is another. But that which leads us to this contention, following St. Thomas, is the fact that only by appealing to the work of this internal sense can we adequately account, in our opinion, for the psychological data evident upon reflecting upon the act of ideation.

Hence, the progress of this thesis will be quite simple. We shall begin with a psychological description of the act of abstraction or formation of an idea drawn from experience, laying particular stress upon the area which, it is claimed, is never touched in the scholastic system of "intuiting essences." We shall then try to show how St. Thomas explains this given psychological data in his metaphysical abstract of the process of cognition, beginning with a general outline of the process, and then concentrating upon the discursive function of the vis cogitativa as an essential step not only in the explanation of the psychological data, but in the act of abstraction itself.

In this way, we believe, we can cut across the objection of many moderns to the "automatic processes" of the "conceptualists" by showing that we are indeed fully conversant with the psycholo-

gical data they themselves use in rejecting the scholastic position, and that we account for and explain it adequately in any full exposition of the act of cognition.

## CHAPTER II

### A PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PROCESS OF CONCEPTUALIZATION

The psychological data that we find it necessary to explain is in itself extremely simple, and quite obvious to anyone who has taken the time to reflect on precisely what he does when he sets about working out a problem--which is, in reality, all the process of ideation is. For in any attempt to form a concept, we are simply looking for a cause, an explanation of the thing in question. Indeed, in the Posterior Analytics, Aristotle goes further and shows that all questions can be reduced to two types, sc. "whether a thing is" and "what a thing is."<sup>1</sup> Now in the first type of question, we are not looking for a definition, but a judgment. In the second type, we are looking for a definition, or as is obvious from the form of the question, an explanation, sc. the reason or cause why a thing is what it is.

And to make it obvious that we are looking for a cause, Aristotle further sub-divides the question "what a thing is" into

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<sup>1</sup>Aristotle, Posterior Analytics, 3,1,89b,23--2,90a,35. Aristotle Prior and Posterior Analytics, ed. W.D. Ross, (Oxford, 1949).



"why this thing is what it is." In Aristotelian terminology, the answer to the first question would give the essential definition; the answer to the second would give the formal or specific definition. But in either case, the answer to the question is going to give a cause, or explanation of what the thing consists in. And St. Thomas is at pains to point this out in his commentary on the Aristotelian text, saying "scire est causam rei cognoscere. Causa autem est quod quaeritur in omnibus praedictis questionibus."<sup>2</sup>

To be specific, let us suppose we are looking for a definition of man, i.e. we want to find out what man is. Now our process of discovery, or conceptualization, goes something like this: First of all, we gather our data, i.e. we go through our memory and experience selecting all the examples of men stored there, as an aid to finding something common or explanatory. We reject trees, stones, brute animals, and everything that is not a man, from our consideration. Moreover, it is to be noted that we do not reject these other categories on any intellectual understanding of what constitutes man as man, since that is precisely what we are trying to discover.

This selection, in fact, need not be made by intellect at all, but occurs on the purely sense level, as is evident from the fact that brutes apparently can also distinguish men from

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<sup>2</sup>In II Post. Anal., lect. 1, n.8.

trees, stones, and so forth. A dog, for instance, can distinguish a man from the chair he sits in, although the posture of the one and formation of the other may be rather similar at the time. Laboratory mice have been trained to enter only those feeding bins with a picture of a man on the cover, rather than others marked with flowers, symbols, etc.

Now we are not trying to say here that this selection may not take place under the influence of the intellect, but simply that it is not necessarily an intellectual operation. It is in fact attributed to the vis aestimativa in the brute (in co-operation with the other internal senses), and to the vis cogitativa in human beings. We shall go into this discussion of powers more in detail later, but what we are now cataloguing are the psychological facts of the abstractive or conceptual process, easily recognizable by anyone who has reflected on his operations in forming an idea. And among these objective psychological facts of experience is this selection of data which takes place before the concept is formed--hence on the pre-conceptual level.

Once we have succeeded in separating this sense data into helpful groups or categories, we then begin to ask ourselves precisely what it is that differentiates one group from another--to search out the cause of why man is man, and hence belongs in one group rather than another. This inquiry may continue for some time, but the eventual outcome is very aptly described by Lonergan-

gan as an act of "understanding, parent of the definition, in which the mind clicks, one gets the idea, one feels like shouting 'Eureka' with Archimedes."<sup>3</sup> In the light of this understanding the mind forms for itself the concept it has derived--in this case the definition of man.

Still, this is not to say that we immediately grasp the essential differentiation. We can assume, for instance, that the differentiating note we first come up with in this specific example is risibility--the ability to laugh. It is still another step, perhaps many steps, to the realization that this is simply a specific property of man following upon his ability to see the incongruity or illogicality of an act or situation, which in turn is due to his ability to see the logical, i.e. his truly specific difference of rationality. Indeed St. Thomas himself indicates that it need not necessarily be the essence or the specific difference which the mind first hits upon in forming a concept:

Si enim accipiuntur multa singularia, quae sunt indifferentia quantum ad aliqua unum in eis existens, illud unum secundum quod non differunt, in anima acceptum, est primum universale, quidquid sit illud, sive scilicet pertineat ad essentiam singularium, sive non. Quia enim invenimus Socratem et Platonem et multos alios esse indifferentes quantum ad albedinem, accipimus hoc unum, scilicet album, quasi universale quod est accidens. Et similiter quia invenimus Soc-

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<sup>3</sup>Lonergan, "The Concept of Verbum", Theological Studies, VII (September, 1946), 360.

ratem et Platonem et alios esse indifferentes quantum ad rationalitatem, hoc unum in quo non differunt, scilicet rationale, accipimus quasi universale quod est differentia.<sup>4</sup>

But again, this is not our prime consideration here, viz. whether or not the mind grasps the specific difference immediately or some other universal note instead. The important thing in this analysis is not what is abstracted, but simply the process by which it is abstracted. For it is only when this initial process of gathering data on the sense level is overlooked or omitted in explanation that the scholastic method of abstracting is destined to seem automatic.

When it is specifically pointed out and retained in explanation, it becomes evident at once that even after the first perception of sense there is much sorting out of data and inquiry before the actual act of understanding and the formation of the concept can take place. To quote Lonergan again: "We do have occasional flashes of insight; but angelic, and still more, divine knowledge is exclusively that sort of thing. We shout our rare 'Eurekas' with Archimedes, but for the most part we have to reason: 'Nam cum volo concipere rationem lapidis, oportet quod ad ipsam ratiocinando porveniam: et sic est in omnibus aliis quae a nobis intelliguntur'."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup>In II Post. Anal., lect. 20, n.13.

<sup>5</sup>Lonergan, TS VII, 378. (He quotes St. Thomas' commentary in Joan., cap.1, lect. 1.

Following upon this analysis of the process of ideation, and in the light of the text of St. Thomas quoted by Lonergan, it will not be out of place here to make a few necessary distinctions about the nature of this pre-conceptual discourse and inquiry. By pre-conceptual discourse, of course, we are now referring to the step in the psychological process in which the act of sorting out or categorizing of the sense data occurs. Since we were at pains in that section to point out that such a selection of data was not necessarily an intellectual operation, but occurred on the sense level, and since it is, in some analogous sense, an inquiry or discourse, we have called it at this point, and shall continue to do so from now on, pre-conceptual discourse.

Obviously the first distinction, to avoid ambiguity in subsequent discussion, must of necessity be made between this so-called pre-conceptual discourse, and the more commonly talked about discourse following upon conceptualization. For just as we have seen that we compare sense data in preparing for abstraction and definition, so, too, there is a strictly intellectual comparison following upon conceptualization wherein we compare previously formed concepts in order to reason to a further and deeper understanding both of the terms and the reality they signify. This is the process we normally mean when we speak of "reasoning" or "thinking". But it is well to realize, as we have just seen in the previous pages, that there is also another type of "reasoning"

that is done not with concepts but with sense data.

That St. Thomas himself was conversant with, and indeed insisted upon, this distinction of the two levels of discourse is evident from his use of the term "ratio particularis" for the vis cogitativa. Thus, in his treatise in the Summa Theologiae on the internal senses he makes this comparison: "Et ideo quae in aliis animalibus dicitur aestimativa naturalis, in homine dicitur cogitativa, quae per collationem quamdam hujusmodi intentiones adinvenit. Unde dicitur ratio particularis. . . est enim collativa intentionum individualium, sicut ratio intellectiva intentionum universalium."<sup>6</sup> And again in the Contra Gentiles he remarks:

"Hujus autem cogitativae virtus est distinguere intentiones individuales et comparare eas ad invicem, sicut intellectus, qui est separatus et immixtus, comparat et distinguit inter intentiones universales."<sup>7</sup>

The first text merely calls the vis cogitativa a reasoning power (ratio particularis), but the second moreover assigns to the cogitative the specific attributes of reason, namely composition and division. Then too, there are any number of similar texts to be found throughout the works of St. Thomas in which this attribution to the cogitative power, for use on the sense

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<sup>6</sup>g.I. I, q. 78, a.4 (Italics not in the original).

<sup>7</sup>c.g. II, 60 (Italics not in the original).

level, of the specific functions of the reasoning power is made.<sup>8</sup>

An authoritative analysis of these texts, supporting our own conclusion, is to be found in Julien Peghaire's article on the cogitative sense, wherein he says in part, while discussing this peculiarly discursive power of the *vis cogitativa*:

Frequently repeated by the Angelic doctor is the idea that the cogitative is to these intentiones particulares what reason is to the intentiones universales. This similarity between the sensible and the spiritual faculty St. Thomas expresses by the verb conferre, and its derivatives, collatio for an act, and collativa for the adjective. But he also uses the same verb as a technical term to designate the operation of man's intelligence inasmuch as it is discursive. As I have tried to show in a study on Intellectus et Ratio Selon Saint Thomas, conferre in a rather general sense signifies the process by which the human mind simply takes possession of multiple elements for the purpose of reaching some truth, through a simple comparison of two or more objects.<sup>9</sup>

Now the whole point of these texts is simply this, that St. Thomas was conversant with the distinction which we have been making above between a reasoning or discursive power on the sense or pre-conceptual level, and the strictly intellectual reasoning

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<sup>8</sup>Cf. particularly C.G. II, 73 adhuc: "cogitativa. . . intentiones dividit et componit"; Q.D. de AN., art. 13, "inquirendo et conferendo"; De Ver. XIV, 1 ad 9 (Parma edition): "Potentia cogitativa est quod est altissimum in parte sensitiva, ubi atgit quodammodo ad partem intellectivam, ut aliquid participet ejus quod est in intellectiva parte infimum, scilicet rationis discursum."

<sup>9</sup>Peghaire, "Forgotten Sense", The Modern Schoolman, XX (March, 1943), 136.

power. Thus, in all the above-mentioned texts, he is at pains to point out the existence of a discourse on the sense level, and to distinguish it by comparison with intellectual discourse.

However, the objection might possibly arise that in the texts cited above St. Thomas attributes to the vis cogitativa a function analogous to intellect, solely because in man it performs these functions of selecting sense data under the direction of the intellect. Hence it will be well to bring in here a quotation from St. Thomas to the effect that this reasoning power, although it is a function proper to the vis cogitativa, remains strictly on the sense level. And so he says: "Cum virtus cogitativa habeat operationem solum circa particularia, quorum intentiones dividit et componit, et habeat organum corporale per quod agit, non transcendit genus animae sensitivae."<sup>10</sup> Precisely what are these intentiones particulares which the cogitative power discourses upon need not detain us here, as we shall treat of them at length further on. Suffice it to say that the distinction which we wished to make clear between pre-conceptual reasoning or discourse on the sense level, and strictly intellectual comparisons of concepts on the intellectual post-conceptual level has been substantiated by the texts, and shown to be part and parcel of Thomist doctrine.

The second distinction to be made at this point is between

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<sup>10</sup>C.G. II, 73 Quia.



what we shall call formal discourse and natural discourse. As the two terms may appear quite frequently later on, a little time spent in getting them clear now may perhaps save much misunderstanding later. The basis for the distinction is simple enough. Formal discourse occurs in such processes as school learning and scientific inquiry, wherein the data is formally presented and ruminated upon until the mind hits upon the solution or law behind it. Thus, the formal gathering of data, hypothesizing, etc. of the physical sciences, the long lists of tables and charts, these are evidences of formal discourse. Such, too, in a less scientific but nonetheless formal vein, would be the habit of mystery novel fans who cull long lists of clues, randomly presented, in an effort to "solve the case" before the author or famous detective.

By natural discourse, on the other hand, we wish to call attention to the ordinary processes of the mind which we generally can and do take for granted, elucidating or discovering them only by means of reflection upon our own acts. Thus, such a formal psychological reflection as was made on pages 12 to 14 above of the process of conceptualization reveals the natural discourse of the human mind in analyzing data. Understand here that while the reflection was an act of formal inquiry, what was uncovered in the reflection were the natural acts of discourse that we take for granted--the natural processes of inquiry of the mind, which we

discover only by some such process of reflection.

Now it is to be stressed here that both the pre-conceptual sense discourse and post-conceptual intellectual discourse which we have distinguished above are basically of this latter type, so, natural discourse. We use them constantly but do not advert to them without reflection. Since human knowledge originates from the diversified singular objects of the objective world, human knowledge is also naturally discursive, and could perhaps be called naturally inductive, in so far as the mind, as we have seen, in forming a concept is actually looking for the explanation of sense data. This point of the naturally inductive process of human knowledge St. Thomas brings out again in his commentary on Aristotle's Posterior Analytics, where he shows that even the first principles of demonstration must also originally be gained by an inductive process: "Quia igitur universalium cognitionem accipimus ex singularibus, concludit manifestum esse quod necesse est prima universalia principia cognoscere per inductionem. Sic enim, scilicet per viam inductionis, sensus facit universale intus in anima, in quantum considerantur omnia singularia."<sup>11</sup>

Induction, of course, in a very broad sense could be called some type of intuition; but as we have observed above in quoting Lonergan, our flashes of intuitive inspiration are rare, and for

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<sup>11</sup>In II Post. Anal., lect. 20, n. 14.

the most part the solution of any problem and the formation of any concept is a process of ruminative discourse, generally slow and time-consuming. The point to be noted is that human knowledge is basically inductive and discursive, and thus (from our own experience) we learn.

Formal education, of course, need not be so tedious a process for there we get in a sort of capsule form the solution (which great minds before us have long labored over) to problems already solved. There, too, it is the part of the teacher to collate the data of the problem in such a way that our grasp of the solution is as quick and easy as possible. Formal education, then, is a short cut to the principles and laws of the sciences, which principles were originally induced from data only with much difficulty by the great minds in the history of the advance of science. But though we get these solutions now in brief minutes, it is again to be noted that they were originally worked out slowly, and in accordance with the natural process of human knowledge ( i. e. induction and discourse), even though under a formal application, as is generally the case with the sciences.

Before going on then, let us sum up the particular points of this chapter that are essential for a continuation of our discussion. The first of these, both in the discussion and in importance, is the discovery in our psychological analysis of conceptualization, of the existence of what we have called pre-concep-

tual discourse, so. that selection of significant data on the sense level which the mind then makes use of to solve its problems.

Recognition of the existence of this discourse, as we have stated repeatedly, is of prime importance to scholastic philosophy if it is to fit the true facts of psychological experience and avoid the reproach of "automatic conceptualization." Hence, it is significant to note the cognizance which St. Thomas gives to this sense discourse, and the provision he makes for it in his doctrine of the internal senses. As we shall see later, St. Thomas insists upon this sense discourse even to the point of stating that without it there could be no knowledge of universals, i.e. no intellectual knowledge at all. This pre-conceptual discourse, therefore, is essential to the natural processes of acquiring knowledge.

The other two points to be remembered are the distinction between pre-conceptual discourse and post-conceptual discourse, or more precisely, between sense-discourse and intellectual discourse, both of which are called "reasoning" (ratio) by St. Thomas; and the distinction between natural and formal discourse, which might again be distinguished by saying that formal discourse is simply the elevation to a scientific method of the natural processes of human reasoning or intellection.

## CHAPTER III

### THE TRADITIONAL METAPHYSICS OF THE PROCESS OF CONCEPTUALIZATION

From the psychological analysis of the act of conceptualization made in the last chapter, we have now become aware of the objective fact of a pre-conceptual period of selecting and organizing data, i.e. a pre-conceptual act of discourse. Our aim in this chapter will be to see precisely where this act fits into the metaphysical abstract or explanation of the process of ideation which it is the part of the philosopher to give. Our primary concern in this thesis, of course, is to see where this act fits into the scholastic abstract of the process, and the Thomist explanation in particular.

Hence to open our discussion, we shall quote at length from a traditional Thomist abstract of the conceptual process:

Totus processus incipit cum sensatione externa. Stimulus venit ab objecto per medium, aetherem pro visu, et intrat in oculum. In intima parte retinae transmutatur in impulsus nerveum, quid physiologicum, et propagatur in partem occipitalem cerebri. Ultima pars hujus processus est species impressa sensibilis, quae fecundat facultatem visivam et tunc actus conscius videnti producitur.

Quia 'nihil est in intellectu quod non

fuerit aliquomodo in sensu,<sup>1</sup> processus sensitivi debent ad formationem idearum tribuere aliquid, quod vero nominatur phantasma. . . An phantasma sufficit ad tollendam indifferentiam intellectus Possibilis, seu reducendum intellectum possibilem in actum? Negatur. Phantasma, etsi continet representationem objecti, est profecto in plano sensitivo, unus actus compositi cuius elementum psychicum intrinsecus dependet de materia; est igitur hoc sensu quid 'materiale'.

Aliquomodo tamen, objectum quod repraesentatur in phantasmate debet tollere indifferentiam intellectus possibilis--secus non haberemus cognitionem de objecto, et incidendum esset in Idealismum.

Solutio invenitur in formatione entitatis spiritualis ('species intelligibilis') quae repraesentat illud objectum. Nam talis entitas potest esse in intellectu possibili, facultate spiritali.

Haec entitas spiritualis, quae nominatur species impressa intelligibilis, oritur ex cooperatione phantasmatis et intellectus agentis, qui est facultas spiritalis.

Post educationem speciei impressae ex intellectus possibilis potentia, intellectus possibilis paratus est ad actum suum, summe immanentem, ponendum. Tunc producitur idea, cuius principium integrum et adaequatum est intellectus possibilis ut informatus a specie impressa.<sup>1</sup>

Such then is the elaborated modern classroom version of the process which St. Thomas tersely outlines in its essentials in the Summa Theologiae:

Colores habent eundem modum existendi prout sunt in materia corporali individuali, sicut et potentia visiva: et ideo possunt imprimere suam similitudinem in visum. Sed phantasmata, cum sint similitudines individuorum,

<sup>1</sup>Lefebvre, Reginald, Classnotes in Rational Psychology, rev. ed., (West Baden, 1955), 77-80.

et existant in organis corporeis, non habent eundem modum existendi quem habet intellectus humanus; et ideo non possunt sua virtute imprimere in intellectum possibilem. Sed virtute intellectus agentis resultat quaedam similitudo in intellectu possibili ex conversione intellectus agentis supra phantasmata.<sup>2</sup>

Obviously for our discussion, since the discourse we treat of is pre-conceptual, the point of the process outlined in the above texts that we must concentrate on is the last act of the purely sense faculties, the phantasm. For the phantasm, according to the above quotations, is the part which the sense faculties contribute to the process of conceptualization. And since the discourse we are discussing is pre-intellectual discourse, it must (as we have seen in the last chapter) lie on the sense plane.

One striking fact about the above-quoted texts is that they say little or nothing about sense-discourse--and it is this silence that makes them a prey to the charge of "automatic conceptualization" with moderns. Yet this silence is not unusual in a metaphysical summary of this sort in so far as any abstract of the process of conceptualization does not necessarily deal in summary with how each stage ( in this case the phantasm) of the process is formed, but simply at what point it occurs in the over-all explanation. It will be our task, therefore, in this part of the thesis to go more deeply into the metaphysical abstract of the process of conceptualization in an effort to discover precisely how the pre-

paration of the phantasm is accounted for.

Fortunately this task will not be difficult, for St. Thomas himself is rather explicit on this step of the process. But let us begin back a little further and follow St. Thomas step by step. First of all let us see how important to intellectual knowledge St. Thomas considers the phantasm. In the Summa Theologiae he has a long treatise on the point, beginning with the statement that it is impossible for the intellect to know anything without the help of phantasms:

Respondeo dicendum quod impossibile est intellectum nostrum, secundum praesentis vitae statum, quo passibili corpori conjungitur, aliquid intelligere in actu, nisi convertendo se ad phantasmata. . . Quia hoc quilibet in seipso experiri potest, quod quando aliquis conatur aliquid intelligere, format aliqua phantasmata sibi per modum exemplorum, in quibus quasi inspiciat quod intelligere studet. Hujus autem ratio est, quia potentia cognoscitiva proportionatur cognoscibili. De ratione autem hujus naturae est, quod in aliquo individuo existat, quod non est absque materia corporali: sicut de ratione naturae lapidis est quod sit in hoc lapide, et sic de aliis. Unde natura lapidis, vel ejuscumque materialis rei, cognosci non potest complete et vere, nisi secundum quod cognoscitur ut in particulari existens. Particulare autem apprehendimus per sensum et imaginationem. Et ideo necesse est ad hoc quod intellectus actu intelligat suum objectum proprium, quod convertat se ad phantasmata, ut speculetur naturam universalem in particulari existentem.<sup>3</sup>

And in various places St. Thomas strengthens his statement by

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<sup>3</sup>S.T. I, q. 84, a. 7.



saying that the phantasm is not just the object of intellect as sense objects are to sense,<sup>4</sup> but indeed its proper object.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, another highly important statement made about the phantasm by St. Thomas is this: that while the phantasm is the proper object of the intellect, the intellect is able to re-arrange these phantasms according to what it wishes to understand, as in the formula "sibi format phantasmata per modum exemplorum" used above. The significance of this ability to re-arrange phantasms appears from the following statement to the effect that different ideas arise from different arrangements of phantasms, just as different words result from the different arrangements of the same letters: "In imaginatione autem non solum sunt formae rerum sensibilium secundum quod accipiuntur a sensu, sed transmutatur diversimode; vel propter aliquam transmutationem corporalem sicut accidit in dormientibus et furiosis, vel etiam secundum imperium rationis disponuntur phantasmata in ordine ad id quod est intelligendum. Sicut enim ex diversa ordinatione earundem litterarum accipiuntur diversi intellectus, ita secundum diversam dispositionem phantasmatum resultant in intellectu diversae species intelligibiles."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Cf. especially De Ver., II, a.6: "phantasmata se habent ad intellectum nostrum sicut sensibilia ad sensum".

<sup>5</sup>Especially in In II Sent. d.24, q.2, a.2, ad lum.

<sup>6</sup>S.T. II-II, q. 173, a.2.

Let us pause for a moment here and consider the importance of what we have gathered from these texts. First of all, arguing from the statements that the intellect needs a phantasm in order to understand and that varying phantasms bring about varying concepts, it would seem obvious that the preparation of an apt or suitable phantasm is the first basic requirement to any clear intellectual comprehension of a given object. That this is not merely an inferred conclusion is evident from St. Thomas' statement that not all phantasms are intelligible, but only those that are properly disposed: "Potest autem dici quod intellectus agens semper agit quantum in se est, sed non semper phantasmata fiunt intelligibilia actu, sed solum quando sunt ad hoc disposita."<sup>7</sup>

Secondly, since there is now a question of properly disposing the phantasm, it would seem obvious that it is at this stage in the metaphysical abstract that there arises the pre-conceptual discourse with which we are now concerned. Obviously the process of abstracting from phantasms is not an automatic one, for not all phantasms become actually intelligible even though the agent intellect is always prepared to act, as St. Thomas states above. But our conclusion at the moment rests on two points: 1) In our psychological analysis of conceptualization we became aware that the process was not automatic, but indeed rather time-consuming, because of a certain activity akin to discourse on the sense level;

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<sup>7</sup>C.G. II, 76 Potest.

2) We have now arrived at a similar point in the metaphysical abstract of the process of conceptualization in which St. Thomas shows that the process again is not automatic, but depends for its progress toward completion on the formation of an apt or suitable, i.e. well-disposed, phantasm. And since the phantasm is the last stage of sense cognition, indeed the actual contribution of the senses toward intellectual cognition, we conclude that it is at this point, if at all, that pre-conceptual discourse must be accounted for in the scholastic metaphysical abstract.

However, this, too, is an inferred conclusion. St. Thomas has not yet said that the formation of an apt phantasm is a discursive process, or that this proper disposing of the phantasm is done by some act of "sense-reasoning" as we discussed in the last chapter. Let us then quote in full the text from the Contra Gentiles: "Potest autem dici quod intellectus agens semper agit quantum in se est, sed non semper phantasmata fiunt intelligibilia actu, sed solum quando sunt ad hoc disposita; disponantur autem ad hoc per actum cogitativae virtutis, cujus usus est in nostra potestate; et ideo intelligere actu est in nostra potestate; et ob hoc etiam contingit quod non omnes homines intelligunt ea quorum habent phantasmata; quia non omnes habent actum virtutis cogitativae convenientem."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid. (There is a possible objection to be noted concerning the use of this text. It might possibly be objected that this text

Now this text does not call the preparation of the phantasm a discourse explicitly, but it does say that it is the work of the vis cogitativa. But the peculiar function of the vis cogitativa,

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is not strictly the mind of St. Thomas, since it is supposed as an objection from his Averroistic adversaries. Hence it would seem that the words of St. Thomas immediately following this quotation in the text, sc. "videtur autem quod haec responsio non sit omnino sufficiens", precludes any legitimate use of the text in our own context.

That this is not so can be seen from a short resume of the context of objection and argument. St. Thomas is here arguing against the Averroists who hold the agent intellect to be separate from the individual. The Averroists answer that the reason this can be so, and the individual still have individual knowledge, and that it (the separate agent intellect) is not always actually understanding but is controlled by the individual, arises from the fact that the discursive power (vis cogitativa) is an individual faculty which prepares the phantasm to be abstracted by the separate agent intellect. Hence, they argue, only when the phantasm is aptly prepared does the separated agent intellect work for this man.

St. Thomas answers characteristically by saying that the operation of the vis cogitativa must then be understood to do one of two things: 1) dispose the possible intellect to receive the species, or 2) dispose the phantasms to become actually intelligible. He rejects the first (Avicennist) position, because no sense can work on intellect, and moreover the possible intellect is by its nature receptive of species and needs no further disposition. But his answer to the second possibility is quite different. He allows the operation of the vis cogitativa to stand unchallenged, but remarks that this is only a remote cause of intelligibility, not sufficient to cause intellection of itself. Therefore, he concludes, there must be a proximate cause within us, and hence the agent intellect is a power of our soul and not separate.

Concerning our discussion, therefore, St. Thomas does not reject this objection about the function of the vis cogitativa because he considers it an incorrect function, but simply because it is not sufficient of itself to cause intellection. Indeed, he has already (in C.G. II, 73 ad huc) used this function of the vis cogitativa as his own doctrine: "virtus cogitativa non habet ordinem ad intellectum possibilem quo intelligit homo, nisi per suum actum quo praeparantur phantasmata ut per intellectum agentem fiant intelligibilia actu et perficientia intellectum possibilem." The text, therefore, is valid in the context for which we adduce it.)

as brought out in the last chapter by long lists of texts, is an act of sense-discourse, sc. the ratio particularis comparing and separating the intentiones particulares. Thus, the argument is plain: The phantasm is made apt or suitable for intellection by the vis cogitativa; but the operation of the vis cogitativa is discursive; therefore, the phantasm is made apt or suitable for intellection by this sense-power of discourse.

We have now arrived at the heart of this thesis. After analyzing our conceptual process, we found that there is a pre-conceptual sense discourse before abstraction in which the data is composed in such a way that the characteristic or common note is made clear to the intellect. Then, reviewing St. Thomas' abstract of this psychological process, we found that for him this sense-discourse occurs in the re-arrangement or preparation of suitable phantasms for intellection, and that the discursive power by which this suitability is brought about on the sense level is the vis cogitativa. For further emphasis by St. Thomas on the point, this text can be compared with others both in the Contra Gentiles (where the functions of this faculty come under heavy scrutiny because of Averroistic objections) and the Summa Theologiae.<sup>9</sup> In all these cases St. Thomas names the vis cogitativa as necessary in the pre-

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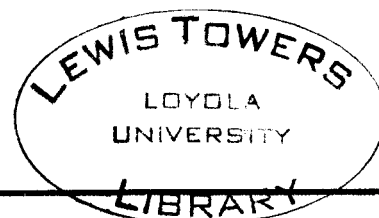
<sup>9</sup>cf. especially C.G. II, 73 Quia; and 81 Sciendum; S.T. I-II, q. 50, a.4, ad 3um: "vires apprehensivae interiorius praeparant intellectui possibili proprium objectum, ideo ex bona dispositione harum virtutum. . . redditur homo habilis ad intelligendum."

paration of the phantasm even to the point where he will say that without these disposing operations of the cogitative upon the phantasm there is no intellection at all.<sup>10</sup>

But though these texts bring us logically to the heart of this thesis, they do not have much to say concerning our central point. The aim of this thesis is to discover the function of the vis cogitativa in the preparation of the phantasm. St. Thomas has insisted with us on the necessity of the vis cogitativa to prepare a suitable phantasm; he has not said how this preparation is accomplished. Our next consideration, therefore, will have to be a discovery of the precise way in which the vis cogitativa operates to prepare the phantasm for intellection.

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<sup>10</sup> C.G. II, 81 Sciendum: "quamdiu est anima in corpore, non potest intelligere sine phantasmate nec etiam reminisci, nisi per virtutem cogitativam et memorativam per quam phantasmata praeparantur."



## CHAPTER IV

### THE NATURE AND SPECIFIC MODE OF OPERATION OF THE VIS COGITATIVA ACCORDING TO ST. THOMAS

As is probably quite evident from the preceding chapters, it is quite easy to find texts in St. Thomas concerning the fact that the function of the vis cogitativa is to prepare the phantasm for intellection. It is another thing entirely to find statements in St. Thomas declaring precisely how the vis cogitativa operates in this act of preparation, or even as to what this act of preparation consists in. Hence in outlining the function of the vis cogitativa in this operation, which is the aim of this thesis, we must observe two things. First of all we must assign to the vis cogitativa an operation consistent with the nature of this faculty as outlined by St. Thomas; secondly, we must see to it that our overall explanation is congruent with the general Thomist position on the metaphysics of abstraction.

Accordingly we shall examine in this chapter St. Thomas' own statements on the nature and operation of the vis cogitativa; in the following chapter we shall try to pin-point its specific operation in preparing the phantasm; and then finally we shall attempt

to show that this specific mode of operation which we assign to the vis cogitativa is not only not contrary to the mind of St. Thomas, but indeed a necessary one if other statements of St. Thomas concerning the origin of intellectual knowledge are to be adequately explained.

To begin, then, we shall first of all quote from the section in the Summa Theologiae where St. Thomas lists in summary form his doctrine on the internal senses, in which category is contained the vis cogitativa. To keep somewhat in the bounds of our thesis, however, we shall content ourselves here only with St. Thomas' conclusions as to what distinct powers are found on the sense level. Anyone interested in finding out how St. Thomas arrives at these conclusions and these distinct sense powers has only to read the opening paragraphs of this article in the Summa from which we copy only the conclusions.

Sic ergo ad receptionem formarum sensibilium ordinatur sensus proprius et communis; ad harum autem formarum retentionem aut conservationem ordinatur phantasia sive imaginatio, quae idem sunt; est enim phantasia vel imaginatio quasi thesaurus quidam formarum per sensum acceptarum. Ad apprehendendam autem intentiones quae per sensum non accipiuntur, ordinatur vis aestimativa. Ad conservandum autem eas, vis memorativa, quae est thesaurus quidam hujusmodi intentionum. Et ipsa ratio praeteriti, quam attendit memoria, inter hujusmodi intentiones computatur.

Considerandum est autem quod, quantum ad formas sensibiles, non est differentia inter hominem et alia animalia; similiter enim immutantur a sensibilibus exterioribus. Sed quantum ad intentiones praedictas, differentia est:



nam alia animalia percipiunt hujusmodi intentiones solum naturali quodam instinctu, homo autem etiam per quandam collationem. Et ideo quae in aliis animalibus dicitur aestimativa naturalis, in homine dicitur cogitativa, quae per collationem quandam hujusmodi intentiones adinvenit. Unde etiam dicitur ratio particularis, cui medici assignant determinatum organum, scilicet mediam partem capitis: est enim collativa intentionum individualium, sicut ratio intellectiva intentionum universalium.

Et sic non est necesse ponere nisi quatuor vires interiores sensitivae partis: scilicet sensum communem et imaginationem, aestimativam et memorativam.<sup>1</sup>

There are therefore in man four distinct internal senses, according to St. Thomas, each with its proper function: 1) The common sense, which unifies the perceptions of the various external senses and perceives the operation of sensation of each;<sup>2</sup> 2) The imagination or phantasy which retains and conserves the forms perceived by the external senses; 3) The cogitative sense for the apprehension of forms (intentiones) not received through the external senses, differing from the animal aestimativa in this that it arrives at a perception of these "intentions" by a sort of discourse, while the estimative in the brute perceives them by a certain "natural instinct"; 4) The memory, which retains and conserves the intentions perceived by the vis cogitativa.

There is also to be found in this article of the Summa one other statement of some importance for our discussion. It per-

<sup>1</sup>S.T. I, q. 78, a.4.

<sup>2</sup>Gf. Ibid. ad lum.

tains to the further nature of the imagination, and reads: "Avicenna vero ponit quintam potentiam, mediam inter aestimativam et imaginativam, quae componit et dividit formas imaginatas; ut patet cum ex forma imaginata auri et forma imaginata montis componimus unam formam montis auri, quem numquam vidimus. Sed ista operatio non apparet in aliis animalibus ab homine, in quo ad hoc sufficit virtus imaginativa."<sup>3</sup> From this it would seem that the imagination is not simply a passive "storehouse" of forms received by the external senses, but also has an active power to re-arrange these forms once perceived. We shall go into this question further in the next chapter, but since this active power of the imagination is mentioned in this main text of the Summa, the reader will do well to note it at this point.

Parallel to this text in the Summa is a somewhat shorter text in the Quaestione Disputata de Anima, in which precisely the same distinctions in internal senses are outlined.<sup>4</sup> Here again the distinction is finely drawn between the animal estimative and the human cogitative power, sc. both have as their proper objects the "intentions" which the external senses do not perceive; but the former knows these intentions by a certain natural instinct, and the latter knows them by a process of discourse or collation.

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Q.D. de An., a. 13. (Parma edition)

It is not necessary to quote here from all the texts mentioning the object and function of the vis cogitativa; many were already quoted in Chapter II of this thesis, and others may simply be listed for reference.<sup>5</sup> Suffice it to say that from these and other texts, three points are clearly established: 1) The proper object of the vis cogitativa in man is an intentio insensata;<sup>6</sup> 2) The peculiar function or manner of operating of the vis cogitativa is discursive--componendo et dividendo;<sup>7</sup> 3) The vis cogitativa not only compares these intentiones once perceived, but perceives them originally by a process of comparison. Thus St. Thomas in the above-cited text says that the vis cogitativa arrives at a knowledge of these intentiones by a collatio, and then as ratio particularis collates intentions (plural).<sup>8</sup>

Much has already been said in Chapter II about the discursive operation of the cogitative.<sup>9</sup> A very difficult question, however, arises when one attempts to define further the intentiones which are the proper objects of the cogitative. In Schutz' Thomas-Lexi-

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Chapter II of this thesis, page 18.

<sup>6</sup>S.T. I, q. 78, a.4: "ad apprehendendum autem intentiones quae per sensum non accipiuntur, ordinatur vis aestimativa. . .in homine dicitur cogitativa."

<sup>7</sup>C.G. II, 73 adhuc: "cogitativa. . .intentiones dividit et componit."

<sup>8</sup>S.T. I, q. 78, a.4: "per collationem huiusmodi intentiones adinvenit; . . .ratio particularis. . .est collativa intentionum."

<sup>9</sup>Cf. Chapter II of this thesis, pages 17-18.

con there are five major classifications of diverse senses in which St. Thomas uses this word, and up to eight or more subdivisions. Klubertanz has worried over the meaning of this word at some length in his documentary treatise on The Discursive Power, and hence to save time we shall simply quote here some of his discussion, and his conclusion, on the meaning of the term.

St. Thomas, following Avicenna, calls that which the estimative power perceives an intention. This term in the Thomistic writings is used to designate seven or eight different things.<sup>10</sup> Although an attempt has been made to find a common (analogical) signification,<sup>11</sup> it still seems better to admit with St. Thomas that it is an equivocal term with at least two irreducible meanings<sup>12</sup>--for St. Thomas says in a particular instance that 'it is taken equivocally in two cases.'<sup>13</sup>

If we adopt the position that it is an equivocal term, it will be necessary to consider only the series of uses of it in the cognitive

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<sup>10</sup>Thus: "motio instrumentalis, intendere (as act of the will), intentio rei, intentio rationis (or virtutis cognoscitivae), intentio intellecta, intentio individualis, sensibilis, intentio generalis, intentio prima, etc." of. H.D. Simonin, O.P. "La notion d' 'intentio' dans l'oeuvre de S. Thomas d'Aquin," Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques, XII (1930) pp. 445-63.

Or in another listing: "effort, intention, attention, design or purpose, meaning (of an author), species cognoscitiva, virtus instrumentalis," of. Andre Hayen, S.J. L'Intentionnel dans la philosophie de Saint Thomas, (Bruxelles: L'Édition Universelle-Paris: Desclée, 1942) pp. 46-7; of also G. Rabeau, Species Verbum (Paris: Vrin, 1938) pp. 62-77.

<sup>11</sup>See A. Hayen, L'Intentionnel, who concludes that it is always "une relation allant de l'esprit à l'objet". p. 217.

<sup>12</sup>cf. H. Simonin, "La notion d' 'intentio'", pp. 446-47, 451.

<sup>13</sup>De Veritate, XLI, 3 ad 5, ed. Parma, vol. IX, p. 307.

order. In this order there are three groups of intentiones: of the intellect, of the discursive and estimative powers, and of the senses.<sup>14</sup> Fr. Simonin says that the common notion here is that of 'la possession spirituelle de l'objet connu par la faculté.'<sup>15</sup>

Can this definition be used in all three instances? In question 78, article 4, it is said that 'it is necessary, therefore, for the animal that it perceive such intentions', and again, that 'for the apprehensions of the intentions which are not received from the senses the estimative power is made.' According to Fr. Simonin's definition, the first phrase would read 'it is therefore necessary that the animal should perceive the spiritual possession of the object known.' As far as I can see, this definition would result in making the estimative indistinguishable from the common sense.

Furthermore, the utility (and the like) which is apprehended by the estimative is not within the cognition of the external sense. St. Thomas says that the intentions are 'not sensed.'

From these considerations it seems more reasonable to think that intentio means 'cognition' (or 'object known').<sup>16</sup> In this case, we would translate 'it is necessary that the animal perceive this sort of knowledge' (cognate accusative). Advantages of this translation are: it makes an intelligible sentence, while some translations do not; secondly it is sufficiently vague so as not to prejudice any consequent in-

<sup>14</sup>H. Simonin, "La notion d' 'intention'", p. 457.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>This meaning corresponds to that of the original Arabic word which intentio was used to translate: cf. "Ma'na--idée, ou mieux en latin intentio. Ma'na désigne presque toujours l'intelligible, cependant cette traduction convient plutôt à ma'qul, d'autant que ma'na est employé quelquefois pour un degré d'abstraction inférieur à l'abstraction intellectuelle, . . . au plus bas degré, ma'na se rapporte à l'idée particulière, à la saisie par l'estimative," A.M. Goichon, Lexique de la langue Philosophique d'Ibn Sina (Paris: Desclée, 1938) no. 469, pp.253-54.

terpretation.<sup>17</sup> One advantage [sic] is that it misses the full flavor of intentio; it fails to reproduce the connotations of relation and finality suggested by the Latin term.<sup>18</sup> A final suggestion would be that intentio be paraphrased as 'cognition' under the aspect of its having a direction (finality, or tendency) toward an object.<sup>19</sup>

In concrete terms, the estimative perceives the sensibly useful, suitable, harmful, and the like. Generalizing from this, we might say that the knowledge which the estimative gathers is of certain definite and concrete relations. It does not seem possible to find more than this in St. Thomas.<sup>20</sup>

Nor does one receive much clarification if he looks up the meaning of intentio in Avicenna, whose terminology St. Thomas is supposed to be following here. Thus, Klubertanz again, in his study, shows:

There is clear evidence that St. Thomas supposed his readers to be familiar with many things. For example, the word intentio has a technical meaning when used to designate the object of the estimative and the via cogitativa. St. Thomas himself does not state this meaning; he contents himself with an example or two. The only detailed exposition of the term is to be found in Avicenna (p. 12).

<sup>17</sup>See A. Hayen, L'Intentionel, definition noted above in note 11; also his making equivalent intentio non sensata and intentio intelligibilis, p. 53.

<sup>18</sup>Alberto Gomez Izquierdo, O.P. "Valor cognoscitivo de la 'intentio'", Ciencia Tomista, XXIX (1924) pp. 169-88, especially "La forma (cognoscitiva) es el fundamento de aquella relación activa de la potencia al objeto conocido, la cual constituye, según Santo Tomás, la esencia de la intención en su aspecto cognoscitivo".

<sup>19</sup>Furthermore, this paraphrase will also be usable for such phrases as intentio sensus, intentio intellectus, and intentio prima. This is a further argument for its validity.

<sup>20</sup>Quotations and footnotes 10-19 from Klubertanz, 231-32.

When Avicenna turns to discuss the inner powers, he sets down some preliminary distinctions. This passage is important, since it seems to be the only explicit statement of what is meant by the 'intention' perceived by some of the interior powers.

"Of the interior apprehensive powers, some apprehend sensible forms, but some apprehend the intentions of sensible things. . . The difference between apprehending forms and apprehending intentions is this. A form is that which the exterior and interior sense apprehend together; but the exterior sense apprehends it first and then gives it to the interior sense, as when a sheep apprehends the form of a wolf, that is, its shape, and its affection and color. But the exterior sense of the sheep first apprehends this, and then the interior sense.

An intention is that which the soul apprehends about a sensible thing, although the exterior sense does not first apprehend it; as the sheep apprehends the intention which it has about the wolf, that is, that it must fear the wolf and run away from it, although the exterior sense does not apprehend this in any way. Now that which the external sense first apprehends about the wolf and then the interior, is properly called in this place by the name of form. But that which the hidden powers apprehend without the sense is properly called in this place by the name of intention."<sup>21</sup>

The most important and interesting of terms and definitions laid down here is the distinction between form and intention. By 'form' Avicenna wishes to designate those aspects in sensible things which both the external and internal senses grasp, for instance, shape and color. An

<sup>21</sup>Avicenna, Liber Canonis (Venice: Juntas, 1582) bk. 1, fen. 1, Doctrina 6, c.5, fol. 5ra-b, pp. 20-21.

'intention' is that concerning a sensible object which only the interior sense grasps, while the external senses do not perceive it, for example, the eremity of the wolf.<sup>22</sup>

As far as a definition of intentio goes, then, after a lengthy study we are as far as we were originally when St. Thomas described them as insensatas. For according to all these studies, an "intention" is merely a form (or some sort of knowledge) which the external sense does not perceive while the internal does. Since we began searching for a definition of "intention" in as much as it was the proper object of the vis cogitativa, we end by defining in a circle. But as far as texts to the point go, this cannot be helped. All we can do is generalize from the few examples offered in the texts, as Klubertanz does, and conclude that seemingly an "intention" is a sort of relationship that is sensed; a relationship either between the object and the knower (bonum, nocivum, utile) or between various classes of sense objects.

This latter type of relationship we shall immediately discuss in the next chapter. Our aim in this chapter was to look closely at St. Thomas' statements on the nature and operation of the cogitative faculty--the vis cogitativa. As a result, we have seen that the vis cogitativa is an internal sense distinct from the common sense, imagination, or memory, whose function is to perceive by a discursive process on the sense level certain "Inten-

<sup>22</sup>Klubertanz, The Discursive Power, 93-94.



tentions" or relationships among sensible objects which are not perceived by the other senses.

## CHAPTER V

### THE FUNCTION OF THE VIS COGITATIVA IN PREPARING THE PHANTASM FOR ABSTRACTION

There are two realms of knowledge, as we noted in the Introduction to this thesis, in which the vis cogitativa plays an important part, namely practical and speculative knowledge. We are quite ready to admit the role of the vis cogitativa in practical knowledge which is the purport of Klubertanz' dissertation, and so we need not take it up in this thesis. But in this thesis we wish to go beyond the limited function assigned by Klubertanz to the cogitative sense in speculative knowledge.

We are attempting to show that the work of the vis cogitativa is essential to the formation of a concept in so far as it prepares an apt phantasm, and that consequently, without its operation, knowledge of any sort, given the statement by St. Thomas that our knowledge of reality is basically inductive, is well nigh impossible. Even our first principles are inductively arrived at; yet the formation of an apt phantasm is the necessary basis of inductive thought, and hence the work of the cogitative sense is necessary not only in the carrying out of practical

knowledge, but also in the acquisition of speculative knowledge. And in this chapter we shall show precisely what the work of the vis cogitativa consists in as regards the origin of such knowledge.

Now in this emphasis of the cogitative's function in our formation of a concept, we certainly believe that we are correctly interpreting the Thomistic synthesis. And in quoting here the texts which lead us to this conclusion, we shall also gain as explicit a hint of precisely what the vis cogitativa does in preparing phantasms as can be found in St. Thomas. We begin with a statement by St. Thomas to the effect that the senses "quodammodo" know the universal:

Manifestum est enim quod singulare sentitur proprie et per se, sed tamen sensus est quodammodo etiam ipsius universalis. Cognoscit enim Calliam non solum in quantum est Callias, sed etiam in quantum est hic homo, et similiter Socratem in quantum est hic homo. Et exinde est quod tali acceptione sensus praeexistente, anima intellectiva potest considerare hominem in utroque. Si autem ita esset quod sensus apprehenderet solum id quod est particularitatis, et nullo modo cum hoc apprehenderet universalem naturam in particulari, non esset possibile quod ex apprehensione sensus causaretur in nobis cognitio universalis.<sup>1</sup>

Thus sense "quodammodo" knows the universal. That it is the cogitative sense which knows this universal in the particular is affirmed by St. Thomas when he says: "Nam cogitativa apprehendit individuum, ut existens sub natura communi: quod contingit ei,

<sup>1</sup>In II Post. Anal., lect. 20, n. 13.

inquantum unitur intellectivae in eodem subjecto; unde cognoscit hunc hominem prout est hic homo, et hoc lignum prout est hoc lignum."<sup>2</sup> In these two texts, then, St. Thomas explicitly affirms our thesis concerning the function of the vis cogitativa as regards the origin of knowledge. For it is one of the attributes of the vis cogitativa to know the universal in the particular; and moreover, unless it knew this universal in the particular, we should never arrive at a universal concept. That, at least, is the gist of these two texts.

But in the light of strict Thomist doctrine, these statements cannot and ought not be taken to mean that the vis cogitativa, a strictly sense faculty, knows a strict universal. This type of knowledge is always reserved by St. Thomas for the intellect, which alone can know a concept prescindng from individuating matter (i.e. a universal concept) in so far as it alone is an immaterial faculty. The function of the cogitative power is altogether different. In the psychological analysis with which we began this thesis, we noted a sense ability in man (and beasts) to group sense data according to classes, viz. trees, rocks, men, and so forth. To do this we have to be able to distinguish, on the sense level, both the individual sense perception of the moment, and the group to which it belongs. This then, in a sense, is

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<sup>2</sup>In II de An., lect. 13, n. 398. (Piroetta edition)

knowing the universal in the particular. This is the function, we say, of the vis cogitativa.

It is somewhat more difficult to state precisely on what grounds the cogitative can do this. However, in searching for an explanation, we must bear it in mind that it is the task of the philosopher to explain the facts of reality, not to work a priori. The fact of this sense selection or classification of data is evident from experience; hence the cogitative is called upon to explain this fact according to the Thomist principle that diversification in formal objects demands a diversification in faculties. Accordingly in question seventy-eight, article four of the first part of the Summa, St. Thomas (as we have seen) divides the various classes of sense perceptions into specific groups of objects, and arrives at the conclusion that to know certain "unsensed" (i.e. not perceived by the external senses or certain other of the internal senses) objects--which we know from experience are actually known somehow--posits the existence of the vis cogitativa.<sup>3</sup>

Among these intentiones insensatas is the "particular as existing under a common nature;"<sup>4</sup> or in other words, an individual object belonging in a certain class. But since the cogitative

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<sup>3</sup>S.T. I, q. 78, a.4: "Ad apprehendendum autem intentiones quae per sensum non accipiuntur ordinatur vis aestimativa. . . in homine dicitur cogitativa."

<sup>4</sup>In II de An. lect 13: "cogitativa apprehendit individuum, ut existens sub natura communi."

does not know class or universal as such (i.e. in the abstract), it must perforce catalogue individual perceptions by comparing them with others. In this comparison of purely sense attributes it can distinguish the latest instant perception from certain types of previous perceptions, and assign it to a general group of similar perceptions. Thus it can distinguish a tree or a stone from a man purely by reason of the physical or sensible characteristics acquired in the sense perception. Its operation, then, according to St. Thomas, is one of comparing<sup>5</sup> and, in an inferior way, of judging--in so far as it assigns objects to one category or another of previous sense impressions. And so it is called the ratio particularis.

This quasi-judgment of the vis cogitativa cannot always be exact. As is obvious from experience, there are certain borderline cases in which we either misjudge an object, or simply do not know how to judge it. Certain stock examples of these cases are ready to hand: the misperception of a scarecrow for a man in the dark; the puzzlement as to whether an overturned box is a table when it is being used as one, etc. In such cases, the cogitative having only the physically sensed characteristics to work with is hard pressed to find similar pre-perceived objects in the same

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<sup>5</sup>S.T. I, q. 78, a.4: "in homine dicitur cogitativa, quae per collationem quandam hujusmodi intentiones adinvenit, unde etiam dicitur ratio particularis." Also C.G. II, 60: "cogitativae virtus est distinguere intentiones individuales et comparare eas."

class with which to compare and to which to assign its latest perception. And so it may either assign this latest perception to the closest category (we are speaking now of sensible appearances) or perhaps may not be able to assign it at all.

From these few psychological observations it is also easy to see why St. Thomas lists memory as the internal sense which preserves the perceptions of the vis cogitativa.<sup>6</sup> Let us contrast it for a moment with the imagination, which is also called a storehouse, but only of the forms perceived by the external senses.<sup>7</sup> From our own experiences, it is quite easy to see why St. Thomas made this distinction of internal powers, not only as regards perception, but also as to the retention of sensations. Following the indications both of personal experience and the above-cited text, we can say that the distinction between these two sense powers (memory and imagination) is based on the distinction between what we might call an individual or a general perception. One can imagine man, but one must remember this man. In the first case we have what could be called creative imagination, as in the case of Greek art which assigned the ideal characteristics (Physical) of the ideal man. In the second case we are dealing with an individual, and we must remember this particular individual (John,

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. "vis memorativa, quae est thesaurus quidam hujusmodi intentionum."

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. "est imaginatio quasi thesaurus quidam formarum per sensum acceptarum."

Joe, James, etc.) and no other. To imagine man (or car, or horse, or mountain) is to select at random from the forms stored in the imagination; the resultant image will be concrete, but not strictly individual. But to remember this man is to remember a particular individual according to his peculiar individuating notes, and no other characteristics will do.

In other words, the imagination stores generically the perceptions of sense according to form, color, shape, etc; but the memory, following upon the perception of the vis cogitativa, stores the individual, the specific perceptions of sense. And it can do this only in so far as the cogitative perceives the latest perception of sense as an individual, in its separateness from former perceptions of the same or similar objects.

One of the intentiones insensatas, therefore, which the vis cogitativa must perceive about an object is separateness—not in the abstract, by knowing what the quiddity of separateness consists in, but simply in knowing that each perception coming from the senses is a separate perception. Again, it is only in the light of this knowledge of individual or separate perceptions by the vis cogitativa that St. Thomas can assign to the memory the knowledge of "past as past."<sup>8</sup> And it is only in the light of perceiving each perception of sense as "separate" that the cogitative

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid. "ipsa ratio praeteriti, quam attendit memoria, inter hujusmodi intentiones computatur."



itself is able to be assigned a discursive function by St. Thomas.

To be more specific, it is only by knowing the separateness of each perception that there can arise a knowledge of sequence, of one perception following another. And it is only by a knowledge of sequence that we can know prior or posterior, past or present. Hence, it is only by the perception of the separateness of each succeeding sense perception that the memory, following the cogitative, can retain one sensation or image as prior to any other sensation or image, that it can know the sequence of images, or that it can, in short, know the "past as past." Secondly, if the vis cogitativa did not perceive the separateness of each sense perception (we are talking here about perceptions of the external senses, or possibly perceptions of the external senses plus the operation of the common sense, which seems more likely) it could never compare one with the other. Yet St. Thomas assigns to it a discursive function in preparing the phantasm--an act of grouping and selecting data. And this act of selection or comparison the cogitativa can and does perform precisely because it knows the "separateness" of each succeeding sense perception. Let us emphasize once more: The vis cogitativa does not know separateness as an abstract idea, but it does recognize that each succeeding sense perception is separate and distinct from the ones preceding it.

Now this perception of separateness is not something the vis

cogitativa draws out of thin air, nor should the formula intentio insensata strike one in this way. The basis for this perception of the cogitative lies in the common sense, which not only unites the diversified perceptions of the various external senses, but also is aware of their activity--in which latter function it is said to sense the act of sensation. It is this sensing of the act of personal commitment or operation on the part of the common sense that allows the vis cogitativa to perceive each new sensation as a "separate" sensation.

Concerning the formula "to know the universal in the particular", then, we have examined in what sense it is to be understood with regards to both terms. The vis cogitativa knows each new perception as separate, or particular, and by comparing it, according to its presented sense attributes or properties, with other pre-perceived particulars filed away as particulars in the memory, it is able to assign this latest perception to a class of similar sense perceptions. And in so far as the cogitative knows the appropriateness of this particular sense perception to a group of similar sense perceptions, it is said to know the universal in the particular.

Thus, without actually knowing the nature either of separateness or universal, or the quiddity of any of the objects it perceives (such as the essence of man, trees, etc.), the vis cogitativa knows particular, separate objects and assigns them to a cer-

tain class of sense perceptions, in which assignation it is said to know the "universal in the particular" in so far as it can classify particular perceptions (this man, this tree, this stone) as corresponding to other pre-perceived and remembered groups of similar particulars (trees, stones, men--or more precisely these trees, these stones, these men).

The vis cogitativa, therefore, adds to any particular perception of sense a relationship to a similar class of previously perceived objects. This relationship is purely internal, since the other objects in the class are not now being sensed by the external senses, but simply remembered. Hence this relationship is called an intentio in the Avicennan sense of the word, sc. something, concerning the sensible, perceived by the internal sense although the external sense does not perceive it.<sup>9</sup> It is an intentio insensata in the full and unique sense of that term.

As noted above in Chapter IV, there are other types of relations known by the vis cogitativa (e.g. useful, harmful, etc.) pertaining to the object's relationship to the knower. But they are not immediately pertinent to this thesis, where our task is to analyze the operation of the vis cogitativa in preparing the phantasm for the act of abstraction. For this purpose, the two "intentions" of separateness and relationship are sufficient.

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<sup>9</sup>Cf. the discussion on pp. 38-43 of this thesis.

Let us emphasize for perhaps the last time that these two intentiones are known concretely, not abstractly or universally, by the vis cogitativa. That is to say, the cogitative does not know the quiddity of a relation or of separateness, but it does know that any given particular perception (this man) is a separate perception related to previous perceptions of the same kind.

But as we noted also in Chapter IV after a careful study of the texts of St. Thomas, the discursive function of the vis cogitativa is two-fold;<sup>10</sup> it finds or establishes the intentiones (relationship to similar objects) by a discursive process, and then similarly "collates" or compares the intentiones themselves once they are perceived. As can readily be seen if one considers the point we have now reached in the argument, the very fact that the vis cogitativa discovers in any separate perception an "intention" of relatedness to a similar group of pre-perceived and remembered objects does not automatically insure that every phantasm is suitable for abstraction. True, this function of the vis cogitativa is the foundation for its ability to prepare an apt phantasm; but the actual preparation does not take place by this operation of the cogitative, but rather by its second operation, sc. the comparing of already perceived intentiones.

This is not to give the vis cogitativa two distinct opera-

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<sup>10</sup>As on page 35 of this thesis.

tions; it operates in one way only, namely discursively. Nor does it attribute to the cogitative two distinct formal objects; it has only one, namely the "intention". We are simply saying here, with St. Thomas, that the vis cogitativa can operate discursively on these "intentions" on two levels, sc. it can discourse when discovering them, and then discourse with and upon them once they have been discovered.<sup>11</sup> And it is in this second level of discourse that the vis cogitativa prepares the phantasm and makes it suitable for abstraction.

But a distinction must be pointed out here. If we equate the word "intention" with the word "relation", as we have done for clarity's sake in the last few pages, it would be tantamount now to saying that in this second level of operation the cogitative compares "relations". Since, however, it does not know relations as such, but only concrete resemblances or relationships, this could hardly be the case. It need only be pointed out that while every "relationship" discovered by the vis cogitativa comes under the Avicennan term "intention", not every "intention", as we have seen, is a "relation" (separateness, for instance, is not a relation). Rather, what the cogitative compares in this second level of discourse, as St. Thomas points out, are the particulars whose

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<sup>11</sup>S.T. I, q. 78, a.4: "cogitativa. . .per collationem quandam hujusmodi intentiones adinvenit. Unde dicitur ratio particularis. . .est enim collativa intentionum individualium, sicut ratio intellectiva est collativa intentionum universalium."

particularity is recognized as belonging to a group.<sup>12</sup> Thus the vis cogitativa will single out for comparison all the particular instances of this or that man (rejecting trees, stones, etc. as not "related" to this group) which have been stored as particulars in the memory. If it could not compare them as particular instances in a related group, it would be similar in this to the imagination which can form a composite image of man.

Reverting, then, to our discussion in Chapter III, we remember that it is necessary for abstraction that we have not only a phantasm (without which it would be impossible to understand anything), but a suitable phantasm, for whose preparation the vis cogitativa and the memory are required.<sup>13</sup> We must now, therefore, try to put together these elements, along with the nature of the vis cogitativa and the intentiones brought out in the last chapters, into an orderly synthesis to show precisely where and how the cogitative fits into the metaphysical picture of the process of abstraction.

We begin then by reverting to the psychological analysis of the act of conceptualization studied in Chapter II. We noted there that when we wish to understand anything--to know its causes--we begin proposing to ourselves certain examples of the

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<sup>12</sup>In II Post. Anal., lect. 20.

<sup>13</sup>Cf. Chapter III of this thesis, pp. 27-29.

object, according to a selective or suitable phantasm. This is a fact of psychological experience also noted by St. Thomas.<sup>14</sup> It means, in effect, that this process of selection is intellectually directed, if not consciously observed; for while it is true that we can go about this selection consciously, it is also true that we do not always do so.

In other words, following the distinction pointed out in Chapter II, under the requiring impulse of intellect we naturally discourse to prepare a suitable phantasm, but may only be aware of this sense discourse by a later reflection. Again, in certain problems and situations we may formally discourse, i.e. the intellect may consciously direct sense discourse. In either case (formal or natural discourse), the point to be made here is that it is the intellect which begins this second-level discourse of the vis cogitativa in which it compares already perceived intentiones, as St. Thomas notes: "in potestate nostra est formare phantasmata accomodata considerationi quam volumus."<sup>15</sup>

This liason activity between the vis cogitativa and the intellect has often been noted by various authors, commenting on certain texts of St. Thomas wherein the cogitative is called the highest of the sense powers because of its being the medium be-

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<sup>14</sup>St. Th. I, q. 84, a.7: "quando aliquis conatur aliquid intelligere, format sibi aliqua phantasmata per modum exemplorum."

<sup>15</sup>C.G. II, 74 ad fin.

dium between intellect and sense.<sup>16</sup> How this liason is accomplished is a further problem, and one that this thesis makes no pretense to solve. But it is a point of Thomistic doctrine, and must be kept here if we honestly try to interpret the function of the vis cogitativa according to St. Thomas.

It is this direction of the intellect, at any rate, which determines the particular problem to be solved, and thus determines the type of phantasm to be prepared, in this way outlining negatively at least the limits of the ensuing sense-discourse. The vis cogitativa, then, must find particular examples in which the cause or quiddity sought by the intellect is concretely embodied. We may reasonably argue that one example will not suffice, otherwise the intellect would immediately abstract the essence (find the essential cause or definition) of the object at its first appearance or representation in the phantasm. This would be the automatic abstraction that our own experience belies. What is needed, therefore, is a group of examples which the intellect may then consider, disregarding differences etc., until it hits upon the common note. Again, as we saw, St. Thomas does not say that the first similarity or common note the intellect hits upon (or abstracts) will be the essential note or form--it may be only the form of whiteness which it first notices as common to

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<sup>16</sup>Cf. especially Q.D. de Ver. q. 10, a.5; ad 2um; ad 4um: "potentia media"; In III Sent., d.23, q.2, a.2, sol. 1, ad 3um.



this group of examples.<sup>17</sup> But the point here is simply this: Intellect notes the similarity among the differences, or in stricter terminology, it abstracts the form had in common from the individuating notes. That is the job of intellect, not the vis cogitativa. The cogitative simply finds a group of related objects taken in their particularity--i.e. all individuated by differences, but having the same common characteristics. It is then up to intellect to find the single common note among the individual differences.

Thus the function of the vis cogitativa is to find a group of objects, related in form (according to sense characteristics) corresponding to the problem proposed by intellect. It finds this group by comparing the myriad particular objects stored as particulars in memory, selecting only those with the required relationship.

For example, we want to define man. The vis cogitativa selects from the myriad remembrances of the individual objects in memory the related group (Joe, James, John, Thomas); it disregards the other particulars stored in memory which are not related, sc. trees, animals, stones, houses, etc. It can do this because it knows these objects under two aspects ("intentions")--"separate" and "related". Having compared the objects stored in memory, and having rejected the non-related ones, it presents to

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<sup>17</sup>In II Post. Anal., lect. 20.

the intellect for speculation a group of particular objects, still individuated by their differences, but related according to the sensible characteristics which the cogitative perceives as common among them.

This discussion immediately suggests two problems which are not within the scope of this limited thesis and have not, to our knowledge, been explicitly solved elsewhere: 1) Is the phantasm thus presented to intellect a "multiple" phantasm, or a series of phantasms; 2) Is this phantasm produced in the imagination by the cogitative, or can the cogitative also produce phantasms independently of the imagination?

As regards the first problem, it would seem that the term "composite" phantasm should be avoided, since the related objects must be seen by the intellect as individual objects with their individual differences. It is the work of the intellect, not sense, to prescind from these differences in abstraction. Hence the idea that the cogitative gathers individuals in a related group until the common note stands forth clearly, with the differences subdued, does not appeal to us. This process has often been compared with a photographer's changing negatives in an enlarger and exposing each for a small fraction of the necessary time on the same sheet of printing paper, with the result that only the common properties of each, and not their differences, appear on the finished positive. If this were the case with the vis cogita-

tiva in preparing the phantasm, it would not leave much to the intellect. We here take "multiple" phantasm to mean a single phantasm representing several individuals ( a group photograph, if you will) as contrasted to a series of individual phantasms, each representing one particular object (a film-strip, to follow out the photographic analogy).

As regards the second problem, an interesting and rather singular text in the Summa could possibly be taken as a statement by St. Thomas to the effect that producing a phantasm is not an operation peculiar to the imagination: "Respondeo dicendum quod quidam posuerunt habitum scientiae non esse in ipso intellectu, sed in viribus sensitivis, scilicet imaginativa, cogitativa, et memorativa; . . . sed quia scientia est in intellectu, oportet quod habitus scientiae hic acquisitae partim sit in praedictis viribus sensitivis, et partim in ipso intellectu. Et hoc potest considerari ex ipsis actibus ex quibus habitus scientiae acquiritur. . . Actus autem intellectus ex quibus in praesenti vita scientia acquiritur, sunt per conversionem intellectus ad phantasmata, quae sunt in praedictis viribus sensitivis."<sup>18</sup> The use of the plural here by St. Thomas is interesting, but of course not necessarily conclusive in the light of other numerous texts. Still, it remains a possible solution to this second question.

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<sup>18</sup>S.T. I, q. 89, a.5.

Either of these problems, seemingly, would be enough for a thesis in itself; they cannot be gone into any further in this one. Our problem has been a wholly different one, sc. to discover the precise work of the vis cogitativa in preparing the phantasm for intellection. And whatever the specific faculty by which the phantasm is elicited may be, and whatever the nature of the phantasm so prepared, we have seen what must be the work of the vis cogitativa as regards its preparation. And we have been able to do this, although St. Thomas nowhere explicitly outlines this operation, because of the specific nature which St. Thomas assigns to the vis cogitativa, namely an internal sense which knows "intentions" discursively, and can also discourse upon them.

Applying this specific and somewhat peculiar nature of the vis cogitativa to the problem of the preparation of phantasms (and we apply it to this problem simply because St. Thomas insists the cogitative is necessary to prepare an apt phantasm), we saw that the function of the vis cogitativa in this problem is to select, by discoursing upon particulars stored in memory under the "intentional" aspects of separate yet related (which it knows in its first act of discourse) a related group of objects. The "related-group" phantasm(s) presents to the gaze of intellect a group of similar objects in all their individuating differences, precisely because they are still a group of particulars; it is the function of intellect to discern the unity in the multiplicity, to abstract

the "form" from the individual differences.

We have thus answered, within the Thomistic synthesis and drawn from the texts of St. Thomas himself, the modern objection that Thomism teaches the "automatic" abstraction of essences and does not adequately account for the psychological data of the act of abstraction. We have found in the Thomistic synthesis a recognition and explanation of the "sense-discourse" which figures so largely in these objections, attributing this function, in the metaphysical abstract of the act of cognition, to the vis cogitativa in the act of preparing the phantasm for an act of intellectual understanding.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONGRUENT AND RELATED DOCTRINES OF ST. THOMAS WHICH ILLUSTRATE THAT THIS INTERPRETATION IS WELL FOUNDED

To a very large extent, this thesis has attained its aim, so an analysis and clear statement of the function of the vis cogitativa in preparing the phantasm for the act of abstraction. We have examined, indeed, not only the function of the vis cogitativa, but the process whereby it performs this function. To fulfill our purpose adequately, then, it is only necessary to show that this statement of the function of the vis cogitativa is according to the mind of St. Thomas Aquinas.

To a certain degree we have even accomplished this secondary necessity already. No step in this thesis thus far has been taken without the explicit use of a text of St. Thomas himself to justify it. Still, certain points in our analysis of this function of the cogitative have gone beyond the explicit statements of the texts involved, especially in the crucial area of enumerating the "intentions" which the vis cogitativa perceives and uses in preparing the phantasm. Hence we feel it necessary in this chapter to examine certain related doctrines of St. Thomas on the subject

of cognition which will show that our interpretation of texts, where necessary, was well-founded.

We have already discussed (in Chapter V) at some length, the relationship between the operation of the vis cogitativa and the ability of the memory to retain "past as past". Indeed, St. Thomas even mentions explicitly that the ratio praeteriti is one of the intentiones discovered by the vis cogitativa.<sup>1</sup> Taken literally this would mean that the cogitative knew the abstract essence or meaning of the term "past". Since the vis cogitativa is a sense, however, and cannot know in the abstract, this statement by St. Thomas can only mean that the vis cogitativa discovers something which serves as the foundation (ratio) for the intellectual concept of past. This discovered something, we said, was the "intention" of separate, the perception of each sense picture as an individual unit, and consequently the perception of the sequence of individual perceptions. And it is on this notion of sequence--one thing following another--that the idea of "past as past" is built.

In this area, then, our interpretation of the operation of the vis cogitativa fits the texts of St. Thomas, and even illuminates them to a certain degree. For it is only after the function of the cogitative that the memory is said to retain the ratio

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<sup>1</sup>S.T. I, q. 78, a.4: "Ipsa ratio praeteriti, quam attendit memoria, inter hujusmodi intentiones computatur."

praeteriti. But since the texts do not say precisely in virtue of what perception of the cogitative this can be, it is pleasant to note that our interpretation of the function of the vis cogitativa fits this statement of St. Thomas and also supplements it to some degree.

We have also mentioned in passing (Chapter II) the necessity of this interpretation of the vis cogitativa's function in order to fit correctly St. Thomas' statements concerning the origins of intellectual knowledge: "si autem ita esset quod sensus apprehenderet solum id quod est particularitatis, et nullo modo cum hoc apprehenderet universalem naturam in particulari, non esset possibile quod ex apprehensione sensus causaretur in nobis cognitio universalis;"<sup>2</sup> and again, "cogitativa apprehendit individuum ut existens sub natura communi."<sup>3</sup> In other words, it is only in so far as the vis cogitativa knows the "intention" of related--relating individual perceptions into general categories according to sense characteristics--that the intellect is presented with a phantasm suitable for the abstraction of the universal. With this suitably prepared phantasm the intellect can abstract the universal. Without it, as St. Thomas says, it would not even be possible to have any intellectual knowledge originating in the

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<sup>2</sup>In II Post. Anal., lect 20.

<sup>3</sup>In II de An., lect. 13, n. 398 (Pirootta edition)



senses. And since all our knowledge in this life begins with sense perception, without this function of the vis cogitativa we would have no intellectual knowledge at all, since "necesse est prima universalia principia cognoscere per inductionem."<sup>4</sup>

The obverse of this doctrine also finds our interpretation of the function of the vis cogitativa in accord with St. Thomas' position in the scholastic dispute as to whether or not the intellect has direct or indirect knowledge of the singular, material object. Suarezians in general hold that the intellect has an immediate knowledge of the singular material, of which it forms a proper concept. St. Thomas, on the other hand, holds that the singular material cannot be known directly by the intellect, an immaterial faculty.<sup>5</sup> That the singular must somehow be known by the intellect is obvious from the fact that the singular is used in judgments ( e.g. John is a man), and consequently the intellect must have a concept of both the subject and predicate of the judgment.

St. Thomas solves this difficulty by observing that it gets this knowledge by a quaedam reflexio to the source of its knowledge of the individual, sc. the phantasm.<sup>6</sup> Since it is the function of the vis cogitativa to keep representations in the phantasm separ-

<sup>4</sup>In II Post. Anal., lect. 20.

<sup>5</sup>S.T. I, q. 86, a.1.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

ate but related, the intellect is enabled to pick out the individual instance in this reflection. Again, then, the operation we have given the vis cogitativa in arriving at these two "intentions" is in accord with St. Thomas' own explicit doctrine on the point of intellectual cognition of the singular.

Had St. Thomas, for instance, adopted the Suarezian position in this doctrine of the knowledge of the singular, we should have found our interpretation of the function of the vis cogitativa at variance on this point, and be forced to reconsider our position. As it is, our interpretation fits normally into the Thomistic doctrine at this point, thus giving an oblique substantiation, at least, that whatever interpreting of texts we have done has been according to the mind of St. Thomas.

One last related doctrine, in the same relative sphere of cognition, in which the vis cogitativa plays a major part according to St. Thomas is the notion of "experience". This is a literal translation of the Latin term experimentum, and is understood here in the sense of the English expressions "man of experience" or "an experienced politician" etc. To define "experience", to state just what it is in itself, presents somewhat of a problem even to St. Thomas. He speaks of its origins and its results, but perhaps the closest he comes to defining it is to paraphrase it by the words experimentalis scientia.<sup>7</sup> We might roughly attempt a

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<sup>7</sup>In I Meta., lect. 1, n. 18, ed. Cathala (Taurini, 1926).

definition of it as an experimental knowledge or practical skill which arises from a comparison of remembered instances of the same thing or event, and which gives one the ability to work easily and surely in a present similar instance. Possibly an example, such as that used by St. Thomas,<sup>8</sup> will illustrate the point in question.

A man observes that a certain herb or medicine cures Plato, Socrates, and others, from certain similar cases of fever--i.e. temperature such and such, pulse such and such, in certain external circumstances (after exposure, etc.). Now in the given present case, he observes the same external symptoms and, remembering the other cases, gives to this man with just such symptoms the same herb or medicine and the man recovers. That would be an example of the operation of "experience."

An important thing to notice in all of this is that experience is not strictly intellectual, though it may be guided by intellect. In the example, for instance, the herb is not given because the cause of the disease is known, or the nature of the herb is known, or the medicinal counter-effects of the one upon the other is known. It is given because it is remembered as working in similar remembered cases of the same remembered symptoms. There are many examples from our modern daily lives of

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

the operation of "experience". To simplify the example and modernize it, suppose a child to have observed a doctor reviving a victim of a fainting spell by rubbing the wrists, slapping the face, elevating the feet, etc. The child could then, we may suppose, successfully revive someone who has fainted by imitating the doctor's actions. The treatment will work, but it will not be because the child knows anything about blood-circulation as a cause either of the fainting or the reviving. It will be simply because he remembered the actions of the doctor in a similar instance. Knowledge of the causes for the action, or understanding, is not necessary for the actions of "experience."

In the light of the thesis thus far, it will not be surprising to find that St. Thomas does not attribute this experimental knowledge to the intellect, but to the vis cogitativa. Intellect knows per causas, but "experimentum est ex collatione plarium singularium in memoria receptorum."<sup>9</sup> This is the work of the vis cogitativa: "Hujusmodi autem collatio est homini propria, et pertinet ad vim cogitativam, quare ratio particularis dicitur."<sup>10</sup> It is the work of the vis cogitativa, because it is a discourse on the sense level--i.e. a comparing of the present with a remembered group of similar instances. Intellect has not yet discover-

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

ed the cause so that there is knowledge of the universal principle to be applied in the case, but there is sufficient knowledge obtained by this sense-discourse to allow action--the action of "experience." Thus St. Thomas says: "ex multis memoriis unius rei accipit homo experimentum de aliquo, quo experimento potens est ad facile et recte operandum."<sup>11</sup>

The whole doctrine of "experience" hinges upon the ability of the vis cogitativa to compare a present individual instance with a group of related and similar instances remembered in all their individual circumstances. This is the function we have attributed to the vis cogitativa in this thesis, and the correctness of our interpretation seems adequately borne out by this related doctrine of St. Thomas on the nature of "experience".

The related doctrines, then, of memory, the origin of intellectual knowledge both of the singular and the universal, and finally of experimentum, all tend to confirm the position we have taken in this thesis concerning the function and operation of the vis cogitativa in preparing the phantasm for the act of abstraction. Though this type of confirmation can only be indirect and limited, it does show that we have not gone contrary, at least, to the mind of St. Thomas concerning the operation of the vis cogitativa where interpretation or supplementation of the direct texts was necessary to carry out the purpose of the thesis.

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<sup>11</sup>ibid.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Daniel Leo Flaherty, S.J. has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Philosophy.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

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Date

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