Deely, Aquinas, and Poinsot: How the intentionality of inner sense transcends the limits of empiricism*

ANTHONY J. LISSKA

Abstract

In Four ages of understanding*, John Deely considers (among many things) issues in the philosophy of mind rooted in the Aristotelian tradition. One specific item concerns perceiving the individual as an individual that is not reducible to an empiricist "bundle of sensations." Deely, in discussing Poinsot on inner sense and perception through an* intentio insensata*, suggests that most modern and contemporary philosophers neglected Poinsot's insights, a partial exception being Thomas Reid. The present essay offers an explicatio textus of Aquinas's texts shedding light on the role the* vis cogitativa *with its* intentio insensata *plays in transcending classical empiricism. Deely's analysis brings to the forefront this philosophical discussion. Nonetheless, Deely's analysis omits discussing how late twentieth century analytic philosophy of mind has ventured nearer this set of epistemological concerns than his book appears to indicate. This essay covers that omission.*

Keywords: *Phantasm; vis cogitativa; individual; primary substance; Thomas Aquinas; Thomas Reid.*

In his monumental *Four ages of understanding*, John Deely offers his readers a wide swath of the history of western philosophy situated under the mantel of semiotics and the theory of meaning. Deely considers more than several issues common to metaphysics and the philosophy of mind that are rooted in the Aristotelian tradition. One of these issues in the philosophy of mind deals with the perception of the individual as an individual and not merely as a "bundle of sensations," a position common to much British empiricism. Deely considers the role that the renaissance scholastic philosopher, John Poinsot — sometimes more widely known as John of St. Thomas — articulated in his view of the internal senses. This discussion deals with the perception of the individual by means of

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what scholastic philosophers call an *intentio insensata*, which suggests that the role of perception differs radically from an analysis of sensation. Deely suggests, correctly it would seem, that most modern and contemporary philosophers have neglected the insights of Poinsot. The exception would be the common sense position articulated by the Scottish philosopher, Thomas Reid. Reid, however, does not provide the philosophy of mind machinery necessary to justify his distinction between sensation and perception (Deely 2001: 552).

The thrust of this essay, following from the insights of Deely, is to offer an *explicatio textus* of the writings of Thomas Aquinas that will shed light on this epistemological conundrum. To be more specific, this essay is a discussion of the role of inner sense, with special reference to the *vis cogitativa*, in the theory of sensation and perception put forward in the writings of Thomas Aquinas. While much has been written on the role of intellect as discussed by Aquinas — both the *intellectus agens* and the *intellectus possibilis* — nonetheless much less has been written about his account of sensation and perception. Regarding sense knowledge, moreover, even less has been written about the role of inner sense in Aquinas's overall treatment of issues in the philosophy of mind. One significant benefit of Deely's analysis is that it brings to the forefront of philosophical discussion this set of issues. Nonetheless, one omission in Deely's generally thoughtful analysis is his neglect in considering how late twentieth century analytic philosophy of mind has ventured nearer to his set of epistemological worries than his book appears to indicate.

The foil for this essay is the set of texts rooted in classical British empiricism, with special reference to Berkeley and Hume, in which what has become known as the "bundle view of perception" was articulated with philosophical vehemence. Deely notes with approval that Thomas Reid offered a critique of this position defended by Berkeley and Hume; however, Reid fails, both in the judgement of this reviewer and in Deely's analysis, to offer an analysis of how his position transcends what Berkeley and Hume proposed other than by wishful thinking. Aquinas's account of the *vis cogitativa*, on the other hand, provides a structural account of how the perception of the individual as opposed to merely an awareness of a bundle of sensations is possible. This essay, therefore, is an elucidation — an *explicatio textus* — of the necessary conditions for perception in Aquinas's philosophy of mind, all the while not forgetting the importance of Poinsot's contributions to this discussion.

Writing recently on contemporary naturalist epistemology, John Haldane suggested that serious discussion was needed in this area of cognitive inner sense faculties in Aquinas. Haldane writes: "What is now needed, however, is a fully perspicuous philosophical account … of the nature

and operations of what in the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition are spoken of as the 'cogitative powers' and the 'active intellect.' That might be one of our tasks for the next century'' (Haldane 1999: 43).

Dorothea Frede, on the other hand, argued recently (2001: 170) that Aquinas on inner sense is generally ''an embarrassment.'' Frede and Haldane offer two contrasting positions, to be sure. Frede charges Aquinas with producing a philosophical embarrassment while Haldane challenges philosophers to work seriously on the ''cogitative powers.'' One of the purposes of this essay is to sort out these differences and adjudicate contrasting interpretations: is the *vis cogitativa* ''an embarrassment'' or is it rather a segment of inner sense theory requiring serious and sustained study in the history of philosophy, which should be ''one of our tasks for the next century''? The argument spelled out in this essay sides with Haldane's proposal.

There is, moreover, a general realist thrust to Deely's mode of doing philosophy. In this regard, Deely forces the reader to not forget that Aristotle's and Aquinas's method in undertaking philosophical analysis is realist to the core. In this regard, Deely holds a position in direct opposition to a postmodernist position offered by Catherine Pickstock, among others. This challenge of postmodernism is neither an arcane nor idle philosophical question. Writing in the English Dominican monthly, *New Blackfriars*, Pickstock asks the following question, and not rhetorically: [1] ''How should one respond to the death of realism, the death of the idea that thoughts in our minds can represent to us the way things actually are in the world? For such a death seems to be widely proclaimed by contemporary philosophers'' (Pickstock 2000: 308).

Pickstock's analysis of Aquinas on truth is a vigorous attempt to place Thomas in the Post-Modernist camp. This essay raises serious questions about Pickstock's anti-realist interpretation of Aquinas.

1. No epistemology without an ontology

In discussing Aquinas's account of the philosophy of mind, one must begin with a methodological principle articulated by Haldane and substantiated by Deely. Haldane suggests that philosophers undertaking work in Aristotle and Aquinas on mind understand that a necessary condition for working through a structural analysis of mind in these two classical realists requires acknowledging the role philosophical realism plays in their theories. This principle undercuts the epistemological foundationalism common to much modern philosophy since the time of Descartes. Certainly Descartes raised the foundationalist questions with vigor. Haldane

reminds philosophers confronting epistemological issues in Aristotle and Aquinas that their respective ontological theories play a principal role in their theories of knowledge. Simply put, both Aristotle and Aquinas build their ontological theories first, and then their respective philosophies of mind follow upon their ontologies. It is not the other way around, as one finds in many modern epistemological foundationalists. Hence, for both Aristotle and Aquinas, an ontology of primary substances is a necessary condition for the development of a coherent philosophy of mind. The awareness of a primary substance in Aquinas's philosophy of mind, furthermore, grounds his distinction between sensation and perception. This is a distinction Reid proposes but one which both Deely and this author argue Reid seems unable to ground philosophically.

This ontological principle for epistemology is found earlier in analytic philosophy in the writings of Gustav Bergmann. In his "Inclusion, exemplification, and inherence in G. E. Moore," Bergmann (1962: 86) argued that "Epistemology or theory of knowledge is nothing but the ontological assay of the awareness situation." Deely would appear to concur. In discussing Aquinas and Maritain on the philosophy of mind, Deely writes: "'Metaphysics' ... is understood ... as a philosophy of being that is at once, and par excellence, a philosophy of mind. And within this 'philosophy of mind,' epistemology does not exist as a discipline distinct from, but as a part within, metaphysics" (Deely 2001: 742).

Bergmann gives evidence of further connections with the general tenor of Aristotelian and Aquinian philosophy. Herbert Hochberg, writing in *The Modern Schoolman*, unearthed the themes of Aristotelian hylomorphism found in Bergmann's later writings. This connection with a principal twentieth century analytic philosopher compliments Deely's Thomist analysis. Hochberg notes that throughout his career, Bergmann focused his attention on three metaphysical issues: the problem of individuation, of universals, and of intentionality. These are metaphysical *aporia* common to the philosophical work of Aquinas and Poinsot. Hochberg writes that what Bergmann called "ultimate sorts" function as "*categorical natures* that are components of what they *inform*." Hochberg writes the following:

> Here Bergmann saw a connection to "... Aristotle's composition of a substance out of form and matter, or, rather in the manner of Aquinas, out of an essence and a bit of *materia signata* ...." Irrespective of the accuracy of his reading of Aquinas, regarding essences and *materia signata*, his claim is clear, as is the influence of Aristotle and Aquinas. (Hochberg 2001: 264)[2]

Bergmann was delving into serious metaphysical work, which was at least analogous to the metaphysics of Aquinas and Poinsot. Hochberg

further notes, moreover, that Bergmann's "turn to metaphysics was unique among the positivists that emigrated to the United States and England" (Hochberg 2001: 257). The themes Bergmann addressed are similar structurally to several ontological positions put forward by Aristotle and Aquinas and endorsed recently by Haldane's work in what he calls "Analytical Thomism." Hence, there is an interesting confluence of late twentieth century analytic metaphysics and philosophy of mind with the traditional realism articulated and defended by Aquinas and Poinsot. Deely appears not well connected to this aspect of twentieth century analytic philosophy.

2. Philosophical worries about sensation and perception in early analytic philosophy

Issues in perception theory dominated Anglo-American philosophy during much of the twentieth century. Early analytic treatises by Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore, for instance, attended relentlessly to the worries about idealism and its connection with theories of sensation and perception. These early discussions, however, fostered worries about what counted for an adequate analysis of the awareness of an individual. At mid-century, Gilbert Ryle, for instance, expressed these worries in a forthright manner:

> One of the things that worry me most is the notion of sensations or sense-impressions. It seems, on the one hand, very hard to avoid saying that hearing, seeing, and tasting could not happen unless appropriate sense-impressions were received; and yet also very hard to give a coherent account of what such sense-impressions are, or how the having of sense-impressions is connected with, say, our hearing a conversation or our seeing a tree. (Ryle 1956: 427)

In his essay, Ryle raised three issues that are important in considering Aquinas's theory of intentionality for sensation and perception:

1. What is the causal relation between objects in the world and our intentional awareness of these objects?
2. Does efficient causality offer a sufficient condition for explaining perception?
3. How do we get beyond sensations alone and become aware of "things"?

Deely's *Four ages of understanding*, it would seem, fits in structurally with this set of philosophical concerns.

Recent work in the philosophy of mind addresses these issues in some detail. The focus of this essay is on the perception of "individual things" contained in the theory of mind articulated by Aquinas and seconded by Poinsot, with special attention to intentionality theory and inner sense in the context of recent analytic philosophy of mind. This analysis suggests important structural connections between work in analytic philosophy of mind and the thrust of Deely's arguments.

The text from Ryle indicates the importance of the set of issues then prevalent in mid century analytic philosophy, especially as practiced in Great Britain, centered on the nature of sensation and perception. What determined this philosophical direction in analytic philosophy was the early epistemological worries of Moore and Russell, among others, caused by the then almost over-whelming acceptance — many would argue almost uncritically — of absolute idealism in several of its different formulations. In his famous essays, "The refutation of idealism" (1965 [1903]) and "a defence of common sense" (1925), Moore articulated what he took to be the nature of sensation in order to prove that idealism, with its general maxim gained from Berkeley's *Esse est percipe*, was flawed conceptually. The early work of Moore and Russell determined the development of analytic philosophy for a good part of the first half of the twentieth century. This role for common sense in early analytic philosophy, however, was more pronounced than Deely appears to grant.

Of course, these early essays spawned those quite irritable sense datum theories that one finds accepted by analytic philosophers, Moore and Russell included, during most of the first half of the twentieth century. It was Ryle himself, along with Wittgenstein and the brash young John Austin at Oxford, who eventually undercut sense datum theories by indicating, especially in the lectures of Austin, that sense data language violated the norms of ordinary language. What is interesting historically is that ordinary language philosophy brought about the upheaval in analytic philosophy that both hastened the death knell of Cartesian foundationalism and reintroduced the possibility of Aristotelian realism.[3]

What is surprising about all of this, when considered from the historical distance of more than a half-century, is that, while the twin characteristics of philosophical realism and an adherence to the role of common sense permeated the discussions of the early analytic philosophers — as well as the later work of Wittgenstein, Ryle and Austin — nonetheless the great realist philosophers of the Aristotelian tradition were, for all practical purposes, overlooked, neglected, and ignored. The analysis put forward in this essay, which is one with which one suspects Deely would concur, suggests that this oversight is a conceptual pity. Deely writes about what he considers one of "history's great ironies": "That modern

empiricism, introduced to vindicate the views of the 'plain man of common sense' against the dream of Descartes, ended up, of all the philosophies in history, the one most removed from and contemptuous of 'common sense'" (Deely 2001: 552).

The Aristotelian philosophy of mind tradition, especially as found in the writings of Thomas Aquinas, offers insights regarding the nature of sensation and perception that might have moved these twentieth century perception discussions forward in important ways. Hence, the analysis of philosophical concepts found in the writings of Aquinas and Poinsot, especially as spelled out in Aquinas's detailed *Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima*, are philosophical themes with much more than historical interest. These discussions encompass analyses of intentionality theory, adopting a role of common sense, rendering a distinction between sensation and perception, elucidating a naturalistic philosophy of mind, treating what Donald Davidson once called the "anomality of the mental," rejecting what Hilary Putnam refers to as "the inner theatre of the mind," and finally transcending the limits of British Empiricism. These issues are in structure similar to Deely's analysis put forward through the lenses of Poinsot's theory of signs.

3. Source material for Aquinas: The *Sententia Libri "De Anima"*

A perspicuous analysis of perception theory in Aquinas depends on working through sections of his *Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima*, whose Latin title is the *Sententia Libri "De Anima."* Not only is this treatise a lucid *explicatio textus* of the many issues central to Aristotelian philosophy of mind, but it is here that Aquinas develops most fully his account of sensation and perception. Recently, philosophers have paid more attention to the *Commentary*. The Leonine edition of Aquinas' *Sententia Libri "De Anima,"* edited by the French Dominican, Rene-Antoine Gauthier, appeared in 1984. In 1999, Robert Pasnau rendered a new translation of the *Commentary*, which was the first fresh translation of this work since the classic Foster and Humphries (1951) edition appeared a half century ago.

In order to witness Aquinas's wrestling at his best with issues in sensation, perception and concept formation, philosophers interested in the history of the philosophy of mind need to read carefully Aquinas's exposition on Aristotle's *De Anima*. When discussing Aquinas's philosophy of perception, however, historians of philosophy normally refer to the short analysis in the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*, plus occasional references to the somewhat whimsical discussions in the *Summa Contra*

Gentiles. While the account of intellectual knowledge found in the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae* is moderately developed, nonetheless Aquinas treats the important issues of sense knowledge in only two articles of Question Seventy-Eight: Article Three for the external senses, and Article Four for the internal senses. If order to see where Aquinas considers philosophy of mind issues in more detail, one must read seriously his *Sententia libri "De Anima."* This account of a realist theory of sensation and perception depends on Aquinas's analysis of the ontology of the human person as a holistic entity and not as a separated Cartesian mind. This, in turn, is the justification of Aquinas's famous non-Cartesian claim (1993 [1265]: 192–193) that "*Anima mea non est ego!*" In this *Commentary*, furthermore, Aquinas demonstrates his work primarily as a philosopher. Hence, one need not drown in the sometimes tiresome worries about the role of theology in the writings of Aquinas. In his Aristotelian *Commentary*, Aquinas writes like the first rate philosopher he is, and one should take his philosophical commentary for what it is — a piece of serious philosophical analysis.

The *Prima Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae* and the *Commentary on the Soul* appear to have been written about the same time.[4] The dating of the *Commentary* is a fascinating puzzle-like project in itself. This author claims no expertise on these arcane, albeit important matters. Nonetheless, Aquinas undertook concurrently with the writing of his Aristotelian commentary, so it appears, the composition of the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae*, where his account of his philosophy of mind appears in Questions 78–79 and 84–89. Hence, Aquinas was figuring out his own take on issues in the philosophy of mind while wrestling with Aristotle's *De Anima*. Gauthier and Simon Tugwell both suggest that this was the first of Aquinas's Aristotelian commentaries.[5] In his excellent study of Aquinas, Tugwell notes the following concerning Aristotelian commentaries written by Thomas:

> Also, towards the end of his time in Rome, Thomas composed what may have been his first fully developed Aristotelian commentary, on the *De Anima*, and it is not unreasonable to postulate a connection between this commentary and the fact that Thomas was writing about the soul in the first part of the *Summa*. In the same way the commentary on Aristotle's *Ethics*, at least in its final form, seems to be related to the composition of the second part of the *Summa*. (Tugwell 1988: 256)

The *Sententia libri "De anima,"* especially the exposition and commentary beginning with Chapter/*Lectio* Ten of Book Two and in major sections of Book Three, contains the important analyses by Aquinas on is-

sues in the philosophy of mind. This corresponds to Book Two, Chapter Five and following in Aristotle. Aquinas's account of a realist theory of sensation and perception is developed more fully in this Aristotelian *Sententia* than in any other text in the written corpus of Aquinas.

4. Aquinas on inner sense

In this essay, concept-formation and the process of abstraction through the *intellectus agens* come into play only in a peripheral way. This analysis addresses Aquinas's fascinating but much neglected account of inner sense, especially the *vis cogitativa*. The texts of Aquinas imply two different interpretations of inner sense with the text of the *Summa Theologiae* suggesting one account of the concept of *phantasia* while Aquinas's *Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima* offers a different account.

1. In the *Summa Theologiae*, the inner sense faculty of *phantasia* is identical with the imagination or *vis imaginativa*. Aquinas writes: "*Ad harum autem formarum retentionem aut conservationem ordinatur phantasia, sive imaginatio, quae idem sunt*." (I, Q. 78, art. 4.)
2. In the *Commentary on the soul*, *phantasia* is used as a generic concept or "place-holder" covering the three distinct faculties of inner sense: the imagination, the *vis cogitativa* and the sense memory. One must note, however, that Aquinas considers each of these internal sense faculties in the *Summa Theologiae* account.

5. Recent work in Aristotelian perception theory

This discussion of Aquinas is part of the general resurgence of interest in Aristotelian philosophy of mind and intentionality, with the last fifteen years witnessing much work in Aristotle. Names like Richard Sorabji, Anthony Kenny, Myles Burnyeat, Hilary Putnam, Martha Nussbaum, John Haldane, Fred Miller, Deborah Modrak, and John McDowell, among others, are on the list of those philosophers unearthing insights Aristotle offers in the general area of sensation and perception. Writing on the importance of Aquinas for contemporary philosophy of mind, Nussbaum wrote the following: "Aquinas' commentary … produced in the thirteenth century, is one of the very greatest commentaries on the work … (and) Aquinas's commentary itself is very insightful; so too are the extensive remarks about Aristotelian soul-body issues contained in the *Summa Theologiae*" (Nussbaum 1995: 4).

Following on the coattails of much recent work into Aristotle's philosophy of mind, some interesting scholarship has been forthcoming on inner sense in Aquinas. This is a radical departure from much twentieth century history of medieval philosophy, where Aquinas's general account of perception was for the most part relegated to the philosophical backwaters of forgotten theory. Dominik Perler's significant collection of essays, *Ancient and Medieval theories of intentionality* (2001), for instance, contains four articles devoted almost exclusively to Aquinas's philosophy of mind, with the *vis cogitativa* occupying a central place in two of the essays: Dorothea Frede's "Aquinas on *Phantasia*," and Cyrille Michon's "Intentionality and proto-thoughts." This is, to be sure, an advance over the neglected status of these intentionality discussions on the internal senses in Aquinas noted in an article published in the 1940s (Peghaire 1942–1943): "A forgotten sense, the cogitative according to St. Thomas Aquinas".

6. The worldview of Aquinas

In order to understand Aquinas's thesis of intentionality, one needs to understand first the general structure of his ontology and the categories contained within that ontology.[6] In Aquinas's worldview, the sensible world is composed of primary substances. His ontology is an attempt to account for what is necessary in order to render an analysis of a primary substance possible. A primary substance is an individual of a natural kind, which exemplifies the following kinds of properties:

a. Incidental properties — the accidents that happen to an individual of a natural kind; these are accidental forms or *per accidens* forms.
b. Essential properties — the sortal properties that define the essential characteristics of an individual of a natural kind; these properties are grounded in the substantial forms, which are instances of a *forma substantialis*.

In addition, some account of first matter that underlies the substantial form is a necessary condition for an adequate ontological analysis. The first matter and the substantial form together provide what Aquinas calls secondary substance or second matter. It is to this composite that accidental forms inhere. A discussion of first matter, a terribly difficult concept in Aristotelian metaphysics, is beyond the limits of this present inquiry. In the philosophy of mind, the question arises: "How is knowledge of this primary substance possible?" Aquinas develops his theory of intentionality in order to account for the possibility of the

awareness and the understanding of a primary substance. There are, first, three sensible objects, and second, there is the philosophy of mind "machinery" necessary in order to abstract the essence or natural kind properties from the individual primary substance. The three objects of sense knowledge are the following:

1. Proper sensibles
2. Common sensibles
3. The incidental object of sense

In addition, Aquinas postulated the intentionality ability or cognitive disposition to abstract and know the essence of an individual of a natural kind.

4. An intentional awareness of the essence:
   a. *Intellectus agens* — the ability to abstract the set of essential properties.
   b. *Intellectus possibilis* — the ability to know this set of essential properties.

In his book, Deely (2001: 347–350) treats the functions of the intellect in Chapter Two, Section Seven. The texts below from both the *Summa Theologiae* and the *Commentary on the soul* indicate in some detail the three kinds of sensible objects noted above that are found in Aquinas's theory of sensation and perception: the proper sensibles, the common sensibles and the incidental objects of sense.

Senses know things from being impressed with their likeness. Now this likeness can be taken at three stages:

1. First, *immediately and directly (primo et per se)*, as when the likeness of color is in the sight. So also with the other proper sense-objects in their appropriate senses.
2. Secondly, *directly but not immediately (per se, sed non primo)*, as when the likeness of bodily shape or size is in the sight. So also with sense-objects shared through several senses — i.e., the common sensibles.
3. Thirdly, neither immediately nor directly, but indirectly *(nec primo nec per se, sed per accidens)*, as when the likeness of a human person (the incidental object of sense) is in the sight; she is there not because she is a human person, but because she is a colored object. (*Summa Theologiae*, Ia, Q. 17, a. 2)

In his *Commentary*, Aquinas spells out the same set of sensible objects:

Now the term sense-object is used in three ways, one-way incidentally (*per accidens*) and in two ways essentially or absolutely (per se). Of the latter, we use one if referring to the special objects proper to each sense, and the other in referring to

the objects that are common to more than one sense in all sentient things. (*Commentary on the Soul*, # 383)

7. Meta-philosophical principles necessary in understanding Aquinas's philosophy of mind

In discussing intentionality theory, Aquinas opts for a meta-philosophy significantly at variance with what one finds in much modern philosophy. Deely agrees with this claim. Aquinas builds his ontology first, and then his philosophy of mind and his epistemology follow from the ontological analysis already constructed. Hence, not only is Aquinas, for instance, not a Cartesian advocating metaphysical substance dualism, but in a deeper sense, his approach to undertaking the activity of philosophy is diametrically opposed to the Cartesian method. There is a fundamental meta-philosophical difference between Aquinas and most practitioners of modern philosophy. In discussing these meta-philosophical differences, Scott MacDonald once wrote the following:

> Aquinas does not build his philosophical system around a theory of knowledge. In fact, the reverse is true: he builds his epistemology on the basis provided by other parts of his system, in particular, his metaphysics and psychology. To examine what we can recognize as a distinct and systematic theory of knowledge, then, we need to extract his strictly epistemological claims from the metaphysical and psychological discussions in which they are embedded. (Macdonald 1993: 160)

This analysis put forward by MacDonald is aligned with Haldane, who formulated the maxim noted earlier in this essay: "No epistemology without ontology" (Haldane 1999: 54). Haldane argues that one needs to account for a theory of the person first, which person has the dispositional properties to have cognitions and undertake actions. The theme of a holistic account of the human person as agent and knower is central to Aquinas's theory of human nature. Haldane further suggests that Aristotle and Aquinas adopt a different architectonic of proceeding from what one finds in modern philosophy: "Our knowledge of the external world is the starting point for philosophical reflection, the task of which is not to justify this knowledge but to explain it; to give an account of the scope of cognition, its genesis and its operations" (Haldane 2000: 43).

Neither Aquinas nor Poinsot articulates a set of criteria entailing a "foundationalist epistemology." To the contrary, Aquinas does not attempt to justify individual acts of awareness but rather to explain the possibility of those acts of awareness. This lack of foundationalist worries so

divergent from the thrust of much modern and contemporary epistemology caused, until recently, the general lack of interest in Aristotelian intentionality theory. Aquinas adopts both ontological realism — the claim that the external world is structured — and epistemological realism — the claim that knowers are aware in some manner of this structure of the world. The role of substantial form and incidental form is, of course, indispensable in these discussions. Form determines the structure to reality, both substantial forms and accidental forms. It is this set of structures that provides the possibility for knowledge. This, in turn, provides for a common sense view of knowing.

8. Thomas Reid on sense knowledge

In considering the role of common sense, Aquinas is akin philosophically to Thomas Reid. Reid, William Kneale once wrote (1971: 68), rescued the word "perception" from the muddles of early modern philosophers where, Kneale suggests, the term ceased to have any clear meaning. Empiricists like Hume thought themselves entitled to use "perception" as an "omnibus word" for whatever goes on in the mind. On matters of perception, Aquinas and Poinsot, like Reid, differ radically from Hume. Haldane once wrote (1997: 167) "Like Thomas Reid ... Aquinas himself is simply trying to identify at the level of a metaphysical description what is implicit in our everyday dealings with the world." Deely remarks (2001: 548) that Reid "was, as it were, the one man of the eighteenth century who stood up and said 'the emperor has no clothes on.'"

The *explicatio textus* of sense organ and faculty found in the *Commentary*, moreover, is remarkably similar to the method articulated by James Gibson in discussing the evolutionary development of human sense organs. It is through this evolutionary accommodation, Gibson suggests, that a human knower can make one's way around the environment. This position is often referred to as "ecological perception theory." While Gibson does not posit an ontology of holistic primary substances, nonetheless he considers the role the environment plays in determining how sense organs and faculties have developed and function. The same is true, *mutatis mutandis*, for Aquinas.[7] This gives a certain cash value to Aquinas's oft-repeated claim that "nature does not act in vain" and "the knowing faculty is made for the act of knowing, which in turn is made for the object of knowing."

A first response to these teleological claims in Aquinas is often — "How quaint!" quickly followed by a dismissal, especially by contemporary philosophers of mind. These "quaint discussions," however, may be

Aquinas's mode of introducing "epistemological naturalism" into the philosophy of mind discussion of cognitive faculties. In other words, human knowing faculties are made — or develop — for a particular environment, which is Gibson's claim. Haldane too observes this epistemological naturalism in Aquinas, and he once suggested (Haldane 2000: 39) that Aquinas and Willard Quine share some important metaphilosophical themes, since in the philosophy of mind, "both are philosophical naturalists." The external and the internal sense faculties are what they are because the objects of sensation and perception are what they are.

Moreover, what is important for this discussion is Reid's affirmation of the distinction between sensation and perception. Mental acts of perception are aware cognitively of individual things and not of discrete sensibles or sense data. Furthermore, Reid argues that only perception is cognitive. The important philosophical question, however, concerns what grounds Reid offers to justify philosophically this distinction between sensation and perception. Haldane once observed wryly that at the end of the day, Reid throws up his hands and utters something like: "It's magic!" Reid also appeals to the "Author of nature" who set up our perceptual apparatus so that it can function in a common sense manner. Reid writes: "The wise Author of our nature intended that a great and necessary part of our knowledge should be derived from experience before we are capable of remembering, and he hath provided means perfectly adequate to this intention" (1967 [1764]: 25).

Deely too is concerned about the lack of philosophical analysis on Reid's part justifying the distinction between sensation and perception. Deely writes:

> Reid's valiant effort to establish principles of common sense in modern philosophy, viewed in the light of earlier Latin developments in epistemology, had one great shortcoming which uncorrected, could only doom the effort. While Reid rejected the proposition that we directly know only our own ideas, which is the bedrock of modern epistemology, *he did so without having a way effectively to discriminate between sensation and perception as such.* Hence, he made his case of direct knowledge of physical things so strong as to be unable to deal as a matter of principle with the fundamental difference between perceptual objects in their objective constitution through relations and perceptual objects in what they have of a subjective constitution in as things accessible in sensation. (Deely 2001: 548; italics added)

This essay proposes that the mental act of the *vis cogitativa* enables Aquinas to affirm the distinction between sensation of accidental qualities — the proper and the common sensibles — and the perception of the in-

dividual primary substance as a thing. This entails postulating an internal cognitive structure to the mental act of the *vis cogitativa* that permits it to perceive an individual primary substance as such and not merely as a collection or bundle of sense qualities. While discussing the need for perception as distinct from sensation, Deely writes precious little about the *vis cogitativa*. This essay, in turn, offers a proposed development to the analysis of what Deely has provided in the *Four ages of understanding*.

9. Intentionality and the curse of representationalism

This section of the essay addresses several interesting connections between recent work on intentionality theories and Aristotelian realism. Deely too is much concerned with this set of issues. Deely writes:

> The mainstream call for anything like a return to common sense remained that of Locke in his founding of empiricism, with the claim that the senses are the origin of all we know. Yet his followers along the mainstream way of ideas did not fail to notice that, in this regard, Locke with empiricism had done no better than Descartes with rationalism in restoring to modern philosophy a contact with the down-to-earth realm of material objects and everyday common sense. (Deely 2001: 548)

Furthermore, Hilary Putnam's denial that the mind is an "inner theatre" is akin structurally to the common sense philosophy of mind defended by Aquinas and Poinsot (cf. Putnam 2000). Putnam's "inner theatre" model is a direct reference to representationalism, which is familiar in all Cartesian and Lockean philosophy of mind. In his *My philosophical development*, Russell accepted this inner theatre paradigm:

> I maintain an opinion which all other philosophers find shocking: namely, that people's thoughts are in their heads. The light from a star travels over intervening space and causes a disturbance in the optic nerve ending in an occurrence in the brain. What I maintain is that the occurrence in the brain is a visual sensation. I maintain, in fact, that the brain consists of thoughts — using "thought" in its widest sense, as it is used by Descartes. . . . What I maintain is that we can witness or observe what goes on in our heads, and that we cannot witness or observe anything else at all. (Russell 1959: 25–26)

Representationalism entails, first of all, that efficient causation is a sufficient condition to explain sensation and perception. Second, representationalism assumes what John McDowell and Putnam call "the highest common factor" between a veridical awareness and a non-veridical

awareness (e.g., an illusion). Both Putnam and McDowell suggest, on the other hand, that their explanation in terms of a "disjunctive account" entails a category difference between a perception and a dream image and thus undercuts the common factor that most representationalists assume. In other words, Putnam and McDowell's disjunctive account suggests the lack of a common property linking sense perception with dream images. This disjunctive analysis is directly opposed to the epistemological responses Descartes provides in the *First meditation*. Furthermore, this disjunctive method assists in elucidating Aquinas on intentionality theory, for Aquinas too holds this disjunction. Deely suggested that several neo-Thomist authors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries worried about this same set of issues, but in a different context: "When ... Neothomist authors entered the lists to combat modern idealism, one of their principal concerns was to show how a restored metaphysics faithful to the principles of a philosophy of being really would achieve what Locke and then Reid had in vain attempted, namely, a continuity with common sense" (Deely 2001: 552).

In an earlier work, Deely (1994: 123) noted that by Locke's time, the late medieval scholastic philosophers had about a dozen synonyms for the intentional object in the understanding or imagination.

Less impressed with Aristotelian philosophy of mind, however, is Myles Burnyeat. In a much-circulated essay, "Is Aristotelian philosophy of mind still credible?" (Burnyeat 1995), he argued for a rejection of Aristotelian ontological realism. Aristotle's account of mind, according to Burnyeat, is no longer credible, and hence "it ought to be junked." Simply put, Burnyeat argued that epistemological realism in Aristotle — and *a fortiori* in Aquinas and Poinsot — was dependent on a theory of ontological hylomorphism that is, in the eyes of contemporary philosophy, neither acceptable nor understandable. Burnyeat, furthermore, appeared to argue against what he took to be the materialist/physicalist account of Aristotle put forward by Richard Sorabji (1995). Burnyeat argues for three points:

1. The only way for Aristotle — and Aquinas — to be coherent on these matters is to argue for some "spiritual" reception of forms.
2. However, Proposition #1 above entails that some form of Cartesian substance dualism is a necessary condition for philosophy of mind, which negates the Sorabji position.
3. The rise of the new science in the seventeenth century, with its theory of corpuscular matter, rejected categorically ontological hylomorphism. If Aristotelian philosophy of mind depends on hylomorphism, then it must "be junked."

Burnyeat suggests that a reception of forms, however analyzed, must be immaterial, which entails, in his mind, spiritual existence. In this analysis, Burnyeat appears not to accept the common scholastic distinction between "spiritual" and "intentional." This entails Cartesian dualism, which denies the materialist account put forward by Sorabji. Finally, form entails hylomorphism, which modern philosophy rejects. Thus, Aristotelian philosophy of mind "ought to be junked. Nussbaum and Putnam (1995: 195–225) wrote an extensive response to the Burnyeat challenge to Aristotle's philosophy of mind. In essence, they refute, first of all, the materialist account put forward by Sorabji, and second, they offer a functionalist interpretation of Aristotle. The issues of functionalism, however, are beyond the limits of this paper. Nonetheless, however one might account for Aquinas's philosophy of mind, it is not reducible to a functionalist position. All three of these philosophers — Nussbaum, Putnam, and Burnyeat — neglected, however, to discuss a theory of intentionality based on formal identity. This is the epistemological importance of Deely's account of the "formal sign" based on the writings of Poinsot. This provides Aquinas and Poinsot a means to hold both ontological realism and epistemological realism. In this way, Aquinas offers a middle ground position between Cartesian substance dualism on the one hand — which Burnyeat appears to adopt — and the physicalism and functionalism of much contemporary studies in the philosophy of mind on the other. It follows that Aquinas's account rejects the reductionist materialism, which Sorabji appears to force onto the Aristotelian philosophy of mind, without falling into Cartesian immaterialism.

10. The incidental object of sense: The *vis cogitativa* as opposed to classical representationalism

In his philosophy of mind texts noted above, it is clear that Aquinas, again following Aristotle, adopts a three-fold division for the objects of sense knowledge: the proper sensibles, the common sensibles, and the incidental object of sense. There is no analogue in classical British empiricism, however, for the incidental object of sense. Given the bundle view of perception espoused by Berkeley in *Principles* and Hume in *The enquiry*, among other places, theoretically there is no room left for the incidental object of sense. Berkeley and Hume analyze an individual in terms of a collection of sensible properties and they both argue for the "bundle view of perception." The following texts explicitly note this "bundle view" or "heap" position for the objects of perception. In Berkeley's *Principles*, one finds the following passage: "Thus, for example, a certain color, taste, smell, figure and consistency, having been observed to go

together, are accounted one distinct thing, signified by the name "apple." Other collections of ideas constitute a stone, a tree, a book, and like sensible things" (Berkeley 1948 [1710]: #1).

In his *An enquiry concerning human understanding*, Hume used the same analysis, substituting a peach for an apple: "As our idea of any body, a peach, for instance, is only that of a particular taste, color, figure, size, consistency, etc., so our idea of any mind is only that of particular perceptions without the notion of anything we call substance, either simple or compound" (Hume 1975 [1748]: 194).

These texts from Berkeley and Hume indicate that the bundle view is the paradigm of perception accepted by these empiricists. In Chapter Thirteen of *Four ages of human understanding*, Deely discusses these empiricist issues at some length. A physical object is nothing more than a collection — i.e., a set of sense qualities — that in British empiricism would be the set of primary and secondary qualities. On the other hand, Aquinas, in espousing a "thing consciousness" paradigm, goes beyond the limits of the bundle view paradigm. In his *Commentary on the soul*, Aquinas attributes to the *vis cogitativa* the inner sense structure necessary to articulate this more sophisticated account of perception. This theme is developed more fully in the *Commentary* than in the *Summa Theologiae* or the *Summa Contra Gentiles*.[8]

> Having seen how we should speak of the absolute or essential sense objects, both common and proper, it remains to be seen how anything is a sense object "incidentally." Now for an object to be a sense object incidentally, it must first be connected accidentally with an essential sense object; as a human person, for instance, may happen to be white, or a white thing may happen to be sweet. Secondly, it must be perceived by the one who is sensing. If it were connected with the sense object without itself being perceived, it could not be said to be sensed incidentally. But this implies that with respect to some cognitive faculty of the one sensing it, it is known, not incidentally, but absolutely. Now this latter faculty ... (is) the *vis cogitativa*. (*Commentary on the Soul* # 395)

> Thus as soon as I see anyone talking or moving herself, my intellect tells me that she is alive and I can say that I see her alive. But if this apprehension is of something individual, as when, seeing this particular colored thing, I perceive this particular man or beast, then the cogitative faculty (in the case of human persons at least) is at work, the power that is also called the "particular reason" because it correlates individualized notions, just as the "universal reason" correlates universal ideas. (*Commentary on the Soul* # 396)

It is because of the act of awareness of the *vis cogitativa* that one can affirm the distinction between sensation and perception. The following texts from the *Commentary* elucidate these issues:

Thus I perceive indirectly that so and so is Cleon's son, not because he is Cleon's son, but because he is white. Whiteness as such only happens to be connected with Cleon's son. Being the son of Cleon is not (like sweetness) indirectly visible in such a way as to imply its being directly perceived by some other sense. (*Commentary on the Soul* # 580)

The *vis cogitativa* is always of a man as this man, and of a tree as this tree. (*Commentary on the Soul* # 398)

The *vis cogitativa* apprehends the individual thing as existing in a common nature, and this is because it is united to intellect in one and the same subject ... Instinct, on the other hand, is not aware of an individual thing as in a common nature. (*Commentary on the Soul* # 398)

Sensation in Aquinas is the awareness of the set of proper and common sensibles. Perception, on the other hand, is the awareness of an individual primary substance. Hence, this is Aquinas's method for distinguishing sensation from perception. In *Commentary* # 399, Aquinas also distinguishes animal instinct, which is also an *intentio non sensata*, from an awareness of a primary substance as a unified whole.

Accordingly, Aquinas not only has primary substances in his ontology, but his philosophy of mind is structured so that the perceiver might be aware of these primary substances. Simply put, the *vis cogitativa* explains the possibility for the awareness of individual substances as distinct entities of a natural kind. The end result is that Aquinas asserts the two following propositions:

1. There are individual things (primary substances) in the external world.
2. We are aware of these individual things (primary substances) as individuals and not as mere collections of proper and common sensibles.

11. A Kantian turn with the *vis cogitativa*: *Intentiones non-sensatae*

To explain the possibility of perception of the individual one must elucidate the concept of *intentiones non-sensatae* or *intentiones insensatae*. The following texts indicate how Aquinas provides an analysis of the *vis cogitativa* and the concept of *intentiones non-sensatae*.

Aristotle next takes the third member of the division. We might, he says, call Diares or Socrates incidentally a sense object because each happens to be white: that is sensed incidentally (*sentitur per accidens*) which happens to belong to what is sensed absolutely (*sentitur per se*). It is accidental to the white thing, which

is sensed absolutely, that it should be Diares. Thus, Diares is a sense-object *incidentally. He does not, as such, act upon the sense at all.* (*Commentary on the Soul* # 387)

An indirect (incidental) object of sense is that which does not act on the sense, neither as sense nor as a particular sense, but is annexed to those things that act on sense directly. For instance, Socrates; the son of Diares; a friend and the like, which are the direct object of the intellect's knowledge in the universal, and in particular are the object of the cogitative power in human knowers, and of the estimative power in other animals. The external sense is said to perceive things of this kind, although indirectly, when the apprehensive power, i.e., the *vis cogitativa* (whose province it is to know directly this thing known), from that which is sensed directly, apprehends them at once and without any doubt or discourse — thus we see that a person is alive from the fact that she speaks. Otherwise, the sense is not said to perceive it even indirectly. (*Summa Theologiae, Supplementum ad III*, Q. 92, a. 2)

We have seen that sensation is a "being acted upon" and "altered" in some way. Whatever, then, affects the faculty in, and so makes a difference to, its own proper reaction and modification has an intrinsic relation to that faculty and can be called a sense-object in itself or absolutely. *But what makes no difference to the immediate modification of the faculty we call an incidental object*. Hence, Aristotle says explicitly that the senses are not affected at all by the incidental object as such. (*Commentary on the Soul*, # 393)

The analysis of these texts suggests how Aquinas goes beyond the "magic" of Reid. The mental act of the *vis cogitativa* is a structured mental act in a manner akin to Gestalt psychology. Deely also refers to this conceptual similarity with Gestalt Psychology, when he writes the following:

The argument here anticipates, more or less completely, the famous notion of "Gestalt" that would be introduced into scientific psychology in the early decades of the twentieth century … The field of perception reveals objects in a way and according to properties that cannot be derived from a mere summation of its purely sensory components. (Deely 2001: 346)

This innate mental structure provides for the awareness of the individual. The philosophy of mind is developed in order to explain how an awareness of an individual primary substance beyond the limits of an awareness of a bundle of sensibles might be possible. However, Deely and this author may disagree on the object of this awareness of inner sense. Deely remarks that the inner sense faculty "forms a perception or *image*, on the basis of which it relates to a pattern of sensory stimulus as an object of experience …" (2001: 346, italics added). Deely goes on to

write that "there is a disproportion between the stimulus as such and what is perceived as object." It is correct that the disproportion exists. Yet the object of the *vis cogitativa* is not an "image." Rather the mental act is so structured that it is always aware of the individual as an individual. This is the cash value of the *intentio non sensata*.

The important question concerns the significance of this account for Aquinas's theory of sensation and perception. It appears that Aquinas provides a modified Kantian account of the perception of the individual. Since *intentiones non sensatae* cannot come about through the external senses, there must be some active contribution, what might be called a "conditioning" or a "structuring" of the mental act itself, on the part of the *vis cogitativa*. This intrinsic structure enables the *vis cogitativa* to perceive individuals as substantival wholes of a natural kind and not merely as bundles of sensations. In this case, Aquinas's epistemological account is not a reception of a form immaterially or intentionally in a straightforward isomorphic way. There is, however, a variant of isomorphism. But this isomorphism is with the essence determining principle — the *forma substantialis* — as found in the individual primary substance. This individual is an individual of a natural kind. In this discussion, there is a conceptual difference between an *ens rationis* — a "being of reason" in scholastic philosophy — and an *intentio non-sensata*. The former comes about by means of a reflective awareness of the intellect; the latter is reducible to an innate structuring of the mind that permits the mind to perceive an individual primary substance as just that — an individual and not just a collection of proper and common sensibles. Deely, it would appear, blurs this distinction when he writes about "... the role of *entia rationis* in the structuring of perception as such (*phantasiari*) in its distinction from and possible independence of ... human understanding or reason *tout court*" (2001: 470).

If the above analysis is correct, then it appears that the *vis cogitativa* is the crucial sense faculty in Aquinas's account of perception. It is by the conditioned awareness of this faculty that the individuals of the world, which in effect are the primary substances of his ontology, are perceived. Insofar as Aquinas affirms the existence of a world of individuals, he also provides the epistemological and philosophy of mind machinery necessary for a perceiver to be aware of these individuals. Furthermore, because a primary substance is an individual of a kind, which natural kind in Aquinas's ontology is determined by a substantial form, the *vis cogitativa* is also aware of an individual as one belonging to a natural kind. The *vis cogitativa* explains, after a Kantian fashion, the possibility for the perception of primary substances, which are the *hoc aliquids* of the external world.

In his monograph, *De Principio Individuationis*, Aquinas sums up nicely the issues under consideration in this part of our discussion. Note the following text:

> However, the quiddity of a particular thing in its particularity *does not fall under (is not seen as) a per se object for the exterior senses*, because the quiddity itself is a substance and not an accident, nor does it pertain to the intellect as a *per se* object on account of its materiality. Therefore, *the quiddity of a material thing in its very particularity is the object of the particular reason*, whose task it is to confront particular intentions, and whose place in brutes is the natural aestimative power. This power on account of its conjunction with the intellect — where is found the very reason which treats of universals — participates as a collective power; but because it is a part of the sensitive order, it does not completely abstract from all matter. *Hence its proper object remains a quiddity of a material particular.* That which falls under the particular reason is an individual (*hoc aliquid*) found in a material nature (*per naturam materiae*); what falls under the external senses is through quantity. (*De Principio Individuationis*, Ch. II [Parma Edition], XVI)[9]

Without this structured awareness of an individual primary substance on the part of the *vis cogitativa*, a human knower would be deficient in two substantive ways. Aquinas was not one, to be sure, to permit philosophical deficiencies to blossom in his ontological theory or into his philosophy of mind.

1. A human knower would be unable to be aware directly of the fundamental ontological categories in Aquinas's metaphysics, which are individuals of natural kinds; these are, of course, primary substances.
2. A human knower would be less able to "abstract" the essence from the phantasms in the sense memory using the *intellectus agens*.

The *explicatio textus* suggested here is remarkably similar, it would seem, to the method noted above and articulated by James Gibson in discussing the evolutionary development of human sense organs. It is through this evolutionary development that a human knower can make one's way around the environment. Haldane is quite explicit about this epistemological naturalism in Aquinas.[10] The human mind, through its intentional structures, is geared towards understanding the existing primary substances, which are individuals of a natural kind.

In his philosophy of mind, Aquinas, like Aristotle before him, rejects the analysis of a mental act in the Platonic mode of "knowledge as acquaintance." This is a rejection of what Moore called the "diaphanous mental act." Readers familiar with Moore (1965 [1903]: 25) will recall his discussion of the intentionality of mental acts in terms of their being "diaphanous" — what is sometimes referred to as the "diaphanous arrow of consciousness." Aristotle and Aquinas adopt what might be called a

"structured mental act." These root cognitive structures ground the possibility of a coherent knowledge of the external world. This is the intentional structure, it would seem, that is necessary for the development of what Poinsot refers to as the "formal sign."

12. The *vis cogitativa* and the *intellectus agens*

An awareness of the individual is a necessary condition for Aquinas to offer the possibility for a coherent explanation of the process of abstraction with the *intellectus agens*. Book II of the *Summa Contra Gentiles* contains propositions linking abstraction with the phantasms of inner sense:

> . . . phantasms (are) prepared by the *vis cogitativa* in order that they may become actually intelligible and move the possible intellect. (*Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book II, Ch. 76)

> . . . the *vis cogitativa* is . . . directed to the possible intellect . . . only through its act by which the phantasms are prepared, so that by the *intellectus agens* they may be made actually intelligible; in this way, the possible intellect is perfected. (*Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book II, Ch. 73)

In the following passage, Aquinas brings in all three inner sense faculties:

> It is through the *vis cogitativa*, together with the imagination and the memory, that the phantasms are prepared to receive the addition of the *intellectus agens*, whereby they are made actually intelligible. (*Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book II, Ch. 60)

Adopting a "structured mental act" analysis entails placing two important intentional structures in Aquinas's philosophy of mind:

1. The *intellectus agens*.
2. The *vis cogitativa*.

Both of these intentional structures are necessary conditions in order for Aquinas to provide an account of an awareness of essential properties. Both transcend direct data from the external senses. The *intellectus agens* is the cognitive power of abstraction. In discussing Etienne Gilson's account of Aquinas's philosophy of mind, John Peterson once wrote (1976: 7): "The senses carry a message which they cannot themselves interpret." In this discussion, Peterson and Gilson refer only to the *intellectus agens*. The thrust of the analysis offered here argues unequivocally that the *vis cogitativa* must be included in the discussions of intentional

structures with this cognitive characteristic proposed by Gilson and Peterson. Hence, the working of the *vis cogitativa* enables the *intellectus agens* to engage in the process of abstraction. If the *vis cogitativa* were not aware of individuals of a natural kind, then the mental act of abstraction would be almost an empty process scattered among bunches or arbitrary groupings — i.e., heaps — of discrete and unconnected proper and common sensibles. The *vis cogitativa* prepares the way for the mental act of abstraction. Without these innate cognitive structures, one on the level of perception and the other on the level of abstraction, Aquinas would be unable to develop a coherent theory of intentionality. This important function of this faculty of inner sense is, then, hardly "an embarrassment," which is the position noted earlier that Dorothea Frede (2001) proposed.

The possibility of our being aware of individual things is accounted for by means of the phantasm-structured *vis cogitativa*. The external sensorium is aware of unified wholes of proper and common sensibles. At this point in the process — i.e., the external sensorium — Aquinas's account is similar structurally to the bundle view paradigm articulated by Berkeley and Hume. The *vis cogitativa*, however, is aware of the primary substance as a primary substance — an individual. The mental act of the *vis cogitativa* renders the awareness of "unified collection of qualities" from the external sensorium into an awareness of an individual of a natural kind. In effect, it is because of the *vis cogitativa* that Aquinas can distinguish between sensation and perception, and, *a fortiori*, transcend the limits of modern and contemporary British empiricism.

This *explicatio textus* of Aquinas on the *vis cogitativa*, therefore, offers a way to account for the awareness of individuals independent of and quite different from the reflexive act of the intellect, which Aquinas discusses in the *Summa Theologiae* 1.86.1, "Whether the intellect knows particulars." On the level of sense perception utilizing the internal sense of the *vis cogitativa* conjoined with the notion of *intentiones non-sensatae*, Aquinas pushes the boundary of traditional empiricism. In this way, he would in principle accept the category difference between sensation and perception affirmed by Reid. Aquinas, however, through the structured mental act of the *vis cogitativa*, transcends the "magic" of Reid on perception. In this way, Aquinas responds to the worries articulated by Ryle nearly fifty years ago with which this analysis began.

It is appropriate to compare the acts of awareness of the *vis cogitativa* with what is common sensibly referred to as "experience." The first time Megan sees Elin, she obviously does not recognize her as Elin. As far as being Elin to Megan the perceiver, through the external sensorium alone, Elin is no more than a mere bundle of sensations. Yet Megan perceives a

distinct person as a substantive unity. Furthermore, after Megan has begun to know Elin, then she immediately recognizes Elin "as Elin" as soon as Elin comes into view. It is important to realize that Aquinas does not claim that one remembers this particular bundle of sensations — i.e., the concrete whole — as Elin. Rather, one *perceives* her to be Elin as a substantial unity — a person. Yet "being Elin" is not some type of discrete property that is directly perceivable in the external world. "Being Elin" is neither a proper nor a common sensibility. This is an important part of Aquinas's theory of sense perception.

Accordingly, Aquinas claims that it is by means of the internal sense of the *vis cogitativa* that a human perceiver is able to "immediately perceive" an individual as an individual. In other words, when Megan is directly aware of Elin, she is not remembering what she saw earlier as this same bundle of sensations. On the contrary, she is directly aware that this *hoc aliquid* is Elin — a particular individual or primary substance of a natural kind. That such an individual property is unperceivable *per se* is, furthermore, consistent with Aquinas's theory of individuation. Aquinas resolves the ontological problem of individuation in his metaphysics by postulating that "*materia prima*" is the principle of individuation. Accordingly, there is no postulation of an individualizing form similar to the *haeccaeitas* proposed by Duns Scotus. It follows from what Aquinas assumes about intentionality that only a form can be knowable directly. Since *materia signata quantitate*, which is the direct opposite of a form, is the individuator, there is nothing as such in the external world that could be the object of the mental act of direct awareness regarding an individual as an individual. Therefore, Aquinas makes use of the *vis cogitativa* structured by an *intentio non-sensata* as the faculty of the internal sensorium, whose structured mental act accomplishes our awareness of individuals and not just of "concrete wholes" or "bundles of sensations." This permits Aquinas to transcend the limits of British empiricism regarding the possibility of perceiving individual objects and not merely a heap of sensible qualities.

13. Contemporary work on the *vis cogitativa*

John Wisdom in "Philosophical perplexity" once noted the following important distinction presupposed in this analysis of Aquinas on inner sense. Philosophers must distinguish, Wisdom argued, between what he called "sense statements" and "thing statements" (1966: 292). Roderick Chisholm, in *The problem of the criterion* (1974), offered much the same analysis: there is a "particularist epistemology," which argues for the

priority of a "thing consciousness" rather than for the "bundle view" common to British Empiricism. Aquinas followed by Poinsot would accept Wisdom's distinction and Chisholm's suggestion about the importance of a "particularist epistemology."

Deborah Modrak, in her *Aristotle: The power of perception*, seems open to the analysis articulated in this essay. Modrak, in discussing the proper and the common sensibles in Aristotle (*kath' hauta*), suggests that the incidental object of sense (*kata sumbebekos*) is categorically distinct from the proper and the common sensibles. Modrak writes: "The sensory basis for the perception of an individual object does not fully determine the content of the perception." She goes on to suggest the following:

> ... the percipient plays an active role in shaping the content of an individual perception. (Also) ... the perception of an incidental object arises spontaneously in the perception when past and present experiences are conducive to the apprehension of the incidental object in question. ... Moreover, there is no textual evidence for attributing to Aristotle a narrow notion of perception that would exclude interpretation. (Modrak 1987: 69–70)

This analysis argues that Aquinas's faculty psychology of cognitive structure by means of the inner sense of the *vis cogitativa* provides the necessary philosophy of mind machinery that Aristotle neglected. This account offers an explication for what Modrak calls "interpretation" in the immediate perception of the incidental object of sense. Aquinas, with the *vis cogitativa*, provides an explanatory account of how this "interpretation" takes place. Deely would, it would seem, concur.

More recent work on the *vis cogitativa* in analytic philosophy, however, raises some concerns. Noted earlier was Dorothea Frede's article in the Perler volume, "Aquinas on *Phantasia*," where she remarked that possibly Aquinas's use of the inner sense of the *vis cogitativa* is an embarrassment in his over all philosophy of mind: "This ability is something of an embarrassment for it seems to be an ability that is somehow *in between* sense-perception and thought" (Frede 2001: 170). Why, one might ask, is the *vis cogitativa* an embarrassment? The argument articulated here is that the *vis cogitativa* provides a necessary function "between sense-perception and thought." Furthermore, without the *vis cogitativa*, Aquinas's philosophy of mind would be terribly muddled and indeed an embarrassment.

In his essay in the Perler volume, Cyrille Michon proposes a propositional view in order to understand the functioning of the *vis cogitativa*: "The presentation of phantasms to the intellect, for abstraction or conversion, does not involve any kind of judgment. However, the cogitative

power is needed for a direct and non-intellectual knowledge of the singular, which is a complex knowledge, a judgment'' (Michon 2001: 339).

Michon is correct in suggesting that there is a non-intellectual knowledge of the particular, which would be a primary substance. Michon attempts to incorporate recent work from Donald Davidson and others on the matter of proto-thoughts. He suggests that the workings of the *vis cogitativa* would be an example of a proto-thought mechanism. However, the claim of this essay is that this awareness is neither a judgment nor a proposition but rather a Gestalt-like perception based on a structured mental act using the *vis cogitativa*. Deely would, it would seem, accept this position on the *vis cogitativa*. Aquinas does not refer to a ''judgment'' in texts discussing the *vis cogitativa*. Hence, the *explicatio textus* offered here is that a ''conditioning'' or ''structuring'' of the mental act in a Gestalt manner provides for the awareness of an individual of a natural kind. In this way, Aquinas saves his epistemological realism and his ontological realism. Poinsot does likewise.

14. Seven summary propositions

The following is a summary list of the philosophical propositions affirmed in this analysis of the inner sense of the *vis cogitativa* in Aquinas's philosophy of mind:

1. The *vis cogitativa* is the faculty, which perceives the individuals of the world. In Aquinas's ontology, these would be the primary substances, each of which is a *hoc aliquid*.
2. This perception is of an individual of a natural kind.
3. This awareness transcends the boundaries of the external senses. The external senses are limited, given the structure of Aquinas's philosophy of mind, to an awareness of proper and common sensibles.
4. The awareness of the *vis cogitativa* is an ''active contribution'' to the perceiving process — a structured mental act — to be aware of individuals as individuals and not as bundles of sensations.
5. It follows from 1 through 4 above that Aquinas developed a philosophy of mind on the perceptual level sufficient to provide for an awareness of individuals.
6. This account of the awareness of an individual is in addition to the usual account of the reflexive awareness of the intellect so common to explications of Aquinas's philosophy of mind. Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, Ia., Q. 86, art. 1: ''Whether the intellect knows particulars.''
7. It follows that Aquinas offers an account for the awareness of individuals as individual *hoc aliquids* on the level of sense perception.

15. Concluding propositions on the mental act of the *vis cogitativa*

Given the propositions articulated above, the following list of conclusions can be enumerated:

1. The *vis cogitativa*, in opposition to Frede's claim, is not an embarrassment.
2. The awareness of the mental act of the *vis cogitativa* is a structured, Gestalt-like awareness.
3. The awareness is not a judgment or proto-judgment.
4. This mental act distinguishes sensation from perception in Aquinas's philosophy of mind.
5. This act of awareness of the individual of a natural kind, in a Kantian fashion, is neither magic nor an instance of Divine Illumination.
6. The act of the *vis cogitativa* is more than a reduction to the structure of the *vis aestimativa*, which many philosophers, both in the scholastic and the analytic traditions, have suggested. For example, see George Klubertanz (1952), William Kneale (1971), Simon Kemp (1990), and Edward Mahoney (1984), among others.
7. This analysis of the *vis cogitativa* proposes an account of a structured mental act of perception, which better explains the account of "abstraction" by means of the *intellectus agens*. Both the perceptual and the conceptual realms, therefore, have higher-level structured mental acts, which when conjoined, enable Aquinas to offer an account of human knowledge of the primary substances of the external world. This is an example of what in the late twentieth century became known as "cognitive psychology."

With his discussion of the *vis cogitativa* and its mental act, Aquinas accepts in principle John Wisdom's distinction and is concerned about the same set of issues. Through his analysis of the *vis cogitativa*, Aquinas undercuts the sense data theories of early twentieth century epistemology found in the writings of Russell, Moore, Price, and Ayer, and also the representational empiricism of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. Aquinas accomplishes this by suggesting, in effect, that our experience is of things rather than of sense data. In addition, by using a meta-philosophical methodology entailing a cognitive faculty psychology, Aquinas provides the philosophy of mind machinery necessary to explain the possibility of an act of awareness of an object beyond the immediate data of the proper and the common sensibles. There is a similarity with Peter Strawson, who once claimed that "particulars" are the basic elements of a human perceiver's conceptual scheme. Accordingly, Aquinas, like Strawson, suggests that it is a philosophical howler to assert that human perceivers are

primarily and fundamentally aware of bundles of sense data. To the contrary, human perceivers have a direct awareness of "thing consciousness" or "individual consciousness." Furthermore, this "consciousness" and "intentional awareness" are rudimentary for human perceivers. The intentionality of mind is geared towards perceiving and understanding a world of primary substances. It is this goal in mind that leads Aquinas to develop the structured positions that he articulates in his sophisticated philosophy of mind.

16. The inner sense theory and contemporary scientific explanation

Before closing this analysis of medieval and renaissance cognitive theory, historians of philosophy might consider the recent analysis of inners sense put forward by the historian of psychology, Simon Kemp. Kemp offers several significant suggestions in his evaluation of the medieval theory of inner sense, which will be indicated briefly in what follows. First of all, this theory is, Kemp suggests, an "information-processing model." Second, the theory is consistent with "discrete stage-processing models," which, Kemp notes, have been important in twentieth century cognitive psychology. These models argue that cognitive information is transformed in discrete stages. Third, contemporary psychologists distinguish between "episodic memory" and "semantic memory."[11] For Aquinas, the former would be located in the inner sense faculties and the latter in the mind; this "semantic memory" appears to be similar structurally to Peter Geach's analysis of the concept in Aquinas (Geach 1971 [1957]: 11–17) as a cognitive ability.

Kemp suggests that when considering the value of medieval theories of inner sense, one needs to consider the meta-scientific theory articulated by recent philosophers of science.[12] The necessary conditions for an adequate scientific theory include: (1) explanatory depth; (2) unifying power; (3) consistency and coherence; and (4) application. The theory of inner sense as developed in medieval cognitive theory, Kemp argues, did attempt to explain perception theory. Moreover, it was a unified position covering the developing stages of phantasm formation, and the overall cognitive theory appeared to be consistent internally. Lastly, Kemp writes that the theory helped account for certain mental aberrations — nightmares, delusions, et al — that were explained through the malfunctioning of the *vis cogitativa* or the *phantasia*.

Historians of philosophy might reflect on Kemp's admonition to his fellow psychologists — and also, it would appear, to contemporary philosophers of mind — who too readily dismiss medieval and renaissance

cognitive theories as trivial: "However, we would claim that the theory of the inner senses was an elaborate and innovative exposition that, even in retrospect, can be regarded as a considerable scientific achievement" (Kemp 1993: 572–573).

The same might be argued in defense of the philosophy of mind positions on inner sense offered by Thomas Aquinas and John Poinsot.

17. Conclusion

This concludes the analysis — an *explicatio textus* — into the somewhat muddled region of inner sense — *phantasia* — rooted in Thomas Aquinas, developed by John Poinsot, and reinterpreted for contemporary philosophy through John Deely's theory of signs. This is a bit of philosophy of mind rooted in Aristotle's *De Anima*, but an account developed so much further. If this account is sufficiently perspicuous, possibly it will help address what Haldane suggested as "one of the tasks for the next century." The texts from the *Summa Theologiae* and the *Commentary on the soul* justify the explanatory analysis put forward and developed in this essay. Hence, the incidental object of sense is an *intentio non-sensata* known through the intentional activity of the *vis cogitativa*. Given this analysis, the *vis cogitativa*, in an explanatory mode, is not an embarrassment to Aquinas. On the contrary, this faculty provides the possibility for the awareness of an individual of a natural kind on the level of perception. This, in turn, renders the entire abstraction process, which is part of the intellect, more coherent. This analysis has argued that, for Aquinas, the *vis cogitativa* is a necessary component between sense perception of the individual and conceptual thought by means of abstraction; this is, of course, the position that Frede called an embarrassment. To reiterate an earlier observation, without the *vis cogitativa*, to the contrary, Aquinas's philosophy of mind would be both much muddled and indeed an embarrassment.

Notes

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1. Pickstock (2000) was reprinted as the first chapter of Milbank and Pickstock (2000). For a critique of Pickstock's position, one might read Kenny's rather trenchant account (2001: 14).
2. One might suggest that had Bergmann read Poinsot's works on the philosophy of mind, he would have found them philosophically congenial.
3. For a discussion of the role of ordinary language philosophy in the revival of late twentieth century Thomism, one might read Kerr (2002: Ch. 2).
4. Gauthier argued that Aquinas completed this Aristotelian commentary before he left Rome for Paris in 1268. He further argues that Thomas was composing Questions 75–89 of the *Prima Pars* of the *Summa Theologiae* at the same time he was writing the *Commentary on the Soul.* Gauthier then claims that all three books of the *Commentary* appeared in Italy before September 1268, at which time Thomas left Rome for Paris. Simon Tugwell (1988) refers often to the important work of Gauthier.
5. The English translation of Torrell (1996: 172) contains a thoughtful discussion of Gauthier's research. Those interested in these issues might consult Gauthier's work, or Pasnau's introduction to his own translation of Aquinas's *Commentary*.
6. For an analysis of intentionality theory in Thomas, one might consult Lisska (2006).
7. Historian of psychology Harry Heft assisted in this discussion of Gibson's work.
8. Furthermore, in some texts of Aquinas, the particular reason is equated with the *vis cogitativa*. In none of these texts, however, is the *ratio particularis* identified with the *intellectus possibilis*. Hence, all of this intentional activity is undertaken on the level of sense perception. See the discussion in Deely (1971) and Lisska (1973).
9. This text is found in the Latin in Klubertanz (1952: 296–297), along with discussion; italics not in the original. There exists some debate over the authenticity of this treatise.
10. Noted earlier was Haldane's suggestion that in their theories of knowledge, Aquinas and Quine are both philosophical naturalists.
11. See Kemp (1993: 568–569). The author's friend, professor of psychology Harry Heft, introduced the author to the important studies undertaken by Kemp.
12. Kemp (1993: 572) refers to the work of Larry Laudan (1984).

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Anthony J. Lisska (b. 1940) is a professor at Denison University ⟨lisska@denison.edu⟩. His research interests include Medieval natural law theory; contemporary jurisprudence; intentionality theories, Aquinas's account of Inner Sense theory. His publications include *Aquinas's theory of natural law: An analytic reconstruction* (1996); "Medieval theories of intentionality: From Aquinas to Brentano and beyond" (2006); "The philosophy of law of St. Thomas Aquinas" (2007); and "A new look at inner sense in Aquinas: A long-neglected faculty psychology" (2007).