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Thomas Aquinas and Hervaeus Natalis on Concepts and Intentional Objects

Fabrizio Amerini

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THOMAS AQUINAS AND HERVAEUS NATALIS ON CONCEPTS AND INTENTIONAL OBJECTS

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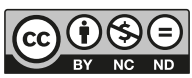

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Introduction

This volume collects three separate, albeit strictly intertwined studies on medieval theories of concepts and intentional objects. In these studies, my principal interest will be human beings' mechanisms of intellective cognition of extramental things and my focus will be on the accounts offered by two eminent authors of the late Middle Ages, namely the Dominicans Thomas Aquinas (1224/25–1274) and Hervaeus Natalis (ca. 1260–1323). In these studies, the reader will find me at times speaking, for the sake of brevity, simply of cognition; take it as read however that I mean to refer, if not otherwise specified, always to the cognition of the intellective kind, to intellective cognition.

The volume is structured as follows.

The first study, *Thomas Aquinas on Concepts*, intends to review Aquinas's account of concepts with respect to the contemporary debate on Aquinas's representationalism vs. direct realism in epistemology. It sets out to reconsider the whole debate from a semantic viewpoint. The rationale behind this choice is that Aquinas equates the object of signification with the object of cognition, so a correct understanding of the semantics of common names or natural-kind terms can help to shed light on Aquinas's understanding of the function and nature of natural-kind concepts such as the concept of human being. Across his career, Aquinas does not seem to change his semantic views, although he importantly modifies his position on concepts. Specifically, in his mature works, Aquinas rejects the identification between a concept and that which, according to the medieval technical vocabulary, he calls the 'intelligible species' of an extramental thing. He no longer portrays concepts as the starting-point of intellective cognition but as its end-product, while intelligible species continue to be described as the activating principle of intellective cognition. On this new theory of concepts, Aquinas attributes to common names the function of signifying in the first instance not the intelligible species but the concepts of things. Aquinas makes it clear that those concepts must not be understood, however, as items psychologically rooted in the intellect but rather as the extramental things themselves *qua* existing within the intellect according to a peculiar mode of existence—what Aquinas calls 'spiritual' or 'intentional' being. As Aquinas emphasizes, common names are not introduced into a language for speaking about mental items, but about real things.

In his later writings Aquinas shows no particular interest in distinguishing the concept from the thing cognized through it. This is one of the reasons why both medieval and contemporary interpreters disagree on Aquinas's final word, if any, about the ontological status of concepts. Is a concept a mental representation of a

thing or the thing itself *qua* cognized and represented? Aquinas's lack of a distinction between the concept and the cognized thing leads interpreters to collocate Aquinas either among the advocates of representationalism or among the supporters of direct realism in epistemology. In the first study, I provide an interpretation of Aquinas's treatment of concepts that attempts to reconcile representationalism with direct realism when we are to explain Aquinas's account of the ordinary, natural mechanisms of intellective cognition. The semantic viewpoint will confirm this reconciliation, for Aquinas seems to consider the same saying that common names signify concepts or that they signify cognized things. My final 'conciliarist' position is not new in the literature, absolutely speaking. Many scholars have proposed it as the most appropriate reading of Aquinas's texts. Nonetheless, by way of an interrelated analysis of semantics and epistemology, I try to offer a better understanding of the reasons why, in Aquinas's view, representationalism and direct realism can be kept together.

The second study, *Hervaeus Natalis on Concepts and Intentional Objects*, carries on this line of investigation. Specifically, it focuses on Hervaeus Natalis's explanation of the nature of concepts. The Master General of the Dominican Order proposes an understanding of Aquinas's theory of concepts that would exert a deep influence on the history of so-called Thomism at least up to the Renaissance. One of Hervaeus's goals is precisely to clarify the relation between the concept and the cognized thing, which was left unexplained by Aquinas. While Hervaeus describes a concept as something mind-independent to a certain degree (specifically, as a real quality inhering in the intellect), he accounts for the thing that is cognized as something mind-dependent. According to a standard technical vocabulary in Hervaeus's time, the former is said to exist 'subjectively' in the intellect, while the latter 'objectively'.

Among the first interpreters of Aquinas, there was great controversy over what concepts are. Two major questions were debated: first, whether concepts can be reduced to the acts of intellective cognition that originated them, and second, whether the concept of a thing can be distinguished from the thing itself *qua* cognized through that concept. In the second study, Hervaeus's answer to these questions will emerge from his discussion with another important Dominican author, Durand of St.-Pourçain (1270/75–1334). Hervaeus's final position is that a concept cannot be reduced to an act of intellective cognition—the position held by Durand—since two or more numerically different acts can be associated with one and numerically the same concept. The concept is also different from the thing *qua* cognized. The intellect is the efficient cause of a concept, but the cognized thing to which the intellect refers through a concept is ultimately the extramental thing itself, which however exists in the intellect with an objective mode of existence once it has been cognized. Despite the details Hervaeus provides on the nature of concepts, an interpreter can however have with him the same difficulties of classification encountered with

Aquinas, but for a different reason. Aquinas did not go into the relationship that a concept bears to the cognized thing, so it remains uncertain whether Aquinas regarded a concept as a mental replacement of an extramental thing or, rather, as the extramental thing itself *qua* existing within the intellect under the guise of a concept. Hervaeus, by contrast, presents a concept as a two-faced item, including the concept itself, understood as a quality of the intellect, which is endowed with a psychological or, as Hervaeus calls it, 'subjective' mode of existence, and a cognized thing, which is instead endowed with an 'objective' mode of existence in the intellect. Thus, while Aquinas seems to waver between representationalism and direct realism, Hervaeus indistinguishably mixes up representationalism and direct realism in his theory of concepts. Notwithstanding this, Hervaeus's principal purpose remains that of defending the extramental extension of our ordinary, natural operation of intellective cognition.

The third study, *Hervaeus Natalis on Cognizing and Being Cognized*, reconsiders some recent interpretations of Hervaeus's account of intellective cognition and of his explanation of intentional objects. Hervaeus generally follows Aquinas and explains that when we intellectively cognize a thing, the thing acquires a new kind of being, viz., the being cognized or 'objective' being. This kind of being in no way modifies the real nature of the thing cognized. It simply indicates that the thing has become an *object* of the intellect and a thing ends up being such only when, thanks to an act of intellective cognition, it develops a *relation* with the intellect actually turned to it. So, borrowing from Aquinas, Hervaeus describes intellective cognition as an action that necessarily entails a relation and, like any relation, that which ensues from intellective cognition too is supposed to entail two directions: one that goes from the intellect to the thing and the converse one that goes from the thing to the intellect. Aquinas and Hervaeus agree that the first direction expresses a real relation, while the second expresses a relation of reason. If Aquinas stated but did not examine in detail the converse relation of the relation of intellective cognition, such an exploration is at the center of Hervaeus's works. The Master General of the Dominican Order makes it clear that what Aquinas called 'spiritual' or 'intentional' being is, in the case of intellective cognition, nothing other than a *relational being*. The relation of intellective cognition gives rise to the property of 'being cognizing', whose subject is our intellect, while the converse relation gives rise to the property of 'being cognized', whose subject is the thing itself. More precisely, as we shall see, the thing *qua* cognized is the proximate subject of the property of being cognized, while the extramental thing is the remote subject. Once again, Hervaeus finds the source of this distinction in Aquinas.

Historically speaking, Hervaeus is the first to coin the abstract term 'intentionality' (*intentionalitas*) to refer to the relation of being cognized that a thing bears to the intellect. While 'intentionality' formally expresses a being of reason (in that

it expresses a relation of reason), the thing that can be denominated an intention is instead a real being. In Hervaeus's interpretation, the act of intellective cognition makes possible the converse relation of being cognized and this in turn makes possible the objective being of the thing: our intellective cognition posits the thing in a sort of 'intellective perspective' with respect to the intellect. Hervaeus reproposes Aquinas's conviction that in an act of intellective cognition what comes from the world (i.e., the thing's nature that is cognized) can be distinguished from what is supplied by the mind (i.e., the mode of cognition and the relation of being cognized). Hervaeus maintains this conviction across his career, defending it from the criticism addressed to him by the Franciscan Peter Auriol (ca. 1280–1322). Hervaeus's solution, though, reveals a difference when compared to Aquinas. While Aquinas described the concept as the internal *termination* of an act of intellective cognition, so emphasizing the identity between the subject-cognizer and the thing cognized, for Hervaeus there is an intelligible distance between the intellect and the thing cognized. If, for Aquinas, when I am thinking of a stone, I am simply in the mental state of being informed by the intelligible form of a stone's nature, for Hervaeus my thought of stone obtains when I am in a relation with the object that is referred to by the intelligible species of stone, i.e., the stone's nature. In the third study, I shall elaborate on the significance of this difference, while rejecting some recent interpretations of Hervaeus's doctrine of objective being.

The general goal of these three studies is to make a fresh contribution to the reconstruction and discussion of the later medieval theories of concepts, a topic in which recent scholarship has taken a special interest. Historically speaking, these studies propose to clarify a central issue in Aquinas's philosophy. The topic of the nature of concepts was particularly intensely debated starting with the generation after Aquinas and it was seen as a major controversial node of Aquinas's thought. My choice to also illustrate Hervaeus Natalis's position hinges upon the fact that Hervaeus provides not only one of the most influential interpretations of Aquinas's theory of intellective cognition, but also a distinctive and original account of concepts that enriches Aquinas's position.

A final note on the editorial structure of the volume. Each study originates as an independent piece of work, so it can be read separately from the other studies. But the three studies have many intersections and overlap on many points. An effort has been made to coordinate and unify them, so they can also be read conjointly, one after another, as a comprehensive reconstruction of Aquinas's and Hervaeus's theories of concepts and intentional objects.

Before concluding this Introduction, let me express my sincere gratitude to Claude Panaccio and Russell L. Friedman for having followed the genesis of this volume and for their valuable comments and suggestions on the manuscript of this work,

and to the many friends and colleagues (it would be too long to mention all of them here) who have discussed parts and topics of this volume with me over the years. My sincere thanks go to the anonymous referees for their really priceless and insightful comments, and to William O. Duba for first revising my English. It goes without saying that the responsibility for any mistake or misinterpretation is entirely mine.

A special mention is finally due to my wife and my family for their patience and continued assistance.

I

Thomas Aquinas on Concepts

1. Introduction

This first study proposes an investigation into Aquinas's theory of concepts, which will be made by examining its relation to Aquinas's account of the semantics of common names. The reason for this choice is that the semantic viewpoint can play an important role, for the motivations I shall give later, in addressing correctly Aquinas's view of concepts. As we shall see, an accurate scrutiny of Aquinas's account of the semantics of common names or natural-kind terms will allow us to conclude that Aquinas endorses neither merely direct realism nor merely representationalism in epistemology.

1.1. The Architecture of this Study

In order to reach its main purpose, this study will proceed as follows. I shall begin by introducing Aquinas's view of the semantics of common names (§ 2) and by distinguishing the different senses of signification in Aquinas (§ 3). This is necessary since Aquinas equates the object of signification with the object of cognition and clarifying this point is our principal goal in this study. Then, I shall look more deeply at he nature of the object of signification in Aquinas (§ 4). After making clear the role played by abstraction in forming the object of signification of common names, I shall next discuss the equation of the object of signification with the object of cognition (§ 6). This equation is intended to shed better light on the real nature of the object of cognition and so to permit us to appreciate the interconnection between direct realism and representationalism in Aquinas (an issue that I shall introduce in § 5). To be clear, the direction of my argument in this study will be from semantics to epistemology. This will be evident especially in §§ 7–10, when I shall clarify the different ways of understanding the object of signification in Aquinas (§§ 7–9) and then pause on Aquinas's distinction between object and mode of signification (§ 10). But at times I shall also follow the reverse path (as will happen in §§ 5–6, which I shall reserve to discussing the notions of representation and abstraction in Aquinas): it too is of utility in establishing correctly the issue of representationalism vs. direct realism in Aquinas. In the final conclusion (§ 12), I shall provide a reassessment of Aquinas's position with respect to the representationalism/direct realism divide. My general conclusion will be that Aquinas vacillates about the ontological status of the object of signification. In some texts he identifies it with the class of essential properties that express the nature of extramental things, in other texts with the general bearer of such prop-

erties. What does not change in Aquinas, however, is the conviction that common names do not signify the concepts as such but their contents, namely the cognized things to which the concepts refer. These mental contents are described as real, although they are said to exist in our intellect only under the guise of a mental representation (be it the concept or what Aquinas calls the intelligible species). As we shall see, being cognized thus expresses a kind of mental being of an extramental thing which is not however a kind of mental existence separate from that of the mental representation. For this reason, direct realism and representationalism end up being inextricably mixed in Aquinas.

From the very beginning the reader should note that my investigation into the nature of the object of signification and the object of cognition will intersect with another issue which has been much debated in the literature, viz., that of the possible evolution of Aquinas on the object of cognition and on the object of signification of common names. Although discussing this evolution is not among the goals of this study, nonetheless I shall consider it in what follows and, on this subject, I shall argue that, while Aquinas changed his mind on the nature of concepts, he never did on the nature of the object of signification. Common names are said to signify concepts understood as similitudes of things and Aquinas does not seem to change opinion on this. If my interpretation is right, this clarification will help to better assess Aquinas's evolution on concepts. At the end of this study we shall thus be prepared to return to Aquinas's semantics and propose a comprehensive reconsideration of Aquinas's explanation of the signification of common names and of the way human beings arrive at the natural concepts of extramental things, which will then become the objects of signification of the common names of our spoken and written language (§ 11).

1.2. Some Preliminary Remarks

In order to better follow my line of reasoning, let me begin with some preliminary clarifications about the topic of this study. I limit myself here to outlining them; I shall develop them later.

In his works, Aquinas portrays concepts as mental items provided with some properties: concepts inhere in the intellect as in their subject, they are universal and abstract in character, and each concept expresses one thing: epistemically, for Aquinas, every act of intellective cognition ends with one concept. This holds in the case of simple concepts such as those expressed by simple terms like 'human being' (*homo*) and 'animal' (*animal*), as well as in the case of complex concepts such as that expressed by propositions like 'A human being is an animal' (*homo est animal*). It is a tenet of Aquinas that there is always a one-to-one correspondence between acts of intellective cognition and concepts. Acts of abstraction give rise to simple concepts, while acts of composition or division of simple concepts give rise to propositional

concepts.[1] When I am thinking that a human being is an animal, I already must have the concepts of human being and animal, but having the propositional thought that a human being is an animal does not amount to adding my act of thinking of human being and my act of thinking of animal. My propositional thought expresses one single, albeit complex, concept, in which the concepts of human being and animal work only virtually.

As to the properties of universality and abstractness, as we shall see, for Aquinas natural-kind concepts do not parallel perfectly with the extramental world, although they all are caused by the extramental things. From this it follows that their semantic content is entirely determined by our act of abstracting a thing from its singularity and materiality (in the case of simple concepts) or by our act of composing and dividing concepts (in the case of complex concepts). A concept, as a whole, is what corresponds to an act of intellective cognition, be it an act of abstraction of a simple concept or an act of composition or division of simple concepts. Once formed, such concepts become the subject of further, additional properties such as being universal and being abstract, which Aquinas calls logical or intentional properties (I shall elaborate on them in the third study).

A second feature of Aquinas's account of concepts that should be noted at the start is that concepts are produced by acts of intellective cognition and this kind of cognition is described by Aquinas as an immanent and intransitive action.[2] First, intellective cognition is thought to be an immanent action: this means that it is an action that remains within the intellect. Second, intellective cognition is also thought to be an intransitive action: this means that it is not an action such as that

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[1] The distinction between two operations of the intellect that give rise to two kinds of concepts traces back to Aristotle's *De anima*, III, 6, 430a26ff., where the intellection of indivisibles and the composition of simples are distinguished. The idea that three basic operations pertain to the intellect (the third one, added by Averroes it seems, is the operation of making inferences) is frequently mentioned by Aquinas. For an explanation, see Thomas Aquinas, *Sentencia libri De anima*, III 5 (Opera Omnia, t. XLV/1, p. 224–8). Note that in what follows my concern will be only on natural-kind concepts, i.e., in Aquinas's vocabulary, the concepts of the species and genus of extramental things. I shall not discuss the case of individual concepts nor that of fictitious or other kind of concepts. Accordingly, when I speak of 'intellective cognition', I mean to refer to the ordinary process of the human intellective cognition of the outer world. Please note also that the editions from which the quotations of Aquinas are extracted are all indicated in the final bibliography.

[2] This characterization of intellective cognition recurs many times in Aquinas's works. See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 8, a. 6 (Opera Omnia, XXII/2–1, p. 238,104ff., esp. 116–9): 'Actio autem appetitus et sensus et intellectus non est sicut actio progrediens in materiam exteriorem sed sicut actio consistens in ipso agente ut perfectio eius.' For other cases, see *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 14, a. 3; *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, c. 23; *Summa theologiae*, I^a, q. 18, a. 3, ad 1; q. 27, a. 1 and a. 5; q. 28, a. 4; I^a, q. 85, a. 2; *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 3, a. 15; q. 8, a. 1; *Expositio in XII libros Metaphysicorum*, IX, lec. 8. For further discussion of this characterization and a possible evolution of Aquinas on it, see G. Pini, 'Two Models of Thinking: Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus on Occurrent Thoughts', in G. Klima (ed.), *Intentionality, Cognition, and Mental Representation in Medieval Philosophy*, Fordham, N.Y.: Fordham University Press, 2015, p. 81–103. See also F. Amerini, *Tommaso d'Aquino e l'intenzionalità*, Pisa: ETS, 2013, p. 110–15; S.L. Brock, 'Intentional Being, Natural Being, and the First-person Perspective in Thomas Aquinas', *The Thomist* 77/1 (2013), p. 103–33.

of heating, which is directed to making something else warm. Intellective cognition is not directed to producing anything else, but it is completely realized with the full achievement of the action itself: as the actualization of my eyes' potency to see consists in seeing, so the actualization of my intellect's potency to intellect consists in intellecting. Nothing more and nothing less. This characterization has various implications: the most important is that the extramental thing that is intellectively cognized by me does not get really modified by my act of intellective cognition. When I think of a stone, for example, I do not really modify the extramental stone I am thinking about; a stone remains a stone regardless of whether or not I am thinking about it. Metaphysically, this feature depends on the fact that extramental things are material, while our intellect is immaterial for Aquinas, and the material and the immaterial cannot be directly and really in contact. The material thing cannot act directly upon the immaterial intellect, nor can the immaterial intellect directly act upon the material thing. So when I am thinking of a stone, although I am really modified by my act of thinking, I am not really in contact with any extramental stone, nor am I modifying any extramental stone. Moreover, extramental things are all singular and—this is a second tenet of Aquinas's theory of knowledge—no material singular thing can be intellectively cognized as such. First, I cannot know if this singular stone in front of me still exists when it is far from my acts of sense perception. Second, I cannot know what this singular stone in front of me is without cognizing the universals under which that stone falls. Aquinas's basic conviction is that I cannot have any direct intellective cognition of an extramental stone. Our knowledge of an extramental thing starts with the sense perception of its accidents and ends with the formation of what Aquinas calls the 'intelligible species' of the thing, which is assumed to express the extramental thing's essence. This species indeed obtains when we abstract from the extramental thing's singularity and materiality, then arriving at grasping the intimate nature of the thing. My thinking of a stone is thus always mediated by the intelligible species of stone I have in my intellect.[3]

[3] For further discussion of Aquinas's explanation of the mechanisms of intellective cognition and of the nature of intelligible species, and of its historical context, see K.H. Tachau, *Vision and Certitude in the Age of Ockham. Optics, Epistemology, and the Foundations of Semantics 1250–1345*, Leiden: Brill, 1988; L. Spruit, *Species intelligibilis. From Perception to Knowledge*, 2 vols., Leiden–New York–Cologne: Brill, 1994–1995; D. Perler, 'Things in the Mind: Fourteenth-Century Controversies over Intelligible Species', *Vivarium* 34 (1996), p. 231–53; R. Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997; E. Stump, 'Aquinas's Account of the Mechanisms of Intellective Cognition', *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 52 (1998), p. 287–307; S. Theron, 'Intentionality, Immateriality and Understanding in Aquinas', *The Heythrop Journal* 30/2 (2007), p. 151–9; S.R. d'Onofrio, *Aquinas as Representationalist: The Ontology of the Species Intelligibilis*, PhD Dissertation, University of New York at Buffalo, 2008; E. Baltuta, 'Thomas Aquinas on Bridging the Gap between Mind and Reality', *Revue roumaine de philosophie* 56 (2012), p. 147–60; E. Baltuta, 'Aquinas on Intellective Cognition: The Case of the Intelligible Species', *Philosophia* 41/3 (2013), p. 589–602; A. Murray, *Intentional Species and the Identity between Knower and Known According to Thomas Aquinas*, Strathfield: Catholic Institute of Sydney, 2013; see also T. Scarpelli Cory, 'Aquinas's Intelligible Species

This general characterization of intellective cognition has another implication: since, for Aquinas, there is no direct causal relation between an extramental singular thing and a concept, concepts can exist and refer to extramental things even if the things cognized by those concepts no longer exist. In another respect, however, natural-kind concepts could not be obtained if at least one extramental thing had not existed and caused them. But what concretely permits natural-kind concepts to be linked to extramental singular things is the faculty of imagination, which, through managing internal images and sense-perceptions received from the things and stored in the memory, allows concepts to refer to one or to another extramental singular thing.[4]

I shall closely discuss the core aspects of Aquinas's explanation of the mechanisms of intellective cognition later. For the time being, it may suffice to note that Aquinas's characterization of intellective cognition as an immanent action follows from the conviction that our intellect abstracts from extramental singular things essential information about those things, namely information not concerning the things' singularity, materiality and accidentality, and recollects such information by means of an intelligible species. Specifically, the intelligible species should be considered as expressing the common nature or essence of extramental things that belong to the same natural species and genus.

When the intelligible species is formed, the Aristotelian theory of knowledge that Aquinas follows prescribes that our intellect and the intelligible species assimilate to each other. Aquinas conceives of the intellect as a potency of the human soul and

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as Formal Constituents', *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 31 (2020), p. 261–309, for a reappraisal of the whole issue of intelligible species in Aquinas. On Aquinas and the intellective cognition of singulars issue in particular, see G.P. Klubertanz, 'St. Thomas and the Knowledge of Singular', *New Scholasticism* 26/2 (1952), p. 135–66; C. Bérubé, *La Connaissance de l'individuel au Moyen Âge*, Montréal–Paris: PUF, 1964; D. de Haan, 'Aquinas on Perceiving, Thinking, Understanding, and Cognizing Individuals', in E. Baltuta (ed.), *Medieval Perceptual Puzzle: Theories of Sense-Perception in the 13th and 14th Centuries*, Leiden: Brill, 2019, p. 238–68.

[4] Literature on Aquinas's theory of knowledge is wide. Beyond the references quoted in the previous note, see, for a general introduction, S. MacDonald, 'Theory of Knowledge', in N. Kretzman – E. Stump (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 160–95, and M. Pickavé, 'Human Knowledge', in B. Davies – E. Stump (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 311–25. See also N. Kretzmann, 'Aquinas's Philosophy of Mind', *Philosophical Topics* 20 (1992), p. 77–101, p. 85–90; A. Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind*, London–New York: Routledge, 1993; T.F. Cruz, 'Rediscovering Aquinas's Concept of "Knowledge"', in K. Lehrer – J. Lum – B.A. Slichta – N.D. Smith (eds.), *Knowledge, Teaching and Wisdom*, Cham: Springer, 1996, p. 111–24; H. Smit, 'Aquinas's Abstractionism', *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 10 (2001), p. 85–118; T. Scarpelli Cory, 'What is an Intellectual "Turn?" The Liber de Causis, Avicenna, and Aquinas's Turn to Phantasms', *Tópicos* 45 (2014), p. 129–62; T. Scarpelli Cory, 'Rethinking Abstractionism: Aquinas's Intellective Light and Some Arabic Sources', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 53 (2015), p. 607–46; L. Shia Gordon, 'Reconstructing Aquinas's Process of Abstraction', *Heythrop Journal* 59/4 (2018), p. 639–52; C. Trifogli, 'Aquinas on Cognition as Information', in C. Meyns (ed.), *Information and the History of Philosophy*, Abingdon–New York: Routledge, 2021, p. 137–149. Other studies will be quoted in the following footnotes. I reconsidered Aquinas's treatment of intellective cognition in Amerini, *Tommaso d'Aquino e l'intenzionalità*, to which I refer for other bibliographical references.

the intelligible species is its actualization. By actualizing my potency to know, the intelligible species is what gives the impulse to my operation of intellective cognition. When I think of a stone, thus, I actualize my potency to think, so that my intellect and the intelligible species of stone assimilate in the act of thinking of a stone. The kind of *assimilation* between the intellect and the intelligible species through which the intellect is thinking of extramental things has been particularly debated in the literature. The discussion has been intense and complex, and it has also concerned a different topic, namely the kind of the relation of *similarity* that intelligible species are said to entertain with the things from which they have been abstracted. My intellect indeed forms an intelligible species that Aquinas describes as a *similitude* of the nature of things from which the intelligible species has been abstracted. Aquinas does not go into more detail on the nature of such similitude, so it remains unclear if, for him, an intelligible species is similar to the things from which it has been abstracted in the same sense in which those things are similar to each other.

It is not my concern to enter into the details of such discussions here. For my argument in the following, only one point may be noted. Regardless of how one is disposed to interpret the assimilation between the intellect and the intelligible species of extramental things, it is clear that Aquinas does not consider such an assimilation real but merely 'intentional' (as he calls it). This has repercussions for the similarity-relation issue as well, for it introduces a gap between the sphere of extramental things and the sphere of the intellect. When I am thinking of a stone, I assimilate to a stone. However, not to the stone as it exists in the outer world, since I do not transform myself into a stone when I am thinking of a stone. I only assimilate to what of the stone can exist in my intellect according to an intelligible way of being, and this is the intelligible species of stone. This 'intentional' assimilation between the intelligible species of stone and my intellect induces us to assume that when I am thinking of a stone, I am simply in the 'intentional' mental state of being a stone, namely in an intelligible state of being-thinking-of-a-stone, made possible thanks to the presence of an intelligible species. Such a state is what actualizes my potency to think of a stone. So having or abstracting essential information from a stone coincides, for my intellect, with the condition of being under the intelligible species of stone. This informing of the intellect through the intelligible species orients my intellect toward one thing rather than another. It is this intelligible state that expresses the similitude of the things that have been cognized. As said, this is but an Aristotelian piece of doctrine: actualizing a thing's potency to be F amounts, for such a thing, to be F in act, and in the case of knowledge, being F in act amounts to being a similitude of a thing of the kind F.[5] I shall return to the significance of this point later.

[5] What I am saying here holds for occurrent acts of intellective cognition. The case is in part different for dispositional acts of intellective cognition. For a close discussion of this interpretation of Aquinas's view, see Pini, 'Two Models of Thinking', p. 8–24. The claim that when I think of a stone, it is not the stone itself that is in my soul but the (intelligible) species (*species*) of the stone is a common

It must be clear that Aquinas's endorsement of such an account of intellective cognition does not necessarily entail that he also endorses a *reductionist* position on intelligible species, as has been argued by some scholars.[6] We should distinguish here different kinds of reduction. First, the reduction of the intelligible species to the intellect, and second, the reduction of the intelligible species to the thing of which the intelligible species is a similitude. While Aquinas is hesitant on the second kind of reduction, we shall see that he has many reasons for excluding the first. The principal reason is that he defends the view that our intellect's nature is not entirely exhausted by our intellect's intentional assimilation to the intelligible species of a thing. The intellect may be said to be a cognizing subject, but it is not only this but also something else, viz., a certain intellective nature on its own. Thus, the intelligible species does not reduce to the intellect. Moreover, neither does the intelligible species reduce to the act of intellective cognition. Aquinas makes it clear that the acts of intellective cognition belong to the Aristotelian category of Action: they express the actions through which the intelligible species are formed as well as the actions that follow from the formation of the intelligible species. Although Aquinas is vague on which Aristotelian category intelligible species exactly belong to, we may assume that they probably belong to that of Quality, being treated as active potencies that allow the intellect to elicit acts of intellective cognition. Finally, neither does the intelligible species reduce to a concept, since Aquinas will describe concepts, at least in his mature works, as items added to the acts of intellective cognition and to the intelligible species, insofar as their end-product, the existence of which is needed in order to account completely for the phenomenon of intellective cognition. In his mature works, Aquinas will address two specific questions about concepts: first, how intelligible species and concepts relate to an extramental thing's nature, and second, how they relate to each other. While on the second question Aquinas's position evolves over time, my point is that on the first question his position remains unchanged.

A last point must be noted in this introductory section. Aquinas upholds that every act of intellective cognition generates a relation that links a thing to the intellect when the thing is cognized by the intellect. When I intentionally turn to a stone, the stone too gets turned to me. More specifically, two relations are at work here: one that my intellect bears to the stone and another that the stone bears to my intellect. However, there is not here a real composition of two relations. For Aquinas, only the first is indeed a real relation, while the second is but a relation of reason. We shall see in the second and third study that this view is defended with

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dictum of Aquinas, which he takes from Aristotle's *De anima*. See, e.g., *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 15, a. 5, a. 3, ad 3; *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 23, a. 1; *Summa contra Gentiles*, IV, c. 11; *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 76, a. 2, ad 4; *Sentencia libri De anima*, III 13.

[6] See, e.g., J.E. Brower – S. Brower-Toland, 'Aquinas on Mental Representation: Concepts and Intentionality', *Philosophical Review* 117/2 (2008), p. 193–243. See also G. Klima, 'Mental Representations and Concepts in Medieval Philosophy', in G. Klima (ed.), *Intentionality, Cognition, and Mental Representation in Medieval Philosophy*, Fordham, N.Y.: Fordham University Press, 2015, p. 323–38.

vigor by the Dominican Hervaeus Natalis as well. Thus, both Aquinas and Hervaeus advocate what has been called in the literature a correlational explanation of the intentionality of mind.[7] Genuinely reductive accounts of intentionality will make their appearance in the Middle Ages only when a double step is taken: first, the concepts of things will be reduced to the acts of intellective cognition that formed them, and second, these latter will be reduced to qualities of the cognizing intellect. An accurate analysis of the semantics of natural-kind terms will reveal that Aquinas was not yet prepared to take these steps; nonetheless, he arranges things to balance direct realism and representationalism, without opting for either of them.

It is now time to justify this claim and what has been said in this introductory section by analyzing Aquinas's semantics of common names. We must bear in mind that when we look at things from this semantic perspective, concepts play the role in Aquinas as that which is signified primarily by the common names of our spoken and written language. The analysis of Aquinas's account of the semantics of common names will help to illuminate the problem of the nature and function of concepts.

2. Concepts as the Immediate Signification of Common Names

Aquinas deals with signification in many places in his works.[8] For instance, he introduces important semantic distinctions in theology, especially when he approaches

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[7] For this label, see, e.g., L. Cesalli, 'Objects and Relations in Correlational Theories of Intentionality. The Case of Franciscus de Mayronis', *Quaestio* 10 (2010), p. 267–84. By 'correlational theory' I mean a theory that explains intellective cognition as an activity that implies the interplay of a relation and its converse relation. For an introduction to medieval theories of intentionality, see D. Perler, *Theorien der Intentionalität im Mittelalter*, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2002; L.M. de Rijk, 'A Study on the Medieval Intentionality Debate up to ca. 1350', in L.M. de Rijk (ed.), *Giraldus Odonis O.F.M., Opera Philosophica*, vol. 2: *De intentionibus*, Leiden: Brill, 2005, p. 19–372, p. 95ff.

[8] For an introduction to the medieval theories of the semantics of names, see P.V. Spade, 'The Semantics of Terms', in N. Kretzman – A. Kenny – J. Pinborg (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, p. 188–97. In particular, on Aquinas's semantics, see G. Klima, 'Thomas Aquinas on the Meaning of the Words', *Magyar Filozofiai Szemle* 3–4 (1984), p. 298–312; E.J. Ashworth, 'Signification and Modes of Signifying in Thirteenth-Century Logic: A Preface to Aquinas on Analogy', *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 1 (1991), p. 39–67; R. McInerny, *Being and Predication: Thomistic Interpretations*, Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986; C. Panaccio, 'From Mental Word to Mental Language', *Philosophical Topics* 20 (1992), p. 125–47; E.C. Sweeney, 'Supposition, Signification, and Universals: Metaphysical and Linguistic Complexity in Aquinas', *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 42/3 (1995), p. 267–90; G. Klima, 'The Semantic Principles Underlying Saint Thomas Aquinas's Metaphysics of Being', *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 5 (1996), p. 87–141; F. Amerini, 'Pragmatics and Semantics in Thomas Aquinas', *Vivarium* 49/1–3 (2011), p. 95–126; G. Klima, 'Theory of Language', in B. Davies – E. Stump (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 371–89; E.J. Ashworth, 'Aquinas, Scotus and Others on Naming, Knowing, and the Origin of Language', in J.L. Fink – H. Hansen – A.M. Mora-Marquez (eds.), *Logic and Language in the Middle Ages*, Leiden: Brill, 2013, p. 257–72; G. Klima, 'Semantic Content in Aquinas and Ockham', in M. Cameron – R.J. Stanton (eds.), *Linguistic Content: New Essays on the History of Philosophy of Language*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 121–35.

the problem of naming God. Aquinas at times deals with signification in a more technical way in his philosophical writings, for instance in his Commentary on the *De interpretatione*, where important details about the signification of names and propositions are introduced. In this study I reconsider Aquinas's account of signification throughout his works, by focusing on two different aspects, namely, first, the status of the object of signification (*significatum*/*res significata*), and second, the role played by the names' modes of signifying (*modi significandi*), which determine the relationship between a name's signification and the semantic function of co-signification or connotation.[9] Note that, in what follows, I shall limit myself to considering the semantics of natural-kind terms such as 'human being', 'stone' and the like. In order to avoid any misunderstanding, when I generically speak of 'names', I mean to refer exclusively to natural-kind terms, which are common names. My goal is to revise two claims concerning Aquinas's semantics:

(C1) The first is that the evolution of Aquinas's views on concepts significantly impinges upon his semantics of names.

(C2) The second claim is that Aquinas should be considered a 'hyper-externalist', i.e., a strong advocate of the position that names primarily signify things as they are in themselves.[10]

It is my intention to show that these claims do not correctly go to the core of Aquinas's semantics.

Against the first claim (C1), my argument runs as follows. If the evolution of Aquinas's thought regarding concepts, which can be unequivocally recorded from the *Summa contra Gentiles* onward, consists in differentiating concepts from intelligible species, this change does not affect the fundamentals of Aquinas's semantics, for two reasons.[11] The first is that, in his early theory of concepts as well, names are said to signify concepts, although concepts are not yet distinguished from intelligible species. The second and stronger reason is that the *nature* of the signified object

[9] In his works, Aquinas pays no particular attention to the notion of connotation. The word occurs a few times and it is used, in most cases, when Aquinas explains the semantics of the word 'Creator'. Essentially, it is treated as a case of co-signification: 'Creator' signifies the divine essence, while connoting, i.e., co-signifying, the effect of the action of divine creation. See, e.g., *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 14, q. 1, a. 1, ad 5 (ed. Mandonnet, I, p. 319). Aquinas more often contrasts signification with co-signification, as what is signified primarily/formally by a name with what is (co-) signified secondarily/materially.

[10] For this label, see Klima, 'Semantic Content', and G. Klima, 'Mind vs. Body and Other False Dilemmas of Post-Cartesian Philosophy of Mind', in M. García-Valdecasa – J.I. Murillo – N.F. Barrett (eds.), *Philosophy and Subjectivity. Philosophical Contributions to Non-Reductive Neurosciences*, Cham: Springer, 2016, p. 25–40, p. 35ff. On Aquinas's externalism, see also J.P. O'Callaghan, *Thomistic Realism and the Linguistic Turn. Toward a More Perfect Form of Existence*, Notre-Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003, p. 237–74.

[11] For the sake of brevity, I shall speak hereafter of 'concept' without distinguishing between concept (*conceptus*) and conception (*conceptio*). Since Aquinas does not seem to differentiate them in any relevant way, I take them as interchangeable terms. For the chronology of Aquinas's works, see P. Porro, *Thomas Aquinas. A Historical and Philosophical Profile*, Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016.

does not change, since both in his early and in his later view of concepts, names are said to signify concepts understood as *concepts-of*, i.e., as similitudes of things, rather than concepts understood as special kinds of mental items of their own.

Instead, if one states that the evolution of Aquinas's thought consists in a move from concepts understood as intelligible species to concepts understood as things cognized by means of intelligible species, I simply contend that this evolution has taken place in Aquinas. In any case, it seems to me that, even conceding such a move, evidence supporting the idea that concepts can be treated as things cognized can be found in Aquinas's early as well as in his later theory of concepts.

Against the second claim—i.e., (C2) that names primarily signify things as they are in themselves—my point is that throughout his career Aquinas relies on the same reasoning to reject this claim. It is formed by three steps:

(i) Aquinas follows the interpretation proposed by Boethius of what Aristotle says at the beginning of *De interpretatione* and holds that names are signs or notes (*notae*) of the passions of the soul—in the case of intellective cognition, signs or notes of concepts.

(ii) Concepts, when understood correctly, must be put on the side of things, since they are nothing other than the reasons (*rationes*), essences (*essentiae*), quiddities (*quidditates*) or natures (*naturae*) of extramental things *qua* present to the intellect as intelligible species.

(iii) The intellect has a causal role in forming the intelligible species.

Since names are signs or notes of concepts (i), names cannot primarily signify things as they are in themselves. This can be said because things in themselves are singular, while names are introduced to signify common natures that are abstracted from the singularity of extramental things. In his Commentary on Aristotle's *De interpretatione*, Aquinas notes that the mode of signifying of names permits us to draw this conclusion.[12] On the other hand, step (i) further entails that names signify the extramental things if not through concepts: names signify concepts immediately and extramental things mediately.[13] At the same time, Aquinas observes that one should not believe that names, since they are signs of concepts, are introduced into a language to signify precisely concepts taken as things existing in our soul. Names are introduced to speak about extramental things and not about mental entities, and it is so because 'names are imposed by us insofar as we acquire cog-

[12] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, I 2 (Opera Omnia, I* 1, p. 10–1,95–105): 'Set nunc est sermo de uocibus significatiuis ex institutione humana, et ideo oportet passiones anime hic intelligere intellectus conceptiones quas nomina et uerba et orationes significant, secundum sentenciam Aristotilis: non enim potest esse quod significent inmediate ipsas res, ut ex modo significandi apparet: significat enim hoc nomen "homo" naturam humanam in abstractione a singularibus, unde non potest esse quod significet inmediate hominem singularem.'

[13] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, I 2 (Opera Omnia, I* 1, p. 11,109–12): 'ideo necesse fuit Aristotili dicere quod uoces significant intellectus conceptiones inmediate, et eis mediantibus res.'

nition from things'.[14] The main conclusion, often stated by Aquinas, is that names signify the concepts of things or—and my point will be that saying this amounts to the same as saying that they signify—the things as cognized by means of concepts. My claim in this study is that Aquinas does not depart from this conclusion across his career, although he may appear to be not always consistent in his formulations. Such conflicts, however, should be explained with respect to the context of his pronouncements and, in some cases, regarded as a form of progressive refinement rather than as a radical change in Aquinas's thought. Such refinement especially follows from the fact that, while in the early part of his career Aquinas works with a simplified epistemology, in his maturity he articulates it by differentiating the starting-point from the end-product of intellective cognition, viz., by differentiating the intelligible species from the concept. His stated and not otherwise explained identification between concepts and cognized things will be what allows us to reconcile representationalism with direct realism. But before illustrating this point, let me consider more closely Aquinas's semantics of names.

3. Different Senses of Signification

'Signification' (*significatio*) and its cognates are equivocal words in Aquinas in the sense that they indicate a relation that can derive from a variety of other relations. Aquinas understands signification according to several meanings and uses it in many different contexts. Broadly speaking, he takes as equivalent saying that something A signifies something else B and saying that A is a sign (*signum*) of B. A sign is defined as something which has been imposed to signify something else.[15] Specifically, the relation 'to be a sign of' is taken as shorthand for a class of relations of different kinds. Something may be a sign of another thing if it bears some causal or representational relation to that thing. From this perspective, something A can be seen as a sign of something else B if A can be associated with B by way of any inferential reasoning.[16] For example, Aquinas holds that it is correct to state that smoke signifies a fire, that a name signifies a concept or also a definition—according to the celebrated Aristotelian dictum of the *Metaphysics* that the formula or notion which a name signifies is a definition (*ratio quam significat nomen est definitio*)[17]—that a thing signifies another thing or God. In the first case, there is a causal relation between smoke and fire, while in the second

[14] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 4, a. 1 (Opera Omnia, XXII/1–2, p. 119,157–9): 'nomina imponuntur a nobis secundum quod cognitionem de rebus accipimus' (my translation).

[15] Cf., e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 1, q. 4, a. 2, *expositio textus* (ed. Mandonnet, I, p. 46): 'Signum enim est quod est institutum ad aliquid significandum: res autem est quae habet absolutam significationem non ad aliud relatam. Unde non est inconveniens quod idem sit signum et res respectu diversorum.'

[16] See Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 45, q. 1, a. 4.

[17] This dictum occurs in Aquinas's writings many times. See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 2, q. 1, a. 3; *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 2, a. 1, ad 11; *Summa theologiae*,

case a relation of semantic expression or equipollence; in the third case, finally, there is a symbolic, allegorical or figurative relation (such as that of being a vestige or a footprint). Speaking of signification of things or even of events or facts[18] was quite usual in the theological practice in the age of Aquinas, and in this respect one could find reasonable the idea that everything can be a sign of anything else, insofar as every thing can have some relation or other to anything else. Such a wording is common, for example, when interpreting the Holy Scripture in a spiritual sense beyond the literal one,[19] when explaining the nature of Sacraments, or when exploring the theological meaning of the created world with respect to its Creator. Regarding this, Aquinas does not deviate from the view current in his day that the assumption that things other than signs signify must be seen as the hallmark of theology.[20]

Strictly speaking, though, signs and things are different items in function if not in nature. Sensible signs actually are things, but they are expressly imposed to refer to things, while things are not brought into existence to serve this function.[21] If, broadly speaking, 'to signify' is the same as 'to be a sign of', strictly speaking they are not, since 'to signify' must be narrowed down to speech, while 'to be a sign of' may apply to things other than words. Nevertheless, even in the case of speech, 'to signify' and 'to be a sign of' can be considered equivalent to a certain degree. At the beginning of *De interpretatione*, as has been said, Aristotle calls spoken and written names 'symbols' of the 'passions of the soul' (*pathemata tes psyches*). Boethius translated the Greek '*symbola*' into Latin as '*notae*', which is commonly understood as 'signs'. Aquinas reads the Boethian term as equivalent to 'signify'. Saying that names are signs or notes of the passions of the soul means that names signify the passions of the soul. Regardless of the exact meaning of 'passions of the soul' in Aristotle's text, Aquinas has no doubt that the function of names is precisely that of expressing, in a spoken or written way, our thoughts by means of linguistic symbols, conventionally chosen and imposed.[22] In this sense, our ordinary spoken

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I^a, q. 13, a. 8, ad 2; *Expositio in XII libros Metaphysicorum*, IV, lec. 17 (ed. Spiazzi, Turin–Rome, 1964, n. 733). For the Aristotelian source, see *Met.*, Γ 7, 1012a23–4.

18 See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super Isaiam ad litteram*, c. 20; *Expositio super Ieremiam*, c. 19, lec. 2.

19 On this, see, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^a, q. 1, a. 10; *Quodlibet* VII, q. 6, a. 1.

20 See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^a, q. 1, a. 10; *Quodlibet* VII, q. 6, a. 1; *Lectura super Epistolam ad Galatos*, c. 4, lec. 7. I do not dwell further on this claim. For an introduction, see R. van Nieuwenhove, *Introduction to Medieval Theology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 167ff.

21 Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 1, q. 4, a. 2, *expositio textus* (ed. Mandonnet, I, p. 46): 'Ad secundum dicendum, quod res dupliciter sumitur in processu hujus locutionis: sumitur enim communiter pro omni ente; et sic omne signum est res; sumitur etiam magis stricte pro eo quod est res tantum et non signum, et sic contra signum dividitur.'

22 Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, I 2 (Opera Omnia, I* 1, p. 12,190–3): 'comparantur enim passiones anime ad uoces sicut primum ad secundum: uoces enim non proferuntur nisi ad exprimendum interiores anime passiones.' Cf. Boethius, *Commentarius in librum De interpretatione. Editio secunda*, c. *De signis*, in *Patrologia Latina*, t. 32, col. 405Aff.

and written language is intrinsically representational.[23] In what follows, signification will be taken in this strict linguistic meaning.

4. The Object of Signification of Names and Aquinas's Evolution

The core of Aquinas's position on the signification of names consists in a couple of distinctions, stated frequently by Aquinas in his works:

(D1) The first distinction is that between a name's mode of signifying (*modus significandi*) and the thing signified (*significatum* or *res significata*).[24]

(D2) The second distinction is that between that from which a name has been imposed to signify (*id a quo nomen imponitur ad significandum*) and that onto which a name has been imposed to signify (*id ad quod significandum nomen imponitur*).[25]

I begin by focusing on the first distinction, especially on the nature of the thing signified. I shall postpone the discussion of the mode of signifying to § 10 and the examination of the second distinction to § 9. In the last section (§ 11), before concluding, I shall propose a reconstruction of Aquinas's semantics of names as it follows from such distinctions.

Medieval as well as modern interpreters of Aquinas raised the question whether the thing signified by a name such as 'human being' is an extramental thing, a cognized thing, or the concept or the intelligible species of a (cognized) thing.[26] In the literature it has been emphasized that Aquinas changed his mind on the nature of concepts and that his interpreters often neglected this fact when explaining Aquinas's semantics.[27] In the early works, such as his Commentary on the *Sentences* or his *Quaestiones de*

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[23] See Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 14, a. 1, a. 2, ad 3; also *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, c. 105.

[24] See, e.g., *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 8, q. 2, a. 3, ad 2; d. 22, q. 1, a. 2 and ad 1; *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 8, a. 2, ad 7; *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 39, a. 4. The term *significatum* and the phrase *res significata* are not equivalent. I shall illustrate their distinction below, § 10.

[25] Cf., e.g., *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 23, q. 1, a. 2, ad 1; III, d. 6, q. 1, a. 3; *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 9, a. 3 ad 1; *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 13, a. 2, ad 2, and a. 8; *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, I 4. Both distinctions are not a novelty of Aquinas but were current in his times. For example, they are formulated by Albert the Great too. On such distinctions, see Ashworth, 'Signification and Modes of Signifying in Thirteenth-Century Logic' and, for a general assessment of their meaning, I. Rosier-Catach, 'Res significata and modi significandi: les implications d'une distinction médiévale', in S. Ebbesen, *Sprachteorien in Spätantiken und Mittelalter*, vol. 3 of P. Schmitter (ed.), *Geschichte der Sprachtheorie*, Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1995, p. 135–68. On the historical background of the second distinction in particular, see F. Amerini, 'The Semantics of Substantial Names: The Tradition of the Commentaries on Aristotle's Metaphysics', *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales* 75/2 (2008), p. 15–61.

[26] For an excellent presentation of the different positions on the signification of names in the age of Aquinas and of the different interpretations of Aquinas's doctrine as well, see G. Pini, 'Species, Concept, and Thing: Theories of Signification in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century', *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 8 (1999), p. 21–52. See also A.M. Mora-Marquez, *The Thirteenth-Century Notion of Signification: The Discussions and their Origin and Development*, Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2015, to which I refer for further literature.

[27] See, e.g., Pini, 'Species, Concept, and Thing', p. 35ff.

veritate, Aquinas describes a concept as that by virtue of which a thing is cognized (*id quo*). In the later works, such as his *Summa theologiae*, a concept is instead described as that which has been cognized about a thing (*id quod*). Since Aquinas equates the concept with the thing signified by a name, this change affects Aquinas's semantics of names as well. If in the early works, names are said to signify intelligible species, in the later works they are said to signify concepts and not intelligible species.

I do not agree with such a presentation of Aquinas's evolution. It seems to me that Aquinas's change is another and simply concerns the identification between the point of departure and the point of arrival of the operation of intellective cognition. If in his early writings it is doubtful that Aquinas distinguished the concept as means (*id quo*) from the concept as object (*id quod*) of intellective cognition, in his later writings he clearly does so. This change, though, does not affect Aquinas's semantics, given that Aquinas never departs from the idea that names are imposed to signify *what is cognized about a thing* and this is that to which both intelligible species and concepts refer. Nevertheless, to assess correctly Aquinas's semantics of names, the nature of the object of signification calls for a closer inspection. But before we come to this investigation, let me introduce a pair of constraints about concepts, which our analysis of Aquinas's semantics is expected to confirm. With respect to this, two aspects of Aquinas's doctrine of concept can be elucidated, they will help us to establish first what the object of cognition is not for Aquinas.

4.1. Signification and the Ontological Status of Concepts

The first aspect concerns the ontological status of concepts. There is no doubt that Aquinas regards an intelligible species, a mental word (*verbum mentis*) and a concept—regardless of whether or not they amount to the same thing—as something existing in the intellect as in its subject,[28] and as that by virtue of which (*id quo*) the

[28] The mode of being of a thing in a subject will be called, after Aquinas, 'subjective being'. Aquinas does not use this expression, but to my mind, existing subjectively or having a subjective mode of being just amounts to existing either as a subject (like substance do) or as something in a subject (like accidents do). The numerical multiplication of intelligible species according to singular intellects is a commonplace of Aquinas's anti-Averroistic polemics against the numerical unity of the possible intellect. On this, one could see, e.g., what Aquinas says in *De unitate intellectus*, c. 3, or in *Compendium theologiae*, I, c. 85. But Aquinas also states the numerical multiplicity of *concepts* according to singular intellects given that he affirms, for concepts too, that they are in the intellect as in their subject. Cf., e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 2, q. 1, a. 3 (ed. Mandonnet, I, p. 66–7): 'Non enim hoc dicitur, quasi ipsa intentio quam significat nomen rationis, sit in re; aut etiam ipsa conceptio, cui convenit talis intentio, sit in re extra animam, cum sit in anima sicut in subjecto: sed dicitur esse in re, inquantum in re extra animam est aliquid quod respondet conceptioni animae, sicut significatum signo', and ad 6 (ed. Mandonnet, I, p. 72); *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 1, a. 1, ad 12; q. 7, a. 6 (ed. Pession, p. 202): 'Et sic omnes rationes sunt quidem in intellectu nostro sicut in subiecto, sed in Deo sunt ut in radice verificante has conceptiones. Nam non essent verae conceptiones intellectus, quas habet de re aliqua, nisi per viam similitudinis illis conceptionibus res illa responderet'; *Responsio de 108 articulis*, a. 1 (see below, note 102). Here, I take the phrase 'as in (its/their) subject' (*sicut in subiecto*) as substantially equivalent to the adverb 'subjectively' (*subiective*) used by subsequent philosophers.

intellect can be said formally to be cognizing and the extramental thing formally to be cognized.[29] If I can point to textual evidence confirming my claim, I could not point to any text, especially among Aquinas's early works, where Aquinas states that an intelligible species, a mental word or a concept *qua thing existing in the intellect as in its subject* is what is signified primarily by a name. Aquinas appears to have excluded this possibility from the beginning of his career: extramental things and psychological occurrences of mental tokens cannot be what a name has been imposed primarily to signify. Aquinas seems to have two reasons for ruling out both extramental things and mental tokens.

The first reason is that they are both singular,[30] while our names are common, and no common name has been imposed to refer to any singular thing. As has been said earlier, Aquinas explicitly makes this conclusion in his Commentary on Aristotle's *De interpretatione*. The second reason to rule out both extramental things and mental tokens is that a singular—it does not matter here whether it is mental or extramental—cannot be cognized by means of a direct act of intellective cognition, but only by means of a reflexive act, in which the so-called phantasms of imagination or some other mental items are involved. In the case of singular

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On the notion of mental word, on which I do not directly focus in this study, still useful is H. Paissac, *Theologie du verbe: saint Augustin et saint Thomas*, Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1951, while on the mental word in the early works, see J. Chênevert, 'Le verbum dans le Commentaire sur les Sentences de Saint Thomas d'Aquin', *Science ecclésiatique* 13 (1961), p. 191–233, p. 359–90. For a list of works where Aquinas deals with the topic of mental word, see J. de la Vaissière, 'Le sens du mot "verbe mental" dans les écrits de saint Thomas', *Archives de Philosophie* 3/2 (1925), p. 168–75.

[29] See, e.g., what Aquinas says in the following texts: *Quaestiones de anima*, q. 3, ad 7; *Sentencia libri De anima*, III 7; *De unitate intellectus*, c. 3–4; *Compendium theologiae*, I, c. 85.

[30] This is quite clear for extramental things. But this also obtains for psychological occurrences of mental tokens. This point is stated explicitly by Aquinas in the early part of his career and strenuously defended at the end of it (for instance, in *De unitate intellectus*, c. 4–5), especially against the so-called Averroistic accounts of the possible intellect. See notably Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, II, d. 17, q. 2, a. 1, ad 3 (ed. Mandonnet, II, p. 429): 'Ad tertium dicendum, quod secundum Avicennam, loc. cit., species intellecta potest dupliciter considerari: aut secundum esse quod habet in intellectu, et sic habet esse singulare; aut secundum quod est similitudo talis rei intellectae, prout ducit in cognitionem ejus; et ex hac parte habet universalitatem: quia non est similitudo hujus rei secundum quod haec res est, sed secundum naturam in qua cum aliis suae speciei convenit.' Also see *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, II, d. 3, q. 1, a. 2 (ed. Mandonnet, II, p. 91): 'Ad tertium dicendum, quod forma quae est recepta in intellectu, potest dupliciter considerari: vel per comparationem ad rem cujus est similitudo, et sic habet universalitatem: non enim est similitudo hominis secundum conditiones individuantes, sed secundum naturam communem; vel per comparationem ad intellectum in quo habet esse, et sic est quid individuatum, quemadmotum intellectus; et alia numero species intellecta hominis est in intellectu Socratis, et alia in intellectu Platonis; unde non oportet intellectum non esse quid determinatum et subsistens'; *De unitate intellectus*, c. 5 (Opera Omnia, XLIII, p. 310ff.). Aquinas explicitly excludes that names primarily signify intelligible species, taken as psychological entities, in *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 82, a. 2, ad 3. On the numerical multiplicity of acts of intellective cognition too, see also *Quaestio de spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 9 (Opera Omnia, XXIV/2, p. 97–8,436–44): 'Res igitur intellecta a duobus intellectibus est quodammodo una et eadem et quodammodo multe, quia ex parte rei que cognoscitur est una et eadem, ex parte uero ipsius cognitionis est alia et alia: sicut si duo uideant unum parietem est eadem res uisa ex parte rei que uidetur, alia tamen et alia secundum diuersas uisiones; et omnino simile esset ex parte intellectus.'

extramental things, Aquinas usually expresses this conviction by claiming that the intellect can cognize them only by 'converting' itself to phantasms, hence going back over its process of concept formation and sense perception up to the thing that started the process.[31] In the case of singular mental tokens, he instead brings up this point by stating that science can be about species or intentions only secondarily, namely only in virtue of the reflection the intellect does upon itself, its acts and its modes of cognition.[32]

The two exclusions narrow the domain of what the object of signification of common names can be. We have already seen that names cannot signify extramental things as such; we may add here that neither do they signify psychological occurrences of mental tokens. This matches Aquinas's basic idea that singular material things cannot be intellectively cognized by us.

4.2. Signification and the Twofold Status of Concepts

The second aspect of Aquinas's doctrine of concepts that needs here to be preliminarily elucidated concerns the double consideration of a concept. This is also a point on which there is agreement among scholars. In some texts Aquinas makes it clear that terms such as 'intelligible species', 'mental word' or 'concept' designate items that can be understood in two ways. They can be described as psychological tokens that exist singularly in the intellect as in their subject, as said in the previous section; they can also be described as (universal) similitudes of extramental things. As far as I can see, Aquinas is unequivocal in maintaining throughout his works that names signify intelligible species, concepts or mental words only *understood in the second way*.[33] Differentiating concepts and intelligible species could therefore be of no particular significance for the semantics of names. If names are supposed to signify mental items insofar as they are similitudes of cognized things, it follows that names are introduced into language to signify the things that are cognized by means of concepts. Moreover, both intelligible species and concepts (although with different modalities, when Aquinas distinguishes them from each other: viz., in an implicit and confused way the former, in an explicit and expressed way the latter) are similitudes of one and the same thing, i.e., of an extramental thing's nature. So distinguishing them from each other has effects on epistemology, but not on the metaphysical status of the thing that is signified by a name.

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[31] See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 84, a. 7; q. 86, a. 1; also *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, IV, d. 50, q. 1, a. 2, ad 1.

[32] See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, IV, d. 49, q. 1, a. 1, q.la 2; *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, c. 75; *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 85, a. 2; *Sententia libri De anima*, III 8; *De unitate intellectus*, c. 5. On Aquinas on self-knowledge, see T. Scarpelli Cory, *Aquinas on Human Self-Knowledge*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

[33] See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, IV, c. 11; *Compendium theologiae*, I, c. 25; *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 7, a. 6.

My point is that in his later works Aquinas has epistemological rather than semantic reasons for denying that intelligible species are the proper objects of the signification of names. The evolution of Aquinas's position on the identification between intelligible species and concepts thus does not affect his position on the object of signification. Aquinas is clear in maintaining that names signify concepts and in describing concepts as similitudes of things.

5. Representationalism vs. Direct Realism

The two aspects of Aquinas's doctrine of concept considered in the previous section reveal some preliminary but important things about the status of the object of signification and show that the fundamentals of Aquinas's semantics of names were established at the beginning of his career and remained unchanged. Nevertheless, the picture is still far from clear. Most of the interpretative puzzles about the object of signification in Aquinas result precisely from the acceptance of the twofold consideration of a concept indicated above (viz., the concept considered as a mental item and as a similitude of an extramental thing). In particular, queries revolve around two possible identifications that concern the understanding of concepts as similitudes of things: whether Aquinas grants (i) the identity of the concept of a thing with the thing that has been cognized through that concept (for example, of the concept of human being with human being as cognized by that concept), and (ii) the identity of the cognized thing with the extramental thing (viz., of the human nature that has been cognized with the human nature of the individual human beings). We shall see later how the investigation into the object of signification may help to solve the two above queries. But first, let me begin to clarify the issue by considering how Aquinas arrives at specifying the ontological status of concepts after he has excluded that names have been imposed to signify extramental singular things and singular mental tokens.

Aquinas never hesitates to keep distinct the concept and the extramental thing to which the concept ultimately refers. A concept is occasionally described as a certain passion of the intellect,[34] while the thing that is cognized as something outside the intellect. If I form the concept of a human being, for example, my concept can be explained as a sort of modification of my intellect, while human being refers to an external thing that I am cognizing. But since very little information is given by Aquinas about the two identifications above, the door is left open to contrasting interpretations.

Aquinas's explanation of intellective cognition is indeed complex. One clear point, however, is that he understands there to be a gap between the material/sensory part and the immaterial/intellective part of it. Aquinas condenses that by

[34] See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, I 2; *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, c. 46; *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 8, a. 1 (see below, note 78).

the Aristotelian commonplace that senses are about singulars, the intellect about universals (*sensus est singularium, intellectus universalium*).[35] For Aquinas, human knowledge consists in an activity of reception of a thing's form, and from the beginning to the end such a form, being abstracted from the thing's materiality, must be placed in a spiritual dimension, although it is true that at least in its first segment (viz., the sensory one) human knowledge is performed by means of corporeal organs. Only intellective cognition obtains incorporeally. As Aquinas explains, sensible species exist already in sense organs according to what he calls a spiritual and intentional mode of existence.[36] Aquinas does not better specify the nature of such an intentional or spiritual being, and great discussion has occurred in the literature about this point. Without taking here a position in the historiographical debate, for the present purposes it suffices to retain that Aquinas's explanation of human knowledge rests on three basic principles. The first is that no extramental thing can act directly upon the intellect. The second follows from the first and is that nothing can transit from the outer world to the intellect while remaining one and the same. The third is a consequence of the first two and is that human knowledge must develop in a spiritual or intentional dimension, from the beginning to the end. We have already noted that the main reason for these principles is that the extramental thing is material and corporeal whereas the human soul is immaterial and noncorporeal, and nothing material/corporeal can act directly on what is immaterial/incorporeal. A logical consequence of these principles is that if some identification must hold between an extramental thing and the thing *qua* cognized, it must be limited to the formal or essential features of the extramental thing, since they are the only features that our intellect can grasp in abstraction from the thing's materiality and singularity. So, while Aquinas denies that intellective cognition can be explained, literally, as a sort of translation of an extramental thing into the intellect,[37] he is not against conceding hat the nature of extramental things and the nature *qua* cognized amount to the same thing to a certain degree. What changes is only the mode of existence of that nature, and this prevents us from saying that a thing's nature *qua* cognized is exactly the same as the thing's nature as it exists in the extramental thing. In one respect, it is, but in another, it is not.

For Aquinas, we can only intellectively cognize a thing by knowing what that thing is, i.e., its nature or essence. When I think of Socrates that he is a rational animal, for example, I am thinking of exactly the features that make Socrates what

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35 See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 85, a. 3.

36 See, e.g., *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 22, a. 1, ad 2; *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 84, a. 6. This topic has been much discussed in the literature. For a state of the art and further bibliographical references, see, e.g., G. de Anna, 'Aquinas on Sensible Forms and Semimaterialism', *Review of Metaphysics* 54/1 (2000), p. 43–63, and M. Lenzi, 'Senso, materia e intenzione. Tommaso d'Aquino su *De anima*, II, 12', *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 25 (2014), p. 329–62, to which I refer for further literature.

37 See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 85, a. 1, ad 3 (see the text below, note 168).

he essentially is, namely a rational animal. There is no reason for saying that the features I am thinking about are not the features Socrates himself has. My intellective cognition of Socrates is not supposed to modify the reality, hence neither is my act of intellective cognition supposed to falsify it. We must assume this because we have no other way of saying what the essence of Socrates is other than that of knowing what Socrates is. Aquinas is close to what Aristotle says in the *Metaphysics*: the knowledge of the 'what it is' of a thing is the limit of our knowledge of that thing and such a limit is also the limit of the thing itself, and vice versa.[38] It would be not incorrect to account for human knowledge in Aquinas as a transfer-information activity, which holds through the medium of sensory and intelligible species: no information is lost in the passage from outside to inside the intellect; or, if a loss of information obtains, we have no way of ascertaining if it really happened and what has been lost. We instead have the possibility of ascertaining if this transferring of information is reliable, for example if it produces some sensory deception, wrong recognition and incorrect decision-making about the thing.

On the other hand, however, Aquinas upholds that no information remains exactly the same in the passage from the senses to the intellect. So one can find Aquinas say, with Avicenna, that neither the property of 'being animal' nor that of 'being rational', both involved in our knowledge of what Socrates essentially is, exist as such in the external reality. In the outer world there is nothing like the animality or rationality as such, while we can find the principle of animality and rationality (which metaphysically Aquinas identifies with the human soul). Animality and rationality are the outcome of our activity of gathering features that appear in Socrates and that causally depend on his human soul, features such as the capacity of moving and perceiving or the capacity of thinking that we then name, respectively, as 'animality' and 'rationality' and classify as essential.[39] With respect to the second identification mentioned above, i.e., (ii) that of the cognized thing with the extramental thing, Aquinas's conclusion seems to be that in one respect the extramental thing and the thing cognized are the same, but in another respect they are not: they are the same in the sense that the essential properties we can capture of a thing are not different in the thing and in the intellect, but it is not the same in the sense that the essence as existing in the thing is not numerically the same as that I can find in the intellect once intellective cognition is over, since their modes of existence are different.

If we move now to the first identification mentioned above—i.e., (i) that of the concept of a thing with the thing that has been cognized through that concept—it

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[38] See Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio in XII libros Metaphysicorum*, V, lec. 19 (ed. Spiazzi, n. 1048).

[39] For further details and references about this procedure, see F. Amerini, '"The Essential Differentiae of Things Are Unknown to Us". Thomas Aquinas on the Limits of Knowability of Natural Substances', in J. Hochschild – T.C. Nevitt – A. Wood – G. Borbély (eds.), *Metaphysics Through Semantics: The Philosophical Recovery of the Medieval Mind*, Cham: Springer 2023, p. 79–93.

will be enough for the time being to recall what we said in the previous section, namely that, for Aquinas, a mental item (be it an intelligible species, a concept or a mental word) can be considered in two ways, namely in itself and as a similitude of extramental things. Only in the second way could the identity of a concept with the cognized thing be stated. To my knowledge, however, Aquinas never says that a concept can be understood as the concept of a thing and as the cognized thing itself, but at least once, albeit in a very different context—when speaking in fact of the nature of phantasms—Aquinas concedes that a *thing represented* can be considered in itself and a similitude of extramental things. Since being a similitude of extramental things is the typical feature of concepts, one might be authorized to infer, on the basis of such a text, the identity of a concept with the thing cognized.[40]

It is certain that when I refer to the concept of a thing, say to the concept of human being, I do not mean to refer to nothing other than to the thing itself that has been cognized (i.e., a human being). For, unless I am a psychologist interested in investigating what happens in my mind when I am thinking of a human being, I refer to concepts intending to refer to things. It is the thing cognized that I take as the similitude of an extramental and true thing. No human being as such exists in the external reality; I only come across singular instances of a human being, such as Socrates or Plato. However, as has been noted above, I can abstract from Socrates and Plato some common features that my intellect unifies, and are such unified features that can be described as a similitude of the properties that I have abstracted from Socrates and Plato. If intellective cognition entails numerical discontinuity, it is clear that no *natural conformity* between the extramental thing and the cognized thing may be admitted by Aquinas. It would be implausible that a concept be called a similitude of two things which are similar to each other in the sense that it shares the same similitude that the two things have between them.[41] For example, if Socrates and Plato share the property of being rational, my concept of rational,

[40] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Sentencia libri De sensu et sensato*, II, c. 3 (Opera Omnia, XLV/2, p. 115,174–86): 'Dicit ergo primo quod potest assignari quomodo contingat et accidat hoc quod dictum est, scilicet quod aliquis senciat passionem presentem et memoretur rem absentem. Et inducit exemplum de animali quod pingitur *in tabula*, quod quidem *et est animal* pictum *et* est *ymago* animalis ueri et, cum idem subiecto sit cui conueniunt hec ambo, differunt tamen hec duo ratione, et ideo alia est consideratio eius in quantum est animal pictum et alia in quantum est ymago animalis ueri; ita etiam *et fantasma quod* est *in nobis* potest accipi uel prout est *aliquid* in se uel prout est *fantasma alterius*'; also see *Quaestio de spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 11, s.c. 2; *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, III, d. 9, q. 1, a. 2, q.la 2 (ed. Moos, III, p. 311–2): 'Ad secundam quaestionem dicendum quod imago potest dupliciter considerari: vel secundum quod est res quaedam, et sic nullus honor ei debetur, sicut nec alii lapidi vel ligno; vel secundum quod est imago. Et quia idem motus est in imaginem inquantum est imago, et in imaginatum; ideo unus honor debetur imagini et ei cujus est imago.' On the intentionality of memory in Aquinas, see D. Perler, 'Aquinas on the Intentionality of Memory', *Topoi* (2025), online publication at https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-025-10226-z (last access on July 30, 2025).

[41] For a close discussion of the notion of similarity, see G. Klima, 'Indifference vs. Universality of Mental Representation in Ockham, Buridan, and Aquinas', *Quaestio* 10 (2010), p. 99–110, and G. Klima, 'Intentionality and Mental Content in Aquinas, Ockham, and Buridan', in F. Amerini – L. Cesalli (eds.), *Universals in the Fourteenth Century*, Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2017, p. 65–87. See also T. Scarpelli

which is a similitude of their property of being rational, is not rational in the same sense in which Socrates and Plato are said to be rational. It is only something that permits me to refer to Socrates's and Plato's property of being rational, and it is reasonable to think that the term 'similitude' is used by Aquinas just to indicate such a way of referring. Indeed, the only relation there is between me and the property of being rational of Socrates and Plato is of the *representative kind*, Aquinas says.[42] In some texts, Aquinas presents the notion of representation/representing (*repraesentatio*/*repraesentare*) as primitive and explanatory. In the context of human knowledge, thus, representing does not indicate an act of natural conformity, but just act of natural referring. A property as being rational is constructed by the intellect, through abstraction. It represents a thing's property of being rational only in the sense that it allows me to refer to the features that I have singled out and summarized in my concept of rational. The fact that Aquinas describes both the concept and the cognized thing according to their capacity of being a similitude of an extramental thing has a precise implication: we may say that Aquinas looks at them as at items primitively and naturally endowed with referential power. When I think of a human being or that Socrates is a human being, I am bringing about an action that refers me to something existent in the outer world, namely Socrates, through something that I have abstracted from him, namely human being.

These traces of representationalism need, however, to be clarified. Aquinas indeed does not seem to take representation in visual or pictorial terms. A concept is not, strictly speaking, an image of a thing, for Aquinas. It is not because there are not sensible properties in the thing that my concepts can represent. As said, representing simply means that concepts by their very nature refer to things. Representing is just a referential function. The pictorial aspect of representation emerges only at the level of the faculty of imagination, when our concepts are linked to images drawn from things. Since our concepts' return to things obtains thanks to the help of imagination and sense-perception, we need to associate images with concepts.

A first claim can be made on the basis of what we have said thus far: explaining concepts in terms of representations could permit us to reconcile representationalism and direct realism. Insofar as natural-kind concepts express what we can know about extramental things, they can be said to express the nature of the things, and this is a realist claim. But insofar as concepts stay in the intellect in the place of the nature that the extramental thing exhibits, then they are said to represent the thing, and this is a representationalist claim. However, if representing is understood in the

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Cory, 'Rethinking "Thinking About" in the Middle Ages: Aquinas's Theory of Intentionality as Active Imitating', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 9 (2025), p. 97–118.

[42] See, e.g., what Aquinas says in *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 8, a. 1 (Opera Omnia, XXII/2–1, p. 217–18,166–72): 'In omni enim cognitione quae est per similitudinem modus cognitionis est secundum convenientiam similitudinis ad id cuius est similitudo; et dico convenientiam secundum repraesentationem, sicut species in anima convenit cum re quae est extra animam, non secundum esse naturale.'

referential manner I am suggesting, representationalism becomes reconcilable with direct realism. A representation of a thing's nature is indeed the only way in which such a nature can be cognized and referred to by the intellect. In the early *Quaestiones de veritate*, Aquinas makes this point clear: a thing is cognized insofar as it is present *as represented* in the intellect and not insofar as it exists in it, which induces one to think that the modality of being represented is not considered by Aquinas as a different kind of existence in the intellect, different—I mean—from that of the mental similitude.[43] At the end of the day, even a hyper direct-realist thinker such as Ockham cannot avoid resorting to the notion of 'similitude' to explain the concepts' natural capacity of reference.[44] The point of discussion could therefore be another in the case of Aquinas: whether a mental similitude, once formed, refers to a thing (i.e., to the cognized thing) that is different from the extramental thing, so that the point of departure and the point of arrival of my act of intellective cognition of a thing are different.

Much of the controversy among the interpreters precisely lies in the uncertainty about whether Aquinas is thinking of a mental similitude as something really including two components, i.e., the representation and the represented thing, or simply as something that can be described in two ways, namely as a thing in itself and as a representation of an extramental thing. In other words, does Aquinas embrace, especially in his later works, an epistemology that involves two items (viz., concepts and extramental things) or three (viz., concepts, extramental things, and cognized things)? Aquinas is not explicit on this alternative and probably this means that he was not interested in drawing out all the consequences from the admission of a distinction between concepts and cognized things. In any case, even conceding that a concept and the cognized thing amount to the same entity to a certain degree, one has still to prove that the cognized thing has been produced *directly* by the thing rather than by the intellect. In order to opt for a representationalist rather than for a direct-realist account of Aquinas's theory of knowledge one has to demonstrate that, for Aquinas, the process of abstraction of extramental things' natures is discontinuous in some relevant sense. Above we have argued for the discontinuity, through referring to a text from the *Summa theologiae* (I^a, q. 85, a. 1, ad 3). But what does Aquinas precisely say in that text about the continuity or

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[43] Cf. *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 2, a. 5, ad 17 (Opera Omnia, XXII/1–2, p. 65,439–54): 'Ad septimum decimum dicendum quod hoc modo aliquid cognoscitur secundum quod est in cognoscente repraesentatum et non secundum quod est in cognoscente existens: similitudo enim in vi cognoscitiva existens non est principium cognitionis rei secundum esse quod habet in potentia cognoscitiva sed secundum relationem quam habet ad rem cognitam.'

[44] On the argument, see C. Panaccio, *Ockham on Concepts*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003, p. 119ff.; C. Panaccio, 'Concepts as Similitudes in William of Ockham's Nominalism', in G. Klima – A.W. Hall (eds.), *Proceedings of the Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics*, vol. 4: *Mental Representation*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011, p. 25–31; S. Schierbaum, *Ockham's Assumption of Mental Speech. Thinking in a World of Particulars*, Leiden: Brill, 2014, p. 162ff.

discontinuity of cognition? Before returning to the semantic viewpoint and going into more detail on he notion of object of signification and showing its link with what has been said thus far on the realist vs. representationalist nature of the mental similitude, we need to take another preliminary step regarding concepts and say something about the role played by abstraction in the genesis of concepts.

6. Abstracting and Representing

It is not a mystery that the notion of abstraction is of pivotal importance in Aquinas's theory of knowledge. Nobody doubts this. Aquinas illustrates this notion in many works. But for our purposes, the questions of the first part of the *Summa theologiae* devoted to human being and human knowledge (qq. 75–89) are of particular significance, for there Aquinas introduces some crucial qualifications concerning the nature of the object of intellective cognition. The impression one can get from reading these questions of the *Summa* is that Aquinas continues to explain the mechanisms of intellective cognition as he did in his early Commentary on the *Sentences*, i.e., by invoking basically two poles, namely intelligible species and concepts, on the one hand, and singular extramental things, on the other hand. Intelligible species and concepts are forms or similitudes by virtue of which our intellect cognizes and can return to the extramental things, while extramental things are the ultimate correlates of such mental items, that which has been cognized by our intellect. Aquinas describes the mental similitude as the form of the intellect and says that, for this reason, the intelligible species is not that which is cognized but the similitude of that which is cognized.[45] In this and other similar texts of Aquinas, the expression 'similitude of the cognized thing' (*similitudo rei intellectae*) seems to be understood by Aquinas as 'similitude of the extramental thing that has been cognized' and not as 'similitude of the cognized thing as cognized'.

We have said above that Aquinas denies that an extramental thing can pass from the world to the intellect while remaining one and the same in number. It cannot because it is material and corporeal, while the intellect is immaterial and noncorporeal. We have also noted that Aquinas instead concedes that the nature of a thing can migrate from the world to the intellect. In reality, when we examine what Aquinas says in the *Summa*, we should recognize that Aquinas is willing to deny that a thing's nature can migrate from the world to the intellect while remaining one and the same in number. True, Aquinas at times recognizes that a thing's nature and the nature cognized are formally one and the same. As Aquinas notes in the *Quaestiones de veritate*, for example, their being one and the same is what prevents

[45] See, e.g., *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 85, a. 2, ad 1 (Opera Omnia, V, p. 334): 'Ad primum ergo dicendum quod intellectum est in intelligente per suam similitudinem. Et per hunc modum dicitur quod intellectum in actu est intellectus in actu, inquantum similitudo rei intellectae est forma intellectus; sicut similitudo rei sensibilis est forma sensus in actu. Unde non sequitur quod species intelligibilis abstracta sit id quod actu intelligitur, sed quod sit similitudo eius.'

from speaking of truth in the case of the first operation of the intellect: since the extramental thing's nature and the nature as cognized are one and the same, there cannot be 'adequation' (*adaequatio*) between them, strictly speaking.[46] But the fact that such natures are one and the same does not entail that they are one and the same in number. Since at end of the intellective cognition of a thing we do not find the thing's nature as it is on its own but a similitude of it—as Aquinas often repeats by appealing to the Aristotelian dictum that it is not the stone but the species of stone that is present in the intellect—we may conclude that no extramental thing's nature can actually exist into the intellect, unless it does so under the guise of a similitude. There are places in which Aquinas seems to subscribe to this view, but the way in which such texts have to be understood is not clear.

Consider, for example, Aquinas's explanation of the phrase '(intellectively) cognized in act' (*intellectum in actu*) in *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 85, a. 2, ad 2. Aquinas there suggests understanding such a phrase as designating an item that is composed of two elements, namely the thing that has been cognized and the property of being cognized.[47] Aquinas gives this interpretation in order to avoid considering what is cognized as a mere product of the intellect. So, when I cognize a thing's nature, for instance the human nature, Aquinas's point is that I am dealing with a composition of two things, namely the human nature, which is a mind-independent component, and the property of being cognized, which is mind-dependent. Aquinas provides the same explanation of other similar phrases, such as 'abstract universal' (*universale abstractum*). Similarly, this phrase designates something that is composed of two elements: the nature of the extramental thing and the accidental property of being abstract or being universal. The nature is the underlying subject of the properties of being cognized, being abstract or being universal, which accidentally supervenes on that nature, being the outcome of an operation achieved by the intellect. Through the distinction between the cognized thing and the property of being cognized, Aquinas seems to be confident that, in the ordinary process of intellective cognition of an extramental thing, it is possible to distinguish the contribution made by the world from that provided by the mind.

In clarifying this intuition, Aquinas observes that the nature to which the properties of being cognized, being abstract or being universal are attributed exists in the extramental singulars, while those properties exist in the intellect. How to interpret this claim? Clearly, Aquinas does not want to say that those properties

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[46] See *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 1, a. 3 (Opera Omnia, XXII/I–2, p. 10–11,23–50).

[47] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 85, a. 2, ad 2 (Opera Omnia, V, p. 334): 'Ad secundum dicendum quod, cum dicitur intellectum in actu, duo importantur, scilicet res quae intelligitur et hoc quod est ipsum intelligi. Et similiter cum dicitur universale abstractum, duo intelliguntur, scilicet ipsa natura rei et abstractio seu universalitas. Ipsa igitur natura cui accidit vel intelligi vel abstrahi, vel intentio universalitatis, non est nisi in singularibus; sed hoc ipsum quod est intelligi vel abstrahi, vel intentio universalitatis, est in intellectu.' See also *De ente et essentia*, c. 3; *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 5, a. 9, ad 16; *Expositio in XII libros Metaphysicorum*, VII, lec. 13 (ed. Spiazzi, n. 1570).

can be directly attributed to the thing's nature insofar as it exists in the outer world, since the extramental singulars do not have on their own the properties of being cognized, being abstract or being universal. Aquinas identifies the underlying subject of these properties with the thing's nature *absolutely considered*, which is, as taught by Avicenna, 'indifferent' to the properties of being universal and being singular. Such nature is singular when it is considered as realized in the extramental singulars, while it is universal when it is considered as abstracted and existent in the intellect.

Here a reader of Aquinas should proceed carefully. When the 'indifferent' nature is abstracted from a thing, it can still be understood in two ways, viz., as the potential or the actual subject of the properties of being cognized, being abstract or being universal. Only in the first way should nature be considered the subject of such properties. Not in the second way, since the nature as existent in the intellect is already under those properties. The nature abstracted from singulars only exists in the intellect, but one thing is to state this and a different thing is to consider the nature as precisely existent in the intellect. The distinction between potential and actual subject of those properties is not expressly stated by Aquinas, while it will be used by the subsequent philosophers. Nonetheless, it seems to me that it can be derived from Aquinas's pronouncements in the *Summa*.[48] Aquinas is here suggesting that our intellect comes in contact with an extramental thing's nature by means of an abstract or universal mode of cognizing, but the mode of cognizing and the cognized nature are two independent items. As we shall see better in the third study, our intellect can single out this mode when it reflects on the thing's cognized nature *qua* cognized and compares it either with the extramental things from which it has been abstracted or with other cognized natures. By this act of comparison, our intellect manages to define the above properties, which Aquinas calls 'intentions' (*intentiones*) and which, in the logical tradition after Aquinas, will be specified as 'second intentions'.[49] When I state 'a human being is an animal', for example, I am

[48] I tend to read Aquinas's claim about 'abstract universal' in this way, but the point is controversial, both in Avicenna and in Aquinas. For different assessment of Aquinas's understanding of Avicenna's doctrine of the indifference of essence, very popular in Aquinas's times, see G. Pini, 'Absoluta consideratio naturae. Tommaso d'Aquino e la dottrina avicenniana dell'essenza', *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 15 (2004), p. 387–438; see also, for slightly different interpretations, G. Galluzzo, 'Aquinas on Common Nature and Universals', *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales* 71 (2004), p. 131–71, and F. Amerini, 'Thomas Aquinas, Alexander of Alexandria, and Paul of Venice on the Nature of Essence', *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 15 (2004), p. 541–89. For an introduction to Aquinas's metaphysical thought and his background, see J.F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas. From Finite Being to Uncreated Being*, Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000. On the Arabic influences on Aquinas's account of intelligible species and concepts, see M. Herrera, *Arabic Influences on Aquinas's Doctrine of Intelligible Species*, PhD Dissertation, Marquette University, 2010.

[49] For further details of Aquinas's account of intentions and other bibliographical references, see the third study in this volume. For an introduction to this topic in Aquinas, see F. Amerini, 'Thomas Aquinas and Hervaeus Natalis on First and Second Intentionality', *Topoi* (2021), online publication

predicating a nature on another nature, but when I state 'a human being is a universal', I am predicating an intention on a nature. In the first case, 'human being' refers to the indifferent nature considered as existent in the external reality, while in the second case, it refers to the same indifferent nature but considered as existent in the intellect. If we take this distinction as read, the sense of the Aristotelian dictum, endorsed by Aquinas, that 'senses are about singulars, the intellect about universals' (*sensus est singularium, intellectus universalium*) becomes clearer: the human intellect cognizes the natures of extramental things through an abstract and universal mode of cognition.[50] Aquinas's distinction between underlying nature and intentional properties allows us to draw two conclusions.

First, the cognized nature *qua* cognized overlaps with the concept of the extramental thing's nature. This may be said because both share the properties of being universal, of being the similitude of the thing's nature existing in the external reality and of being existent in the intellect as in their subject. This means that, in Aquinas, there is no room for a third kind of being in between that of the thing existing in the external reality and that of the similitude existing in the intellect.[51] Accordingly, in a first sense, a thing may be said to exist in the intellect only *mediately*, namely under the guise of a similitude, since the similitude is what permits the intellect to cognize a thing and the thing to be present in the intellect.

Second, there is however a second sense according to which the thing can be said to be in the intellect *immediately*, since our intellect is immediately directed to the extramental thing's nature when it cognizes a thing by way of an abstract and universal mode of cognition. The primary and proper object of the intellect is indeed, for Aquinas, the essence or quiddity of extramental things. In this sense, the similitude

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athttps://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11245-021-09748-z (last access on July 30, 2025), to which I refer for any further bibliographical references. On the distinction between first and second intentions, see F. Amerini, 'Intentions, Primary and Secondary', in H. Lagerlund (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy. Philosophy between 500 and 1500*, Dordrecht: Springer, 2011, p. 555–8.

[50] See also Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 86, a. 1, ad 4 (Opera Omnia, V, p. 347): 'Ad quartum dicendum quod virtus superior potest illud quod potest virtus inferior, sed eminentiori modo. Unde id quod cognoscit sensus materialiter et concrete, quod est cognoscere singulare directe, hoc cognoscit intellectus immaterialiter et abstracte, quod est cognoscere universale'. A more explicit clarification of the Aristotelian dictum can be found in the *Quaestio de spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 9, ad 6 (Opera Omnia, XXIV/2, p. 98,456–72): 'Et sicut secundum Platonem ipsa res que intelligitur est extra ipsam animam, ita secundum Aristotilem, quod patet ex hoc quod neuter eorum posuit scientias esse de his quae sunt in intellectu nostro sicut de substantiis; set Plato quidem dixit scientias esse de formis separatis, Aristotiles uero de quiditatibus rerum in eis existentibus. Set ratio uniuersalitatis, que consistit in communitate et abstractione, sequitur solum modum intelligendi in quantum intelligimus abstracte et communiter; secundum Platonem uero sequitur etiam modum existendi formarum abstractarum; et ideo Plato posuit uniuersalia subsistere, Aristotiles autem non. Sic igitur patet quomodo multitudo intellectuum non preiudicat neque uniuersalitati neque communitati neque unitati rei intellecte.'

[51] See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 4, a. 2, ad 3; *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 14, a. 12; q. 89. For an introduction to the different explanations of the mechanisms of abstraction in the times of Aquinas, see A. de Libera, *L'art des généralités. Théorie de l'abstraction*, Paris: Aubier, 1999. For more on Aquinas's account of abstraction, see Smit, 'Aquinas's Abstractionism' and Scarpelli Cory, 'Rethinking Abstractionism'.

precisely gives the way in which a thing can exist in the intellect. All that makes sense of the fact that, for Aquinas, the intellect attaches such intentional properties as being cognized, being abstract and being universal to a thing's nature and not to itself.

Besides evidence from the *Summa theologiae*, there are other texts in which Aquinas puts an emphasis on the fact that the properties of being cognized, being abstract and being universal apply to a thing's nature as it exists in the intellect. Such a realistic approach to abstraction is already present in works such as the Commentary on the *Sentences*, where Aquinas assigns to the intellect the function of *abstracting* essences rather than that of *forming* intelligible species.[52] This way of speaking, however, also recurs in later works such as the *Summa contra Gentiles* and again in the *Summa theologiae*.[53] In such texts, Aquinas allows for the existence of a thing's nature in the intellect, and such a nature is seen as not different in fact from the concept taken as the similitude of the thing's nature.

There are texts of Aquinas that could be more easily accommodated if concepts were understood as cognized things.[54] If the expression 'cognized thing' (*res intellecta*) were understood as meaning not 'thing that is cognized' but 'thing *once* it has been cognized', this would explain well why the cognized thing is sometimes qualified by Aquinas as the form or perfection of the intellect.[55] In some works (like the early *De ente et essentia*), furthermore, Aquinas explicitly says that it is the nature as existent in the intellect that is a similitude of the extramental thing's nature.[56] In these cases a third entity seems to be in play in Aquinas's epistemology, since a concept is not said to be a similitude of the extramental thing itself, but of the thing cognized, so a concept seems first represent a thing's nature as cognized and this latter in turn represents the extramental thing's nature.[57]

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[52] Cf., e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, IV, d. 49, q. 2, a. 1 (text downloaded from www.corpusthomisticum.org, last access on July 30, 2025): 'Sed iste modus non videtur esse sufficiens. Primo, quia quidditas substantiae materialis quam intellectus *abstrahit*, non est unius rationis cum quidditatibus separatarum substantiarum: et ita, per hoc quod intellectus noster *abstrahit* quidditates rerum materialium, et cognoscit eas, non sequitur quod cognoscat quidditatem substantiae separatae, et praecipue divinam essentiam, quae maxime est alterius rationis ab omni quidditate creata' (my emphasis).

[53] See, e.g., *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, c. 76; III, c. 41; and *Summa theologiae*, I^a, q. 88, a. 2.

[54] For a particularly clear statement in this sense, see Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio in XII libros Metaphysicorum*, VII, lec. 13 (ed. Spiazzi, n. 1570), and *Summa theologiae*, I^a, q. 85, a. 2, ad 2 (Opera Omnia, V, p. 334); a. 3, ad 1; I–II, q. 29, a. 6; *Sentencia libri De anima*, I 1 and II 12; and also *De ente et essentia*, c. 2–3.

[55] See, e.g., *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, c. 99; *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 8, a. 1 (see the text below, note 78).

[56] Cf. Thomas de Aquino, *De ente et essentia*, c. 3 (Opera Omnia, XLIII, p. 375,91–6): 'Ipsa enim natura humana in intellectu habet esse abstractum ab omnibus individuantibus; et ideo habet rationem uniformem ad omnia individua, que sunt extra animam, prout equaliter est similitudo omnium et ducens in omnium cognitionem in quantum sunt homines. Et ex hoc quod talem relationem habet ad omnia indiuidua, intellectus adinuenit rationem speciei et attribuit sibi.'

[57] See, e.g., *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 8, a. 7, ad s.c. 8 (Opera Omnia, XXII/2–1, p. 245,422–5): 'obiectum intellectus est quod quid est, id est ipsa essentia rei, ut dicitur in III De anima; et sic similitudo rei quae est in intellectu est similitudo directe essentiae eius'; *Quodlibet* VIII, q. 2, a. 2 (Opera

Although the reading that separates concepts from things' natures as cognized finds some evidence in Aquinas's texts, it is not however certain that it is the correct one. There is in fact an unresolved tension in Aquinas's writings, since he does not elaborate on the relationship a thing's nature, once cognized, bears to the similitude, in virtue of which it can exist in the intellect. This may induce one to think that Aquinas in fact tends to avoid such a separation and take the similitude, understood as similitude-of, as *precisely the mode* in which an extramental thing's nature can be present in the intellect.[58] One of Aquinas's favorite examples may help us to bring to light the difficulty one can have in establishing the nature of this relationship and in some way the impossibility of taking a final position on Aquinas's theory of intellective cognition when we attempt to assess it exclusively from the point of view of the inner structure of a concept.

When I look at a painting of Hercules the Hero (or at that of Mercury, in a different one of Aquinas's examples), I can attach different properties to it, according to the different ways I can consider it. If I explain the painting as a certain kind of thing, I can say that the painting is made up of canvas, that it has a definite shape and color, that it is representing Hercules, and so on. But if I explain the painting as a certain kind of representation, I can say that such a painting *is* Hercules, precisely because it is a painting *of* Hercules.[59] Certainly, I do not mean to say that the Hercules I am looking at in the painting is exactly the same as the Hercules the Hero I may

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Omnia, XXV/1, p. 59,105): 'Unde species intelligibilis est similitudo ipsius essencie rei.' See also *Summa contra Gentiles*, IV, c. 11; *Expositio in XII libros Metaphysicorum*, VII, lec. 11; and especially Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 2, q. 1, a. 3; d. 39, q. 2, a. 2 (ed. Mandonnet, I, p. 931): 'intellectus attribuit intentionem universalitatis naturae apprehensae, quam non habet in rebus extra animam'; II, d. 3, q. 3, a. 2, ad 1; *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 7, a. 6 (ed. Pession, p. 201): 'Nec tamen intellectus est falsus: quia ea quorum sunt istae rationes, scilicet genus et species, non attribuit rebus secundum quod sunt extra animam, sed solum secundum quod sunt in intellectu. Ex hoc enim quod intellectus in se ipsum reflectitur, sicut intelligit res existentes extra animam, ita intelligit eas esse intellectas: et sic, sicut est quaedam conceptio intellectus vel ratio, cui respondet res ipsa quae est extra animam, ita est quaedam conceptio vel ratio, cui respondet res intellecta secundum quod huiusmodi; sicut rationi hominis vel conceptioni hominis respondet res extra animam, rationi vero vel conceptioni generis aut speciei, respondet solum res intellecta.' Also *Sentencia libri De anima*, II 12. Texts like these open the way to more 'internalist' interpretations of Aquinas's account of representation. On this, see, e.g., O'Callaghan, *Thomistic Realism and the Linguistic Turn*, p. 237ff. I shall return to this point in the Conclusion of this study.

58 See, e.g., *Quaestiones de virtutibus*, q. 2, a. 3, ad 13.

59 As Aquinas occasionally recognizes, representing or picturing states an asymmetrical relation. This means that the painting and the painted thing do not share exactly the same form. Only the painting has the form of the painted thing, for this latter exerts a causal action on the former, but the painted thing does not have the form of the painting. Cf., e.g., *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 2, a. 3; q. 23, a. 7, ad 11; but especially q. 4, a. 4, ad 2 (Opera Omnia, XXII/1–2, p. 128–9,130–40): 'Ad secundum dicendum quod Anselmus accipit stricte nomen similitudinis, sicut et Dionysius in IX cap. De divinis nominibus ubi dicit quod in aeque ordinatis ad invicem recipimus similitudinis reciprocationem, ut scilicet unum dicatur alteri simile et e converso; sed in his quae se habent per modum causae et causati, non invenitur proprie loquendo reciprocatio similitudinis: dicimus enim quod imago Herculis similatur Herculi sed non e converso.' For Aquinas, thus, '*a* is a similitude of *b*' does not entail '*a* and *b* share the same form', in the case that *b* is the cause of *a*.

encounter in the world. The reason is that the painting of Hercules is something that only *stands for* the real live Hercules, since it has been intentionally painted in order to *refer to* Hercules the Hero. But it is quite clear that I may consider the painted Hercules as a *true* picture of the real live Hercules, i.e., as something that *truly takes the place of* the real live Hercules in the painting of him. In this case, the real live Hercules is different from the painting of Hercules, but probably the same as the painted Hercules.[60] Even conceding there are differences between the painted Hercules and the real live Hercules, I may attach to the painting of Hercules, taken not in itself (i.e., as a certain canvas with colors and figures), but as painting-of (i.e., as a representation of Hercules the Hero), some properties I would attach to the flesh-and-bones Hercules, namely the essential properties of Hercules the Hero such as being a human being, being rational and the like.[61]

The example of the painting of Hercules (or Mercury) shows that the representational power of a painting can be explained by three items (i.e., a painting on canvas, the painted Hercules, and the real live Hercules) as well as by only two (i.e., the painting of Hercules/the painted Hercules and the real live Hercules), one of which (i.e., the painting of Hercules/the painted Hercules) may be understood in two ways, i.e., as a canvas made so-and-so and as a painting of the real live Hercules. As it happens, the same could be said in the case of intelligible species or concepts.

Someone could contest this parallel. First of all, unlike the painting of Hercules, an intelligible species or a concept such as that of human being does not have a

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[60] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 22, a. 14 (Opera Omnia, XXII/3–1, p. 647,64–77): 'Omnia autem quae sunt ad invicem ordinata, sunt quidem plura in quantum sunt res quaedam per se consideratae, sunt vero unum in ordine quo ad invicem ordinantur; et ideo actus animae qui fertur in ea secundum quod sunt ad invicem ordinata est unus; actus vero animae qui fertur in ea secundum quod sunt in se considerata est multiplex: sicut patet in consideratione statuae Mercurii, quam si aliquis consideret ut est quaedam res, erit alia consideratio eius et consideratio Mercurii cuius statua est imago; si autem consideretur statua ut imago Mercurii, erit idem modus considerationis in statuam et in Mercurium.'

[61] See Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, I 3 (Opera Omnia, I*1, p. 15,55–62): 'Set dicendum est quod, cum conceptiones intellectus sint similitudines rerum, ea que circa intellectum sunt dupliciter considerari et nominari possunt: uno modo secundum se, alio modo secundum considerationes rerum quarum sunt similitudines; sicut ymago Herculis secundum se quidem dicitur et est cuprum, in quantum autem est similitudo Herculis nominatur homo.' Also see *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 27, q. 2, a. 3 (ed. Mandonnet, I, p. 663): 'quamvis aliquid sit species vel similitudo alterius, non tamen oportet quod semper quandocumque convertitur in speciem, convertatur in illud cujus est species vel similitudo; quia in speciem vel in imaginem contingit fieri conversionem dupliciter: vel secundum quod est species talis rei, et tunc est eadem conversio in rem et speciem rei; vel in speciem secundum quod est res quaedam; et sic non oportet quod eadem conversione convertatur quis per intellectum in speciem rei et in rem; sicut quando aliquis considerat imaginem inquantum est corpus lapideum, et inquantum est similitudo Socratis vel Platonis'; d. 36, q. 1, a. 3, ad 3 (ed. Mandonnet, I, p. 837): 'Ad tertium dicendum, quod similitudo rei quae est in anima, dupliciter consideratur: vel secundum quod est similitudo rei, et sic nihil attribuitur sibi nisi quod in re invenitur: aut secundum esse quod habet in anima, et sic attribuitur sibi intelligibilitas vel universalitas; sicut etiam patet in imagine corporali, cui convenit esse lapideum ex parte ejus in quo est, et non ex parte ejus cujus est similitudo.' For other details on the notion of image in Aquinas, see R. Imbach – F.-X. Putallaz, 'Notes sur l'usage du terme imago chez Thomas d'Aquin', *Micrologus* 5 (1997), p. 69–88.

distinct referent in the extramental world, since no universal human being as such can exist in the external reality. In this case, human being is not different from the similitude of human being, for it can exist only by virtue of such a similitude. Consequently, the identification between a similitude and the thing to which the similitude refers should be limited to cases in which universal similitudes are concerned. Second, while from the cognition of the painting of Hercules I can move to the immediate cognition of Hercules, this does not hold in the case of the cognition of human being.[62] Finally, unlike the painting, an intelligible species or a concept does not have specific properties of its own except, probably, for those connected to its cognitive function.

I think that in spite of these possible counterarguments someone could still maintain the similarity between an intelligible species and a painting.[63] Like pictorial representations, intellective cognition involves two sides, viz., that of things that are cognized and that of the intellect cognizing them. In order for a thing to be cognized, Aquinas requires on the side of the intellect an item that, first, enables the thing to be cognized by the intellect, and second, permits the intellect to cognize the thing. Intelligible species play such a connecting role in intellective cognition. They allow things to be present in the intellect, while allowing the intellect to cognize things. Consider again the example of Hercules. When I turn my attention to Hercules in the flesh, I can abstract the nature of Hercules by removing from him all the properties depending on his individual matter. This act of abstraction is none other than an act of selective consideration of Hercules's features. What remains are Hercules's essential properties, which are imported into my intellect thanks to the intelligible species. Strictly speaking, the intelligible species *is not* the

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[62] See Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 8, a. 5 (Opera Omnia, XXII/2–1, p. 235–6,68–116): 'Dicendum quod omnis cognitio est per assimilationem scientis ad scitum […]. Dupliciter igitur aliquid alicui similatur: uno modo ex hoc quod similitudinem eius immediate ab eo accipit in se, alio modo ex hoc quod assimilatur alicui quod est simile ei; et sic etiam dupliciter fit cognitio: cognoscimus enim per visum Socratem in quantum visus noster assimilatur ipsi Socrati, et etiam in quantum assimilatur imagini Socratis; et utraque istarum assimilationum sufficit ad cognoscendum Socratem […]. Et similiter est in intellectu, quia ex forma generis et differentiae comprehensis format quidditatem speciei. In huiusmodi igitur potentiis quando una res cognoscitur per similitudinem alterius rei, quandoque contingit quod praeter similitudinem illam formatur alia species, quae est rei immediate; sicut ex statua Herculis visa potest formare quamdam aliam similitudinem quae sit ipsius Herculis immediate; sed haec cognitio iam est alia ab illa qua cognoscebam Herculem in statua sua: si enim esset eadem, tunc oporteret hoc accidere in qualibet alia potentia, quod manifeste falsum apparet; cum enim visus exterior videt Herculem in statua sua, non fit cognitio per aliquam aliam similitudinem quam per similitudinem statuae.'

[63] Claude Panaccio ('Aquinas on Intellectual Representation', in D. Perler (ed.), *Ancient and Medieval Theories of Intentionality*, Leiden: Brill, 2001, p. 185–201, p. 192–6) has given some plausible reasons for excluding that Aquinas grants a strict identity between an (external) nature and its mental representation (be it an intelligible species or a concept). The basic argument is that, for Aquinas, the nature is the proper object of intellective cognition, while a mental representation is only a means of cognition. Nonetheless I think that a weaker identity between a thing's nature and its mental similitude may be granted.

same as Hercules's nature or essence, but it is that by means of which his nature can be present in the intellect. All the same, since the intelligible species is not a similitude of Hercules but of his nature, we can say that the intelligible species *in some way is* the same as Hercules's nature, for Hercules's nature can be brought out only by virtue of an intelligible species. There is however a difference between a painting and an intelligible species. Unlike a painting, an intelligible species does not serve a strong pictorial function, since there is nothing separate correlated to it in the extramental world; but like a painting, an intelligible species has to serve the function of *replacing* another thing in a different context, viz., an extramental thing's nature in the intellect. The replacement, in this qualified sense, can be said to be identical with the thing that has been replaced.[64] We shall return later to the qualified identification between the similitude and the thing to which the similitude refers. It is now time to close this digression on abstraction and representation and return to the semantics of names. We need to prove that semantics can help us to take a position concerning the relationship that concepts have with the things cognized through them.

7. The Twofold Status of the Object of Signification

According to what has been said in the previous section, one can have the impression that the disagreement among scholars in reconstructing Aquinas's views on the nature of intelligible species for a large part depends on the two ways in which the expression 'similitude of a cognized thing' (*similitudo rei intellectae*) may be understood. For the supporter of the realist interpretation, it is the nature itself of an extramental thing that, once cognized, becomes a similitude of the extra-

[64] Dominik Perler ('Essentialism and Direct Realism. Some Late Medieval Perspectives', *Topoi* 19 (2000), p. 111–22, p. 114–5) has opportunely recalled that 'similitude' (*similitudo*) is a technical term in Aquinas, which should be understood in a causal rather than in a strongly pictorial or representational fashion (see, e.g., *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 2, a. 14; q. 3, a. 4; *Summa theologiae*, I^a, 1, q. 4, a. 3). Nonetheless it should also be noted that, for Aquinas, the similitude of a thing is not the thing itself but something that takes the place of it (see *Summa contra Gentiles*, IV, c. 11) and that, as seen, Aquinas at times explains the notion of similitude by way of the more primitive notion of representation. A clear text for this point is *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 2, a. 3, ad 9 (Opera Omnia, XXII/1–2, p. 53,430–43): 'Ad nonum dicendum quod similitudo aliquorum duorum ad invicem potest dupliciter attendi: uno modo secundum convenientiam in natura, et talis similitudo non requiritur inter cognoscens et cognitum, immo videmus quandoque quod, quanto talis similitudo est minor tanto cognitio est perspicacior, sicut minor est similitudo similitudinis quae est in intellectu ad lapidem quam illius quae est in sensu cum sit magis a materia remota, et tamen intellectus perspicacius cognoscit quam sensus; alio modo quantum ad repraesentationem, et haec similitudo requiritur cognoscentis ad cognitum.' In general, Aquinas distinguishes the thing to which the similitude refers from the similitude itself in order to guarantee the existence of similitudes of non-present or non-existent, or even infinite in number, things (see, e.g., *Summa theologiae*, I^a, q. 17, a. 2, ad 2; q. 14, a. 12; also *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 20, a. 4, ad 1). As has been said, it is instead doubtful that Aquinas also meant to distinguish the intelligible species from the thing's nature *qua* cognized, for a nature *qua* cognized seems to be none other than the extramental thing's nature according to an intelligible or mental mode of existence. This mode of existence is precisely that provided by a mental similitude such as an intelligible species.

mental thing's nature. For the supporter of the representationalist interpretation, by contrast, the mental similitude is something that replaces in the intellect the extramental thing's nature. The representationalist interpretation is also open to a twofold understanding: it can be, so to speak, externalist or internalist according to whether the replaced item is understood to refer to the thing's nature as extramentally existent or to the thing's nature as cognized.

As has already been mentioned (and shall be argued better below), these interpretations can be reconciled to a certain degree. I side with representationalists in that I assume that, for Aquinas, the intelligible species is a replacement of the extramental thing's nature. There is an insurmountable gap between the mind and the world. Things cannot enter into direct contact with our intellect, nor be present as such in the intellect. Our intellect is closed in itself and detached from the world; the process of intellective cognition is discontinuous in some relevant sense, for Aquinas. But I also side with realists in that I assume that such a replacement precisely indicates, in Aquinas, the mode in which an extramental thing's nature may exist in the intellect. In addition, such a replacement is intentional in character, because when I think of something through some mental similitude, my intellect immediately refers to the thing cognized, without lingering on the similitude itself (a point to which I shall return in the Conclusion of this study). At this point, it is time to consider how semantics may help us to clarify this picture and to reach the main purpose of this study, namely, to prove that representationalism and direct realism can be reconciled to a certain degree.

Apart from differences in context or accent, upon which I do not want to dwell here, in his works Aquinas often repeats that names are signs of what has been cognized about things and this is a similitude of things.[65] But since Aquinas also holds that names signify the natures of things,[66] one is induced to conclude that the similitudes of things are the natures of things. This conclusion should not be understood in the sense that the similitudes of things are the true natures of the things, since it would be nonsensical to say that what a stone is in its nature is just the similitude of a stone. The right sense is that the similitudes of things are the way in which extramental things' natures can be present in the intellect. This sense explains why Aquinas moves from saying that names signify the natures of things to saying that names signify the similitudes of things, and vice versa, without seeing any problem in this shift. We have already remembered Aquinas's interpretation

[65] See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Quodlibet* IV, q. 9, a. 2; *Summa theologiae* I[a], q. 13, a. 1 (Opera Omnia, IV, p. 139): 'Respondeo dicendum quod, secundum Philosophum, voces sunt signa intellectuum, et intellectus sunt rerum similitudines. Et sic patet quod voces referuntur ad res significandas, mediante conceptione intellectus. Secundum igitur quod aliquid a nobis intellectu cognosci potest, sic a nobis potest nominari'; *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, I 2.

[66] See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Sentencia libri De anima* II 12 (Opera Omnia, XLV/1, p. 116,145–9): 'ipse autem nature quibus accidit intentio uniuersalitatis, sunt in rebus. Et propter hoc nomina communia significancia naturas ipsas predicantur de indiuiduis.'

of Boethius's commentary on the opening lines of Aristotle's *De interpretatione*, in support of this view.[67] The reason behind Aquinas's apparently inconsistent speech is that names are introduced into a spoken or written language to signify a certain kind of passions of the soul, that is, concepts, and in most cases names are imposed to signify concepts about things, hence to signify things. We shall enter into the details of Aquinas's account of the semantics of names in the next section, but this brief observation about the twofold status of the object of signification of common names already reveals the unavoidable overlap of things' natures and similitudes of things. It is clear that the fact that a mental similitude can be described both as a similitude of an extramental thing's nature and as the extramental thing's nature itself as considered according to its mental mode of existence as similitude may force the interpreter to stress the mental or alternatively the real status of the thing signified by a name. But on the account of Aquinas's texts, such an alternative misses the point.

Yet someone could object that the identification between mental similitudes and things' natures, even if it were conceded, should be limited in fact to the early works of Aquinas because, as said, Aquinas's position evolves over time. It is known that in the Commentary on the *Sentences* (1254–1256), when examining the nature of divine Word, Aquinas identifies the concept (*conceptio intellectus*) with either the operation of cognizing (*intelligere*) or the cognized species (*species intellecta*), which is called the species of the cognized thing (*species rei intellectae*) and 'the means of knowledge' (*medium cognoscendi*).[68] There are also places in the Commentary on the *Sentences* where Aquinas states that an intelligible species rather than an extramental thing's nature is the proper object of the intellect, while being at the same time that by means of which the intellect can cognize an extramental thing's nature.[69] More explicitly, in his *Quodlibet* VIII, which dates to around the same period as his Commentary on the *Sentences* (1256), Aquinas states that an extramental

[67] See above, § 2.

[68] See Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 27, q. 2, a. 2, q.la 1 (ed. Mandonnet, I, p. 658): 'si inquiratur quid sit verbum quo aliquis sibi loquitur, non invenitur esse nisi conceptio intellectus. Conceptio autem intellectus est vel operatio ipsa quae est intelligere, vel species intellecta. Unde oportet quod verbum vel dicatur ipsa operatio intelligendi, vel ipsa species quae est similitudo rei intellectae; et sine utroque istorum non potest quis intelligere […]. Et ideo impossibile est quod accipiendo hoc modo verbum aliquis intelligat nisi verbo intellectus sui, quod sit vel operatio ejus, vel ratio operationis ad eam, sicut medium cognoscendi se habens, quae est species rei intellectae.'

[69] See Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, III, d. 31, q. 2, a. 4 (ed. Moos, III, p. 998): 'Ad quintum dicendum, quod ille modus cognoscendi accidit scientiae ex statu ejus in quo est. Non enim phantasma est objectum propinquum et proprium intellectus, cum sit intelligibile in potentia, non in actu; sed species intellecta est per se objectum ejus.' Also see *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 35, q. 1, a. 2 (ed. Mandonnet, I, p. 814): 'intellectum primum est ipsa rei similitudo, quae est in intellectu; et est intellectum secundum quod est ipsa res, quae per similitudinem illam intelligitur.' To be precise, in the first text above Aquinas speaks of 'intellected species' (*species intellecta*) and not of 'intelligible species' (*species intelligibilis*). It is debated whether the two phrases amount to the same or not. In the light of the second text mentioned above, the two phrases could be taken as equivalent when speaking of the first object of the intellect.

thing's nature *qua* cognized, i.e., according to its intelligible being (*secundum esse intelligibile*), is identical with the intelligible species in some way (*aliquo modo*).[70] In light of such pronouncements, it might be difficult to regard Aquinas, at least in his early works, as not committed to a strong form of representationalism in epistemology. As to Aquinas's semantics, the identification between intelligible species and cognized natures could pave the way for affirming that names signify primarily intelligible species, insofar as they have been imposed to signify primarily things' natures.

I think, though, that this commitment needs to be nuanced. In the Commentary on the *Sentences,* as noted, Aquinas already distinguishes the psychological occurrence of an intelligible species from the intelligible species understood as a similitude of something else. Accordingly, names are said to signify intelligible species or even 'reasons' (*rationes*) taken in the second way;[71] intelligible species are similitudes of things that are extramentally founded and provided with a complete being in the external reality.[72] From this point of view, when one tackles the identification between intelligible species and cognized natures stated in *Quodlibet* VIII, one may note that this identification can be read in both ways, so it may support a representationalist as well as a realist understanding of intellective cognition. So the identification could also induce someone to hold that in the early works Aquinas is committed to a form of realism in epistemology rather than of representationalism. We thus need to qualify such an identification. In this respect, one may note that Aquinas himself presents it in a qualified way ('in some way', *quodam modo*),[73] and this shows that an intelligible species and a thing's nature do not amount, for him,

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[70] See Thomas Aquinas, *Quodlibet* VIII, q. 2, a. 2 (Opera Omnia, XXV/1, p. 59,101–13): 'species que sunt in sensu uel ymaginatione non representant naturam rei, set accidencia eius tantum, sicut statua representat hominem quantum ad accidentalia. Set intellectus cognoscit ipsam naturam et substanciam rei, unde species intelligibilis est similitudo ipsius essencie rei et est *quodam modo* ipsa quidditas et natura rei secundum esse intelligibile, non secundum esse naturale, prout est in rebus. Et ideo omnia que non cadunt sub sensu et imaginatione set sub solo intellectu cognoscuntur per hoc quod essencie uel quiditates eorum sunt *aliquo modo* in intellectu' (my emphasis). See also *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 27, q. 2, a. 2, q.la 1 (see above, note 68); *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, c. 99; *Quodlibet* VII, q. 1, a. 2.

[71] See, e.g., *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 2, q. 1, a. 3 (ed. Mandonnet, I, p. 66–7).

[72] See *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 2, q. 1, a. 3 (ed. Mandonnet, I, p. 66–7): 'Unde sciendum, quod ipsa conceptio intellectus tripliciter se habet ad rem quae est extra animam. Aliquando enim hoc quod intellectus concipit, est similitudo rei existentis extra animam, sicut hoc quod concipitur de hoc nomine "homo"; et talis conceptio intellectus habet fundamentum in re immediate, inquantum res ipsa, ex sua conformitate ad intellectum, facit quod intellectus sit verus, et quod nomen significans illum intellectum proprie de re dicatur. […] Unde patet secundum, scilicet quod ratio dicitur esse in re, inquantum significatum nominis, cui accidit esse rationem, est in re; et hoc contingit proprie quando conceptio intellectus est similitudo rei'; d. 19, q. 5, a. 1 (ed. Mandonnet, I, p. 486): 'Respondeo dicendum, quod eorum quae significantur nominibus, invenitur triplex diversitas. Quaedam enim sunt quae secundum esse totum completum sunt extra animam; et hujusmodi sunt entia completa, sicut homo et lapis.' Also see *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 22, q. 1, a. 1; d. 34, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2.

[73] For emphasis on this qualification, see Panaccio, 'Aquinas on Intellectual Representation', p. 193.

to exactly the same entity, although an extramental thing's nature as cognized and the intelligible species could be considered one and the same entity.

To put it more clearly, Aquinas's qualification may be understood in two ways. According to the first, the sentence would mean that the intelligible species is the similitude of a thing's essence and the essence itself if this latter is taken according to its intelligible being and not according to its natural being. Aquinas would be qualifying the mode of existence of a thing's nature to prevent the misunderstanding of believing that the intelligible species of a thing is the essence itself of that thing according to its natural being. Clearly, the intelligible species of human being is not the essence of Socrates. In the second way of understanding the qualification, the sentence would mean that the intelligible species is the similitude of a thing's essence and in some way the essence itself according to its intelligible being, namely that even according to the intelligible being of the thing's essence, the similitude should not be confused with the thing's essence. Regardless of which understanding of the sentence one is disposed to take, one thing seems clear, namely: saying that the intelligible species is *in some way* the same as the extramental thing's essence according to its intelligible being amounts to saying that the intelligible being of the intelligible species says *precisely the way* in which the extramental thing's essence can exist in the intellect. My interpretation is corroborated by the second occurrence of the qualification ('in a certain way', *aliquo modo*) in the text from *Quodlibet* VIII: Aquinas says that the essences exist in a certain way in the intellect. In the positive sense, the intelligible species says exactly what is this way, namely that of being the similitude of a thing's essence. In the negative sense, the qualification excludes the possibility that one and the same essence can exist now outside and then inside the intellect, once with natural being and another with intelligible being. A thing's essence can exist as such only in the external reality; nonetheless, it may exist in the intellect under the guise of an intelligible species. Intelligible species replace in the intellect the things' essences, but at the same time they express the only possible way in which things' essences can exist in the intellect. Representationalism and direct realism tend to collapse.

In any case, works such as the Commentary on the *Sentences* or *Quodlibet* VIII display a first stage in Aquinas's speculation on the intelligible species. In the Commentary on the *Sentences* there are already hints of the emergence of a distinction between a thing's essence and its intelligible species. As a matter of fact, Aquinas holds that the essence of extramental things is the proper object of the intellect and the intelligible species are only that in virtue of which such natures are cognized.[74]

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[74] See Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, II, d. 13, q. 1, a. 3; IV, d. 49, q. 2, a. 7, ad 6 (text downloaded from www.corpusthomisticum.org, last access on July 30, 2025): 'Constat enim quod medium quo intelligitur lapis est species ejus in anima, quae non est ipsa lapidis essentia; sed per similitudinem lapidis pervenitur ad cognoscendam ipsam essentiam lapidis; quia objectum intellectus est quid, idest rei essentia, seu quidditas'; III, d. 23, q. 1, a. 2 (ed. Moos, III, p. 701): 'Cognitio

There are also texts from other works, belonging to different stages of his career, in which Aquinas contrasts intelligible species with essences insofar as intelligible species can be numerically multiplied according to the numerical multiplicity of human intellects, while a thing's essence remains one and the same for all intellects.[75] According to these and similar texts, one may understand why Aquinas excludes the possibility that names signify intelligible species or 'reasons' (*rationes*) taken as psychological tokens that exist in the intellect as in their subject. The reason is that, since the beginning of his career, Aquinas accepts the principle that we can signify only that which we can cognize and we signify something only in the way we cognize it. But we first cognize things. Therefore, we first impose names to signify things. Nevertheless, since we cognize things by way of mental similitudes, we signify things by way of mental similitudes. As a result, each formulation stating that a similitude is the primary or proper object of cognition or signification should be understood as a statement concerning the similitude understood as *a similitude of* things. Understood in this way, stating that a similitude is the primary or proper object of cognition or signification amounts to stating that the thing to which the similitude refers is the primary or proper object of cognition or signification.

The early works provide a first conceptual framework for the semantics of names that, while not yet being particularly sophisticated, nonetheless is quite close to that which finds in Aquinas's late works. At this stage, the intelligible species seems to play the twofold role of means and end-product of cognition, so that concepts or 'reasons' (*rationes*) are not yet neatly distinguished from the intelligible species. The exact job of intelligible species in knowledge, however, remains not completely clarified in the Commentary on the *Sentences* and a similar lack of clarity about concepts recurs in the *Quaestiones de veritate* (1256–1259), where concepts are treated simply as something in between the cognizing subject and the cognized thing: they are both that which is cognized and that through which a thing is cognized.[76]

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autem de re secundum id quod est, potest dupliciter haberi; scilicet dum cognoscitur quid est, et an est. Quid autem res est cognoscitur, dum ipsius quidditas comprehenditur […] est proprium objectum intellectus, ut dicitur in III *De anima*.' The same distinction will be repeated in other later works: *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, c. 46; *Sentencia libri De anima*, III 8; *Compendium theologiae*, I, c. 85; and *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 76, a. 2, ad 4 (Opera Omnia, V, p. 217): 'Ad quartum dicendum quod, sive intellectus sit unus sive plures, id quod intelligitur est unum. Id enim quod intelligitur non est in intellectu secundum se, sed secundum suam similitudinem, lapis enim non est in anima, sed species lapidis, ut dicitur in III *De anima*. Et tamen lapis est id quod intelligitur, non autem species lapidis, nisi per reflexionem intellectus supra seipsum, alioquin scientiae non essent de rebus, sed de speciebus intelligibilibus.' To my mind, these texts are not in conflict with what Aquinas says in the Commentary on the *Sentences*, I, d. 35, q. 1, a. 2, that the intelligible species is that which is cognized primarily, the extramental thing that which is cognized secondarily (see above, note 69). In that place, Aquinas is illustrating the process of recognition of a thing, which obtains through a reflection of the intellect over itself. He also proves that this is especially true in the case of God, who knows any other thing through cognizing Himself.

[75] See, e.g., *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, II, d. 17, q. 2, a. 1, ad 3; then *De unitate intellectus*, c. 3; *Compendium theologiae*, I, c. 85.

[76] See, e.g., *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 2, a. 6; q. 4, a. 2, ad 3 (Opera Omnia, XXII/1–2, p. 124,165–172): 'Ad tertium dicendum quod conceptio intellectus est media inter intellectum et rem intellectam

Afterwards, at least from the first book of the *Summa contra Gentiles* (1259–1260) onward, Aquinas distinguishes intelligible species and concepts, attributing to the former only the role of principle or starting-point of the intellective process and to the latter that of end-product. Concepts are thus described as the terms of the acts of intellective cognition.[77]

This distinction is clearly reproposed in a famous passage in *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 8, a. 1 (1265–1266).[78] There, Aquinas portrays a concept as what achieves (*terminus*) an act of cognition activated by an intelligible species and as what is

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quia ea mediante operatio intellectus pertingit ad rem: et ideo conceptio intellectus non solum est id quod intellectum est sed etiam id quo res intelligitur, ut sic id quod intelligitur possit dici et res ipsa et conceptio intellectus'; q. 3, a. 1, ad 2 (Opera Omnia, XXII/1–2, p. 100–1,275–281): 'Ad secundum dicendum quod ad speciem quae est medium cognoscendi duo requiruntur, scilicet repraesentatio rei cognitae quae competit ei secundum propinquitatem ad cognoscibile, et esse spirituale vel immateriale quod ei competit secundum quod habet esse in cognoscente.' Also see *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 27, q. 2, a. 2, q.la 1.

77 See *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, c. 53 (Opera Omnia, XIII, p. 150–1): 'Haec autem intentio intellecta, cum sit quasi terminus intelligibilis operationis, est aliud a specie intelligibili quae facit intellectum in actu, quam oportet considerari ut intelligibilis operationis principium'. The account of concepts as terms of the acts of intellective cognition is however formulated already in the *Quaestiones de veritate*. See, e.g., *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 4, a. 2.

78 Given its importance also for what I shall say on Hervaeus in the second study, I quote here the entire response of Aquinas: 'Quae quidem conceptio a tribus praedictis differt. (1) A re quidem intellecta, quia res intellecta est interdum extra intellectum, conceptio autem intellectus non est nisi in intellectu; et iterum conceptio intellectus ordinatur ad rem intellectam sicut ad finem: propter hoc enim intellectus conceptionem rei in se format ut rem intellectam cognoscat. (2) Differt autem a specie intelligibili: nam species intelligibilis, qua fit intellectus in actu, consideratur ut principium actionis intellectus, cum omne agens agat secundum quod est in actu; actu autem fit per aliquam formam, quam oportet esse actionis principium. (3) Differt autem ab actione intellectus: quia *praedicta conceptio consideratur ut terminus actionis, et quasi quoddam per ipsam constitutum*. Intellectus enim sua actione format rei definitionem, vel etiam propositionem affirmativam seu negativam. Haec autem conceptio intellectus in nobis proprie verbum dicitur: hoc enim est quod verbo exteriori significatur: vox enim exterior neque significat ipsum intellectum, neque speciem intelligibilem, neque actum intellectus, sed intellectus conceptionem qua mediante refertur ad rem. (4) Huiusmodi ergo conceptio, sive verbum, qua intellectus noster intelligit rem aliam a se, ab alio exoritur, et aliud repraesentat. Oritur quidem ab intellectu per suum actum; est vero similitudo rei intellectae. Cum vero intellectus seipsum intelligit, verbum praedictum, sive conceptio, eiusdem est propago et similitudo, scilicet intellectus seipsum intelligentis. Et hoc ideo contingit, quia effectus similatur causae secundum suam formam: forma autem intellectus est res intellecta. Et ideo verbum quod oritur ab intellectu, est similitudo rei intellectae, sive sit idem quod intellectus, sive aliud. (5) Huiusmodi autem verbum nostri intellectus, est quidem extrinsecum ab esse ipsius intellectus (non enim est de essentia, sed est quasi passio ipsius), *non tamen est extrinsecum ab ipso intelligere intellectus*, cum ipsum intelligere compleri non possit sine verbo praedicto. Si ergo aliquis intellectus sit cuius intelligere sit suum esse, oportebit quod illud verbum non sit extrinsecum ab esse ipsius intellectus, sicut nec ab intelligere' (Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 8, a. 1 (ed. Pession, p. 215); numbers inserted and emphasis are mine). See also *Summa contra Gentiles*, IV, c. 11. Note however that in the late *Lectura super Iohannem* (I, lec. 1), which probably dates to 1270–2, Aquinas tends to repropose, quite surprisingly at first, the same threefold distinction occurring in the Commentary on the *Sentences*: 'Si ergo volumus scire quid est interius verbum mentis, videamus quid significat quod exteriori voce profertur. In intellectu autem nostro sunt tria: scilicet ipsa potentia intellectus; species rei intellectae, quae est forma eius, se habens ad ipsum intellectum, sicut species coloris ad pupillam; et, tertio, ipsa operatio intellectus quae est intelligere' (ed. Cai, p. 7).

quasi-constituted (*quasi … constitutum*) by such an act.[79] At the same time, it is said to be what is formed by the intellect in order to cognize extramental things, which are the primary target of our acts of intellective cognition. Specifically, the intellect produces a concept by reflecting upon the cognized thing, which is present in the intellect thanks to an intelligible species and which is said to be the form of the intellect.[80] The argument for this final claim is that since every effect is assimilated to its cause according to the form of the cause, it follows that a concept is assimilated to the intellect according the form of the intellect. This explains why a concept is said to be the similitude of the cognized thing. Finally, Aquinas says that a concept is external to the essence of the intellect, since it is a quasi-passion (*quasi passio*) of the intellect, although it plays the role of essential achievement of any cognitive act fulfilled by the intellect.[81]

The distinction between intelligible species and concepts is repeated in *Quodlibet* V, q. 5, a. 2, which dates to around 1265–1267, and regularly employed in the

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[79] See the previous note, point 3. As is clear, the two characterizations are not entirely equivalent to each other. Insofar as we describe a concept as something 'quasi-constituted' (*quasi … constitutum*), we are understanding it as something different from and posterior to the action of cognizing, namely as something remaining once the action of cognizing is over. But insofar we describe it as a 'term' (*terminus*), we are understanding it as the action of cognizing itself taken as completely and fully achieved. On the other hand, the second characterization could be read simply in an epexegetic way. In this case, the term '*quasi*' becomes significant. A concept can be explained as the complete realization of an action of cognizing, as if the action fully achieved were something different from the same action as not yet achieved. This makes sense of what Aquinas afterwards says (see the previous note, point 5), that the concept is not something essentially external to the action of cognizing (*non tamen extrinsecum ab ipso intelligere intellectus*), although something extrinsic to the nature of intellect. This interpretation makes fully compatible, and so only apparently conflicting, the two accounts of intellective cognition that one can find in Aquinas, namely that of intellective cognition as a self-contained action that does not produce anything and that of intellective cognition as a self-contained action that produces concepts. For emphasis on the two accounts, see Pini, 'Two Models of Thinking', p. 18ff. On the distinction between concepts and intelligible species, see the previous note, point 2.

[80] See note 78, point 4. As far as I know, this is the only place where Aquinas says that the cognized thing is the form of the intellect. Clearly, if the expression 'cognized thing' (*res intellecta*) has here the same meaning as that which Aquinas attached to it some lines before (when distinguishing it from the concept: see note 78, point 1), Aquinas would be saying that an extramental thing (or the form of an extramental thing) is the form of the intellect. It hardly seems likely that such a strong realist interpretation is the right one. Probably Aquinas means to say, more blandly, that the thing which is cognized by means of an intelligible species becomes the form of the intellect. If this is the sense of Aquinas's claim, it is but an unexpressed way of saying that the intelligible species of an extramental thing or, perhaps, the thing insofar as it is cognized by means of an intelligible species is the form of the intellect. In some other texts belonging to the same period, Aquinas unequivocally says that it is the similitude of the cognized thing to play the role of the form of the intellect (see, e.g., *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 85, a. 2, ad 1; *Lectura super Iohannem*, I, lec. 1: see the text above, in note 78).

[81] The phrase '*quasi passio*' could be understood in two ways. It could emphasize that the nature of the intellect is that of being absolutely impassible (see, e.g., *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, IV, d. 33, q. 3, a. 1, ad 4), or, alternatively, that the concept is not something undergone by the intellect, but only something happening to it. In general, the term '*quasi*' seems to mean here that such an item can be explained as a passion, although it does not work really as a passion. It is just a way of saying that it does not belong to the essence of the intellect.

Summa theologiae[82] and in the late Commentaries on Aristotle's works. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that in all these writings both the concept and the intelligible species, progressively distinguished from each other, are called similitudes of the cognized thing and regarded as that by means of which something different from the intellect is cognized. Admittedly, in all these works, even conceding that names signify concepts and not intelligible species, Aquinas does not significantly change his views about signification, since he maintains that common names do not directly signify singular extramental things or singular mental occurrences of concepts. At the end of the day, the reader finds Aquinas repeat throughout his works that common names are signs or notes of concepts, namely that names signify things that (and in the way in which they) have been cognized by means of concepts, which are said to exist in the intellect as in their subject.[83] Aquinas is not the first to introduce this idea, which was quite popular among his contemporaries. It can be traced back at least to Boethius's Commentaries on Aristotle's *De interpretatione* and it is so general that it does not commit its supporters to any realist rather than representationalist position on the signification of common names. To differentiate concepts from intelligible species thus appears to be relevant as to Aquinas's doctrine of concepts but not as to the semantics of names, since common names are regularly said to signify things and they can do that insofar as they signify the (universal) *similitudes of* things. As Aquinas says in the *Lectura super Iohannem*, if we want to know what a concept is, we must know what signifies that which has externally been expressed through a spoken or written language.[84] This semantic approach is how an interpreter can square representationalism with direct realism. In fact, assuming that names are imposed to signify things and that names signify the concepts of things is equivalent for Aquinas, since things can be signified only to the extent to which they are cognized and things are cognized only through intelligible species.

After having considered how semantics may help us to clarify Aquinas's account of concepts and to reach the main purpose of this study, namely, to prove that representationalism and direct realism can be reconciled to a certain degree, we are now in the position to discuss more deeply the semantics of common names. It is time to follow Aquinas's suggestion above, from the Commentary on John's Gospel:

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[82] See *Quodlibet* V, q. 5, a. 2 (Opera Omnia, XXV/2, p. 375); and notably *Summa theologiae*, I^a, q. 85, a. 2 (Opera Omnia, V, p. 333–4).

[83] For the claim that concepts exist in the intellect as in their subject, see already *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 2, q. 1, a. 3, ad 6; then *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 7, a. 6; *De 108 articulis*, a. 1, and especially *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, c. 53. For the commonplace that common names are signs or notes of concepts, see *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 22, q. 1, a. 1; *Summa theologiae*, I^a, q. 13, a. 1; *Quodlibet* IV, q. 9, a. 2; *Compendium theologiae*, I, c. 24 and c. 37; *Lectura super Epistolam ad Ephesios*, c. 3, lec. 4; *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, I 2.

[84] See above, note 78.

if we want to know what a concept is, we must know what signifies that which has been externally expressed through a spoken or written language.

8. Aquinas's Argument for the Semantics of Names

In the Introduction to the present study, I claimed that Aquinas introduces a distinction between intelligible species and concepts, but that such a distinction does not affect Aquinas's semantics of names. Then, I addressed the problem of the nature of mental similitudes and argued that names signify such mental similitudes taken however as similitudes of things. Like intelligible species, concepts are in fact described as similitudes of extramental things' natures and names are said to signify indifferently similitudes or natures of things. If we now delve into this issue, we may say that, except for contextual differences, Aquinas seems to hold to a line of reasoning that he tends to replicate, with minor adjustments, in his works. Aquinas's reasoning takes the following steps:

(1) Spoken and written signifying names are conventionally chosen and imposed in order to signify extramental things and not mental concepts on their own. A proof of this is that both things and concepts can be signified by means of names imposed according to different and subsequent acts of imposition.[85]

(2) Extramental things can be signified, not in themselves however, but to the extent to which they are cognized, since names are imposed on account of concepts.[86]

(3) Spoken and written signifying names signify extramental things *qua* cognized by virtue of concepts; according to Aquinas's usual way of speaking, names signify first the concepts of extramental things and then, by way of those concepts, the extramental things themselves.[87]

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[85] See *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, III, d. 26, q. 1, a. 5; IV, d. 15, q. 4, a. 1, q.la 1, ad 4; IV, d. 49, q. 4, a. 1; *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, I 1–2. A clear explanation of the naming procedure is given in *Lectura super Iohannem*, I, lec. 1 (see below, note 122); *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 7, a. 2, ad 7, and a. 9; *Sentencia libri De anima*, III, c. 8; *Lectura super Epistolam ad Ephesios*, c. 3, lec. 4.

[86] See *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 22, q. 1, a. 1; *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 7, a. 6 (ed. Pession, p. 201): 'Sed sciendum quod significatio nominis non immediate refertur ad rem, sed mediante intellectu: sunt enim voces notae earum quae sunt in anima passionum, et ipsae intellectus conceptiones sunt rerum similitudines, ut patet per Philosophum in principio *Periherm*.' This point is frequently stated by Aquinas: see, e.g., *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 7, a. 2, ad 7; *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, c. 30; *Quaestio de unione verbi*, a. 3, ad 5; *Expositio in XII libros Metaphysicorum*, V, lec. 5; VII, lec. 1; *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 45, a. 2, ad 2; I–II, q. 7, a. 1. On the principle that nothing can be signified unless it is cognized, see *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 13, a. 10, ad 5; *Compendium theologiae*, I, c. 24.

[87] See *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 2, q. 1, a. 3; *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 2, a. 1; *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 13, a. 1 (Opera Omnia, IV, p. 139; see text above, note 65). Also see *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 7, a. 2, ad 7; *Responsio de 108 articulis*, a. 2; *Expositio in XII libros Metaphysicorum*, V, lec. 4; *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, I 10. The conviction that names signify immediately concepts and mediately things is due to an anti-Platonic concern. As Aquinas emphasizes especially in his Commentary on *De interpretatione* (I 2), Aristotle endorses this position because a name is common and no common thing can correspond to it in the extramental world. Unlike Plato, Aristotle held that one and the same thing can exist outside and inside the intellect but in different ways. On this, see above, notes 12–14. This assumption further presupposes that, for Aquinas, every name formally has only

(4) But extramental things *qua* cognized are nothing but common natures, which can be provided with separate existence and unity only in the intellect.[88]

(5) Therefore, spoken and written signifying names signify first the concepts of extramental things and then, by way of those concepts, the common natures of extramental things, which exist in the intellect, unified and formed by virtue of an operation of the intellect.[89]

Despite the appearances, some points of Aquinas's reasoning raise problems and their clarification will help us to proceed towards the main purpose of this study. For instance, it could be received as incorrect to say that natures are *formed* by the intellect—as step (5) states—since natures or quiddities exist before I cognize them.[90] However, to state that the intellect forms natures or, more precisely, quiddities would not be so odd. On the one hand, it could be read simply as meaning that the intellect plays a role in *abstracting* natures from things, but obviously it does not play any role in causing them, since things have a nature of their own. With regard to this, it could also be noted that Aquinas in his texts precisely speaks of quiddities rather than of natures, stressing in this way that the intellect plays a role only in forming what more properly looks like the mental, conceptual counterpart of an extramental thing's nature. As Aquinas explains in *De ente et essentia*, c. 1, in fact, quiddities are the essences that are obtained through the definitional practice of putting a 'What is it?' question on a thing.[91] On the other hand, Aquinas's claim that natures are formed by the intellect could be read, more blandly, as suggesting that our intellect takes a part in *working out* things' essential features, since the natures of things are unknown to us in the way they exist extramentally, while they can be known by us only when they come to be in our intellect. Thus, the intellect forms

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one reference. For—as Aquinas argues in his Commentary on the *Metaphysics*—if a name were to be imposed to signify both a species and its members, it would turn out to be equivocal (see *Expositio in XII libros Metaphysicorum*, VII, lec. 9).

88 See Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio in XII libros Metaphysicorum*, VII, lec. 11 (ed. Spiazzi, n. 1536): 'Licet autem homo praeter singularia non sit in rerum natura, est tamen in ratione quae pertinet ad logicam considerationem.' On the thesis that names signify common natures, see *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 23, q. 1, a. 1; d. 25, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3; *De ente et essentia*, c. 2–3; *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 18, a. 2; q. 30, a. 4; III, q. 4, a. 4, ad 2; *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, I 2.

89 See, e.g., *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 2, q. 1, a. 3; III, d. 24, q. 1, a. 1, q.la 2, ad 1; *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 1, a. 5; q. 2, a. 7; q. 4, a. 2 (Opera Omnia, XXII/1–2, p. 123–4,101–16): 'verbum intellectus nostri, secundum cuius similitudinem loqui possumus de verbo divino, est id ad quod operatio intellectus nostri terminatur, quod est ipsum intellectum, quod dicitur conceptio intellectus, sive sit conceptio significabilis per vocem incomplexam, ut accidit quando intellectus *format quidditates* rerum, sive per vocem complexam, ut accidit quando intellectus componit et dividit. Omne autem intellectum in nobis est aliquid realiter progrediens ab altero, vel sicut progrediuntur a principiis conceptiones conclusionum, vel sicut conceptiones quidditatum rerum posteriorum <a> quidditatibus priorum, vel saltem sicut conceptio actualis progreditur ab habituali cognitione' (my emphasis); q. 8, a. 5; q. 14, a. 1; *Quaestio de spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 9, ad 6.

90 For emphasis on this claim by Aquinas, see Panaccio, 'Aquinas on Intellectual Representation', p. 194. Note however that saying that the intellect forms the quiddity of a thing is a way of speaking that recurs almost exclusively in the *Quaestiones de veritate*.

91 See *De ente et essentia*, c. 1 (Opera Omnia, XLIII, p. 369,27–34).

quiddities insofar as it provides of its own all the means needed in order for it to come intellectively into contact with an extramental thing's nature, and hence for an extramental thing's nature to come into existence in the intellect. Specifically, such means are of the definitional kind. In Aquinas, definition is indeed the most appropriate procedure for sorting out the essential features of extramental things.[92]

The principal difficulty with which the interpreters of Aquinas have to deal, however, concerns step (3). It could be understood in at least two senses, which could pave the way to two radically different interpretations of Aquinas's semantics of names. According to one possible formulation of (3):

(3.1) Names are imposed to signify *primarily* concepts and *secondarily* things.

According to an alternative formulation, instead:

(3.2) Names are imposed to signify *primarily* cognized things and *secondarily* extramental things.

The first formulation presents Aquinas as a supporter of a standard 'mentalist' account of signification, which ultimately stems from Boethius's understanding of Aristotle's *De interpretatione*. According to this interpretation, names are imposed to refer to concepts and to express them to other people, so names can signify things only secondarily. Aquinas seems to embrace this interpretation every times he says that exterior words are expressions of thoughts or that spoken utterances (*voces*) are signs or notes of concepts.[93] The second formulation, instead, attributes to Aquinas a more 'realistic' account of signification, because it holds that names are imposed to signify in any case things.[94] Nevertheless, since we can signify only what we can cognize, it follows that the things we mean to signify primarily are those that we find at the end of the intellective process, and these are not the things in themselves (which are the things we find at the beginning of the cognitive process) but just the natures of things.

The two formulations have a point in common: both attribute to Aquinas a two-tier theory of signification, since names are said to signify something primarily and something else secondarily. But if we look at Aquinas's texts, we see that Aquinas

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[92] See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio in XII libros Metaphysicorum*, VII, lec. 12. Aquinas grounds such an idea on the standard Aristotelian contention that a thing's nature or essence can be singled out only by means of a definition. We cannot know what a thing's essence is before we define that thing and we can know a thing's essence only insofar as we define that thing. On such a contention and Aristotle's semantics of names in general, see D. Charles, *Aristotle on Meaning and Essence*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000, and L.M. de Rijk, *Aristotle. Semantics and Ontology*, 2 vols., Leiden: Brill, 2002. On the formative role played by our intellect in the cognition of things' essences and for some references to Aquinas's texts, see Amerini, '"The Essential Differentiae of Things Are Unknown to Us"'.

[93] See, e.g., *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 7, a. 6; *Summa contra Gentiles*, IV, c. 11; *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 13, a. 1; q. 85, a. 2, ad 3.

[94] See, e.g., *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, II, d. 8, q. 1, a. 3, ad 1; *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 2, a. 1; *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 7, a. 9; *Contra impugnantes*, II, c. 1, ad 1; *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}–II^{ae}, q. 7, a. 1.

prefers to speak of *immediate* and *mediate* signification of names.[95] Consequently, we can propose a different reading of step (3):

(3*) Spoken and written signifying names are imposed to signify immediately concepts and mediately things.

At first, speaking of immediate and mediate signification of names may induce us to think that names signify a kind of mental item, i.e., a concept in the first instance. But it is not so. For Aquinas, concepts are endowed with referential power, being but similitudes of things—as has been noted—so only apparently names signify two things; in fact they signify just one thing, i.e., the concepts as similitudes of things. As a consequence, both reformulations of step (3) above could be reparaphrased as follows:

(3*1) Names are imposed to signify the concepts of things and, through them, the things themselves.

(3*2) Names are imposed to signify cognized things and, through them, the extramental things.

Irrespective of which interpretation one is disposed to follow, here only one signification seems to be in play, because when Aquinas says that names signify immediately concepts and mediately things we could take him mean that names are imposed to signify items that are made in such a way as to naturally refer to things. From this perspective, (3*1) and (3*2) can be harmonized: Signifying concepts or cognized things is nothing but signifying a similitude *of* things.

From what we have said so far, the evolution of Aquinas's theory of concepts should thus be understood as a progressive refinement of the original idea that names are imposed to signify things in the way things are cognized. In semantic terms, moving from the intelligible species to the concept only entails that names are imposed on the expressed end-products of our intellective elaborations rather than on the conceptual impressions we acquired at the beginning.[96] But what remains unmodified is the conviction that names are imposed to signify similitudes of things. This is so because we impose names to signify things and we can do that only through signifying the things as they are cognized. This interpretation may be strengthened if we reconsider two metaphysical assumptions on which Aquinas's semantics is based.

The first is exemplified by the Aristotelian dictum—which we have already quoted—that not a stone but the species of a stone exists in the intellect (*non lapis sed species lapidis est in intellectu*).[97] As we already noted, the reason for endorsing this

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[95] See, e.g., *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 7, a. 6; *Compendium theologiae*, I, c. 25; *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, I 2.

[96] In this direction, see, e.g., *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 85, a. 2, ad 1; arg. 3 and ad 3.

[97] For this dictum, see, e.g., *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 15, q. 5, a. 3; *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 23, a. 1; *Summa contra Gentiles*, IV, c. 11; *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 14, a. 5, ad 2; q. 76, a. 2, ad 4; q. 85, a. 2; *Sentencia libri De anima*, III 13. The source of this dictum is *De an.*, III, 8, 431b29.

dictum is that a stone is material and corporeal, while the intellect neither is corporeal nor does it cognize by means of corporeal organs, since it has the capacity of cognizing any kind of form, both corporeal and incorporeal. The acceptance of this dictum implies two things: first, that no singular extramental thing is that which a name has been imposed to refer to primarily, and second, that in the intellect we find something that takes the place of singular extramental things. As has been seen above, Aquinas occasionally stresses this point by underscoring that things in the intellect and things in the external reality amount to the same, but exist according to different modes of being,[98] as well as the lack of numerical identity or natural convenience (*convenientia in natura*) between things in the external reality and things in the intellect.[99]

The second metaphysical assumption consists in the celebrated Avicennian dictum that the nature or essence of a thing can be considered in three ways, even though it exists only in two, viz., extramentally or mentally.[100] In the external reality, a nature is singular, while in the intellect, it can be considered either universally or absolutely. This interpretation of the Avicennian dictum again has two consequences. One is that the nature absolutely considered is exactly the same as the nature universally considered since the first is the potential subject of the property of being universal, which is an actual accidental property of the second.[101] The second consequence is that the nature can exist in the intellect as in its subject, but since the intellect needs a means for coming into contact with things, the intellect needs an intelligible species in order for the natures of things to exist in the intellect as in their subject.

If one allows for these metaphysical assumptions in Aquinas, one is in a better position to understand why Aquinas sometimes tends to identify the concept of a thing with the cognized thing, and sometimes distinguishes them. Accordingly, it would not be particularly surprising to find in Aquinas's works formulations stating that names signify things or that they signify concepts of things as well as formulations stating that names signify *both* things and concepts of things.[102] Aquinas

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98 See, e.g., *Quaestio de spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 9, ad 6. See also above, note 50.

99 See, e.g., *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 27, a. 2, ad 2.

100 For a clear formulation of Avicenna's doctrine of the indifference of essence, see, e.g., *Quodlibet* VIII, q. 1, a. 1 (Opera Omnia, XXV/1, p. 51–2,53–64): 'Dicendum quod, secundum Auicennam in sua Methaphisica, triplex est alicuius nature consideratio: una, prout consideratur secundum esse quod habet in singularibus, sicut natura lapidis in hoc et in illo lapide; alia uero est consideratio alicuius nature secundum esse suum intelligibile, sicut natura lapidis prout est in intellectu; tercia uero est consideratio nature absoluta, prout abstrahit ab utroque esse, secundum quam considerationem consideratur natura lapidis, uel cuiuscunque alterius, quantum ad ea tantum que per se competunt tali nature.'

101 On the twofold understanding of a universal nature, see *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 85, a. 2, ad 2; a. 3, ad 1, and *Expositio in XII libros Metaphysicorum*, VII, lec. 13 (ed. Spiazzi, n. 1570). We discussed Aquinas's example above, § 6.

102 See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 13, a. 4 (Opera Omnia, IV, p. 144): 'Ratio enim quam significat nomen est conceptio intellectus de re significata per nomen', and *Responsio de 108 articulis*, prol. (Opera Omnia, XLII, p. 279,1–11): 'Primo considerandum est quod ratio cuiuslibet est quam significat nomen eius, sicut ratio lapidis est quam significat nomen eius. Nomina autem sunt signa intellectualium conceptionum, unde ratio uniuscuiusque rei significata per nomen est conceptio

normally states that names are imposed to signify concepts or 'reasons' (*rationes*) of things.[103] But at times he also notes that names are imposed to refer to things.[104] More frequently, Aquinas states that names are imposed to signify the natures or essences of things.[105] To my mind, these formulations show that, for Aquinas, the mental similitude serves the function of a mental counterpart to an extramental thing's nature or essence. Since the intellect plays a role in forming such a counterpart, the similitude cannot be exactly the same as the extramental thing's nature or essence. But since it is supposed that there is something in the thing that directs our intellect to form exactly that and not another counterpart, the similitude is the essence itself according to its intelligible being. This is presumably the reason why Aquinas insists that abstraction is not a process of falsification.[106] If concepts are to be accounted for in this manner, the opposition between representationalism and direct realism becomes less pronounced, insofar as the mental similitude may be conceived, in one respect, as a mind-dependent likeness when considered under that aspect (i.e., as a *similitude*), yet, in another respect, as expressive of the very nature of a mind-independent thing when regarded as the *similitude of* that thing.

As regards semantics, these different claims have various implications. Aquinas makes a parallel between the semantic function of names and the cognitive function of concepts, so names too are endowed with referential value. Specifically, they refer to things *qua* cognized, i.e., they refer to things by passing through the concepts of things. This means that names perform a referential function while at the same time activating the cognitive process that is connected to the referential nature of the signified concept. Aquinas's account of the signification of names thus reveals the clash of two intuitions about the object of signification. In his semantics, the distinction between sense and reference collapses and senses themselves turn out to be the immediate reference of names. Aquinas's pronouncements therefore invite us to be cautious in interpreting his semantics alternatively in a realistic or in anti-realistic fashion alone.

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intellectus quam significat nomen. Hec autem conceptio intellectus est quidem in intellectu sicut in subiecto, in re autem intellecta sicut in repraesentato: nam conceptiones intellectuum sunt similitudines quedam rerum intellectarum.'

[103] See, e.g., *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 7, a. 6; *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, c. 35 and c. 53; *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 34, a. 1; *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, I 2.

[104] See, e.g., *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 22, q. 1, a. 3; IV, d. 15, q. 4, a. 1, q.la 1, ad 4; *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 13, a. 1; *Quaestio de unione verbi*, a. 2; *Contra impugnantes*, II, c. 1, ad 1.

[105] See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 13, a. 9, and q. 18, a. 2 (Opera Omnia, IV, p. 226): 'Et quia sic nominamus aliquid sicut cognoscimus illud, ut ex supradictis patet, inde est quod plerumque a proprietatibus exterioribus imponuntur nomina ad significandas essentias rerum. Unde huiusmodi nomina quandoque accipiuntur proprie pro ipsis essentiis rerum, ad quas significandas principaliter sunt imposita, aliquando autem sumuntur pro proprietatibus a quibus imponuntur, et hoc minus proprie.'

[106] See, e.g., *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 1, a. 12; *Summa contra Gentiles*, III, c. 108; *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 17, a. 3; q. 58, a. 5.

It is clear that counting Aquinas among the supporters of representationalism or direct realism in semantics and epistemology is a question of emphasis and to this point I shall return at the end of the present study. For the time being, let it suffice to point out the main results of our discussion. One is that it is possible to provide an interpretation of Aquinas's texts according to which Aquinas does not appear to have quintessentially changed his views on the semantics of names throughout his career. Names signify the concepts of extramental things' natures and so the (cognized) natures themselves. A second result is that names should not be endowed with two significations after all. The main reason to state this is that Aquinas thinks of our intellect as able to cognize only one thing at once;[107] therefore names, which have been imposed on the basis of concepts,[108] formally signify only one thing at once.[109] As a consequence, if names serve a referential function, they cannot refer to anything else but to things *qua* cognized, i.e., taken under a certain concept. In summary, Aquinas makes three claims that he seems to regard as semantically equivalent since concepts and cognized things overlap to a certain degree: (i) a name signifies a thing according to a certain concept; (ii) a name signifies a certain concept of a thing; and (iii) a name signifies a concept and, by way of that concept, a thing. What is clear is that Aquinas denies that a name signifies immediately a singular extramental thing or the singular psychological occurrence of a concept.

9. The Object of Signification Refined

In order to refine our understanding of the status of the object of signification in Aquinas, let me turn to the second distinction referred to at the beginning of this study, namely (D2) the distinction between that from which a name has been imposed to signify (*id a quo nomen imponitur ad significandum*) and that which

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[107] See *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 9, a. 4; *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, c. 100; *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 76, a. 2, ad 4; and extensively *Expositio in XII libros Metaphysicorum*, IV, lec. 7. On the impossibility of cognizing formally more than one thing, see also *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, III, d. 14, q. 1, a. 2, q.la 4; *Quodlibet* VII, q. 1, a. 2; *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 8, a. 14; *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 12, a. 10, and q. 85, a. 4.

[108] See *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 4, a. 1; *Lectura super Epistolam ad Ephesios*, c. 1, lec. 7.

[109] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, I 4 (Opera Omnia, I*/1, p. 22,137–8): 'unum nomen imponitur ad significandum unum simplicem intellectum'; *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, III, d. 7, q. 1, a. 1, ad 5 (ed. Moos, III, p. 263): 'id enim quod est per se suppositum hominis non est pars significationis hujus nominis album: album enim solam qualitatem significat, cum nomen significet unum'; *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 9, a. 4 (ed. Pession, p. 232): 'Quorum quidam dixerunt, quod significat essentiam et relationem ex aequo, et neutrum circa aliud ponitur. Sed hoc non est intelligibile: quia quod non significat unum nihil significat. Unde omne nomen significat unum in una acceptione, ut dicit Philosophus in IV *Metaphysicorum*.' This principle also holds in the case of propositions. See, e.g., *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, IV, d. 8, q. 2, a. 3, ad 7 (ed. Moos, IV, p. 347): 'Ad septimum dicendum quod significatio orationis, quamvis relata ad partes quibus fit significatio videatur composita, tamen relata ad rem significatam simplex est, inquantum significat unum quid, scilicet compositionem hujus cum hoc […] significationes partium sunt dispositiones ad significationem totius orationis, quae consurgit ex significatione ultimae partis in ordine ad omnes praecedentes.'

a name has been imposed to signify (*id ad quod significandum nomen imponitur*). This distinction will corroborate the value, at the same time mental and extramental, of the nature of thing that has been cognized.

Distinction (D2) plays a role in Aquinas's semantics, although it does not hold for every name. It normally applies to substantives (like 'human being', *homo*), not to adjectives (such as 'white', *albus*) or substantialized adjectives (like 'a white', *album*). The reason is that in the case of adjectives, what is known by us is the same as what is known on its own, so that from which a name has been imposed to signify and that which a name actually signifies coincide.[110] The case of substantives, instead, is different.

Breaking with an old-fashioned account of signification, according to which the etymology of names is supposed to express the essence of things to which names refer—insofar as etymology is thought of as following Adam's divinely inspired act of primitively attaching names to the essences of things[111]—Aquinas assumes that signification cannot be reduced to etymology. Take, for example, one of Aquinas's favorite examples, that of 'stone'. According to the imaginary etymology provided by Isidore of Seville (*Etymologiae*, XVI, 3), which Aquinas takes up, a stone (*lapis*) is so called because it hurts the foot (*laedit pedem*). Hurting the foot is the cause of the imposition of the name 'stone'. How did Latin speakers concretely proceed in this case? One can imagine that the first community of Latin speakers saw that a certain thing is made in such a way that frequently hurts our feet, so they decided to take such a feature as the reason for imposing a name on that kind of thing. Then they chose conventionally a name that nonetheless, according to a given historical language (in their case, Latin), could adequately summarize such a procedure of imposition. Aquinas thinks that human beings usually proceed in this way when they impose names on things. For instance, this is the common procedure when one attaches a singular name to a human being.[112] It is clear however that the first Latin speakers did not impose 'stone' (*lapis*) to refer precisely to the act of a stone's

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[110] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 13, a. 8 (Opera Omnia, IV, p. 157): 'Respondeo dicendum quod non est semper idem id a quo imponitur nomen ad significandum, et id ad quod significandum nomen imponitur. […] Si qua vero sunt quae secundum se sunt nota nobis, ut calor, frigus, albedo, et huiusmodi, non ab aliis denominantur. Unde in talibus idem est quod nomen significat et id a quo imponitur nomen ad significandum.' On this see R. Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature. A Philosophical Study of Summa theologiae 1a 75–89*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 143ff., and R. Pasnau, 'Abstract Truth in Thomas Aquinas', in H. Lagerlund (ed.), *Representations and Object of Thought in Medieval Philosophy*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007, p. 33–63.

[111] On the role of Adam in imposing names on things, see *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, II, d. 23, q. 2, a. 2, s.c. 1; *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 18, a. 4, s.c. 4; *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 94, a. 3, s.c. For details on the process of the first signification of things, see *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, I 4.

[112] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, III[a], q. 37, a. 2 (Opera Omnia, XI, p. 377): 'Et hoc patet in nominibus generum et specierum, prout dicitur IV *Metaphys.*: *Ratio enim quam significat nomen, est definitio*, quae designat propriam rei naturam. Nomina autem singularium hominum semper imponuntur ab aliqua proprietate eius cui nomen imponitur. Vel a tempore […]. Vel a cognatione […]. Vel ab eventu […]. Vel etiam ex aliqua qualitate eius cui nomen imponitur.'

hurting the foot (*laedere pedem*) or to a certain thing as qualified by the natural disposition to hurt the foot (*laedens pedem*), because a lot of other things can hurt our foot without being stones.[113] The name 'stone' has thus been introduced into language only to refer to a certain thing that has the property, among others, of hurting the foot.[114] Linking such distinction to a traditional grammatical distinction inherited by Priscian, in his Commentary on the *Sentences* Aquinas also says that a name has been imposed from a quality and it has been imposed to signify a substance, although sometimes, for heological reasons, Aquinas states that names signify the quality, only suppositing for the substance.[115]

The distinction between that from which a name has been imposed to signify and that which a name actually signifies plays a role especially in theology, where names are imposed on the basis of effects or operations depending on God but

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[113] See Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 23, q. 1, a. 2, ad 1 (ed. Mandonnet, I, p. 559): 'Contingit autem quandoque quod substantia alicujus rei nominatur ab aliquo accidente quod non consequitur totam naturam de qua nomen illud dicitur; sicut lapis dicitur ex eo quod laedit pedem, nec tamen omne laedens pedem est lapis, vel e converso'; *Summa theologiae*, II^{a}–II^{ae}, q. 92, a. 1, ad 2 (Opera Omnia, IX, p. 298): 'Ad secundum dicendum quod aliud est etymologia nominis, et aliud est significatio nominis. Etymologia attenditur secundum id a quo imponitur nomen ad significandum: nominis vero significatio attenditur secundum id ad quod significandum nomen imponitur. Quae quandoque diversa sunt: nomen enim lapidis imponitur a laesione pedis, non tamen hoc significat; alioquin ferrum, cum pedem laedat, lapis esset'; also I^{a}, q. 13, a. 8 (Opera Omnia, IV, p. 157): 'Sicut enim substantiam rei ex proprietatibus vel operationibus eius cognoscimus, ita substantiam rei denominamus quandoque ab aliqua eius operatione vel proprietate, sicut substantiam lapidis denominamus ab aliqua actione eius, quia laedit pedem; non tamen hoc nomen impositum est ad significandum hanc actionem, sed substantiam lapidis.'

[114] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 9, a. 3, ad 1 (ed. Pession, p. 230): 'Ad primum dicendum quod in nomine est duo considerare: scilicet, illud ad quod significandum nomen imponitur, et illud a quo imponitur ad significandum. Frequenter enim imponitur nomen aliquod ad significandum rem aliquam, ab aliquo accidente aut actu aut effectu illius rei; quae tamen non sunt principaliter significata per illud nomen, sed potius ipsa rei substantia, vel natura sicut hoc nomen lapis sumitur a laesione pedis, quam tamen non significat, sed potius corpus quoddam in quo tale accidens frequenter invenitur. Unde laesio pedis magis pertinet ad etymologiam huius nominis lapis, quam ad eius significationem' (my emphasis).

[115] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 2, q. 1, a. 3 (ed. Mandonnet, I, p. 69): 'Sic ergo patet tertium, scilicet quod rationes attributorum sunt vere in Deo, quia ratio nominis magis se tenet ex parte ejus a quo imponitur nomen quam ex parte ejus cui imponitur'; a. 5, *expositio textus* (ed. Mandonnet, I, p. 77–8): 'Ad primum ergo dicendum, quod hoc nomen Deus potest considerari dupliciter. Vel quantum ad id a quo nomen imponitur, quod est quasi qualitas nominis; et sic est nomen operationis, secundum Damascenum. Vel quantum ad id cui imponitur, quod est substantia significata per nomen; et sic est nomen naturae, quia ad significandum divinam naturam est impositum'; III, d. 6, q. 1, a. 3 (ed. Moos, III, p. 232): 'Responsio. Dicendum quod in quolibet nomine est duo considerare, scilicet id a quo imponitur nomen, quod dicitur qualitas nominis, et id cui imponitur, quod dicitur substantia nominis. Et nomen, proprie loquendo, dicitur significare formam sive qualitatem, a qua imponitur nomen; dicitur vero supponere pro eo cui imponitur.' See also *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 4, a. 1, ad 8 (Opera Omnia, XXII/1–2, p. 121,330–7): 'Ad octavum dicendum quod nomen dicitur ab aliquo imponi dupliciter, aut ex parte imponentis nomen aut ex parte rei cui imponitur: ex parte autem rei nomen dicitur ab illo imponi per quod completur ratio rei quam nomen significat, et hoc est differentia specifica illius rei, et hoc est quod principaliter significatur per nomen'; *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 13, a. 1, ad 3; *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 9, a. 4.

with the intention of referring, by way of such names, to God Himself. The reason for introducing this distinction is that the object to which we mean to refer can be inaccessible to us, like in the case of God, who is absolutely beyond our linguistic capacity of signification.[116] We can cognize God only by inference and analogy; therefore we cannot name Him directly. This reason could also be invoked in the case of ordinary names such as 'human being' or 'stone'. Since the essences of natural things are unknown to us, we impose names on things by moving from the effects or external operations that we imagine causally depending on the thing's essence.[117] This similarity, however, is only partial. While God is absolutely beyond any possibility of human knowledge, a human being or a stone are things with which we can cognitively be acquainted. Accordingly, by moving from effects to their cause, we can arrive at defining a human being or a stone in themselves, by saying what a human being or a stone is, but we cannot state what God's essence is, even approximately.[118] But apart from this difference, 'stone', 'human being' and 'God' formally display the same semantic attitude, because by means of such names we refer to things whose essences cannot be grasped directly in themselves. For this reason, signification cannot be reduced to etymology. Etymology gives us information only about the procedure that we followed in attaching names to things.

For our purposes, Aquinas's distinction is interesting in many respects. For one thing, it brings to light his attitude of providing a formally homogeneous and—so to speak—unified treatment of the semantics of names. Formally speaking, each signifying name is endowed in fact with a semantic content, with a reference, and with a mode of signification, all of which determine the sense of the name. For another thing, such a distinction is intended to accommodate our ordinary cognitive experience, upon which signification ultimately is based. Consider again the case of 'stone'. When the first community of Latin speakers decided to call a certain chunk of matter 'stone', we may suppose that they meant to use such a term to point not only to that chunk of matter but also to any other chunk of matter that is more or less similar to it. By saying 'this is a stone', while pointing to a particular stone, they meant to say something like: 'this thing and every thing like this is a stone'. So we

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[116] See, e.g., *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 13, a. 5 (Opera Omnia, IV, p. 146): 'Sed cum hoc nomen de Deo dicimus, non intendimus significare aliquid distinctum ab essentia vel potentia vel esse ipsius. Et sic, cum hoc nomen sapiens de homine dicitur, quodammodo circumscribit et comprehendit rem significatam, non autem cum dicitur de Deo, sed relinquit rem significatam ut incomprehensam, et excedentem nominis significationem. Unde patet quod non secundum eandem rationem hoc nomen sapiens de Deo et de homine dicitur.'

[117] See, e.g., *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 4, a. 1, ad 8. The idea that the essences of things are inaccessible to us is a commonplace in Aquinas. See *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, II, d. 3, q. 1, a. 6; *De ente et essentia*, c. 4; *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 10, a. 1 and ad 6; *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 9, a. 2, ad 5; *Quaestio de spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 11, ad 3; *Expositio in I librum De generatione*, I, lec. 8. For more on this, see Amerini, '"The Essential Differentiae of Things Are Unknown to Us"'.

[118] See *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 13, a. 1; a. 8 and ad 2; *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 7, a. 5, ad 5.

may suppose that 'stone' primarily refers to a *certain kind* of thing rather than to an individual thing of a certain kind in particular.[119]

The example of stone suggests that, for Aquinas, names function in the first instance as rigid designators. Names primitively depend on intelligible species and these latter display certain characteristics: they are the same for all men; they are causally and univocally fixed by extramental things; and finally they exist before any historical language has been invented.[120] In the process of naming stones, the first Latin speakers made use of such primitive species, which serve the basic function of permitting the identification of stones and the distinction of stones from each other. Being able to hurt the foot only gives the occasion for singling out a certain species of things. It is obviously not a sufficient condition, for otherwise we could not understand how the first Latin speakers were able to differentiate a chunk of stone from a chunk of iron, since iron also exhibits this feature. In naming things, the first Latin speakers did not need to have any scientific, fine-grained knowledge of the things they meant to name, nor a divinely inspired and pre-scientific intuition of their essences. Quite the opposite, they imposed names to signify things on the basis of some apparent and very extrinsic features of things, such as sensible qualities, like shape and color, operations they fulfill, effects they exert on us: in the case of stones, for instance, on the basis of their recurrent capacity of hurting our foot. Accordingly, they introduced the name 'stone' in order to sum up such properties. But the proper semantic job of 'stone' is that of designating the species of the underlying bearer of those properties. Once imposed, 'stone' rigidly refers to that species of thing.

If this may be proposed as a reliable interpretation of the process of imposition of the word 'stone', Aquinas has to be put on the side of those who hold that names are introduced into language in order to refer to certain kinds of thing without passing through scientifically well-grounded senses. The first Latin speakers, as is obvious, were able to recognize and name stones even without having a definite account of what a stone exactly is. We may suppose that any scientific research and rational inquiry can contribute to refining this initial impression that things produced on us, for instance by acquainting us with all the conditions a thing must satisfy in order for it to be a stone, such as to be made up of a certain material, to be a corporeal body, and so on. Such refinement has effects on the sense of the imposed name, but not on its reference nor on the reason by which it was introduced into spoken and written language. On the other hand, this does not mean that the first Latin

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[119] See *Summa theologiae*, I^a, q. 13, a. 2, ad 2 (Opera Omnia, IV, p. 142): 'hoc nomen lapis imponitur ab eo quod laedit pedem, non tamen imponitur ad hoc significandum quod significet laedens pedem, sed ad significandam *quandam speciem* corporum; alioquin omne laedens pedem esset lapis' (my emphasis).

[120] For these characteristics, see *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, III, d. 35, q. 2, a. 1, q.la 3, ad 1; *Summa theologiae*, III^a, q. 60, a. 7, ad 1; *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, I 2.

speakers imposed the name 'stone' without having any approximate knowledge of the species of thing a stone belongs to. Such a primitive and at the beginning very confused acquaintance expresses nonetheless a sense of the name 'stone'. Names imposed in the first place summarize these primordial senses.

From our reconstruction of Aquinas's way of explaining the semantics of the name 'stone', we may conclude that, for him, a name such as 'stone' signifies the species-stone or the mode of being typical of stones rather than any individual stone.[121] Aquinas gives the reason for this belief in the *Summa theologiae*. Through the property of hurting the foot, we come to being acquainted with the thing we name 'stone'. By further answering the question 'What is a stone?', we come to cognizing its nature. From this, it follows that 'stone' signifies the nature of stone in its own right, for 'stone' signifies the definition of stone and definition is that by means of which we know what a stone is.[122]

As may be clear, such a treatment of the semantics of names is deeply indebted to Aristotle's theory of definition, according to which only existing things can be defined and only in the way they exist. Strictly speaking, we cannot name non-existent things, while we can continue to name things even when they no longer exist[123] Once a name has been imposed to signify a thing, it rigidly signifies the kind of that thing. Even if things referred to by names ceased to exist, names would continue to signify the kind of those things. The reason, as has been seen, is that names primarily signify kinds of things and kinds always exist, once abstracted, by means of definition, from the spatio-temporal conditions affecting their instances.

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[121] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, c. 31 (ed. Pera – Marc – Caramello, p. 43–4, n. 280): 'Non autem dicitur *lapis*, quamvis lapides fecerit, quia in nomine lapidis intelligitur modus determinatus essendi.'

[122] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 13, a. 8, ad 2 (Opera Omnia, IV, p. 157–8): 'Ad secundum dicendum quod, secundum quod naturam alicuius rei ex eius proprietatibus et effectibus cognoscere possumus, sic eam nomine possumus significare. Unde, quia substantiam lapidis ex eius proprietate possumus cognoscere secundum seipsam, sciendo quid est lapis, hoc nomen *lapis* ipsam lapidis naturam, secundum quod in se est, significat, significat enim definitionem lapidis, per quam scimus quid est lapis. Ratio enim quam significat nomen, est definitio, ut dicitur in IV *Metaphys.*'; also q. 13, a. 1 (Opera Omnia, IV, p. 139): 'hoc nomen "homo" exprimit sua significatione essentiam hominis secundum quod est, significat enim eius definitionem, declarantem eius essentiam; ratio enim quam significat nomen, est definitio.' The nature of stone is called a 'concept' in the Commentary on *De interpretatione*, I 4 (Opera Omnia, I*/1, p. 22,141–3: 'hoc nomen lapis imponitur a laesione pedis, quam non significat: quod tamen imponitur ad significandum conceptum cuiusdam rei'), while it is called a '(mental) word' in the *Lectura super Iohannem*, I, lec. 1 (ed. Cai, p. 7: 'Nullum autem istorum significatur verbo exteriori voce prolato. Nam hoc nomen "lapis" non significat substantiam intellectus, quia hoc non intendit dicere nominans; nec significat speciem, quae est qua intellectus intelligit, cum etiam hoc non sit intentio nominantis; non significat etiam ipsum intelligere, cum intelligere non sit actio exterius progrediens ab intelligente, sed in ipso manens. Illud ergo proprie dicitur verbum interius, quod intelligens intelligendo format').

[123] See *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 18, a. 4, ad 10 (Opera Omnia, XXII/2, p. 543,322–28): 'Alio modo dicitur aliquis cognoscere rem in propria natura per modum definitionis dum scilicet cognoscit aliquis quid sit propria natura alicuius rei; et sic etiam res non existens potest in propria natura cognosci, ut si omnes leones essent mortui possem scire quid est leo.'

Even conceding that this is the standard way of introducing names into language for the first time, one should nonetheless recognize that we usually employ names that are already in use within a community of speakers. Aquinas underscores this aspect when he notes that names are used to signify not only a certain nature, but also what the majority of speakers mean to signify by such names (*nominibus utuntur ut plures*, as the often-quoted dictum from Aristotle's *Topics* says).[124] This entails that ordinarily the relationship between cognition and signification is inverted. Before we know what names signify, we know the things to which they refer.[125] Aquinas's statement is noteworthy. It suggests that the refinement of our original acquaintance with things must always be relativized to a certain historical or social context and to the linguistic agreement of a community. It also invites us to take the context as the regulator of the use of a name by the individual members of a linguistic community. Individual choices or changes in the use of names do not impact on their signification. Variations in the signification of names may occur if wider changes come about within the community. On the other hand, the fact that names are imposed by convention and that signification also depends on an act of linguistic agreement implies that we may not state that one name is more suitable than another to signify the nature of a thing. Consequently, no science can demonstrate that a name is suitable to signify precisely a certain kind of thing.[126]

If names are introduced into language to signify kinds of things and there is a general agreement on what things a kind refers to, it follows that from the perspective of Aquinas it would not be possible to fix both the reference and the use of names without considering, at least, the original sense of the name. Indeed, unlike singular names, common names are not limited to pointing to a singular thing. When I impose names on things, I mean to single out such things with respect to their kind.[127] As has been said, when I point to a singular stone and state 'this is a stone', I mean that *this thing and every thing like this* is a stone. But I could not say what 'like' here means without referring to an original sense correlated to 'stone' and definitions play a role in bringing such a sense to light.

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[124] See *Expositio libri Posteriorum*, I 4 (Opera Omnia, I* 2, p. 19,110ff.). The same idea occurs in *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 27, q. 2, a. 2, q.la 1; *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 4, a. 2; q. 17, a. 1; *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 1, a. 4, s.c. 5; *Quodlibet* V, q. 4; *Responsio de 36 articulis*, a. 9; *Expositio in libros De caelo et mundo*, I, lec. 5; lec. 20; II, lec. 12; III, lec. 8.

[125] On this, see *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 2, q. 1, a. 3.

[126] See *Expositio libri Posteriorum*, II 6 (Opera Omnia, I* 2, p. 194,35ff.).

[127] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^a, q. 18, a. 2 (Opera Omnia, IV, p. 226): 'Et inde est quod ex his quae exterius apparent de re, devenimus ad cognoscendam essentiam rei. Et quia sic nominamus aliquid sicut cognoscimus illud, ut ex supradictis patet, inde est quod plerumque a proprietatibus exterioribus imponuntur nomina ad significandas essentias rerum. Unde huiusmodi nomina quandoque accipiuntur proprie pro ipsis essentiis rerum, ad quas significandas principaliter sunt imposita, aliquando autem sumuntur pro proprietatibus a quibus imponuntur, et hoc minus proprie.' Properly speaking, singular names also signify a kind, although with respect to an individual token of it. See, e.g., *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, I 10 (Opera Omnia, I* 1, p. 51,167).

It is time to come to the end of this discussion. Considering Aquinas's statements scattered throughout his works, the impression one retains is that, for Aquinas, the *use* of names should be justified differently from their *introduction* into a language. Names normally are introduced on the basis of an original sense recollecting the strictest set of features, in principle numerically and univocally determined,[128] that are able to typify the named thing. As the example of 'stone' has shown, this introduction is occasioned by the selection of a recurrent feature. Accordingly, the *original* reference is not fixed by way of a fully defined sense. The use of names instead depends on our competence in dialogue and our extra-linguistic ability to attach names to things, and this usually follows from learning, education and the modes of getting acquainted with the meanings of words.[129] In this case, senses exert an influence on fixing the *ordinary* references of names. Names are imposed to signify kinds of things and such kinds are what we can, approximatively earlier and definitively later, cognize about the thing we mean to name.

Is this explanation of the signification of names helpful for understanding Aquinas's view of concepts? As anticipated at the beginning of this study, I think that the interplay between epistemology and semantics may be of great utility for this goal. We have seen that, for Aquinas, names presuppose concepts and signify them, but names are imposed to signify the kinds of things, so concepts are supposed to express the kinds of things. We also said that concepts are signified as similitudes of things since only in this way can they be signified as expressing the kinds of things. The notion of similitude is at the origin of the shift that one finds in Aquinas, namely from concepts to things. Since for Aquinas signifying the kind of a thing is however signifying a thing, one may conclude that, for him, signifying a concept and signifying a thing amount to the same. In brief, common names signify kinds of things since they signify things in the way they are cognized; but saying that is to say that they signify things of a certain kind, given that names have been imposed to signify things.

10. Signification and Modes of Signifying

As has been seen in the previous section, the second distinction (D2) can help us to shed further light on the status of the object of signification. It leads us to state that common names signify, according to Aquinas, kinds of things or things of a certain kind, so it essentially reaffirms the idea that names are not imposed to signify singular extramental things or singular mental tokens. In spite of its apparent clarity, a last aspect of Aquinas's treatment of the semantics of names needs to be clarified. Although we can understand what Aquinas means when he says that

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128 On this, see *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 20, a. 4, ad 1.

129 See *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 33, a. 3.

names signify kinds of things rather than extramental things in themselves, it is a much more complex matter to establish precisely what kinds consist in.

In order to make this last point clear, let me return to the first distinction (D1), namely that between a name's mode of signifying (*modus significandi*) and the thing signified (*significatum* or *res significata*), and focus more closely on the mode of signifying of names. To illustrate this distinction, consider a different example, that of the name 'human being'. As Aquinas emphasizes in his Commentary on the *De interpretatione*, considering the modes of signifying of names gives us a reason for explaining why names primarily signify kinds.[130] Names' modes of signifying follow directly upon the intellect's modes of understanding and only indirectly upon the thing's modes of being, Aquinas claims.[131] Precisely, this occurs in the case of 'stone' and 'human being', whose mode of signifying is determined by three grammatical features, viz., being (i) concrete, (ii) common, and (iii) substantive. Each of these features helps to clarify the semantic function of 'stone' and 'human being'. In particular, feature (ii) allows one to exclude that 'human being' refers primarily to an extramental thing given that no common thing exists in the extramental world and that every name formally signifies only one thing at once. We already noted this point above.[132] Feature (iii) entails that the thing signified by 'human being', whatever it is, is signified as if it were a separately existing substance, even if a substance does not always correspond to it in the outer world.[133] Together, these two features tell us that the semantic value of a natural-kind term such as 'human being' needs to be

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[130] See *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, I 2 (Opera Omnia, I* 1, p. 10–1,88ff.; see above, note 12). In his works, Aquinas distinguishes grammatical from logical modes of signifying, and he spends a considerable amount of time discussing the former. Grammatical modes can be distributed into modes concerning word-classes and modes concerning word-inflections. For a discussion of some grammatical modes, see, e.g., *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 9, q. 1, a. 1, q.la 2; *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 39, a. 3, ad 1, and a. 4. For a discussion of some important logical modes, instead, see *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 9, q. 1, a. 2; d. 22, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3; d. 23, q. 1, a. 3, s.c.; d. 26, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3. I do not dwell on such a distinction here. On this aspect of Aquinas's semantics, see Ashworth, 'Signification and Modes of Signifying in Thirteenth-Century Logic'; also K. Buersmeyer, 'Aquinas on the modi significandi', *The Modern Schoolman* 64/2 (1987), p. 73–95; G.P. Rocca, 'The Distinction Between "res significata" and "modus significandi" in Aquinas's Theological Epistemology', *The Thomist* 55 (1991), p. 173–97. Sometimes, especially in early works, Aquinas identifies modes of signifying and notions (*rationes*) signified by names (see, e.g., *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 2, a. 1).

[131] On such a claim, see *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 45, a. 2, ad 2; *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 7, a. 2, ad 7; *Contra errores Graecorum*, I, c. 4; *Expositio in XII libros Metaphysicorum*, VII, lec. 1 (ed. Spiazzi, n. 1253): 'Pro tanto autem videntur accidentia in abstracto significata esse non entia, quia nihil ipsorum est aptum natum secundum se esse; immo cuiuslibet eorum esse est alteri inesse, et non est possibile aliquid eorum separari a substantia; et ideo quando significantur in abstracto quasi sint secundum se entia et a substantia separata, videtur quod sint non entia. Licet modus significandi vocum non consequatur immediate modum essendi rerum, sed mediante modo intelligendi; quia intellectus sunt similitudines rerum, voces autem intellectuum, ut dicitur in primo *Perihermenias*.'

[132] See above, note 12.

[133] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 22, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3 (ed. Mandonnet, I, p. 533): 'illud quod significatur per nomen significatur ut aliquid subsistens, secundum quod de eo potest aliquid praedicari, quamvis secundum rem non sit subsistens, sicut albedo; dicit, quod significat substantiam, ad differentiam verbi, quod non significat ut aliquid subsistens'.

assessed with respect to what seems to be presented by Aquinas as an 'objectifying' power of names, since a name such as 'human being' signifies something *as if* it were a separate thing we can refer to. Aquinas expresses such an idea by stating that 'human being' signifies according to a substance-mode or subject-mode of signification (*per modum substantiae* or *per modum subiecti*).[134]

Unlike the last two, feature (i) gives more conflicting information and Aquinas himself seems to hesitate about it. What is the primary signification of the concrete term 'human being? In some texts, Aquinas draws a strong parallel between substantial and accidental terms. Both an abstract and a concrete accidental term, say 'whiteness' (*albedo*) and 'white' (*album*), signify a quality, i.e., whiteness, which is their primary or principal signification. Here Aquinas is following Aristotle's dictum of the *Categories* that 'white' signifies only a quality (*album solam qualitatem significat*).[135] Nonetheless, Aquinas holds that 'white' and 'whiteness' are not synonymous, for they signify whiteness in different ways. The abstract term 'whiteness' signifies whiteness in a subject-mode (*per modum subiecti*), namely as if whiteness were a separate subject of predication (although whiteness does not exist in the outer world as a separate substrate of properties). The concrete term 'white' instead signifies it in an accident-mode (*per modum accidentis*), namely it signifies whiteness with respect to a given subject of which whiteness is predicated. The mode of signification of 'white', however, does not imply that the subject of whiteness has to be included into the signification of 'white', for otherwise we would commit a category error; it only implies that from 'white' we can infer, by consequence (*ex consequenti*), the subject of which 'white' is predicated.[136] This consequential mode of signifying fixes the co-signification of a concrete name, which Aquinas usually reads as a secondary and extrinsic signification.[137]

The case of 'human being' is in part similar. According to another of Aristotle's dictums from the *Categories*, 'human being' seems to signify a certain thing (*hoc*

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134 Cf., e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 9, q. 1, a. 2 (ed. Mandonnet, I, p. 248): 'substantiva significant per modum substantiae, et ideo significant rem suam absolute'; III, d. 5, q. 3, a. 3, *expositio textus*; *Summa theologiae*, I^a, q. 39, a. 3 and a. 5, ad 5; *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 8, a. 2, ad 7, and q. 9, a. 6. Such a distinction plays a crucial role in theology. Terms such as 'God' and 'Godness' signify the same thing but in different ways, so it is not possible to substitute them with each other. In particular, 'God' exhibits the semantics of concrete and singular names, so it signifies the divine essence with respect to a given bearer of properties (*ut in habente*); 'Godness', by contrast, signifies the divine essence as abstracted from the divine Persons. Aquinas holds that such a distinction affects the supposition of terms, hence it is significant in order to assess the truth-value of theological propositions. See *Summa theologiae*, I^a, q. 39, a. 5.

135 See *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 18, q. 1, a. 2, ad 3; III, d. 7, q. 1, a. 1, ad 5; *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 9, a. 4; *Quodlibet* II, q. 2, a. 2; *Expositio in XII libros Metaphysicorum*, V, lec. 9 (ed. Spiazzi, n. 894). The source of this dictum is *Cat.*, 5, 3b19.

136 See *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 18, q. 1, a. 2, ad 3; *Expositio in XII libros Metaphysicorum*, V, lec. 9 (ed. Spiazzi, n. 894); VII, lec. 1 (ed. Spiazzi, n. 1253–5), and lec. 4 (ed. Spiazzi, n. 1352–4).

137 See, e.g., *Quodlibet* IV, q. 9, a. 2.

aliquid) in accordance to the mode of its grammatical expression, but it actually signifies only a certain quality of a thing (*quale quid*).[138] Interpreters of Aquinas could quote many texts in which Aquinas takes up this dictum, namely all those texts in which Aquinas states that 'human being' signifies a human nature (*humanitatem*), while consequently signifying, and hence suppositing for, the bearer of such nature (*habens humanitatem* or *subsistens in humanitate*).[139] This conclusion is somewhat expected. We have seen, indeed, that, on the side of things, names are imposed to designate the specific form of things, that is, their natural kind.[140] So it is clear that names are imposed to refer primarily to forms rather than to the bearers of forms.

There are however texts in which Aquinas underscores dissimilarities between the semantics of substantial and accidental terms. Aristotle himself, in the chapter of the *Categories* on which the above parallelism is based, noted the difference between the semantics of substantial names and that of accidental terms: in fact, while 'white' signifies only a quality (as has been said), the name of a species or a genus signifies a quality with respect to a substance, namely, signifies a substance with a certain quality.[141] In some texts Aquinas seems to have in mind this difference. In the case of accidental terms, he notes that that from which a name has been imposed to signify what it signifies and that which a name signifies are the same, as has been said, because in their case only a form is concerned. But this does not hold in the case of substantial names. The reason is that the abstract kind 'human being' may, in a certain respect, be understood as a composite of matter and form, in the same way as any concrete instance thereof. This hylomorphic composition

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[138] See, e.g., *Quaestiones de anima*, q. 1; *Expositio in XII libros Metaphysicorum*, VII, lec. 7 (ed. Spiazzi, n. 1428). The source of this dictum is *Cat.*, 5, 3b10–17.

[139] See, e.g., *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, III, d. 5, q. 1, a. 3; d. 6, q. 1, a. 2, ad 4 (ed. Moos, III, p. 231): 'Ad quartum dicendum quod homo significat humanam naturam, et supponit pro subsistente in natura illa'; *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 3, a. 3; q. 30, a. 4; q. 39, a. 4, ad 3; III, q. 4, a. 3, ad 2; *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 8, a. 2, ad 7; *Lectura super Iohannem*, I, lec. 1. At least once, the same distinction is formulated in terms of formal/material signification. See *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 9, a. 4 (ed. Pession, p. 232–3): 'Sed sciendum, quod aliquid significatur dupliciter: uno modo formaliter et alio modo materialiter. Formaliter quidem significatur per nomen ad id quod significandum nomen est principaliter impositum, quod est ratio nominis; sicut hoc nomen "homo" significat aliquid compositum ex corpore et anima rationali. Materialiter vero significatur per nomen, illud in quo talis ratio salvatur; sicut hoc nomen "homo" significat aliquid habens cor et cerebrum et huiusmodi partes, sine quibus non potest esse corpus animatum anima rationali.'

[140] On the twofold process of imposing names on things (*scil.*, on the side of things and on the side of the subject imposing names on things), see *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 4, a. 1, ad 8 (Opera Omnia, XXII/1–2, p. 121–2,330–46): 'Ad octavum dicendum quod nomen dicitur ab aliquo imponi dupliciter: aut ex parte imponentis nomen aut ex parte rei cui imponitur: ex parte autem rei nomen dicitur ab illo imponi per quod completur ratio rei quam nomen significat, et hoc est differentia specifica illius rei, et hoc est quod principaliter significatur per nomen; sed quia differentiae essentiales sunt nobis ignotae, quandoque utimur accidentibus vel effectibus loco earum, ut VIII Metaphysicae dicitur, et secundum hoc nominamus rem; et sic illud quod loco differentiae essentialis sumitur est a quo imponitur nomen ex parte imponentis, sicut lapis imponitur ab effectu qui est laedere pedem, et hoc non oportet esse principaliter significatum per nomen, sed illud loco cuius hoc ponitur.'

[141] *Cat.*, 5, 3b17–23.

reveals what a specific form is, so we can say that a name such as 'human being' (*homo*) signifies a human nature to the extent to which it signifies something that *is* of the human kind, i.e., a composite of a certain matter and a certain form.[142] Since such a kind is signified in the concrete or according to a grammatically concrete mode, i.e., as generically exemplified by an individual supposit, Aquinas also infers that 'human being' signifies an indeterminate bearer of the human nature. Thus, while the bearer of whiteness cannot be distinctly cognized and hence signified by 'white', the bearer of humanity is definitely cognized (*determinate intelligitur*) and hence signified by 'human being',[143] so it must be included in the signification of 'human being'.[144] This explains why 'human being' but not 'humanity' is predicated of individual men.[145] This explanation also clarifies why Aquinas sometimes—especially in the Christological or Trinitarian context—stresses that 'human being' signifies that which has humanity rather than humanity itself[146] or emphasizes that 'human being' signifies a certain compound rather than a pure form. Unlike 'human being', 'white' serves only an adjectival function; hence it signifies only a form,[147]

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[142] See *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 22, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3; also *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 9, a. 4; *Quaestio de unione verbi*, a. 2, ad 4.

[143] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestio de unione verbi*, a. 3, ad 5 (ed. Senner – Bartocci – Obenauer, p. 80): 'Ad quintum dicendum, quod in hoc nomine "album" intelligitur albedo et subiectum albedinis; sed albedo determinate, subiectum autem albedinis indeterminate. Nam cum dicimus "album", intelligimus aliquid albedine informatum, non autem determinatur, quid sit illud, sicut determinatur forma. — Similiter etiam, cum dico "hominem" vel aliquid aliud substantialiter dictum, intelligitur habens humanitatem. Sed quia aliquid determinatur ad speciem per suam essentiam vel naturam, non autem per suum accidens, in hoc nomine "homo" determinate intelligitur id, quod est habens humanitatem, magis quam in hoc nomine "album" intelligatur habens albedinem. — Et quia id, quod per nomen determinate intelligitur, est proprie nominis significatum, magis hoc nomen "homo" significat suppositum humanitatis quam hoc nomen "album" subiectum albedinis. Quamvis nec hoc nomen "homo" significet humanitatis suppositum, secundum quod est determinatum in sua singularitate, sed solum secundum quod est determinatum in natura speciei.'

[144] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 4, q. 1, a. 2 (ed. Mandonnet, I, p. 134): 'hoc nomen "homo" in se importat non tantum essentiam, sed etiam suppositum, sed indistincte, alias non praedicaretur de individuis'; III, d. 7, q. 1, a. 1, ad 5; III, d. 10, q. 1, a. 1, q.la 1; *Summa theologiae*, III, q. 17, a. 1.

[145] See *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, III, d. 5, q. 1, a. 3; *Quodlibet* IX, q. 2, a. 1, ad 1; *Summa contra Gentiles*, IV, c. 81; *Expositio in XII libros Metaphysicorum*, VII, lec. 5 (ed. Spiazzi, n. 1378–9); *Compendium theologiae*, I, c. 154.

[146] See, e.g., *Summa theologiae*, III, q. 4, a. 3 and ad 2; q. 17, a. 1; *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 9, a. 4, ad 18; *Quaestio de unione verbi*, a. 3, ad 5; *Quodlibet* IX, q. 2, a. 1, ad 1. On the signification in the concrete mode (*per modum concreti*), see *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 33, q. 1, a. 2; III, d. 4, q. 2, a. 2, ad 2; *Contra errores Graecorum*, I, c. 4.

[147] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, III, d. 5, q. 3, *expositio textus* (ed. Moos, III, p. 210): 'Et dicendum quod differentia est inter nomina substantiva et adjectiva. Substantiva enim significant non tantum formam, sed etiam suppositum formae, unde possunt praedicari ratione utriusque. Et quando praedicantur ratione suppositi, dicitur praedicatio per identitatem. Quando autem ratione formae, dicitur per denominationem sive informationem. Et haec est magis propria praedicatio, quia termini in praedicato tenentur formaliter.'

performing in this way what Aquinas sometimes calls a categorematic function.[148] When the term 'white' is employed as a substantive, however, it is used improperly.

In Aquinas's writings there is thus evidence for supporting either that a name signifies only a certain quality of a substance or that, rather, it signifies a substance with a certain quality. Probably the two views converge. A substantial quality is described in fact in hylomorphic terms and this entails that it is likely the same to say that 'human being' signifies a form or that it signifies the generic bearer of that form. In any case, independently of which interpretation one is inclined to follow, the modes of signifying of 'human being' reveal that the signified thing cannot be, strictly speaking, an extramental thing. The name 'human being' signifies a kind, which exists only in the intellect, but also signifies a generic instance of the kind. A kind is described as a specific form and such a form is semantically linked to a generic subject, which is described as a universal compound of matter and form. Our intellect seems to have the power of gathering the essential properties of a thing and then of objectifying them into a generic bearer of them. If the modes of signifying of names follow the modes of understanding of the intellect, an interpreter could legitimately conclude that, for Aquinas, our intellect too understands things through a concrete, common and substantive way of cognizing. At the end of the day, in Aquinas's semantics both sense and reference seem to collapse into signification, given that a name such as 'human being' is taken to signify both humanity and the bearer of it. Aquinas instead reserves to supposition (*supponere*) the function of referring to individual instances of that kind. Since such a kind is what is expressed through a concept, it is clear that a concept, being signified by a name, represents at the same time a thing's nature and the generic bearer of that nature.

On the side of the intellect, this semantic view seems to presuppose that our acts of intellective cognition form concepts that are but objectifications of the extramental things' essences. So the concept of human nature displays the same ambiguity that one finds in the common name 'human being', it refers to both a kind of a certain thing and to a thing of a certain kind. In my opinion, this gives us the exact meaning of Aquinas's claim that concepts are similitudes of things' natures and at the same time, it helps to understand my insistence on the possibility of reconciling representationalism with direct realism. Things' natures can exist as such only in the intellect, for Aquinas, and when they exist in this way, they are endowed with the power of representing the extramental things' natures. But things' natures exist in the intellect as unified items, signified by substantive common names, so in the act of representing concepts refer to extramental things' natures as if they were separate and self-subsisting subjects, just like common names do in the act of signifying.

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[148] See *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 21, q. 1, a. 1, q.la 1; *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 31, a. 3; q. 39, a. 5, ad 5.

11. Reconsidering the Interplay between Semantics and Epistemology

Thus far, we have seen that, for Aquinas, common names are imposed to signify concepts or similitudes of things' natures rather than extramental things in themselves or mental occurrences of concepts. Then we have seen that names primarily signify the kinds of things. We can legitimately conclude, therefore, that a kind and a concept overlap with each other to a certain degree. But, once again, how is it possible that the natural kind or nature of a thing coincides with a product of the intellect? In order to definitively answer this question and solve the main complication for a conciliarist position as is mine, let me reconsider how Aquinas explains the linguistic introduction of names such as 'human being' and 'stone' and their utilization by a community of speakers.

Imagine when human beings see a stone for the first time. They then *receive* an impression from that thing. This original impression is essentially non-linguistic in the sense that it precedes the invention of any historical language. That this is the view of Aquinas can be stated on the basis of what he says in the Commentary on the *De interpretatione*, chapter 2.[149] If human beings lived alone, it would have been sufficient for them to manage these primitive impressions to interact with the external world and live. But since human beings are naturally disposed to group into a community, they need to introduce speech in order to express to each other such mental impressions and to refer to the things from which such impressions have been received. The non-linguistic (or pre-linguistic) status of such primitive impressions can also be concluded from Aquinas's characterization of such impressions as natural, common and identical for all human beings.[150] On its own, the impression of a stone is thought of as simple and irreducible to any other natural impression. It coincides with that which a thing's form leaves on our intellect. More precisely, it is the intellect itself that forms such an impression by selectively considering—starting from the phantasms, which are made 'capable' by virtue of the light of the agent intellect—a thing's form in abstraction from the material conditions of its occurrence. This impression is what Aquinas calls the intelligible species.

The intelligible species is the starting-point of our intellective cognition, because as a consequence of its formation by the intellect, a thing's form, which is potentially knowable when it is considered on its own, becomes actually knowable, so it can be known. What happens at this point? Once an impression is received, the intellect begins to interact with it, by *returning* to it and hence expanding on its action. Then it is in the position to create a definition or to form propositions involving such an impression. According to what Aquinas says especially in *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 8, a. 1, these mental products (viz., definitions and propositions) are that which

149 See Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, I 2 (Opera Omnia, I* 1, p. 9,10ff.).

150 See Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, I 2 (Opera Omnia, I* 1, p. 12,184ff.).

should properly be called concepts of the intellect, because of the characteristics they display. First, they are formed by the intellect to definitely cognize extramental things. Second, they are the end-product of an act of intellective cognition, in that they express the final and complete achievement of the act. Third and foremost, they are expressed similitudes of the things that have been cognized; it is so because an effect assimilates to its cause according to the form of the cause, but the intellect is the cause of a concept and the cognized thing is the intellect's form, so a concept assimilates to the intellect according to the cognized thing. In Aquinas's wording, this is a way of saying that a concept is none other than a similitude of the cognized thing. Primarily, a concept expresses the acquisition of a cognized thing. Secondly, it expresses all that which the intellect can conceive of a thing once the thing becomes present to the intellect thanks to an intelligible species. Concepts can be called 'words' as well, since they are what the intellect utters within itself about a thing, to cognize expressly it.

To my mind, all that proves that, for Aquinas, the human thought is structured and functions in an intrinsically linguistic way, although this character should not be understood as the outcome of some sort of internalization of a given historical or conventional language. Our intellect initially works on basically different and, at the very beginning, uncharacterized impressions of things, and proceeds by making them more and more definite, by formulating simple concepts, definitions and propositions. When speakers therefore introduce names to signify things, names are meant to signify what actualizes our intellective cognition. Names thus are meant to signify concepts and summarize what our definitions will pull out from such impressions in an explicit way. In practice, when the members of a community of speakers say that this is a stone, while pointing to a stone in particular, they intend to attach to that stone all the features that our intellect is able to extract, by means of definition, from the original impression of stone it received. Thus, when those speakers assert the existence of a stone, they not only want to attach a label to a thing of a certain kind, hence setting apart that thing from other things belonging to different natural kinds, they also want to state that that thing displays some features, implicitly and indefinitely imported by the original impression, which are of a certain kind.[151]

Our intellect plays a key role in picking out these features. There are texts in which Aquinas underlines this role by making two claims. First, Aquinas affirms that features such as being animal and being rational do not exist, as such, in the outer world. All that we can find in the external reality is something that looks like the causal principle of the genus and the differentia that enter into our definition

[151] On the linguistic nature of Aquinas's account of the mental, see F. Amerini, 'Thomas Aquinas on Mental Language', *Medioevo* 38 (2013), p. 77–110; also J.P. Hochschild, 'Mental Language in Aquinas?', in G. Klima (ed.), *Intentionality, Cognition, and Mental Representation in Medieval Philosophy*, Fordham, N.Y.: Fordham University Press, 2015, p. 29–45.

of human being, say animality and rationality. Such a principle coincides with the human soul and realizes in the human being's capacity to perform acts that we describe as moving and perceiving (animality), and as thinking (rationality). Second, Aquinas denies that we can have any direct access to things' natures or essences; our acquaintance with things is limited to the accidental and apparent properties of them. We begin to know a thing from its accidents, so as many accidents of a thing we catalogue as we definitely know that thing. Then we infer that some accidental properties (i.e., those that are explanatory of the others insofar as they are supposed to be closer to the principle of essence) are causally connected to the essential principle of the thing. Therefore, we move to classify such properties as essential.[152] These essential properties are implicitly and confusedly contained in the original impression we received from the thing. But once received, our intellect goes on to refining such an impression, by properly and adequately specifying it. Then it arrives at fixing a set of fundamental properties and, consequently, at singling out univocally the class of things that are able to produce such an impression. In other words, it arrives at defining that thing.

Aquinas holds that names are imposed to signify the kinds of things, which will be the object of our definitions. Once imposed, they rigidly refer to them. The intellect nonetheless plays a role in arranging such kinds by means of concepts, so we may say that such kinds are mind-dependent as to their concrete existence, although not as to their essential being, i.e., in what they are. On the other hand, since these kinds implicitly encompass a set of essential features and a definition spells out these features, we may say that names signify definitions as well. As to the senses expressed by our definitions, it is plain that names can change their signification. But as to the named thing, they seem to be unable to modify their reference. The impression one retains from Aquinas's treatment of signification scattered throughout his works is that in Aquinas two different intuitions about signification are at work. Names are said to signify concepts and also the kinds of things. As has been seen, this ambiguity depends on the fact that Aquinas understands the technical notion of 'concept of a thing' (*conceptio rei*) both as the concept of an extramental thing and as the extramental thing itself *qua* cognized. It is so because a concept is described as the similitude or representation of a thing's nature. Not only this, but a concept also expresses the full actualization of such a potential intellective cognition that is encompassed in the intelligible species. For this reason, in Aquinas's mature theory of concepts, names are said to signify concepts and not intelligible species.[153]

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[152] See, e.g., *De ente et essentia*, c. 2–3; *Expositio in XII libros Metaphysicorum*, VII, lec. 5, n. 1378; *Sentencia libri de anima*, I 1. On this, see Amerini, '"The Essential Differentiae of Things Are Unknown to Us"'.

[153] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Responsio de 108 articulis*, a. 1 (Opera Omnia, XLII, p. 279,1–21): 'Primo considerandum est quod ratio cuiuslibet est quam significat nomen eius, sicut ratio lapidis est quam

In order to bring this reconsideration to an end, two final points must be noted.

The first concerns the question we raised at the beginning of this study. Does Aquinas's change of position on concepts entail a change of position on the signification of names? In one sense 'yes', because it is a fact that in his mature works names no longer are said to signify intelligible species but rather concepts. But in another sense 'no', because in the early as well as in his mature works names continue to be said to signify conceptions, reasons or similitudes of things' natures. When in *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 85, a. 2, for example, Aquinas asks whether the intelligible species is what is cognized, an opponent argues in favor of this on the account of an argument based on the signification of names. In the *De interpretatione*, Aristotle says that spoken sounds are signs of the passions of soul; but spoken sounds signify cognized things, that is, we signify what we have cognized, so the passions of the soul are what we have cognized and these are the intelligible species. Aquinas's reply introduces some further specifications about cognition, not about signification. Spoken sounds continue to signify what we have cognized, but intelligible species are not what we have cognized. They simply are those through which we can cognize things, but what we have cognized about things is what we have mentally formed in order to make judgments about things, and these are the concepts and not the intelligible species.[154] Thus, the evolution of Aquinas's position on concepts does not impact on his position on the signification of names. Quite the opposite, reflecting on the semantics of names might have been what led Aquinas to

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significat nomen eius. Nomina autem sunt signa intellectalium conceptionum, unde ratio uniuscuiusque rei significata per nomen est conceptio intellectus quam significat nomen. Hec autem conceptio intellectus est quidem in intellectu sicut in subiecto, in re autem intellecta sicut in representato: nam conceptiones intellectuum sunt similitudines quedam rerum intellectarum. Si autem conceptio intellectus non assimilaretur rei, falsa esset de re illa conceptio, sicut si intelligeret esse lapidem quod non est lapis; ratio igitur lapidis est quidem in intellectu sicut in subiecto, in lapide autem sicut in eo quod causat ueritatem in conceptione intellectus intelligentis lapidem talem esse. Cum igitur intellectus rem aliquam comprehendit, una conceptione perfecte illam rem representat; et sic diuersas conceptiones contingit esse diuersarum rerum'; a. 2 (Opera Omnia, XLII, p. 280,80–6).

[154] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 85, a. 2, arg. 3 and ad 3 (Opera Omnia, V, p. 334–5): 'Philosophus dicit, in I Periherm., quod *voces sunt notae earum quae sunt in anima passionum*. Sed voces significant res intellectas, id enim voce significamus quod intelligimus. Ergo ipsae passiones animae, scilicet species intelligibiles, sunt ea quae intelliguntur in actu […]. Ad tertium dicendum quod in parte sensitiva invenitur duplex operatio. Una secundum solam immutationem, et sic perficitur operatio sensus per hoc quod immutatur a sensibili. Alia operatio est formatio, secundum quod vis imaginativa format sibi aliquod idolum rei absentis, vel etiam nunquam visae. Et utraque haec operatio coniungitur in intellectu. Nam primo quidem consideratur passio intellectus possibilis secundum quod informatur specie intelligibili. Qua quidem formatus, format secundo vel definitionem vel divisionem vel compositionem, quae per vocem significatur. Unde ratio quam significat nomen, est definitio; et enuntiatio significat compositionem et divisionem intellectus. Non ergo voces significant ipsas species intelligibiles; sed ea quae intellectus sibi format ad iudicandum de rebus exterioribus'; also see *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 14, a. 14, and q. 85, a. 5; *Quodlibet* V, q. 5, a. 2; *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, c. 53; II, c. 75; IV, c. 11 (ed. Pera – Marc – Caramello, p. 265, n. 3466); and especially *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 8, a. 1 (see above, note 78); *Expositio in XII libros Metaphysicorum*, IV, lec. 6; *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, I 1; *Super Boethium De Trinitate*, q. 5, a. 3.

distinguish concepts from intelligible species. As a matter of fact, Aquinas's claim that names signify intelligible species only recurs in his later works,[155] so there is no evidence that it is a revision of his early position rather than a late criticism of other authors. In addition, one may also consider that, as has been seen, in the early works too Aquinas claims that names signify concepts (although they are then still confused with the intelligible species). So a clarification of the epistemological picture does not seem to have affected Aquinas's account of the semantics of names.

The second point to note concerns the object of signification. We have seen that Aquinas at times identifies it with things, and other times with concepts. It is my contention that when Aquinas occasionally states that both a thing (*res*) and a concept or 'reason' (*ratio*) are signified by a name, we should not take him to mean that the signified thing can be understood as referring to both a mental and an extramental item.[156] Rather, we should take him to mean that two stages should be considered in explaining concept formation and the signification of names. In the first stage, our intellect acquires the concept of a thing by virtue of an intelligible species. At this stage, the concept is the end-product of our act of abstraction stemming from the external world and it still involves a confused and implicit cognition of extramental things. In a second stage, our intellect returns to this concept and goes more deeply into it, hence going on with forming a definition or formulating propositions about it. This second stage more properly concerns concepts, since a concept is quintessentially what is conceived and mentally uttered about a thing cognized, the result of a reflexive or discursive act of thought.

These two stages in the activity of concept acquisition give us the right perspective from which to explain a second peculiar claim by Aquinas. As has been noted in the literature, in his writings Aquinas weaves between speaking of a thing signified (*res significata*) by names in some contexts and speaking of signification (*significatum*) of names in other contexts.[157] This distinction—never explicitly explained by Aquinas in his writings—is sometimes interpreted as a distinction concerning a thing's nature regarded, respectively, as extramentally and mentally existing. I tend to reject this reading and I would propose, rather, to connect such a distinction to that between the thing *qua* firstly cognized and the thing *qua* fully cognized by way of a concept, according to the two steps that the intellect takes to achieve its cognition of things.[158]

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[155] See *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 85, a. 2, arg. 3 and ad 3; *Quodlibet* V, q. 5, a. 2, sed contra; *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 8, a. 1.

[156] See Ashworth, 'Signification and Modes of Signifying in Thirteenth-Century Logic'.

[157] For the occurrence of the word '*significatum*', see, e.g., *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 2, q. 1, a. 3; *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 2, a. 1, ad 11; *Quaestio de unione verbi*, a. 3, ad 5; *Expositio in XII libros Metaphysicorum*, IV, lec. 3. For the occurrence of the phrase '*res significata*', see, e.g., *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 22, q. 1, a. 2; *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 4, a. 2, ad 3; *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 13, a. 4; *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 7, a. 6.

[158] For the distinction between two stages in the intellective cognition of things, see, e.g., *Quodlibet* V, q. 5, a. 2, ad 1; and especially *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 85, a. 2, ad 3; *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 23, a. 3; *Quaestio de spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 11, ad 7; *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, I 4. For emphasis on

Such different intuitions about the signification of names clearly emerge if we look at the way in which Aquinas explains the reason why the names of divine attributes cannot be taken as synonymous. In particular, the above distinction is quite evident in some late texts such as the *Compendium theologiae*, which dates to 1265–1267. In book 1, c. 25, Aquinas states that synonymous names are those that *signify the same thing* while *representing* the same concept to the intellect. If otherwise names signified the same thing according to different concepts, they would be not synonymous, since their signification would be not the same, given that names *signify the concepts of the intellect*. From this Aquinas draws an apparently puzzling conclusion: the names of divine attributes are not synonymous because they signify different concepts, although they signify the same thing.[159] Unless we want to attribute to Aquinas an equivocal use of the verb 'to signify', if we want to make sense of his claim, we must admit that, for Aquinas, names signify a certain thing always according to a certain concept. From this we may conclude that Aquinas takes as equivalent expressions such as 'signifying one and the same thing according to different concepts' and 'signifying different concepts of one and the same thing'. Names signify a thing and also what is cognized about that thing, namely a concept. This provides the reason why Aquinas occasionally treats the concept of a thing as something that exists in the intellect as well as in the outer world.[160] In this case, though, we should be cautious in speaking of Aquinas's evolution or change, since the same conclusion of the *Compendium* was already drawn in the Commentary on the *Sentences* and is repeated in other writings, both early and later.[161] In conclusion, the identification between concept and cognized

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the other interpretation, see Ashworth, 'Signification and Modes of Signifying in Thirteenth-Century Logic'.

[159] See *Compendium theologiae*, I, c. 25 (Opera Omnia, XLII, p. 90,4–16): 'Ad hoc enim quod nomina aliqua sint synonima, oportet quod significent eandem rem, et eandem intellectus conceptionem repraesentent. Vbi vero significatur eadem res secundum diuersas rationes, id est apprehensiones quas habet intellectus de re illa, non sunt nomina synonima, quia non est penitus significatio eadem, cum nomina immediate significent conceptiones intellectus que sunt rerum similitudines. Et ideo, cum diversa nomina dicta de Deo significent diuersas conceptiones quas intellectus noster habet de ipso, non sunt synonima, licet omnino eandem rem significent.'

[160] See, e.g., *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 7, a. 10, ad 10 (ed. Pession, p. 211): 'Ad decimum dicendum, quod licet doctor incipiat a rebus, tamen alio modo recipiuntur rerum conceptiones in mente doctoris quam sint in natura rei, quia unumquodque recipitur in altero per modum recipientis: patet enim quod conceptiones in mente doctoris sunt immaterialiter, et materialiter in natura.'

[161] See, e.g., *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 2, q. 1, a. 3 (ed. Mandonnet, I, p. 70): 'Unde, cum Deus secundum unam et eamdem rem sit omnibus modis perfectus, una conceptione non potest integre perfectionem ejus apprehendere, et per consequens nec nominare; et ideo oportet quod diversas conceptiones de eo habeat, quae sunt diversae rationes, et quod diversa nomina imponat significantia rationes illas. Unde nomina illa non sunt synonima, inquantum significant rationes diversas'; d. 22, q. 1, a. 3 (ed. Mandonnet, I, p. 538): 'et inde veniunt diversa nomina attributorum; quae omnia quamvis significent unam rem, non tamen significant unam secundum unam rationem; et ideo non sunt synonyma'; *Summa contra Gentiles*, I, c. 35 (ed. Pera – Marc – Caramello, p. 46, n. 299–300): 'Ostenditur etiam ex dictis quod, quamvis nomina de Deo dicta eandem rem significent, non tamen sunt synonyma: quia non significant rationem eandem'; *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 7, a. 6 (ed. Pession, p. 201): 'Sed sciendum

thing induces one to think that signified thing and signification also amount to the same. The identification in the case of the latter, in turn, proves the identification in the case of the former. If a certain difference at times emerges, it is the following: in some cases, signification refers to the full semantic expression of the signified thing. As an example, 'human being' is a name that signifies the human nature and this is its signified thing; but its signification is 'rational animal', which is the definitional expression of the conceptual content of human being. This linguistic distinction prepares the way for the epistemic distinction occasionally occurring in Aquinas's texts, namely that between thing cognized (*res intellecta*) and what has been cognized about a thing (*intellectum*). From here arises Aquinas's need to distinguish intelligible species and concepts.

12. Conclusion

In Aquinas's texts an interpreter can find evidence supporting a representationalist as well as a direct realist interpretation of his theory of concepts. In particular, we have insisted that Aquinas tends to regard the mental similitude of a thing and the thing to which the similitude refers as one and the same, since both of them are to a certain degree formed by the intellect and portrayed as a similitude of extramental things. Since Aquinas emphasizes that names signify mental similitudes of extramental things, one can therefore conclude that Aquinas subscribes to a position on the semantics of names that does not commit him in a special way to representationalism rather than to direct realism in epistemology.

My interpretation, as mentioned, is qualified. I uphold that mental similitudes are, for Aquinas, that which replaces in the intellect the natures that the extramental things exhibit, but such similitudes are also the way in which the natures of extramental things can exist in the intellect. From my point of view, the two theses called in the literature 'conformality thesis' and 'representation thesis' overlap. It should be noted, in fact, that every intellective similitude is universal in character and that no universal, for Aquinas, can exist outside the intellect. A universal exists always and only as a nature that has been abstracted and unified by the intellect, and this abstracting and unifying act performed by our intellect just amounts to producing a similitude. Aquinas says that the similitudes are formed by the intellect, and this is a clear point—as emphasized by Claude Panaccio—in favor of the classification of Aquinas among the advocates of representationalism. But it is

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quod significatio nominis non immediate refertur ad rem, sed mediante intellectu: sunt enim voces notae earum quae sunt in anima passionum, et ipsae intellectus conceptiones sunt rerum similitudines, ut patet per Philosophum in principio *Periherm*. Quod ergo aliqua nomina non sint synonyma, potest impediri vel ex parte rerum significatarum, vel ex parte rationum intellectarum per nomina, ad quas significandas nomina imponuntur'; *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 13, a. 4 (Opera Omnia, IV, p. 145): 'Et ideo nomina Deo attributa, licet significent unam rem, tamen, quia significant eam sub rationibus multis et diversis, non sunt synonyma.'

true that Aquinas also says, until to the point of tedium, that the similitudes are *similitudes of* things' natures and that when the intellect reflects on itself and on its process of knowledge it attaches the so-called intentional properties directly to the nature of the thing cognized and not to itself or to the similitudes as such.[162] We should not forget that Aquinas finally distinguishes concepts from both the acts of intellective cognition and the intelligible species. My impression is that the albeit qualified identification between similitudes and contents of similitudes tries to keep together two aspects that will be carefully distinguished after Aquinas: the demand for a certain 'objectivity' of our knowledge and the refusal to admit a third dimension in the mental, that is, that which will be called after Aquinas 'objective being'.

What about representationalism, therefore? If by 'representationalism' we mean 'any theory of cognition which attributes a crucial and indispensable role to some sort of mental representation',[163] it is plain that Aquinas should be counted among the advocates of representationalism. In particular, he is a supporter of what some scholars have called the 'simple version' of representationalism.[164] Indeed, many of Aquinas's usual ways of speaking about concepts can be smoothly accommodated according to a representationalist vocabulary. As a matter of fact, there are many texts in which Aquinas says that a species or a concept is a representation of a thing, and in some of these texts the technical notion of similitude (*similitudo*) is explained in terms of the more primitive notion of representation, as has been seen.[165] But the strongest argument in favor of representationalism—I think—is

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[162] For details on Aquinas's account of intentions and further bibliographical references, see the third study in this volume. See also Amerini, 'Thomas Aquinas and Hervaeus Natalis'. For a close discussion of the conformality thesis and the representation thesis, see d'Onofrio, *Aquinas as Representationalist*; Brower – Brower-Toland, 'Aquinas on Mental Representation'; and Scarpelli Cory, 'Aquinas's Intelligible Species'.

[163] See Panaccio, 'Aquinas on Intellectual Representation', p. 185. For an introduction to representationalism in Middle Ages, see M. Tweedale, 'Mental Representations in Later Scholasticism', in J.C. Smith (ed.), *The Historical Foundation of Cognitive Science*, Dordrecht: Reidel, 1990, p. 35–51; P. King, 'Rethinking Representation in the Middle Ages', in H. Lagerlund (ed.), *Representation and Objects of Thought in Medieval Philosophy*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005, p. 83–102; H. Lagerlund, 'Mental Representation in Medieval Philosophy', in E.N. Zalta – U. Nodelman (eds.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2023 Edition), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2023/entries/representation-medieval/ (last access on July 30, 2025); C. Panaccio, 'Mental Representation', in R. Pasnau (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, 2 vols., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, vol. I, p. 346–56; and the contributions in G. Klima (ed.), *Intentionality, Cognition, and Mental Representation in Medieval Philosophy*, Fordham, N.Y.: Fordham University Press, 2015.

[164] See King, 'Rethinking Representation', p. 84–7. For a recent reappraisal of Aquinas's representationalism, see Brower – Brower-Toland, 'Aquinas on Mental Representation'; also P. Moya Canas, 'Immanence, Intentionality and Representation in Thomas Aquinas', *Veritas* 28 (2013), p. 113–31; P.J. Hartman, 'Durand of St. Pourçain and Thomas Aquinas on Representation', *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 30/1 (2013), p. 19–34.

[165] See, e.g., *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, IV, d. 8, q. 2, a. 1, q.la 4, ad 1; *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 2, a. 3 and a. 13; q. 3, a. 1, ad 2; especially q. 8, a. 11, ad 3 (Opera Omnia, XLIII/2–1, p. 256,259–66): 'Ad tertium dicendum quod inter cognoscens et cognitum non exigitur similitudo quae est secundum convenientiam in natura, sed secundum repraesentationem tantum. Constat enim quod forma lapidis in anima est longe alterius naturae quam forma lapidis in materia; sed inquantum

that Aquinas looks at human knowledge as a discontinuous process. According to Aquinas, there is an insurmountable gap between the sensory part of the human soul and its intellective part. It is not clear how the move from the sensible to the intelligible happens, i.e., how we pass from the perception of sensible accidents to the intellective cognition of their substantial subject, but Aquinas is explicit in saying that phantasms cannot act directly on the intellect, impressing by virtue of themselves their similitude on the possible intellect. The reason given by Aquinas in the *Summa theologiae* is that they are representations of singular things and exist in material organs. But when the agent intellect sheds its light on them, they are made capable (*redduntur habilia*) to enable the agent intellect to abstract from them an intelligible species.[166] The phrase '*reddere habilia*' can be read in two ways: either the agent intellect makes the phantasms able to stimulate the intelligible species and at the same time the phantasms continue to be what they are, or it does so by changing the nature of phantasms as well. Aquinas's text seems to encourage the second reading. The light of the agent intellect somehow 'transforms' the phantasms in the sense that, at least, they are now put in a relation with the intellect. If so, the light of the agent intellect does not make the phantasms able to impress by themselves their similitude on the possible intellect, but it is the agent intellect itself that abstracts the species from the phantasms thus illuminated. In such a crucial passage of the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas seems to believe that the result of the agent intellect's act of illuminating coincides with the production of a similitude of the things that are represented by the phantasms. I understand this passage to mean that the agent intellect is involved, regardless of whether it is through one or many acts, in both the process of illumination of the phantasms and the formation of the intelligible species.

In particular, Aquinas makes it clear that such a similitude results from an act of selective and separate consideration of the nature that is exhibited by the extramental things.[167] This means that the 'illuminated' phantasms simply give the occasion to the human intellect to form a similitude of the things represented by the phantasms. So, neither do phantasms impress precisely their form on the intellect, nor does the intellect extract from the phantasms a form that is one and numerically

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repraesentat eam, sic est principium ducens in cognitionem eius'; *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 45, a. 7; q. 93, a. 6; *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 8, a. 1. For an analysis of some of these passages, see Panaccio, 'Aquinas on Intellectual Representation', p. 196–200.

166 Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 85, a. 1, ad 4 (Opera Omnia, V, p. 332): 'Ad quartum dicendum quod phantasmata et illuminantur ab intellectu agente; et iterum ab eis, per virtutem intellectus agentis, species intelligibiles abstrahuntur. Illuminantur quidem, quia, sicut pars sensitiva ex coniunctione ad intellectivam efficitur virtuosior, ita phantasmata ex virtute intellectus agentis redduntur habilia ut ab eis intentiones intelligibiles abstrahantur. Abstrahit autem intellectus agens species intelligibiles a phantasmatibus, inquantum per virtutem intellectus agentis accipere possumus in nostra consideratione naturas specierum sine individualibus conditionibus, secundum quarum similitudines intellectus possibilis informatur.'

167 Cf. *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 85, a. 1, ad 3; also *Quaestiones de anima*, q. 17, ad 4.

the same with that which is supposed to be encapsulated into the phantasms. If no numerical identity of form can be granted in the process of cognition, the mental similitude can be thought of in no other way if not as a *replacement* of the things represented by the phantasms:

> In this way an intelligible species is said to be abstracted from phantasms: namely not in the sense that one and the same form in number, which previously was in the phantasms, then comes to be in the possible intellect, just like a body is translated from one place to another place.[168]

This text from the *Summa* offers a clear sense in to which Aquinas might be called representationalist in theory of knowledge. But at a closer look there is also a sense in to which he may not be. If by 'representationalism' we indeed mean a theory of cognition according to which 'no extramental thing can be intellectively cognized without a concept—or mental word—being formed *as an intermediate object of intellection*',[169] it is plain again, at least according to the later writings, that Aquinas rejects representationalism, for two reasons. The first is that a concept is not that to which our intellect primarily turns its gaze but only what brings to its complete realization an act of intellective cognition stemming from extramental things and the intelligible species. A concept is or includes only what is cognized about extramental things. For Aquinas, we intellectively cognize an extramental thing *a* only when we know what *a* is. In this case, intellectively cognizing a thing *a* amounts to knowing *that a* is *b*. Accordingly, we cognize *a* by way of *b*, i.e., when we cognize *b*. But when we cognize *b*, we are actually cognizing *a*, because we are cognizing *b about a*. This is to say that our knowing that *a* is *b* is intrinsically and primitively intentional, because it is a cognition of the kind '*b*-of-*a*'. In many texts mentioned in the notes of this study, Aquinas stresses this point by saying that concepts are formed in order to cognize things, that concepts are immediate similitudes of things, that we do not linger on concepts when we cognize them, and that concepts are not properly cognized by our intellect if not by reflection.

This leads us to the second reason. As has been frequently noted, in many texts Aquinas informs us that a concept can be treated either as an item existing in the intellect as in its subject or as a similitude of extramental things. We have often repeated this distinction in the present study. Taken in the first way, concepts are

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168 Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 85, a. 1, ad 3 (Opera Omnia, V, p. 332): 'Et per hunc modum dicitur abstrahi species intelligibilis a phantasmatibus: non quod aliqua eadem numero forma, quae prius fuit in phantasmatibus, postmodum fiat in intellectu possibili, ad modum quo corpus accipitur ab uno loco et transfertur ad alterum' (my translation). The reason why there is not numerical identity is clearly given in *Quaestio de spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 10, ad 17 (Opera Omnia, XXIV/2, p. 114,606–15): 'Ad septimum decimum dicendum quod species que est in ymaginatione est eiusdem generis cum specie que est in sensu, quia utraque est indiuidualis et materialis; set species que est in intellectu est alterius generis, quia est uniuersalis. Et ideo species ymaginaria non potest imprimere speciem intelligibilem sicut species sensibilis imprimit speciem ymaginariam; propter quod necessaria est uirtus intellectiua actiua, non autem uirtus sensitiua actiua.'

169 Panaccio, 'Aquinas on Intellectual Representation', p. 185 (his emphasis).

not the primary object of our intellective cognition, unless we are psychologists or we are reflecting upon our acts of knowledge.[170] This is to say that epistemology does not concern mental states, processes and items supporting knowledge, but the cognitive upshots of such processes: especially definitional and propositional conceptual activities. Taken in the second way, by contrast, concepts can be considered the primary object of our intellective cognition. In this case, though, we must proceed carefully. Indeed, concepts cannot constitute the primary and proper object of cognition, even if they are understood as likenesses or *similitudes of* things. But they can when they are taken as similitudes *of things*, namely as *cognized things*. Aquinas's point is that a concept (regardless of how it may be considered) is in itself nothing other than an *instrument* by which we cognize extramental things.[171] Concepts are required because no extramental thing can be intellectively grasped by means of intuitive acts of intellective cognition, nor can things be grasped by the intellect according to the being they have extramentally. On its part, the intellect needs something to come into contact with the extramental world. But a mental instrument *qua* instrument is not cognized when we are cognizing a thing, even though it is within it or through it that things can be cognized. Or, at least, it is not cognized in the same way we cognize the thing. It is the nature of the thing itself that is immediately related to our intellect, even though by the mediation of concepts. Saying this—i.e., that the nature of extramental things is *immediately* related to our intellect although *mediately*, namely by means of concepts—could sound

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170 See, e.g., *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 85, a. 2, arg. 3 and ad 3 (see above, note 154).

171 Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Quodlibet* V, q. 5, a. 2, ad 1 (Opera Omnia, XXV/2, p. 375,48–9): 'Ad primum ergo dicendum quod intellectus intelligit aliquid dupliciter: uno modo formaliter, et sic intelligit specie intelligibili qua fit in actu; alio modo sicut instrumento quo utitur ad aliud intelligendum, et hoc modo intellectus uerbo intelligit, quia format uerbum ad hoc quod intelligat rem.' Aquinas says the same at the beginning of his career. See, e.g., *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, IV, d. 49, q. 2, a. 1, ad 15 (I downloaded this text from www.corpusthomisticum.org/, last access on July 30, 2025): 'Ad quintumdecimum dicendum quod medium in visione corporali et intellectiva invenitur triplex. Primum est medium sub quo videtur, et hoc est quod perficit visum ad videndum in generali, non determinans visum ad aliquod speciale objectum, sicut se habet lumen corporale ad visum corporalem, et lumen intellectus agentis ad intellectum possibilem. Secundum est medium quo videtur, et hoc est forma visibilis qua determinatur uterque visus ad speciale objectum, sicut per formam lapidis ad cognoscendum lapidem. Tertium est medium in quo videtur, et hoc est id per cuius inspectionem ducitur visus in aliam rem, sicut inspiciendo speculum ducitur in ea quae in speculo repraesentantur, et videndo imaginem ducitur in imaginatum; et sic etiam intellectus per cognitionem effectus ducitur in causam, vel e converso'; a. 7, ad 8: 'Ad octavum dicendum quod etiam quando aliquid videtur per similitudinem alterius rei, potest contingere quod videns rem per medium cogitet de re immediate sine hoc quod eius cognitio convertatur ad aliquam aliam rem; quia in illud medium non convertitur ut est res quaedam, sed ut imago illius rei quae per ipsam cognoscitur. Idem autem est motus intellectus in imaginem inquantum est imago et in imaginatum, quamvis alius motus sit intellectus in imaginem inquantum est res quaedam et in id cuius est imago'; *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 10, a. 8, ad s.c. 2 (Opera Omnia, XXII/2–1, p. 324,469–77): 'Et sic etiam, cum dicitur, quod "visio intellectualis eas res continet quae non habent sui similitudines quae non sunt quod ipsae", non intelligitur quod visio intellectualis non fiat per aliquas species, quae non sunt idem quod res intellectae, sed quod visio intellectualis non terminatur ad aliquam rei similitudinem, sed ad ipsam essentiam rei.'

paradoxical. But it is not so. Concepts are necessary conditions for the natures of extramental things to be cognized by us, since such natures can be cognized only after abstraction. They are indeed what we can find at the end of our act of intellective cognition of extramental things. But we do not linger on concepts when we are to cognize things. In brief, we cannot cognize things without having concepts of things, but cognizing things through concepts does not amount to cognizing concepts but things (although in the case of reflexive knowledge we can cognize concepts as well as things).[172]

My opinion is that already in the early writings Aquinas worked with such a qualification in mind. Accordingly, I consider it incorrect to speak of representationalism with regard to Aquinas's early epistemology. As a matter of fact, there are texts belonging to the early period of his career in which Aquinas draws a sharp distinction between object and instruments of cognition, and there is at least one place where Aquinas makes an interesting distinction between cognizing a thing by a concept and cognizing a thing by an image.[173]

Could this compel us to say that Aquinas's semantics presupposes direct realism instead of representationalism in epistemology? This is a vexed question and we have seen that there are many reasons to qualify the answer. Clearly, if by 'direct realism' we mean a theory of cognition that does not make use of any sort of mental representation or that admits direct, intuitive intellective cognition of extramental things, Aquinas evidently is not a supporter of direct realism. It is tricky for the interpreter to reconcile direct realism with Aquinas's major semantic thesis that names do not signify anything but concepts of things, which are formed by the intellect. On the other hand, though, if by 'direct realism' we mean a theory of cognition according to which an extramental thing can be cognized without a mental object being (previously) cognized (and remarkably, cognized in the same way in which the extramental thing is cognized), then Aquinas could subscribe to direct realism, although with a crucial qualification: the extramental thing our intellect actually turns to cognizing is the thing as received and somehow 'reconstructed' by the intellect.[174] In principle, this 'modified version of direct realism' does not

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[172] See Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, I 10 (Opera Omnia, I* 1, p. 50,40–6 and 71–3); also *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 2, a. 1; *Expositio super librum De causis*, I, lec. 1.

[173] See *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, III, d. 14, q. 1, a. 3, q.la 1; also *Quaestiones de veritate*, q. 10, a. 4, ad 1. See also above, note 171.

[174] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 14, a. 6, ad 1 (Opera Omnia, IV, p. 176): 'Non enim semper cognoscens cognoscit cognitum secundum illud esse quod habet in cognoscente: oculus enim non cognoscit lapidem secundum esse quod habet in oculo; sed per speciem lapidis quam habet in se, cognoscit lapidem secundum esse quod habet extra oculum. Et si aliquis cognoscens cognoscat cognitum secundum esse quod habet in cognoscente, nihilominus cognoscit ipsum secundum esse quod habet extra cognoscentem, sicut intellectus cognoscit lapidem secundum esse intelligibile quod habet in intellectu, inquantum cognoscit se intelligere; sed nihilominus cognoscit esse lapidis in propria natura'; q. 75, a. 5 (Opera Omnia, V, p. 202): 'Manifestum est enim quod omne quod recipitur in aliquo, recipitur in eo per modum recipientis. Sic autem cognoscitur unumquodque, sicut forma eius est in

put Aquinas in a safe place with respect to skepticism in knowledge.[175] Aquinas avoids falling into it simply because he holds as an unexplainable fact concerning cognition that the mental object that the intellect has depurated of materiality and singularity is exactly the same, as to its essential features, as the mattered object. And this is so because the former *represents* the nature of the latter. Such an identity is understood by Aquinas in a realistic manner, which is what permits him to say that even when we are reflecting on ourselves and our concepts, we are cognizing the thing in its nature and not the concept.[176] In other words, the fact that a concept is a mental similitude of an extramental thing's nature is not a fact that needs further explanation but it is itself the explanation of the fact that an extramental thing and a cognized thing essentially share the same form. As we have said, this explains Aquinas's conviction that abstraction is not a form of falsification and that we cannot be in error about the apprehension of things' essences. Nonetheless, the matter-depurated object can exist only in the intellect, in the guise of a similitude, while the mattered object can exist only in the external world.

Someone could, however, be unsatisfied with my interpretation and raise two objections. First, one could note that Aquinas's epistemology cannot be classified in any way as 'direct realist' for there is an irreducible difference between an epistemology where intermediary items are posited and an epistemology where no such items are posited, *regardless whether intermediary items are known or not*. Suppose a person is locked in a room and has access to the exterior world (say, her/his garden) only through a window. Even if when s/he looks at the garden, s/he does not aim at the window or see the window, her/his visual experience of the exterior world is not as direct as the one s/he could have if s/he could leave her/his room and go outside. The same thing goes in the case of Aquinas's epistemology when compared to a direct realist's one.

I think one could concede the premise of the objection but not the conclusion. It is obvious that since Aquinas admits intermediary items such as mental representations, he should be called a representationalist and not a direct realist, if the latter is one who would not admit any intermediary items at all. But the conclusion does not follow, because the two cases are different. When one sees the exterior garden through a window, one knows one is seeing the garden through a window, so that one is aware that one is seeing and knowing the window as well. But when Aquinas

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cognoscente anima autem intellectiva cognoscit rem aliquam in sua natura absolute, puta lapidem inquantum est lapis absolute. Est igitur forma lapidis absolute, secundum propriam rationem formalem, in anima intellectiva. Anima igitur intellectiva est forma absoluta, non autem aliquid compositum ex materia et forma.' More explicitly, see *De unitate intellectus*, c. 5 (Opera Omnia, XLIII, p. 512,186–201).

[175] Perler, 'Essentialism and Direct Realism', p. 113. For more on Aquinas and skepticism, see H.T. Adriaenssen, *Representation and Scepticism from Aquinas to Descartes*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

[176] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I[a], q. 14, a. 6, ad 1 (Opera Omnia, IV, p. 176; see the text above, note 174).

emphasizes that we know extramental things *through mental similitudes but not through knowing mental similitudes*, he is telling us that mental similitudes address us immediately to the world, so we do not pause on them, as we do when we look at a garden through a window. We do not cognize our mental similitudes of things when we are to cognize things, even though mental similitudes need to be present in order to cognize things.

A second objection may be nonetheless around the corner. Someone could object that in the texts quoted above, for example in note 171, Aquinas says that the intellection of something as an instrument is a specific type of cognition; but if this is true, then it is a cognition; and if it is a cognition, the instrument (i.e., the mental representation) is cognized, even if only as an instrument. But if it is cognized, it is trivial that it is cognized, and this clearly is not conceded by a theorist of direct realism. I have already replied to this objection above, when I said that, for Aquinas, a mental representation, at least, 'is not cognized in the same way we cognize the thing'. The hypothetical objector could consider this reply unsatisfactory, especially in relation to the conciliatory approach between representationalism and direct realism I propose in the present study: if intermediaries are known, even if not in the same way as things, direct realism does not seem to be an option. And this could be problematic even if representationalism were redefined negatively, as I did above.

I think that even this objection does not reach the target. Aquinas is clear that knowing a thing through a mental similitude does not involve any knowledge of the similitude itself, unless we are not reflecting on the similitude as such. For Aquinas, mental similitudes are made in such a way that they directly reorient us toward the things they represent. The knowledge of something *through* an instrument, therefore, is not the same as the knowledge of something *as* an instrument. For this reason, I think one could accept that representationalism is not incompatible with direct realism, and that this prescinds from the manner and degree of cognition we are inclined to attribute to ourselves with respect to our mental similitudes.

It is time to conclude. In this study I have proven that, for Aquinas, there is no room for a third realm of being alongside the being of the singular things existing in the outer world and the being of the singular cognitive instruments existing in our intellect. All the same, the matter-depurated object that our intellect forms in the process of intellective cognition remains mind-independent with respect to the nature it exhibits, but mind-dependent as to its concrete existence and to the intentional properties it can receive. To my mind, this form of weak (direct) realism turns out to be fully compatible with representationalism after all. Aquinas's position is quintessentially representationalist, but Aquinas's defense of direct realism is beyond doubt. Thus, 'Realist Representationalism' is the label I might propose to condense my interpretation of Aquinas's position. Founding itself upon such an

epistemology, Aquinas's semantics may be proposed as an example of mixed theory, which could be put in between descriptivism and rigid referentiality.[177]

The analysis of Aquinas's explanation of the semantics of common names has given us a helpful perspective from which to look at Aquinas's theory of concepts. As has been seen, Aquinas holds that common names have been imposed to signify things, but things can be signified only to the extent to which they are cognized and this happens thanks to mental similitudes. For this reason, Aquinas excludes the possibility that common names can signify extramental things as such and mental occurrences of concepts too, for both are singular and no common name, as common, can signify an individual thing. The analysis of Aquinas's semantics put us in the right position to understand and reconcile two apparently conflicting claims that occur in Aquinas's works, namely that names signify the concepts of things and that names signify things according to concepts. I have argued that these amount to the same for Aquinas, and this informs us that, for him, probably, concepts and cognized things too have to amount to the same. This conclusion furthermore helps us to understand why representationalism and direct realism can be kept together in Aquinas.

[177] On this, see, e.g., G. de Anna, *Realismo metafisico e rappresentazione mentale*: *un'indagine tra Tommaso d'Aquino e Hilary Putman*, Padua: Antenore, 2001, to which I refer for further literature on the debates on Aquinas's semantic realism or anti-realism. I do not enter into such debates here, although I have given arguments in this study to prove that Aquinas rejects, if not a realist, a direct-realist account of the semantics of names. For more on the descriptivist theories of names, see E. Michaelson, 'Reference', in E.N. Zalta – U. Nodelman (eds.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2024 Edition), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2024/entries/reference/ (last access on July 30, 2025).

II

Hervaeus Natalis on Concepts and Intentional Objects

1. Introduction

Among the first interpreters of Aquinas, there was great controversy over what concepts are. Two major questions were debated: first, whether concepts can be reduced to the acts of intellective cognition that originated them, and second, whether the concept of a thing can be distinguished from the thing itself *qua* cognized through that concept. The Master General of the Dominican Order, Hervaeus Natalis (ca. 1260–1323), proposes an understanding of Aquinas's theory of concepts that will exert a deep influence on the history of the so-called Thomism at least up to the Renaissance. One of Hervaeus's goals is to clarify precisely the relation between the concept and the thing that has been cognized through that concept—a point that, as has been seen in the first study, is left unclarified by Aquinas. We shall see that while Hervaeus describes a concept as something mind-dependent, he considers the thing that has been cognized as something mind-independent to a certain degree.

In what follows, Hervaeus's answer to the above questions will emerge from his discussion with another important Dominican author, Durand of St.-Pourçain (1270/75–1334). I shall reserve § 3 to reconstructing their dispute. Hervaeus's final position is that concepts cannot be reduced to acts of intellective cognition—the position held by Durand—since two or more numerically different acts can be associated with one and numerically the same concept. A concept, that of rose for example, is also different from the thing that has been cognized, namely the rose. The intellect is the efficient cause of the concept of rose, but the rose that the intellect imports through a concept is the extramental thing itself. Despite his specifications on the nature of concepts, we shall see that an interpreter can however have with Hervaeus the same difficulties of classification s/he encountered with Aquinas—difficulties that were discussed in the first study—, but for a different reason. Aquinas did not go into the relationship that the concept of rose bears to the rose that has been cognized, so it remains uncertain whether Aquinas regarded the concept of rose as something that in the intellect replaces the extramental rose's nature or, rather, as the extramental rose's nature itself as existing within the intellect under the guise of a concept. Hervaeus, by contrast, presents a concept such as that of rose as a two-faced item, including the concept itself, understood as a quality of the intellect and as a token endowed with a psychological or 'subjective' mode of existence, and a cognized thing, which is instead endowed with a peculiar mode of existence, which Hervaeus calls 'objective'. In Hervaeus's vocabulary, a

thing is said to exist subjectively when it exists as a real subject of properties or as a real property inhering in a subject (this is the case of concepts, which inhere in the intellect), while a thing is said to exist objectively when it exists in the intellect as the object of an act of knowledge (and this is the case of the thing that has been known). While Aquinas seems to waver between representationalism and direct realism in epistemology (as we proved in the first study), Hervaeus indistinguishably mixes up representationalism and direct realism in his theory of knowledge. With all that said, we shall see that Hervaeus's principal goal remains that of defending the extramental extension of our ordinary, natural process of intellective cognition.

The purpose of this second study is to investigate Hervaeus's account of concepts.[178] On other occasions, I have studied Hervaeus's *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, which is Hervaeus's most extensive explanation of the mechanisms of intellective cognition.[179] I want to follow here another path and to look at other texts of Hervaeus. In particular, my focus in this study will be on his *Tractatus de verbo* and his second *Quodlibet*, since they contain important discussions on the nature of concepts. Two major aspects of Hervaeus's theory of concepts will be discussed in what follows: first, the metaphysical status of concepts (§ 2 and § 4), and second, their extramental foundation (§ 6). In reconstructing Hervaeus's position on the first issue, I shall begin by recalling Aquinas's doctrine of concepts, summarizing what was said in the first study and underscoring what will be useful for the purposes of the present study. Then I shall move on to discussing Hervaeus's position. In particular, I shall first prove that for Hervaeus, like for Aquinas, concepts cannot be reduced to the intelligible species of things (namely, to the first intellective abstractions of things produced by our intellect) nor to the acts of intellective cognition (§ 2). Having reconstructed Hervaeus's dispute with Durand on the possible reduction of concepts to acts (§ 3), I shall secondly prove that, for Hervaeus, concepts can neither be reduced to the things that are cognized. Hervaeus's answer, finally, is the same as that of Aquinas: concepts are the terminations of the acts of intellective cognition, what Augustine called 'formed cogitations'. Specifically, they amount to the terminations of acts of expressed cognition. At the end of my reconstruction of

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[178] For the sake of clarity, let it be understood that in this study too I shall speak generally of concepts, meaning to refer to universal and natural-kind concepts. I shall not discuss the case of singular concepts nor that of fictitious concepts.

[179] See F. Amerini, *I trattati 'De universalibus' di Francesco da Prato e Stefano da Rieti (Secolo XIV)*, Spoleto: Fondazione CISAM, 2003; F. Amerini, *La logica di Francesco da Prato. Con l'edizione critica della 'Loyca' e del 'Tractatus de voce univoca'*, Florence: Sismel/Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2005; F. Amerini, 'Realism and Intentionality: Hervaeus Natalis, Peter Auriol, and William Ockham in Discussion', in S.F. Brown – T. Dewender – T. Kobusch (eds.), *Philosophical Debates at Paris in the Early Fourteenth Century*, Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2009, p. 239–60; F. Amerini, 'Hervaeus Natalis on Universals', in F. Amerini – L. Cesalli (eds.), *Universals in the Fourteenth Century*, Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2017, p. 109–37; Amerini, 'Aquinas and Hervaeus Natalis on First and Second Intentionality': F. Amerini, 'Toward a Unified Account of the Intentionality of Mind. The Case of Hervaeus Natalis', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 98/4 (2024), p. 375–94.

Hervaeus's account of concepts, I shall summarize the mechanisms of intellective cognition according to Hervaeus (§ 5). My final step will be to deal with the second issue of this study and present the moderate realist answer offered by Hervaeus to the question of the extramental foundation of concepts (§ 6). In the final Conclusion (§ 7), we shall thus be ready to assess Hervaeus's theory of concepts with respect to the historiographic debate concerning the representationalist vs. direct realist interpretation of Aquinas's theory of knowledge.

2. The Metaphysical Status of Concepts I: Hervaeus's *Tractatus de verbo*, q. 1, aa. 1–2

2.1. Aquinas and the Twofold Status of a Concept

In one respect, Hervaeus's theory of concepts may be seen as an attempt to understand correctly Aquinas's doctrine. The first question of Hervaeus's *Tractatus de verbo*, for instance, shows a clear and close connection to the celebrated text of Aquinas's *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 8, a. 1.[180] As was said in the previous study, in that text Aquinas distinguishes four items in the process of intellective cognition: the concept or mental word (*conceptio*, *verbum mentis*); the cognized thing (*res intellecta*); the intelligible species (*species intelligibilis*); and the activity of cognizing (*intelligere*).[181] While refining his early position on concepts, Aquinas takes mental words or concepts to be distinct from intelligible species.[182] The reason for this conviction is that a concept bears different relations to each of the other items. First, a concept cannot be the cognized thing, because a cognized thing can sometimes exist outside the intellect, whereas a concept always exists inside the intellect, as the end-product to which any act of intellective cognition

[180] We do not know the date of composition of Hervaeus's *Tractatus de verbo*, but it probably dates to around 1305–1307. It was definitely composed before *Quodlibet* II, since this latter contains a reference to it (*Quodlibeta*, II, q. 8, ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 49va), and before the first redaction of Durand's Commentary on the *Sentences*. The second *Quodlibet* should have been disputed at Paris in 1309. On the life and works of Hervaeus, still useful is A. de Guimarães, 'Hervé Noël (†1323), Étude biographique', *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 8 (1938), p. 5–81; T. Kaeppeli, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum Medii Aevi*, 3 vols., Rome: Ad Sanctae Sabinae, 1970, vol. I, *s.v.*; T. Kaeppeli – E. Panella, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum Medii Aevi*, Rome: Istituto Storico Domenicano, 1993, vol. IV, *s.v.* For quotations from Hervaeus's works I refer to the edition Venice, 1513 (rep. Ridgewood, N.J.: The Gregg Press, 1966) which contains his *Quodlibeta* together with some treatises, not all authentic. Punctuation of the edition has been slightly modified. On Hervaeus's *Quodlibeta* and their context, see R.L. Friedman, 'Dominicans Quodlibetal Literature, ca. 1260–1330', in C. Schabel (ed.), *Theological Quodlibet in the Middle Ages*, Leiden: Brill, 2007, p. 431–49. For an overview on Hervaeus's life and works, see also *The Hervaeus Natalis Homepage*, edited by F. Amerini and F. Binotto, at https://www.hervaeusnatalis.unipr.it/ (last access July 30, 2025).

[181] See *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 8, a. 1 (ed. Pession, p. 215). The entire text has been quoted above, note 78.

[182] As seen in the previous study, early in his career, Aquinas is more nuanced about the distinction between concepts and intelligible species. On Aquinas's different views of mental words or concepts, see Paissac, *Theologie du verbe*.

stemming from the extramental things is oriented. Second, a concept cannot be the intelligible species, because an intelligible species is that by virtue of which an extramental thing is intellectively cognized, whereas a concept indicates that which is finally cognized about an extramental thing. Third, a concept cannot be the act of intellective cognition, because the activity of cognizing is the action by way of which we are actually cognizing a thing, whereas a concept instead expresses the full realization or the end-product of such an action. According to Aquinas's later theory of concepts—once concepts are taken as distinct from intelligible species—a concept is something formed by the intellect in order to cognize things. Specifically, we showed in the first study that Aquinas characterizes a concept as something quasi-constituted (*quasi … constitutum*) by means of an act of intellective cognition and as a similitude of the cognized thing. The reason for distinguishing the relation of causation from that of representation in the case of a concept—Aquinas notes—is that an effect has to be assimilated to its cause according to the form of the cause. But a concept is an effect of the intellect. Since the form of the intellect, namely what informs the intellect, is the cognized thing, which exists in the intellect thanks to an intelligible species, it follows that a concept can be said to be assimilated to the intellect according to the thing cognized. Therefore—Aquinas concludes—a concept represents the thing cognized.[183] Echoing Aquinas's wording, Hervaeus solves the first question of his *Tractatus de verbo* by distinguishing four articles, in which he discusses, respectively, whether the mental word or concept has to be identified with the intelligible species (a. 1), with the act of cognition (a. 2), with the cognized thing (a. 3), or, finally, with the fully developed concept (*cogitatio formata*) (a. 4).[184]

In the Conclusion of the first study I noted that, on the basis of Aquinas's texts such as *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 8, a. 1, scholars disagree on whether to consider Aquinas a theorist of representationalism or direct realism in epistemology. This disagreement shows that Aquinas himself probably was not as completely clear in his formulations as one would expect him to be. As was concluded in the previous study, in Aquinas's works there is evidence of both attitudes towards epistemology.

Hervaeus attempts to account for Aquinas's conflicting pronouncements by qualifying the ways in which concepts can be identified with the cognized things. In one respect, his treatment is nothing other than an interpretation of Aquinas. Specifically, Hervaeus maintains that a concept or a mental word is distinct from the intelligible species, the act of intellective cognition, and the cognized thing, by rehearsing the same reasons given by Aquinas. This reveals, more fundamentally, that Hervaeus gives the same logical sequence in explaining the process of

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[183] See above, note 79.

[184] See *De verbo*, q. 1, aa. 1–4 (ed. Venice, 1513), fols. 10ra–13ra. For details on the relation between Hervaeus's *De verbo* and Aquinas's later theory of concepts, see C. Trottmann, 'Verbe mental et noétique thomiste dans le "De verbo" d'Hervé de Nédellec', *Revue Thomiste* 97/1 (1997), p. 47–62. Note that in this study I shall only speak of concepts, drawing no distinction between concepts and mental words.

intellective cognition and the nature of the cognitive act as Aquinas gave.[185] But in another respect, Hervaeus's disambiguation of what concepts are brings to light the originality of Hervaeus with respect to Aquinas. In order to illustrate the novelty of Hervaeus's position and address correctly his theory of concepts, let me proceed by considering a concrete case.

2.2. Hervaeus's Account of Concepts

According to Hervaeus, every act of ordinary, natural knowledge in human beings originates from an external individual thing. When I see for the first time an individual human being, Hercules the Hero for instance, he leaves an impression on my intellect by stimulating my intellect to work on such an impression. In the wake of tradition, Hervaeus identifies such an impressed and yet confused knowledge with that which is associated with the intelligible species—supposing one is disposed to admit the existence of such a sort of psychological item.[186] More precisely, an intel-

[185] It must be said, preliminarily, that Hervaeus works with a different epistemology from Aquinas's. In general, in addressing the problem of intellective cognition, he accepts the distinction between intuitive and abstractive cognition, introduced by John Duns Scotus. On the one hand, Hervaeus links intuitive cognition to the presence and existence of an extramental thing. Hervaeus holds that it is impossible to have an intuitive cognition of non-present and non-existing things (see *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 5, ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 41va–b). On the other hand, quite traditionally, he links intuitive cognition to sensory cognition (see *Quodlibeta*, IV, q. 11, ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 107rb–vb). There is not, for Hervaeus, an intuitive cognition of the intellective kind besides that of the sensory kind. Abstractive cognition, by contrast, is what brings about abstraction from presence and existence; it especially expresses a definitional knowledge. For an introduction to these aspects of Hervaeus's epistemology, see R.G. Wengert, 'The Sources of Intuitive Cognition in William of Ockham', *Franciscan Studies* 41 (1981), p. 415–47; R.G. Wengert, 'Three Senses of Intuitive Cognition: A Quodlibetal Question of Harvey of Nedellec', *Franciscan Studies* 43 (1983), p. 408–31; and especially D. Piché, 'Intuition et présence selon Hervé de Nédellec. Édition critique du Quodlibet IV, 11', *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge* 90/1 (2023), p. 257–77. See also Tachau, *Vision and Certitude in the Age of Ockham*, p. 55ff.

[186] This caveat is significant in the case of Hervaeus, since he never grants, in an unequivocal way, the existence of intelligible species. From Henry of Ghent onward there was discussion on the need for such mediatory items in intellective cognition. Hervaeus 'moderately' admits the existence of intelligible species in his early *De quattuor materiis contra Henricum de Gandavo* (which dates to around the end of thirteenth century: see *Determinatio de intellectu et specie*, I, ed. Stella, p. 142,9–144,38, and p. 167,29–168,13 for some arguments directly against Henry of Ghent's negation of species), while in the later works he appears more hesitant. To my knowledge, in no later text does Hervaeus explicitly argue in favor of the existence of intelligible species. Quite the opposite, throughout his career Hervaeus usually speaks of intelligible species using precautionary formulas such as 'according to those who hold intelligible species…' or 'if intelligible species indeed exist…'. Among others, see the following texts: *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 36, q. 1 (ed. Venice, 1505, fol. 53va–b); *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 39rb); *Tractatus de beatitudine*, q. 1 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 2vb); *Tractatus de virtutibus*, q. 2 (ed. Venice, 1513, fols. 103vb–104ra); *De verbo*, q. 2, a. 4 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 12rb). It is important to realize, however, that Hervaeus's explanation of intellective cognition is irrespective of the existence of intelligible species as items distinct from the acts of intellective cognition and the cognized things. What Hervaeus requires is, first, that there can be an item that serves the function of starting-point of the intellective process—as the intelligible species or even the cognized thing itself may be—and second, that the acts of intellective cognition logically follow from such an item. On Hervaeus's early theory of intellective cognition in particular, see P.T. Stella, 'La prima critica di Hervaeus Natalis O.P. alla noetica di Enrico di Gand: il "De intellectu et specie" del cosiddetto "De quattuor

ligible species is what is impressed on the possible intellect by an object by virtue of the agent intellect, in order to elicit an act of intellective cognition.[187] Intelligible species precede the acts of intellective cognition, for they express an extramental thing's form that has passed from the state of being potentially knowable to that of being actually knowable, while not yet being actually known by us. In line with a technical vocabulary codified by Henry of Ghent and Godfrey of Fontaines, Hervaeus calls an intelligible species an 'impressed species' (*species impressa*). It is so called because it is understood to designate the first intellective acquaintance with an extramental thing by our intellect, a sort of still confused and approximate knowledge of a thing that we have at the beginning of our activity of intellective cognition about that thing. Since an intelligible species only serves the function of activating the intellective process, Hervaeus holds as unproblematic that I can have an intelligible species of Hercules without having any definite or indefinite thought about him.[188] This mental situation presumably occurs every time someone sees a new thing or hears a new word for the first time. When I see Hercules for the first time, for example, I form a similitude of Hercules which simply allows me to be intellectively in contact with Hercules and recognize him when I see him for a second time. In the first article of his *Tractatus de verbo*, Hervaeus makes this point explicit by illustrating the difference holding between being acquainted with a thing through an intelligible species and elaborating a full-fledged concept of that thing.

Hervaeus takes for granted that my operation of intellectively cognizing Hercules the Hero involves four elements: first, an agent cause of the operation; second, a formal principle activating the operation; third, the activity of operating itself; and fourth, the result or end-product of the operation. Accordingly, Hervaeus ar-

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materiis"', *Salesianum* 21 (1959), p. 125–70; and Lambert M. de Rijk's introduction to Hervaeus Natalis O.P., *De quattuor materiis sive Determinationes contra Henricum de Gandavo*, ed. L.M. de Rijk, 2 vols., Turnhout: Brepols, 2011–2013. For the discussion of general aspects of Hervaeus's epistemology, see P. Conforti, 'Hervé de Nédellec et les questions ordinaires "De cognitione primi principii"', *Revue Thomiste* 97 (1997), p. 63–82; P. Conforti, '"Naturali cognitione probare". Natural and Theological Knowledge in Hervaeus Natalis', in J.A. Aertsen – A. Speer (ed.), *Was ist Philosophie im Mittelalter*, Proceedings of the 10th International Congress of Medieval Philosophy of the S.I.E.P.M., Erfurt, 25–30 August 1997, Berlin–New York: de Gruyter, 1998 (Miscellanea Mediaevalia, 26), p. 614–21; P. Piccari, 'Erveo di Nédéllec e l'epistemologia teologica', *Sapienza* 50/2 (1997), p. 147–62. For a more recent study of Hervaeus's explanation of the mechanisms of intellective cognition, see G. Koridze, *Intentionale Grundlegung der philosophischen Logik: Studien zur Intentionalität des Denkens bei Hervaeus Natalis im Traktat 'De secundis intentionibus'*, PhD Dissertation, University of Tübingen, 2006.

[187] See *De verbo*, q. 1, a. 1 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 10rb): 'in intellectu considerare est duplicem formam sive speciem: unam que imprimitur in intellectu possibili ab obiecto virtute tamen intellectus agentis, que existens in intellectu est ei principium intelligendi et actus intelligendi eliciendi, ut communiter ponitur, nec est curandum ad presens utrum sit aliqua talis species. […] Alia est forma sive species intelligibilis quam intellectus possibilis factus in actu format de re intellecta, sive formando conceptum diffinitivum sive enunciativum.'

[188] See *De verbo*, q. 1, a. 1 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 10va). The only cognitive act that occurs before an intelligible species is the act of abstraction, which resumes all the process of sensory and intellective knowledge of an extramental thing up to the formation of the intelligible species.

gues that if by 'intelligible species' philosophers mean—as they usually do—the activating principle of the operation of intellective cognition and by 'concept' the end-product, then necessarily no concept is an intelligible species.[189]

Nonetheless, Hervaeus explains that the intelligible species and the concept share some features: both exist in the intellect as in their subject and both are natural similitudes of things. But they are not items of the same kind, since they express different but reciprocally ordered residues left on the intellect by the operation of intellectively cognizing Hercules the Hero (see point 1 of the text quoted in note 190). An intelligible species is a similitude in the sense that it is that which triggers my intellective cognition of Hercules, while a concept is called a similitude or even a 'reason' (*ratio*) in the sense it is that in which or through which my intellect can cognize the reason or essence of Hercules, to which the intelligible species refers. Hervaeus further specifies that the intellect uses intelligible species to elicit acts of intellective cognition of things, so for this reason the intelligible species of Hercules must be placed on the side of the intellect; the intellect instead forms a concept, towards which it is directed, in order to cognize things, so for this reason the concept of Hercules must be placed, rather, on the side of the cognized things (point 2). This also has a semantic implication: it is a fallacy to infer that names signify those passions of soul that are the intelligible species from the fact that names are said to signify the passions of soul (point 3).[190]

The cognitive role of intelligible species, for Hervaeus, is thus twofold: first, that of connecting the intellect to the outer world, by importing things into the intellect, and second, that of activating the operation of intellective cognition. In

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189 Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *De verbo*, q. 1, a. 1 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 10va): 'illud quod producitur per operationem aliquam non potest esse principium elicitivum illius operationis; sed verbum producitur per operationem intellectus; ergo verbum non potest esse principium elicitivum operationis illius. […] Verbum non potest esse de illis principiis que requiruntur ante omnem actum seu operationem intellectus; cum ergo species intelligibilis antequam habeat intellectus aliquam operationem intelligendi vel dicendi imprimatur ipsi intellectui, quia nullus dicit quod aliquo modo non intelligit, sequitur quod verbum nullo modo potest esse species intelligibilis.'

190 Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *De verbo*, q. 1, a. 1 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 10va–b): '(1) Ad id quod in contrarium obicitur dicendum quod, licet species impressa ab obiecto et ratio intelligibilis, quam intellectus dicendo format (que dicitur verbum mentis), sit similitudo respectu eiusdem, non oportet propter hoc quod sint eiusdem speciei. […] (2) Ad tertium dicendum quod dupliciter potest aliquid dici ratio [intentio *ed.*] intelligibilis, vel quia est causa vel principium intelligendi […] et talis ratio intelligibilis est species et tenet se magis ex parte intelligentis in quantum per ipsam fit in actu. […] Sed alio modo aliquid dicitur ratio intelligibilis quia in ipso intuetur ratio quare intellectus ad hoc movetur ut operetur circa aliquid intelligendum quasi in quadam forma speculari intuetur ipsum intelligere, et talis ratio intelligibilis se tenet magis ex parte rei intellecte. […] (3) Ad quartum dicendum quod tam species intelligibilis [intelligendi *ed.*] quam verbum quam etiam ipsum intelligere dicuntur passiones anime, quia omnia illa recipiuntur in intellectu sicut in subiecto, unde in processu est fallacia consequentis: non enim sequitur voces passiones significant, ergo has passiones que sunt species intelligibilis' (numbers inserted are mine). Like Aquinas, Hervaeus too holds, first, that common names signify the passions of soul, and second, that identifying these with the intelligible species is however a mistake. In fact, whatever may be placed on the side of the intellect is a passion of soul, so concepts, mental words and even the action of cognizing itself are also such and hence may be signified by common names.

particular, Hervaeus seems to think that the intelligible species is what actualizes a subject-cognizer's potency to understand and that from which acts of intellective cognition are elicited. From this point onward, Hervaeus's explanation of cognition becomes complicate.

What is the end-product of my act of intellective cognition of Hercules the Hero, triggered by the intelligible species of Hercules? One might think it is the concept of human being. This is correct, but only in part. As we shall see better later, it is crucial to Hervaeus's explanation that an act of cognizing (*intelligere*) and an act of mentally elaborating or uttering (*dicere*), which produces concepts, do not amount to the same act. An act of mentally uttering is a predicative act of thought, involving the formation of definitions or propositions about cognized things. An act of cognizing instead is a simple act that expresses, primarily, the acquisition of the intelligible species of a thing, and that allows, secondarily, the fulfillment of any intellective operation, including the utterance of a mental word. This distinction aims to single out two different stages in the process of expressing an impressed species (*species impressa*). In a first stage, once the intelligible species of Hercules the Hero is received, my intellect knows that such a thing is a thing of a certain natural species (and this knowledge is called, according to the medieval technical vocabulary endorsed by Hervaeus too—as we shall see—a 'confused cognition', *confusa cognitio*). In a second stage, my intellect more actively works on the intelligible species, hence expressing the features it finds within the intelligible species (this is what is called 'distinct cognition' or 'expressed cognition', *distincta cognitio*, *expressa cognitio*). This process can be further extended.

Concluding this preliminary reconstruction of the fundamentals of Hervaeus's position on intellective cognition and returning to the main point (viz., the difference existing between being acquainted with a thing through an intelligible species and elaborating a full-fledged concept of that thing), we can say that when confronted with Hercules the Hero, my intellect firstly gets acquainted with him, thus having a confused and still approximate knowledge of him without uttering any mental word. Then, when my intellect explores the content of such confused knowledge, it is in the position to utter a mental word. To be clear, my intellect already has a concept when it acquires the intelligible species and elicits an act of confused cognition, but then the concept is still an implicit and undeveloped knowledge. When the intellect expresses what such a species is, it then makes explicit the knowledge that was embodied in the intelligible species and in this case, it achieves a genuine and full-fledged concept or mental word. Hervaeus explains this progression in knowledge, the move from confused to expressed cognition, in terms of a refinement of our intellect's capacity of representing a thing. He distinguishes three ways or degrees of representing. (i) Broadly, *a* represents *b* if *a* plays some role with respect to the act of cognizing *b*: in this sense, both an intelligible species and the agent intellect can be said to represent a thing. (ii) Properly, *a* represents *b* if *b*

is cognized in *a*, i.e., by way of the act of cognizing *a*: in this sense, an intelligible species can be said to represent a thing. (iii) More properly, *a* represents *b* if *a* is a definition or a proposition which has been formed in order to cognize more expressly (in Hervaeus's word, to make manifest, *manifestare*) *b*: in this sense, only a concept or mental word can represent a thing. This sequence is due to the fact that an act of representation is nothing other than an act of manifestation and forming a concept amounts to making the knowledge of a thing more and more manifest.[191] As a result, the progression in knowledge from the intelligible species to the concept can be described as a progression in the act of manifesting a thing.

The first step of Hervaeus's reasoning in the *Tractatus de verbo* thus concerns the distinction between the concept and the intelligible species. This is the major conclusion of q. 1, a. 1. His second step consists in distinguishing the concept from the act of intellective cognition. This goal is reached especially in the *Tractatus de verbo*, q. 1, a. 2. As we shall see more precisely later,[192] Hervaeus argues for the point that a concept or mental word serves the function of a formal cause of any act of intellective manifestation, *so it cannot be the intellective manifestation itself*, which instead expresses the formal state of knowledge acquired by a subject-cognizer in consequence of an act of intellective cognition. This idea encounters some problems, which we shall point out in the following. In the meanwhile, let it suffice here to note that for Hervaeus an intelligible species and a concept play the same role with respect to different acts of intellective cognition. Specifically, the intelligible species is to an act of confused cognition what a concept is to an act of expressed cognition. They are the formal cause of such acts, but they do not coincide with them. Two major objectives, accordingly, are assigned to the *Tractatus de verbo*: first, that of arguing against any reduction of the formal principles of intellective cognition to the cognitive acts that flow from those principles; and second, that of arguing against any reduction of the acts of mental uttering to the acts of intellectively cognizing. As we shall see below, however, the picture is in fact more complex than that presented here, since a concept is portrayed by Hervaeus as both the end-product of an act of confused cognition and the starting-point of an act of expressed cognition.

It is beyond doubt that an explanation that reduces concepts or mental words to the acts of intellective cognition is epistemologically more parsimonious. But

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[191] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *De verbo*, q. 1, a. 1 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 10vb): 'representare potest accipi large, proprie, magis proprie. Large dicitur representare omne illud quod facit aliquo modo ad hoc quod res cognoscatur et sic intellectus agens et species intelligibilis […] dicitur aliquo modo representare et manifestare. Proprie vero dicitur representare et manifestare omne illud in quo sensu vel intellectu aliquid cognoscitur, sicut forma existens in speculo dicitur representare rem cuius est similitudo. Magis proprie dicitur representare et manifestare illud quod intellectus in se format ad hoc quod in eo rem intelligat formando diffinitionem vel enuntiationem […] de ratione verbi est ut sit quodammodo in eadem forma predicta, ab ipso intellectu differente, ut quod in ea rem intelligatur.'

[192] See below, § 4.

in the *Tractatus de verbo*, q. 1, a. 2, Hervaeus gives three apparently convincing reasons for taking acts and concepts as distinct from each other. The first two are stipulative. Hervaeus says that a concept or mental word meets two conditions and that no act of intellective cognition can meet either of them. (i) The first condition is that of being an object of the intellect under a direct act (*actus rectus*) of intellective cognition,[193] while (ii) the second is that of being produced by an intellect's operation.[194] With such stipulations, Hervaeus seems to have in mind an argument that could be reconstructed as follows: if we did reduce concepts to the acts of intellective cognition and further assume that the acts of intellective cognition be the object of a direct act of cognition, we would be compelled to put in the intellect two simultaneous acts of cognition: one by which we cognize a thing and one by which we cognize our act of cognizing a thing. If we want to avoid such an unwelcome conclusion,[195] which would open the way for an infinite regression of acts of intellective cognition, we are compelled to follow one of the following options: either to reject reducing concepts to the acts of intellective cognition, or to assume that concepts are cognized only through acts of reflexive cognition, since it is clear that our intellect can cognize its own act of cognition only by means of an act of reflection.

Hervaeus observes that an opponent could try to avoid the conclusion that no concept is an act of intellective cognition by two counterarguments. First, the opponent could argue that the reduction of concepts to acts of intellective cognition does not necessarily entail that two acts of intellective cognition exist simultaneously in the intellect, as is clear when someone reflects on an act of cognition through a second act of cognition.[196] Second, the opponent could argue that if a concept must meet the condition of being in some way an object of the intellect in which a

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193 Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *De verbo*, q. 1, a. 2 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 11ra): 'Quod autem verbum proprie acceptum non possit esse ipsum intelligere potest ostendi triplici ratione. Primo potest ostendi ex hac conditione verbi, quia est aliquo modo obiectum intellectus. Ex hoc arguo sic: [est] quod est obiectum intellectus secundum rectam cognitionem et non reflexam, non potest esse actus intelligendi; sed verbum est aliquo modo obiectum intellectus secundum rectam cognitionem; ergo et cetera. Maior patet, quia intellectus non intelligit secundum [*pro* suum] actum intelligendi nisi actu reflexo, illud autem quod intellectus intelligit est obiectum eius et sue operationis; ergo verbum [intelligendi] non potest esse actus intelligendi […].'

194 Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *De verbo*, q. 1, a. 2 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 11rb): 'Secundo ostenditur hoc idem principaliter ex hac conditione verbi, quia est quid productum per operationem intellectus; sed ipsum intelligere videtur procedure ab intellectu sicut operatio ab operante et non sicut productum per operationem; ergo verbum non est actus intelligendi.' The third reason emphasizes the problem that one encountered *in divinis* by equating the divine Word to God's act of thinking. See *De verbo*, q. 1, a. 2 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 11rb). I do not dwell on this here.

195 Cf. *De verbo*, q. 1, a. 2, fol. 11ra: 'duo actus intelligendi non possunt esse in intellectu sic quod unus possit dici obiectum alterius et maxime respectu eiusdem rei.'

196 Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *De verbo*, q. 1, a. 2 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 11ra): 'Sed his duabus propositionibus posset aliquis sic obviare. Prime [prima *ed.*] quidem, que dicit quod actus intelligendi non est obiectum intellectus in actu recto, dicendo quod hoc non oportet.'

thing is cognized, this condition can be met by the act of cognition as well.[197] When recording such counterarguments, Hervaeus is probably thinking of philosophers contemporary with him such as Durand of St.-Pourçain or James of Metz, who pushed for the reduction of concepts to acts of intellective cognition.[198]

Hervaeus thinks that both these counterarguments fail to appreciate the real nature of an act of intellective cognition. Acts of intellective cognition alone are not sufficient to account for intellective cognition. Understood as expressing the activity of cognition, acts belong to the Aristotelian category of Action, and actions are incomplete beings in that they involve potentiality. Acts *qua* actions play a role in forming concepts and then in enabling the intellect to cognize things, but they cannot be endowed with semantic content and representational power on their own. Some thing *x* can be said to be the object of the intellect under a direct act of cognition only when such an act ends with *x* or, through *x*, with a different thing *y*.[199] But no action can meet one or both conditions, since action is something transient. I shall return to the philosophical significance of the representational power attributed to concepts by Hervaeus in the Conclusion of this study. Here I limit myself to noting that, according to this idea, in his reply to the two counterarguments Hervaeus insists on two points.

First of all, he repeats that the acts of intellective cognition cannot be the object of an act of direct cognition for otherwise one could not avoid the conclusion that

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197 Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *De verbo*, q. 1, a. 2 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 11ra–b): 'Contra secundam etiam propositionem, quod verbum est obiectum intellectus aliquo modo, quia scilicet res in eo videtur, huic potest obviari dicendo etiam quod in actu intelligendi res videtur.'

198 A criticism close to Hervaeus's was elaborated by Nicolas of Metz (the so-called *Durandellus*), while rejecting Durand of St.-Pourçain's arguments. See, e.g., Nicolas of Metz, *Evidentiae contra Durandum*, I, 23 (*Quod verbum mentis non est actus intelligendi sive species*), a. 2c, ed. P.T. Stella, Tübingen–Basilea: Francke, 2003. On James of Metz and the debates within the so-called 'first Thomistic school', see J. Koch, 'Jacob von Metz, O.P., der Lehrer des Durandus de S. Porciano', *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge* 4 (1929–1930), p. 169–232; F.J. Roensch, *Early Thomistic School*, Dubuque, Iowa: Priory Press, 1964; L. Ullrich, *Fragen der Schöpfungslehre nach Jakob von Metz, O.P.: Eine vergleichende Untersuchung zu Sentenzenkommentaren aus der Dominikanerschule um 1300*, Leipzig: St. Benno, 1966; B. Decker, *Die Gotteslehre des Jakob von Metz. Untersuchungen zur Dominikanertheologie zu Beginn des 14. Jahrhunderts*, Munster i. W.: Aschendorff, 1967 (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters. Text und Untersuchungen, 42/1); C. Schabel, 'James of Metz's "Lectura" on the "Sentences"', in R. Hofmeister Pich – A. Speer (eds.), *Contemplation and Philosophy: Scholastic and Mystical Modes of Medieval Philosophical Thought*, Leiden: Brill, 2018, p. 342–426.

199 Cf. *De verbo*, q. 1, a. 2 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 11ra): 'Ad cuius evidentiam sciendum est quod convenit aliquid dupliciter se habere ad cognitionem anime ex parte obiecti cogniti. Uno modo quod sic cognoscatur ab ipso cognoscente quod ulterius representet quoddam aliud [aliquid *ed.*] quod habet in ipso cognosci, ita quod cognoscens utatur eo ut eo cognoscat quoddam obiectum […] et utrumque dicitur cognitum, sed differunt.' In his early *Determinatio de intellectu et specie*, Hervaeus made it clear that being the object of the intellect can be understood in two ways, generally and specifically. In the first understanding, it is being *qua* being, while in the second understanding, it is the quiddity of material things. For my purpose here it is enough to say that Hervaeus's discussion with Durand mostly concerns the second understanding of 'object of the intellect'. See *Determinatio de intellectu et specie*, ed. Stella, p. 161,17–162,12.

two acts of cognition are present at the same time in the intellect, especially if these acts concern one and the same thing. Hervaeus explains that if these acts were understood as acts of the same kind (i.e., as acts expressing the same kind or mode of cognition, for example as expressing an expressed cognition), then it would be enough to postulate only one of them. If instead the opponent struggles to maintain both of them, s/he should admit that such acts are of different kind, for example that the first expresses a confused cognition and the second an expressed cognition. But in this case it would be absurd to hold that we may have in the intellect, at the same time and with respect to the same thing, an act of confused cognition and an act of expressed cognition, since such cognitions are incompatible with each other.[200]

The second point emphasized by Hervaeus is that an act cannot be taken as that in which something else is cognized. This is the central tenet of Hervaeus's reply to the opponent. Unlike concepts, acts of intellective cognition cannot have any representational power. He stresses this point by saying that we would speak improperly if we did state that an act takes the place of a thing or that a thing is cognized within an act. We should properly say that the intellect cognizes a thing *by means of* an act and not that a thing is cognized within an act or that an act of intellective cognition represents a thing—unless we are broadly calling 'act' everything that can refer to something else, regardless of whether it is or is not actually a true action.[201]

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[200] Cf. *De verbo*, q. 1, a. 2 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 11ra): 'Sed hoc stare non potest, tum quia duo actus intelligendi non possunt esse in intellectu sic quod unus possit dici obiectum alterius et maxime respectu eiusdem rei. Constat autem quod si secundum intelligere quod ponitur obiectum primi actus intelligendi esset verbum, quod tam primum quam secundum intelligere esset respectu eiusdem rei intellecte, quia verbum quod representat et intelligere quod ad verbum terminatur ut ad obiectum vel ad rem representatam mediante verbo sunt eiusdem rei. Etiam propter hoc, quia non videtur inconveniens quod per illa duo eque expresse res intelligatur, quia tunc solum alterum sufficeret nec esset aliqua necessitas ponendi secundum actum intelligendi. Si autem eadem res intelligeretur confuse per unum et expresse per alterum, sequeretur quod idem simul et semel intelligeretur confuse et expresse, quod est inconveniens.' In the age of Hervaeus there was a great controversy over the simultaneousness of acts of cognition in the intellect. On this, see R.L. Friedman, 'On the Trail of a Philosophical Debate: Durand of St. Pourçain vs. Thomas Wylton on Simultaneous Acts in the Intellect', in S.F. Brown – T. Dewender – T. Kobusch (eds.), *Philosophical Debates at Paris in the Early Fourteenth Century*, Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2009, p. 433–61; R. Pasnau, *After Certainty. A History of Our Epistemic Ideals and Illusions*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 96–8.

[201] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *De verbo*, q. 1, a. 2 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 11rb): 'Sed non valet, quia si proprie volumus loqui, non debet dici res videri in actu intelligendi, sed quod intellectus intelligit eam actu videndi, et si dicitur etiam quod res aliquo modo videatur in actu intelligendi, hoc non erit sicut in re presente qualiter res intelligitur in verbo, quia non dicitur representare nisi quod aliquid intellectui offert, quod non convenit actui intelligendi.' Other remarks scattered in Hervaeus's works, both here and elsewhere, insist on the similarity between human and divine knowledge, on the psychological reality of acts of intellective cognition, on their real separateness from extramental things, on the fact that no act can be called a product of the intellect, and finally on the impossibility for acts to be endowed with the property of being universal in predication. See, e.g., *De verbo*, q. 1, a. 2 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 11rb); *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, d. 1, q. 2, and d. 2, q. 1, ed. J. Dijs, *Hervaeus Natalis. De secundis intentionibus. Distinctiones I & II. Critical Edition with Introduction and Indices*, Leiden: Institute for Philosophy, 2012, p. 112ff., n. 58ff. and 170ff., n. 19ff.; *Quodlibeta*, III, q. 1 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 68ra–b). On such remarks, see J. Pinborg, 'Zum Begriff der *intentio secunda*. Radulphus Brito,

Thus, if someone insists on equating concepts to acts, it is absolutely clear that s/he must mean by 'acts' absolute things that are different from and subsequent to the activity of their formation. In this case, it is preferable to call them 'concepts', in order to avoid any confusion. Hervaeus's conclusion, therefore, is that only the concept *qua* distinct from the act of intellective cognition (like the painting of Hercules *qua* distinct from the act of making the painting) can truly meet all the conditions required for being a representation. Hervaeus gives three conditions: in addition to the two conditions already mentioned, viz., (i) that of being somehow an object of direct cognition (*actus rectus*) by the intellect and (ii) that of being produced by the intellect, Hervaeus gives (iii) the condition of being a specular form (*forma specularis*), i.e., a form that is capable of referring to something else once the form is seen or cognized.[202]

As is clear from what has been said so far, Hervaeus's reasoning relies on the conviction that it is impossible to explain intellective cognition if not in representational terms. In the following, we shall analyze some other criticism of Durand of St.-Pourçain—who is concealed behind the opponent in the disputed question—, but it is already evident that condition (iii) above leads Hervaeus to believe that there are two fundamental shortcomings of any mental-act explanations of intellective cognition. First, they cannot account for the universality of intellective cognition, especially when the cognition of non-present or non-existent things is concerned. Second, they muddle the phenomenon of cognition with its psychological and subjective pre-conditions.

To conclude, in the first two questions of *Tractatus de verbo* Hervaeus follows Aquinas's mature theory of concepts and takes concepts as distinct from both intelligible species and acts of intellective cognition. Hervaeus's account supplies the distinction between the mental similitude and the thing to which the similitude refers, which Aquinas had omitted, since Hervaeus explicitly describes a mental

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Hervaeus Natalis, und Petrus Aureoli in Diskussion', *Cahiers de l'Institut du Moyen-Âge Grec et Latin* 13 (1974), p. 45–59 (rep. in J. Pinborg, *Medieval Semantics*, ed. S. Ebbesen, London: Variorum Reprints, 1984, n. VI); Amerini, 'Realism and Intentionality'.

[202] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *De verbo*, q. 1, a. 2 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 11ra): 'Forma specularis videtur ab aliquo que [qui *ed.*] ulterius representat aliquid aliud cuius illa est similitudo. Et utrumque dicitur cognitum, sed differunt, quia forma specularis sic est cognita vel visa ut quod ulterius est ratio representativa alterius in ipsa et per ipsam visibilis [ipsum visibiles *ed.*], nec sistit in ea cognitio sicut in ultimo termino vel cognitione, sed tendit in aliquid aliud mediante illa forma […]; quod [que *ed.*] in ipsa cognoscitur numquam ducit in cognitionem alterius, sed est ultimum [ultimus *ed.*] ens in quod [quem *ed.*] tendit cognitio […] res alia que in ipsa cognoscitur numquam ducit in cognitionem alterius, sed est ultimum ens in quem tendit cognitio, nisi quando una res cognoscitur per aliam, sicut effectus per causam vel e converso vel aliquo tali modo […]. Verbum sicut predictum est quedam forma quam format intellectus de re ut in ipsa rem intelligat, ergo verbum est aliquo modo obiectum intellectus in actu recto, quia utrumque videtur secundum actum rectum, tam forma representans quam re<s> representata.' The phrase 'specular form' recurs only once in Aquinas's works (in the *Expositio in VIII libros Physicorum*, VII, lec. 6), to indicate the form of the thing present in the mirror when the thing is put in front of it. Aquinas never uses this expression to characterize the intelligible species or the concept.

similitude as an item metaphysically composed of two things, namely the similitude itself and the thing to which the similitude refers. Hervaeus calls the mental similitude a 'specular form'. Like a specular form in a mirror is the similitude of the thing that is in front of the mirror, so a specular form in the intellect is the similitude of the thing that is in the prospect of the intellect. Every specular form, when is cognized, refers to the thing that produced it. But Hervaeus is careful in saying that when we see a specular form in a mirror, we do not stop at the mirror but go beyond and see the thing represented in the mirror. The same happens in the intellect: when we cognize a thing though a concept, we are cognizing at once the concept and the thing cognized through the concept, but the ways of cognizing are different.[203] I shall discuss what epistemic status Hervaeus assigns to the specular form and the thing cognized after reconstructing Hervaeus's dispute with his Dominican confrere, Durand of St.-Pourçain. Their dispute will help us to clarify Hervaeus's position on concepts.

3. Hervaeus's Dispute with Durand of St.-Pourçain on the Metaphysical Status of Concepts

The picture presented until now is based mainly upon Hervaeus's *Tractatus de verbo*, q. 1, aa. 1–2. It is however a provisional picture. In fact, Hervaeus refines many points of his doctrine after the criticism Durand of St.-Pourçain addressed to him in the first redaction of his Commentary on the *Sentences*, I, d. 27, q. 2 (*Quid est verbum in nobis*), which dates to 1303–1308. As has been seen, in the *Tractatus de verbo* Hervaeus refers to two counterarguments, which are close to those formulated by Durand, and this shows that already in that work Hervaeus was acquainted with a kind of reply like that of Durand. After Durand's criticism, Hervaeus returns to this issue in his *Quodlibet* II, q. 8, which probably dates to 1309.[204]

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[203] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *De verbo*, q. 1, a. 2 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 11ra; see the previous note).

[204] The dispute between Hervaeus and Durand was initially highlighted by Joseph Koch in *Durandus de S. Porciano, O.P.: Forschungen zum Streit um Thomas von Aquin zu Beginn des 14. Jahrhunderts*, Münster i. W.: Aschendorff, 1927 (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters, 26). For an introduction to Durand and on the different redactions of his Commentary on the *Sentences*, see M.T. Fumagalli Beonio Brocchieri, *Durando di S. Porziano. Elementi filosofici della terza redazione del 'Commento alle Sentenze'*, Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1969; C. Schabel – R.L. Friedmann – I. Balcoyiannopoulou, 'Peter of Palude and the Parisian Reaction to Durand of St. Pourçain on Foreknowledge and Future Contingents', *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 71 (2001), p. 183–300; E. Lowe, *The Contested Theological Authority of Thomas Aquinas. The Controversies between Hervaeus Natalis and Durandus of St. Pourçain, 1307–1323*, London–New York: Routledge, 2003; I. Iribarren, *Durand of St. Pourçain: A Dominican Theologian in the Shadow of Thomas Aquinas*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005; and the papers in A. Speer – F. Retucci – T. Jeschke – G. Guldentops (eds.), *Durand of Saint-Pourçain and His Sentences Commentary. Historical, Philosophical and Theological Issues*, Leuven: Peeters, 2014 (Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales. Bibliotheca, 9). For a comparison between Durand and Aquinas on intellective cognition, see Hartman, 'Durand of St. Pourçain and Thomas Aquinas on Representation'. On Durand's theory of knowledge, see P.J. Hartman, *Durand of St.-Pourçain on Cognitive Acts: Their Cause, Ontological Status, and Intentional Character*, PhD Dissertation, University

3.1. Durand's Remarks against the Distinction between Acts of Intellective Cognition and Concepts

Durand's criticism of Hervaeus is subtle and complex, and it is not possible here to consider every aspect of it. Historically speaking, his criticism is significant since Durand appears to be one of the first philosophers to break with a common tradition of thinking of a concept as a trace left on our intellect once the activity of intellective cognition is over.[205] Leaving aside points of detail, Durand calls into question especially Hervaeus's conclusion that a concept is something produced by an act of intellective cognition and actually different from the act itself. As has been seen, this conclusion follows from Hervaeus's idea that concepts are the primary object of intellective cognition, understood however as that by way of which something else is cognized, and no act of intellective cognition can play such a role. The main philosophical question at stake in their debate is thus how to understand the relationship that an act of intellective cognition bears to a concept; but more fundamentally, the true question on the table is what kind of action intellective cognition is.

It may also be noted that, from a different angle, the Hervaeus–Durand dispute develops as a question revolving around the right interpretation of two chief authorities: Augustine and Aristotle. On the one hand, the dispute focuses on the correct understanding of the theological notion of 'formed cogitation' (*cogitatio formata*) which Augustine introduced in *De Trinitate*, XV, 19, and on the consequent identification of such cogitation with the mental word. Hervaeus and Durand disagree on the interpretation of Augustine's doctrine more than on that of Aquinas. This aspect of the dispute could have been influenced by Henry of Ghent, who is one of the first to set the issue of intellective cognition in an Augustinian and anti-Aquinas context.[206] On the other hand, their dispute concerns the correct understanding of

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of Toronto, 2012; P.J. Hartman, 'Direct Realism with and without Representation: John Buridan and Durand of St.-Pourçain on Species', in G. Klima (ed.), *Questions on the Soul by John Buridan and Others. A Companion to John Buridan's Philosophy of Mind*, Cham: Springer, 2017, p. 107–129; P.J. Hartman, 'The Relation-Theory of Mental Acts: Durand of St.-Pourçain on the Ontological Status of Mental Acts', in R. Pasnau (ed.), *Oxford Studies in Medieval Philosophy*, vol. 7, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019, p. 186–211.

[205] The identification between acts of intellective cognition and concepts of things, according to the way Hervaeus discusses it in his *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, is also defended by Peter of Auvergne, Radulphus Brito and Simon of Faversham. See Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, I, q. 2, ed. Dijs, p. 124ff. On the other hand, Hervaeus's dispute with Durand seems to have been influenced to a great extent by Henry of Ghent's and Godfrey of Fontaines's accounts of intellective cognition. Another possible source could be James of Metz, who explicitly argues for the identification of concepts with acts of cognition. See Koch, 'Jacob von Metz' and Decker, *Die Gotteslehre des Jakob von Metz*.

[206] See, e.g., Henry of Ghent, *Quodlibet* IV, qq. 7–8 (ed. Paris, 1518, fol. 95ff., fol. 97): 'Ecce expressa sententia Augustini qui appellat verbum, quam formatam notitiam. Illud informans res intellecta est existens obiective in intelligente, ut forma expressiva, non impressiva.' For an introduction to Henry of Ghent's theory of knowledge, see S.P. Marrone, *Truth and Scientific Knowledge in the Thought of*

Aristotle's view that intellective cognition is a kind of actuality. Quite interestingly, both Durand and Hervaeus propose an interpretation of the Augustinian notion of 'formed cogitation' by way of Aristotle's account of intellective cognition as actuality. So the correct understanding of what kind of actuality intellective cognition is entails the correct understanding of what Augustine meant by 'formed cogitation'.[207] Let me give an example of this while considering the main aspect focused on by Durand, i.e., the identification between a concept and an act of intellective cognition.

Durand reminds Hervaeus that there are two kinds of actions, i.e., immanent and transient actions. As has been already illustrated in the previous study,[208] the difference is that a transient action (*actio transiens*) is an action that exits from the subject and is in most cases ordered to produce something different from the action itself, while an immanent action (*actio immanens* or *intra manens*) is an action that remains inside the intellect and is incapable of producing anything different from the action itself.[209] Heating is a paradigmatic case of transient action, while cognizing

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Henry of Ghent, Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy of America, 1985; B. Goehring, 'Henry of Ghent on Human Knowledge and Its Limits', *Quaestio* 12 (2012), p. 589–613; B. Goehring, 'Henry of Ghent on Knowledge, Remembrance, and the Order of Cognitive Acts: The Problematic Legacy of Thomas Aquinas', in R. Hofmeister Pich – A. Speer (eds.), *Contemplation and Philosophy: Scholastic and Mystical Modes of Medieval Philosophical Thought*, Leiden: Brill, 2018, p. 276–90.

[207] The dispute also concerns other views of Augustine. Here is, for example, Durand's non-standard way of reading Augustine's often-celebrated claim that exterior words signify interior words. The text is from the first and second redaction of his *Sentences* Commentary: 'Tenendum est ergo quod uerbum pertinet ad intellectum non obiectiue tantum, set sicut illud cuius entitas tota est in intellectu subiectiue. Et si qua autoritas Avgvstini inueniatur hoc sonare, sicut illa quod uerbum exterius significat uerbum interius, constat autem quod illud quod significatur per uerbum exterius est res extra obiectiue intellecta, et ita uidetur quod ipsa sit uerbum, exponenda est, quia, sicut Aristoteles dicit I Peryhermeneias, uoces sunt signa *passionum que sunt in anima*, et tamen uoces significant res, non passiones, set hoc pro tanto dicitur, quia res non significatur per uocem, nisi prout primo apprehenditur ab anima, sic Avgvstinus dicit quod uerbum exterius significat uerbum interius, quia res exterior non significatur per uerbum exterius, nisi prout declaratur apud intellectum per uerbum interius. Patet ergo quod uerbum pertinet ad intellectum subiectiue uel quasi subiectiue' (*Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 27, q. 2, ed. M. Perrone – F. Retucci, Leuven–Paris–Bristol, Conn.: Peeters, 2019 (Recherches de theologie et philosophie médiévales. Bibliotheca, 10.1.3), p. 131–2,80–93, also available online at https://durandus.uni-koeln.de/kritische-edition (last access on July 30, 2025). For Hervaeus's reply, see below, note 261ff. For the third redaction of Durand's Commentary, I shall quote from the transcription of the Venice edition, 1571, available online at https://durandus.uni-koeln.de/transkription-ed-ven-1571 (last access on July 30, 2025), and made in the context of the 'Durand-Editions-Projekt' (on which see https://durandus.uni-koeln.de/, last access on July 30, 2025) by Guy Guldentops and his collaborators. For the sake of brevity, hereafter I shall refer to it as 'transcr. Guldentops'.

[208] See above, Study I, § 1.2.

[209] *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum. Redactio prima*, I, d. 27, q. 2 (ed. Perrone – Retucci, p. 134–5,145–151: 'Hec est opinio que in summa ponit tria: primum est quod uerbum est quedam forma que non est aliquis actus intelligendi, set est producta per actum intelligentis, qui est dicere; secundum est quod uerbum est obiectum intellectus, licet non principale, set sicut forma specularis uel ymago principalis obiecti representatiua; tertium est quod uerbum est finaliter *propter cognitionem perfectam et expressam habendam de re*, cuius tamen uerbum est causa uel concausa effectiue. […] Primum istorum non puto esse verum. […] Quod patet primo ex natura operationis manentis intra sic: per operationem intra manentem nichil constituitur uel producitur; set intelligere et dicere intellectuale sunt operationes intra manentes.'

or thinking is a typical example of immanent action. Someone could bypass such a distinction, and insist that cognizing too is a transient action, by distinguishing what is 'externally' produced by an action from what is only 'internally' produced. While the former is something put outside the action, as warmth is externally produced by the action of heating, the latter is something remaining inside the action, as the concept is in the case of intellective cognition.[210]

Referring to Aristotle's texts, Durand rejects such a reply: the goal of an act of cognizing is the cognizing itself, just like the goal of an act of seeing is the seeing itself and the goal of an act of slimming is the slimming itself. Durand holds that our intellect is not intentionally oriented to cognize a thing with the scope of producing something else, categorially different from the act of cognizing. Durand does not give any particular argument for this belief; he simply stresses how contrary to Aristotle is the idea that cognition is a kind of production, especially if cognition is assessed with respect to the extramental reality to which our intellect is primarily oriented.[211] When we want to intellectively cognize a thing, we simply want to bring about an act of intellective cognition of that thing. Once the act of intellective cognition is brought about, our intellective cognition is completely achieved; and when our act of intellective cognition is finished, our intellective cognition is over.

A further problem Durand sees in Hervaeus's position is that if one holds that the intelligible species, or the intelligible species together with an act of confused cognition, is the productive cause of a concept, then one should concede one of these two cases: either that an effect, i.e., the production of the concept, is more perfect than its cause, if one supposes that a concept is produced by an intelligible species alone; or that two acts of cognition, i.e., the act of confused cognition and the act of producing the concept, are co-present in the intellect, if one supposes that a concept is produced by an intelligible species together with an act of confused cognition. Nor can one say that the two acts do not remain together. So the argument against the reduction of concepts to acts of intellective cognition must be rejected.[212]

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[210] *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum. Redactio prima*, I, d. 27, q. 2 (ed. Perrone – Retucci, p. 135,165–8.

[211] *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum. Redactio prima*, I, d. 27, q. 2 (ed. Perrone – Retucci, p. 135–6,168–80, esp. 172–5: 'non fuit intentio Aristotelis tantum docere quod per operationem intra manentem nichil extra constituatur, set quod omnino per eam nichil constituitur, nec extra nec intra. Item textus contradicit huic expositioni.'

[212] *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum. Redactio prima*, I, d. 27, q. 2 (ed. Perrone – Retucci, p. 136,181–91: 'Secundo, quia principium productiuum uerbi aut est sola species aut species cum intellectione confusa. Non sola species, quia terminus productionis non est perfectior principio productiuo; set uerbum est perfectius specie intelligibili, eo quod perfectius rem representat; ergo principium productiuum eius non potest esse sola species. Item nec species cum intellectione confusa, quia aut ista manerent simul cum uerbo producto aut non. Non potest dici quod non maneant simul, quia cessante entitate principii actiui cessat suum agere; si igitur intellectio confusa cessaret esse ante entitatem uerbi, cessaret et agere; set cessante agente et actione ante terminum actionis impossibile est terminum esse.' For these remarks, see also Durand of St.-Pourçain, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum. Redactio prima*, II, d. 3, q. 5, ed. J. Koch, in *Durandi de S. Porciano O.P. Quaestio de natura*

3.2. Hervaeus's Reply to Durand's Remarks

In the first article of his *Quodlibet* II, q. 8, devoted to the question 'whether an act of cognizing and act of mental uttering amount to the same act', Hervaeus begins his determination by discussing two main opinions on the operation of intellective cognition as immanent action. The first opinion holds that an immanent action is that by means of which an agent moves itself or produces something within itself, while a transient action is that by means of which an agent moves or produces something outside itself. The second opinion, instead, holds that the difference between these actions is that transient actions produce something else beyond the action, while immanent actions end with the action itself.[213]

Hervaeus thinks that both opinions misrepresent the difference between such actions. Against the first opinion, Hervaeus observes that no internal production can be described as the operation of a productive agent taken as such, i.e., as an actively producing subject, since producing always concerns something that is different in subject from the productive agent. Even if some agent produced something within itself, one should distinguish the productive agent as a producing subject from itself as a subject undergoing the action of production. The obvious reason is that nothing can produce itself, but this would happen if the action remained in the productive agent taken as such (*in eo quod tale*).[214] Against the second opinion, Hervaeus simply points out that it fails to characterize the notion of production, since every productive agent always produces something, so that if some agent produces, necessarily something is produced. From this Hervaeus derives the correct

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cognitionis, altera editio emendatior, Münster i. W., 1935 (Opuscula et Textus, 6), p. 17ff. Hervaeus incorporates Durand's first set of remarks in his *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 8, a. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 49va–b) and summarizes the discussion with him on whether the act of intellective cognition adds something real to the intellect in *Quodlibeta*, III, q. 8 (ed. Venice, 1513, fols. 78ra–80vb; the text is edited in J. Koch (ed.), *Durandi de S. Porciano O.P. Quaestio de natura cognitionis*, p. 43–75). In turn, Durand summarizes his first criticism and Hervaeus's reply in the third redaction of his Commentary on the *Sentences* (*Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 27, q. 2, a. 2 (transcr. Guldentops, p. 800,74ff.)). We may look at this text to reconstruct the whole dispute.

213 Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 8, a. 1 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 48ra): 'Quantum ad primum sunt tres opiniones, quarum duas credo esse falsas. Prima est quod operatio immanens dicitur illa qua aliquid idem subiecto movet se ipsum vel producit aliquid in se ipso, operatio vero transiens quando movet aliquid aliud differens subiecto ab ipso. […] Secunda opinio est que ponit quod agens quandoque nihil aliud causat preter ipsam actionem et tunc est operatio manens […], alia est actio, ut dicunt, in qua preter actionem agentis producitur aliquid extra, sicut calefacere et similia, et talis operatio est transiens.' Hervaeus also illustrates the difference between immanent and transient actions in his early *Determinatio de intellectu et specie*, IV, ed. Stella, p. 147,21–149,9.

214 Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 8, a. 1 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 48ra): 'Sed istam opinionem credo esse falsam et hoc probo dupliciter. Primo sic, quia operatio manens comparatur ad illud cuius est operatio manens sicut ad illud in quo est secundum quod tale; sed producere non est operatio ipsius producentis sicut illius in quo est secundum quod tale; igitur producere non est operatio manens ut ipsius producentis. Unde producere non dicit operationem manentem ut sic. Dico autem "in eo quod tale", quia dato per possibile vel impossibile quod aliquid produceret aliquid in se ipso, iste actus productus prout respiceret illud in quo est, non respiceret illud ut activum, sed magis ut passivum et receptivum.'

interpretation of Aristotle's account of immanent action. When Aristotle says (for example, in *Metaphysics* IX) that the goal of an act of cognizing is the cognizing itself, he did not mean that cognizing ends with itself and no effect is produced, but rather that cognizing belongs to those actions whose effects endure only if there is a particular agent that continuously performs such an action.[215] There is not room here to discuss if Hervaeus's interpretation is a close reading of Aristotle. What is important to retain for our purposes is that Hervaeus provides an explanation that rests on the idea that while all actions are of the same kind in one respect, nevertheless in another respect, intellective actions display some idiosyncratic features. Intellectively cognizing is a kind of action that requires a productive agent that is continuously performing such an action and this makes the action the goal of the action itself. This feature, however, is not seen by Hervaeus as incompatible with the idea that every action leaves something that is beyond the action itself.

Hervaeus's point is that an action can be assessed differently according to which of the four Aristotelian causes we relate it to. An immanent action is not a production, but rather a kind of reception if it is considered with respect to the material cause (i.e., to the subject in which it actually inheres) and a kind of making something formally so-and-so if considered with respect to the formal cause. Every immanent action (like intellective cognition is) is intransient with respect to the material and formal causes of the action, since both the actions that follow from the formal and material causes are internal to the subject: intellective cognition indeed remains within the subject-cognizer and makes him formally cognizing. There are however some differences between the two actions: first (see point 1 of the text in note 216), the immanent action of the material kind inheres in the material cause itself, while the immanent action of the formal kind does not inhere in the form but in that which has the form; second (point 2), the action of the material kind requires an active principle, since it is just a sort of receiving something from something else, while the action of the formal kind does not require any active principle; third (point 3), the action of the material kind remains in the subject, while the action of the formal kind is a transient action to a certain degree since it makes something formally qualified.[216] Applying such an explanation of what an immanent action is, Hervaeus

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[215] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 8, a. 1 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 48ra–b): 'Sed ista opinio improbabilior est prima, quia omne producens aliquid producit; sed sicut se habet producens ad producere, ita se habet id quod agens producit ad produci; igitur ubicumque est producere, ibi est aliquod produci. […] Ad secundum dicendum quod non est intentio Aristotelis dicere quod sit aliqua operatio sine effectu aliquo producto, sed intendit dicere quod aliqui effectus aliquarum causarum non manent nisi ad presentiam agentis particularis continue agentis.'

[216] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 8, a. 1 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 48ra–b): 'Alia est opinio quam credo esse veram, scilicet quod operatio manens non est aliquid producere vel efficere, sed vel est recipere quantum ad principium materiale vel est facere formaliter tale quantum ad principium formale. […] Modo operatio principii passivi et operatio principii formalis dicitur operatio manens in eo quod talis. Sed talis operatio principii activi dicitur transiens per se loquendo, dato quod per accidens posset esse operatio manens, si aliquis faceret aliquem actum in se ipso, si tamen hoc est possibile. […]

concludes that intellective cognition just amounts to producing an act of cognizing; no efficient or material cause is included in its meaning, while the formal cause is. From this, Hervaeus derives his account of the nature of intellective cognition: it is an immanent or intransient action pertaining to the formal cause and every action flowing from the formal cause consists in being a form by means of which something is said to be formally so-and-so.[217] For example, to intellectively cognize Hercules the Hero, for me, amounts to producing an act of intellective cognition of him, and to have that amounts in turn to formally cognizing Hercules by means of a form of him. Interestingly, Hervaeus adds that acts of intellective cognition can be described both as actions and as absolute qualities, but more properly we think of acts of intellective cognition when we think of them as absolute qualities rather than as actions. The reason why we ordinarily think of them as actions is that we are actually speaking of them in relation to a particular agent which is performing actions through such qualities.[218]

Est tamen sciendum quod aliter dicitur operatio principii passivi manens et aliter operatio principii formalis, unde differunt dupliciter. (1) Primo, quia operatio manens ipsius <principii> passivi est in ipso principio passivo subiective; […] operatio vero principii formalis que est esse formaliter tale non est proprie in ipsa forma quasi quoddam diversum ab ipsa receptum in ipsa, sed est in habente formam. (2) Secundo differunt, quia operatio principii <passivi> semper preter principium passivum habet principium activum: nam operatio principii passivi est recipere actum ab alio; […] operatio vero forme, absolute accipiendo quod est esse formaliter tale, non importat esse ab alio sicut a causa efficiente. […] (3) Tertium est scilicet quod operatio principii activi sit operatio transiens per se loquendo et non manens per se loquendo. Probatur, quia operatio transiens dicitur illa que respicit illud cuius est talis operatio in eo quod huiusmodi, ut a quo est et non ut in quo est nisi per accidens' (numbers inserted are mine).

[217] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 8, a. 1 and a. 2 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 48va–b): 'operatio principii formalis est esse formam qua aliquid est tale formaliter. […] Quantum ad secundum, scilicet qualis operatio sit intelligere, dicendum quod operatio immanens pertinens ad principium formale. Primum concedunt omnes, scilicet quod intelligere sit operatio immanens. Et etiam potest ratione probari, quia operatio immanens dicitur illa que respicit illud cuius est talis operatio ut in eo in quo est. Secundum patet, scilicet quod pertineat ad principium formale, quia omnis operatio manens vel pertinet ad principium materiale vel formale; sed intelligere ut sic non dicit aliquid formaliter pertinens ad principium materiale […], quia ut dictum est operatio principii materialis importat habere causam effectivam a qua principium materiale recipiat illud quod recepit; sed intelligere convenit non habenti causam effectivam actus intelligendi. […] Unde intelligere proprie loquendo importat habere actum intelligendi, non includendo causam passivam vel effectivam. Licet autem "intelligere" formaliter ex suo modo significandi non importet talem causam effectivam vel passivam, tamen quantum ad rem <que> pertinet in rebus creatis habet utramque causam.'

[218] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 8, a. 2 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 48vb): 'Sed hic solum restat unum dubium, scilicet qualis res sit actus intelligendi. De quo quidam dicunt quod omnis habitus et operatio tam intellectus quam sensus […] sunt pure relationes. Ego autem teneo quod sunt quedam qualitates absolute et fundamenta tamen quorundam respectuum ad ipsas consequentium, sicut probabitur in 3° quolibet. Si autem queratur quare frequentius dicatur sentire et intelligere operationes […], dico quod hoc ideo est quia dependet a presentia agentis particularis, propter quod videtur quod esse eorum consistat in quodam fieri, alie autem non.' On the qualified identification of acts of intellective cognition with the activity of cognizing, see *Quodlibeta*, III, q. 8, a. 1 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 79va): 'Ad secundum dicendum quod ibi equivocatur intellectus. Nam intellectus potest accipi pro sola potentia intellectiva vel actu sibi inherente. Modo, quando dicimus aliquem intelligere, operatio manens que est intelligere et intellectus prout stat pro actu intelligendi non sunt diversa re, sed idem nominaliter

In light of the explanation of intellective cognition reconstructed above, in the third article of the question Hervaeus replies to Durand's remarks, beginning with a distinction. Saying that *a* produces *b* by way of something else *c* can be understood in two ways:

(1) *a* produces *b* by way of an action *c* that is precisely the production of *b*, just as something produces warmth (*calefacere*) by way of heating (*calefaciendum*), which is precisely the production of warmth;

(2) *a* produces *b* by way of a formal principle *c* by virtue of which *a* can produce *b*, just as something can produce warmth by virtue of heat (*calor*).[219]

According to such a distinction, Hervaeus argues that every action is immanent in one respect, although some actions can be transient in another respect. Every agent indeed acts through some formal principle through which the agent formally has a being so-and-so. For example, a warming agent is said to be able to produce warmth in another thing because it is formally able to produce warmth, by way of the form of warmth. The action of intellectively cognizing is not a production in the first sense distinguished above (1), because through it we do not produce anything in something else. It is however a production in the second sense (2), because a subject is said to be formally cognizing through an action of intellective cognition. In this respect, Hervaeus agrees with Durand that an action such as heating is essentially different from an action such as intellectively cognizing, since cognizing does not amount to producing concepts or cognized things. But cognizing clearly is a production in the sense (2), for we can fulfill the action of intellectively cognizing only by virtue of a formal principle that guides us to achieve such an action, and such a principle must be different from the action of cognizing itself. In brief, intellectively cognizing cannot be considered a transient action, properly speaking, since it is not a kind of real or effective production; rather it remains within the cognizing subject. Nonetheless, it can be considered transient in the sense that something formal (i.e., a specular form) is the principle that permits the action to be produced. To be clearer, intellectively cognizing can be explained as a transient action since it consists in having a formal principle by virtue of which a cognizing subject is formally endowed with a particular mode of being (i.e., being actually cognizing),

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et verbaliter dictum, vel sicut lumen in aere et lucere. Sed intelligere quod [qui *ed.*] est idem realiter quod actus intelligendi et intellectus prout stat pro potentia intelligendi sunt diversa re, sicut lumen aeris et dyaphanitas.'

[219] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 8, a. 3, ad primum (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 49va–b): 'aliquid produci per alterum potest dupliciter intelligi. (1) Uno modo sicut per actionem que est productio ipsius, sicut per calefactionem producitur calidum vel calor in calefacto, et isto modo nihil producitur per operationem manentem, quia operatio manens non est producere. […] (2) Alio modo dicitur aliquid produci per alterum sicut per habere principium activum quo producens producit, sicut calidum calefacit per hoc quod habet calorem […], et isto modo omne quod fit, fit per operationem manentem, quia omne agens agit per aliquid principium formale per quod agens habet esse tale formaliter, quod pertinet ad operationem manentem pertinentem ad principium formale, et ulterius per idem principium habet producere aliud quod pertinet ad operationem transeuntem' (numbers inserted are mine).

which logically ensues from such a principle and from which the subject receives the capacity of producing something else. As a result, Hervaeus distinguishes the case of intellectively cognizing from that of uttering a mental word. While the former is a case of immanent action that consists in having a formal principle through which a subject is formally so-and-so and in force of which it can act, the second is a case of transient action that consists in formally producing something, from which an act of intellectively cognizing can further follow. Specifically, mental uttering consist in producing a specular form, while cognizing is just a cognizing through such a form.[220]

Hervaeus's reply is interesting, although with his distinctions he makes things more and more complicated. Instead of insisting that the activity of cognizing in some way leaves a trail which is different from the activity of cognizing itself, Hervaeus prefers to invert the logical order between an act and a concept, and presents a concept as a formal principle, which logically precedes a certain act of intellective cognition (viz., in the case of a mental word, an act of expressed cognition). Speaking in this way, however, Hervaeus attributes to a concept a twofold role insofar as a concept turns out to be both a formal principle that activates an act of intellective cognition (and as such it logically implies an act) and the end-product of a certain act of intellective cognition (and as such it logically is implied by an act). Clearly, this was not Durand's point. Durand was interested, precisely, in denying that the act of intellective cognition leaves a trail, while he would have agreed that a formal principle is responsible for a certain act of cognizing. The impression that Hervaeus mixes up different questions may be confirmed if one closely retraces Hervaeus's explanation of the sequence of concept formation.

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220 Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 8, a. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 49vb and fols. 50vb–51ra): 'Dico in proposito quod licet intelligere non dicat formaliter dicere vel producere verbum, tamen dicit habere actum per quem mens se movet ad verbum producendum, sive verbum sit actus intelligendi sive aliquid aliud; quod quidem producere est dicere. […] Quicquid igitur sit de conclusione, certum est quod ratio nulla est et procedit ex hoc quod ignoratur natura operationis manentis et transeuntis, et ex hoc etiam quod illi qui eam faciunt ignorant quomodo diversimode aliquid producitur per operationem transeuntem, que est ipsum formaliter producere, et per operationem manentem, que est principium formale tale habere per quod agens agit. […] Dico igitur ad propositum sive verbum sit actus intelligendi sive forma specularis, de qua dictum est, quod dicere formaliter non est intelligere. Et si quidem verbum sit forma specularis, sicut dictum est, tunc differunt dicere et intelligere sicut producere talem formam et intelligere per eam, quia scilicet dicere est producere verbum. Si autem esset actus intelligendi, tunc dicere et intelligere differunt sicut producere actum intelligendi et intelligere differunt. Ista autem differunt, quia unum dicit producere actum intelligendi, aliud vero dicit esse tale per talem actum formaliter, et differunt quodam modo. […] Unde et dicere est operatio transiens formaliter loquendo, licet sit manens per accidens. Unde sciendum quod operatio manens dicitur, per se proprie loquendo, respectu alicuius quod se habet ad id per se et in eo quod talis sicut ad illud in quo est, sicut intelligere se habet ad intelligens. […] Actio vero transiens dicitur, per se proprie loquendo, respectu alicuius ad quod se habet per se ut a quo est, et sic omne producere erit actio transiens per se loquendo, quia producere respicit producens ut a quo est et similiter dicere dicens, licet per accidens possit respicere illud idem ut in quo est, non in quantum est agens, sed in quantum est recipiens. […] Et sic dato quod actus intelligendi esset verbum, adhuc dicere non est intelligere. Unde ista via que dicit quod sicut se habet verbum ad actum intelligendi, ita dicere ad intelligere, falsa est.'

Consider once again the case of the intellective cognition of Hercules the Hero. As was said, when I see Hercules, the intelligible species of Hercules is formed by my intellect. The intelligible species of Hercules enables my intellect to bring about an act of confused cognition and the achievement of such an act leads to the concept, which still exists in my intellect in a confused way. An intelligible species and the confused concept formally amount to the same mental item, but they indicate two different stages of the activity of intellective cognition concerning one and the same thing: I first obtain a confused impression of Hercules's natural kind, then I gain awareness of such a kind, albeit still in a confused way. Once formed, such a concept is the formal principle of an act of expressed cognition, which ends again in the concept, which now exists in my intellect in an explicit and distinct way. If this cognitive sequence is what Hervaeus had in mind, it reveals that a concept may be described both as an end-product and as an activating principle of different acts of intellective cognition, and, as has been said, this was not Durand's point.

3.3. Durand's Counter-Reply and Other Objections

In the third redaction of his Commentary on the *Sentences*, I, d. 27, the first thing about which Durand complains to Hervaeus is that calling a formal principle an immanent action is an improper way of speaking.[221] Durand notes that the point under inquiry is not that discussed by Hervaeus, but another: it concerns the relation that an action bears to its end-product, not the relation that the starting-principle

[221] Cf. Durand of St.-Pourçain, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 27, q. 2, a. 2 (transcr. Guldentops, p. 804–7,182–255): 'Ad hoc quidam dicunt ad maiorem quod aliquid produci per alterum dupliciter potest intelligi: uno modo sicut per actionem que est productio ipsius, sicut per calefactionem producitur calidum uel calor in calefacto, et isto modo non producitur aliquid per operationem manentem. […] Alio modo potest dici aliquid produci per alterum sicut per hoc quod habet principium actiuum, quo producens producit, sicut calidum calefacit per hoc quod habet caliditatem uel calorem uel per calere, ita quod calidum et per calefactionem et per calere calefacit, per calefactionem sicut per illud quod dicit formaliter ipsam productionem eius, set per calere, sicut per illud quod importat agens habere calorem qui est principium per quod agit; et illo modo omne quod fit fit per operationem manentem. […] Hec autem responsio non uidetur ualere propter multa. Primum est quia expresse contradicit Aristotili IX Methaphisice. […] Secundo deficit ista responsio in hoc quod dicit quod per operationem intra manentem nichil producitur tanquam per actionem que sit productio, tamen quicquid producitur producitur per operationem intra manentem tanquam per principium quo producens producit, quia omne agens *agit per formam*, que dat ei tale esse formaliter quod pertinet ad operationem intra manentem, quia omne *esse* quod *dat forma* subiecto potest dici operatio immanens, ut calere et albere. Istud enim non uidetur bene dictum, quia quamuis omne quod producitur producatur per aliquam formam agentis, tamen uocare omnem formam agentis uel tale esse dat quod suo forma subiecto "operationem immanentem" non est congruum nec rationi consonum nec secundum mentem Philosophi nec communiter loquentium; non enim consueuerunt uocari "operationes immanentes" nisi actus anime qui secundum rationem tendunt in sua obiecta, sicut operationes transeuntes tendunt secundum rem in sua passa causando in eis realem effectum. Quod autem a talibus operationibus anime que sole consueuerunt dici "operationes immanentes" producatur quicquid producitur, est manifeste falsum. Quod etiam aliquid per eas producatur tanquam per principia quibus agentia agunt, est assumere quod queritur, et illud cuius oppositum manifeste dicit Philosophus in autoritate prius allegata.' For Hervaeus's text, see above, note 219.

of an action bears to the end-product or to the action itself.[222] To take a concept as something that is confusedly pre-cognized before the intellect expresses it entails that things are cognized before an act of expressed cognition is completed, since things are cognized by means of and in a concept. This becomes much more puzzling if one holds—as Hervaeus's explanation induces one to think—that an act of expressed cognition is caused by an act of confused cognition. In the third redaction of his *Sentences* Commentary, Durand attacks Hervaeus precisely on this point, i.e., he rejects the idea that an act of expressed cognition is caused by an act of confused cognition. These kinds of intellective cognition are incompatible with each other. Durand concedes that one could say that a confused cognition logically precedes an expressed cognition, but it is a logical mistake to infer from the fact that *a* precedes *b* that *a* is the cause of *b*.[223]

Besides these remarks, Durand formulates another criticism. In his *Quodlibet* II, q. 8, a. 3, Hervaeus summarized his own doctrine with three claims. First, a specular form such as a concept is produced by an act of confused cognition. Second, things are cognized in such a form. Third, things are cognized in such a form in a more express way than they are in the first act of intellective cognition stemming from the things.[224] Durand rejects each of Hervaeus's claim, but his principal objection is addressed to Hervaeus's fundamental assumption that we need specular forms in order to intellectively cognize extramental things. Let me expound Durand's criticism.

Durand begins his solution of distinction 27 of book I (q. 2, a. 2), devoted to the nature of mental word in God, by recalling that, on the basis of the similarities that the human intellect is supposed to have with the divine intellect, a mental word must exist subjectively and not objectively in the intellect. Since a concept or mental word is formed by the intellect, as Augustine also attests, it is absurd to equate mental words with cognized things, for the act of forming concepts inheres in the intellect and derives from the intellect, while things are not existent in the intellect

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[222] Cf. Durand of St.-Pourçain, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 27, q. 2, a. 2 (transcr. Guldentops, p. 807,258–61): 'nos querimus utrum per intelligere et uelle fiat aliqua forma in intellectu et uoluntate. Illa autem ratio non probat quod aliqua talis fiat, set solum quod intelligere et uelle sunt principia aliquorum actuum exteriorum qui subiacent imperio intellectus et uoluntatis.'

[223] See Durand of St.-Pourçain, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 27, q. 2, a. 2 (transcr. Guldentops, p. 809,311–8): 'Instantia autem illa non ualet, quia non semper peruenitur ad cognitionem expressam mediante confusa, quia habens habitum scientie proposita conclusione cuius habitum habet statim intelligit eam expressam et clare nullo actu confuso precedente; dato etiam quod actus confusus semper precederet, non propter hoc sequitur quod sit causa eius efficiens, quia multe sunt dispositiones subiecti quarum una necessario supponit aliam et tamen prima non est causa effectiua secunde.'

[224] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 8, a. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 49va): 'Hic tria ponuntur. Primum est quod talis forma producitur per actum confusum intelligendi. Secundum est quia in tali forma speculari cognoscitur res. Tertium est quod in ista forma expressius cognoscitur res quam per primum actum intelligendi qui causatur immediate ab obiecto.' Abstraction, reflection and production of mental word are the three operations that preside over the three points.

nor do they derive from the intellect.[225] As a result, given that mental words exist subjectively in the intellect, they can be either acts of cognition or expressed species. This is consequential because—as Durand points out—philosophers usually make two claims about the domain of what exists in the mental: (i) first, they assume that only four kinds of items can exist subjectively in the intellect, i.e., acts of intellective cognition, habits, impressed species, and expressed species; and (ii) usually they do not explain concepts or mental words as habits or impressed species. This explains the previous conclusion, namely that mental words are either acts of intellective cognition or expressed species. At this point, Durand struggles to prove that concepts or mental words cannot be described as expressed species, especially if these are understood as Hervaeus actually understands them, i.e., as specular forms.[226]

Echoing Hervaeus's summary, Durand condenses Hervaeus's position into three claims. First, a concept or mental word is a form which is not an act of intellective cognition, but something produced by the act of intellective cognition that is mental uttering. Second, a mental word is an object of the intellect, although not the principal one, but it is as a specular form that is representative of the principal object. Third, a mental word is produced for the sake of having a perfect and expressed cognition of a thing.[227] Against the first claim, as we have already seen when we examined Durand's first redaction of the *Scriptum*, Durand points out that Hervaeus misunderstands the nature of immanent actions, since 'by way of an immanent action nothing is constituted or produced.'[228]

Against the second claim, Durand objects that Hervaeus takes for granted what is only an unverified assumption. Even supposing that a concept or mental word is something distinct from an act of intellective cognition, it is not possible to know

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[225] Cf. Durand of St.-Pourçain, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 27, q. 2, a. 2 (transcr. Guldentops, p. 801,87–92): 'Istud enim non uidetur conueniens, tum quia manifeste est contra dictum Augustini XV De Trinitate, qui dicit quod *uerbum est formata cogitatio*; formata autem cogitatio non est res extra obiectiue intellecta, set est aliquid existens subiectiue in intellectu, tum quia uerbum est in dicente uel a dicente; set res exterior non est a dicente nec in dicente; ergo ipsa non est uerbum.'

[226] Cf. Durand of St.-Pourçain, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 27, q. 2, a. 2 (transcr. Guldentops, p. 800,46ff.).

[227] Cf. Durand of St.-Pourçain, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 27, q. 2, a. 2 (transcr. Guldentops, p. 803–4,160–6): 'Hec est opinio que in summa ponit tria: primum est quod uerbum est quedam forma que non est aliquis actus intelligendi, set est producta per actum intelligentis qui est dicere; secundum est quod uerbum est obiectum intellectus, licet non principale, set sicut forma specularis uel ymago principalis obiecti representatiua; tertium est quod uerbum est finaliter propter cognitionem perfectam et expressam habendam de re.' This formulation is the same as that given in the first redaction of the *Scriptum*. See above, note 209.

[228] Cf. Durand of St.-Pourçain, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 27, q. 2, a. 2 (transcr. Guldentops, p. 804,170–7): 'Primum istorum non puto esse uerum, scilicet quod per quemcunque actum intelligentis, siue ille actus sit intelligere siue dicere siue aliter qualitercunque nominetur, producatur aliqua forma in intellectu que non sit actus intelligendi. Quod patet primo ex natura operationis manentis intra sic: per operationem intra manentem nichil constituitur uel producitur; set intelligere uel dicere intelligibile sunt operationes intra manentes; ergo per eas nichil constituitur uel producitur. Maior patet ex IX Methaphisice.'

that a concept *a* is a representation of a thing *b*, without preliminarily cognizing, first, both *a* and *b* (and *b* before *a*), and second, that *a* is not *b*. But this cannot occur in the case of a concept or mental word, since no actual experience of a concept or any other mental item is possible for the human intellect by way of a direct act of knowledge, for otherwise the intellect would have a direct knowledge of itself, what cannot be conceded.[229] In any case, even if we could experience a concept through the intellect, we would have an intellective cognition of it more perfect than that of the cognized thing, since we would have an intuitive cognition of the concept and only an abstractive cognition of the cognized thing.[230] Durand therefore concludes that it is very disconcerting to say that we cognize a thing by means of and in a specular form. If we cognized things through specular forms, we would cognize the specular forms as well and this would imply that the specular forms are more cognizable than the things cognized through such forms.[231]

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[229] Cf. Durand of St.-Pourçain, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 27, q. 2, a. 2 (transcr. Guldentops, p. 812,388–97): 'Tertio sic: intellectus nec se nec habitus suos nec actus intelligit actu recto; set uerbum est aliquis actus intellectus; ergo non est uerum quod sit primum cognitum obiectiue et actu recto. Et confirmatur, qui intuitiue uidet picturam tabule, uidet et tabulam; set si uerum sit talis forma in intellectu qualis ab ISTIS ponitur, tunc uerbum se habet ad intellectum sicut quedam pictura uel ymago ad tabulam; ergo si intellectus uideret intuitiue uerbum suum, sicut necesse est, et si sit primo obiectiue cognitum, necesse est uel saltem possibile quod eodem actu uideat seipsum, et sic intellectus poterit seipsum cognoscere actu recto; quod est falsum'. In the first redaction of the *Scriptum*, this was the second criticism of the second claim of Hervaeus's position. See *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum. Redactio prima*, I, d. 27, q. 2 (ed. Perrone – Retucci, p. 137–8,228–35).

[230] Cf. Durand of St.-Pourçain, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 27, q. 2, a. 2 (transcr. Guldentops, p. 812,376–87): 'Secundo sic est ad idem: illud quod cognoscitur intuitiue clarius cognoscitur quam illud quod cognoscitur abstractiue, quia, sicut patuit in principio huius libri, cognitio intuitiua est clarior et manifestior quam abstractiua; set uerbum, si sit talis forma qualis ab istis ponitur, cognoscitur intuitiue, res autem cuius est uerbum cognoscitur solum abstractiue; ergo uerbum clarius cognoscitur quam res cuius est uerbum; quod est manifeste falsum. Maior iam patet. Set minor probatur, quia uerbum, si sit forma intellectu producta et obiectiue cognita, ut ab ISTIS ponitur, obiicitur immediate intellectui secundum suam presentiam actualem et sic in eam fertur intellectus; et in hoc consistit ratio cognitionis intuitiue, ut prius patuit.' This argument is added in the third redaction; it was not present in the first redaction.

[231] Cf. Durand of St.-Pourçain, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 27, q. 2, a. 2 (transcr. Guldentops, p. 811–2,357–75): 'Et istud non uidetur uerum: primo, quia obiectum quod est cognitum et ratio cognoscendi alterum non potest latere cognoscentem, qui possit certitudinaliter discernere se cognoscere duo, quorum unum est ratio cognoscendi alterum; set nullus cognoscens aliquam rem expressa cognitione diffinitiua uel enuntiatiua potest certitudinaliter discernere se cognoscere talia duo quorum unum sit forma exemplaris siue ymago representatiua alterius, ut isti dicunt de uerbo; ergo uerbum non est talis forma obiectiue cognita. […] dicere quod imo percipimus talem formam representantem principale obiectum est fingere illud quod nullus experitur.' In the first redaction of the *Scriptum*, this was the first criticism of the second claim of Hervaeus's position. See *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum. Redactio prima*, I, d. 27, q. 2 (ed. Perrone – Retucci, p. 137,211–27). As said, Hervaeus summarized Durand's first version of this remark in his *Quodlibet* II, q. 8, a. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 50ra). Both in the first and the third redaction of the *Scriptum*, Durand also mentions an argument based on a comparison between the intellect and the will. It is the third criticism of the second claim of Hervaeus's position in the first redaction and the fourth in the third redaction. See *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum. Redactio prima*, I, d. 27, q. 2 (ed. Perrone – Retucci, p. 138,236–9; transcr. Guldentops, p. 812–3,398–402).

Against the third claim, finally, Durand argues that some concept or mental word can ensue from a confused cognition as well, so it is not true that concepts are only formed in order to have an expressed cognition of things. Durand remembers that in fact we impose spoken words (*verbum vocis*) to signify mental words, but we can impose a spoken word also on the basis of a confused concept of a thing, so we can also have words that confusedly signify concepts.[232]

For all these reasons, Durand reaffirms the reduction of concepts to acts of intellective cognition. In particular, Durand holds that a concept must not be explained as something existing objectively in the intellect, nor as something existing subjectively in the intellect and distinct from (and posterior to) the act of its formation. It is so because if the proper function of concepts or mental words—as the opposing position holds—is that of *manifesting* things to the intellect, there is nothing more manifestative of a thing than the intellective cognition itself, that is, the act of intellective cognition. Durand's conclusion is therefore that concepts are nothing other than acts of intellective cognition and, conversely, acts of cognition may be called concepts.[233]

This conclusion entails a second one: both an act of expressed cognition and an act of confused cognition may be called 'concept', although an act of expressed cog-

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[232] Cf. Durand of St.-Pourçain, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 27, q. 2, a. 2 (transcr. Guldentops, p. 813,403–17): 'Tertium quod hec opinio ponit est quod uerbum est finaliter propter habendam perfectam et expressam cognitionem de re, quia propter confusam non oportet ponere uerbum, ut dicunt. Et illud non uidetur uerum: primo, quia uerbum uocis supponit uerbum mentis, ut dictum fuit ab initio; set rei, quantumcunque confused intellecte, competit uerbum uocis ipsam exterius manifestantis; ergo eidem competit uerbum mentis quo manifestatur interius; set illud non est cognitio expressa nec aliquid quod necessario coexigat cognitionem expressam, ut probatur, non ergo propter solam cognitionem expressam oportet ponere uerbum. Probatio assumpte, quia nos imponimus nomina rebus secundum quod eas intelligimus; ergo intellectus confusus rei sufficit ad imponendum nomen quod confuse representat res; unde dicere quod ad imponendum rei quandocunque nomen ipsam significans, oportet de re habere expressum conceptum, est clare falsum.' See also *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum. Redactio prima*, I, d. 27, q. 2 (ed. Perrone – Retucci, p. 138,240–47). In the first redaction of the *Scriptum*, Durand also gave a second reason against the third claim of Hervaeus's position: what is immediately expressed by some thing, more expressly represents that thing; but the intelligible species is more immediately expressed by a thing; therefore, the intelligible species represents a thing more expressly than the concept. See *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum. Redactio prima*, I, d. 27, q. 2 (ed. Perrone – Retucci, p. 138,248–54).

[233] Cf. Durand of St.-Pourçain, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 27, q. 2, a. 2 (transcr. Guldentops, p. 814–5,447–59): 'Propter hoc dicendum est aliter quod uerbum in nobis est ipsemet actus intelligendi. Quod potest concludi ex predictis sic: uerbum est aliquid ad intellectum pertinens et in intellectu existens; set non est species nec habitus nec forma per actum intellectus producta, ut probatum est; relinquitur ergo per locum a sufficienti diuisione quod sit actus intelligendi, et hoc uidetur rationabile. Cum enim nichil habeat rationem "uerbi", nisi prout induit rationem "manifestatiui", nec sit processus in infinitum, oportet quod primum uerbum non sit manifestatiuum ut signum, sicut uerbum uocis, nec ut species uel ymago, ut alii ponunt, set per essentiam, ita scilicet quod ipsa manifestatio rei apud intellectum est uerbum, manifestatio autem rei est eius cognitio; neque enim est manifesta, nisi quia cognita, ideo etc. Ad illud sunt plures autoritates Augustini.' For a similar formulation in the first redaction, see *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum. Redactio prima*, I, d. 27, q. 2 (ed. Perrone – Retucci, p. 139,277ff.)

nition may be called a concept more properly than an act of confused cognition and an act of reflexive cognition more properly than an act of direct cognition. The reason is, again, that by 'mental words' or 'concepts' philosophers usually refer to acts of cognition understood as *manifestations* of things, and it is clear that expressed and reflexive acts of cognitions can more properly be counted as manifestations. For Durand, this is exactly the sense of Augustine's notion of 'formed cogitation' (*cogitatio formata*).[234] At the end of the day, if one accepts Durand's perspective and equates mental words with mental acts, one may say that an act of forming a mental word is not an act of producing but of having a word, that is, a mental word is not the upshot of a manifestation, but the act of manifesting itself. As Durand emphasizes, saying that a mental word actually represents a thing simply means that it expresses the actual intellective cognition of that thing, so there is no reason not to attribute representational power to the acts of intellective cognition as well.[235] Durand thinks that this view of concepts does not sacrifice the generality and stability of human knowledge. One can in fact save both features by postulating other psychological items such as habits, cognitive dispositions or attitudes, and the like, all of which can be endowed only with a subjective mode of existence in the intellect.

3.4. Hervaeus's *Quodlibet* II, q. 8

Before concluding our reconstruction of the dispute between Hervaeus and Durand on the nature of concepts, let us take a step backwards and complete the picture by considering again what Hervaeus had to say about Durand's first series of remarks. As has been seen above in § 3.2, in *Quodlibet* II, q. 8, a. 1–2, Hervaeus replies to many of Durand's objections. We may widen our focus here and add that in a. 3 Hervaeus

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234 Cf. Durand of St.-Pourçain, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 27, q. 2, a. 2 (transcr. Guldentops, p. 816–7,481–502): 'Est tamen hic notandum quod licet omnis actus intelligendi, tam confusus quam expressus, tam directus quam reflexus, possit dici "uerbum", tamen expressus magis quam confusus, quia magis est rei manifestatiuus. Vnde Augustinus XV De Trinitate dicit quod *formata cogitatio* est *uerbum*, uocans "formatam cogitationem" non formam aliquam per actum intelligendi uel cogitandi productam, sicut quidam extorte exponunt, set ipsum actum cognoscendi expressum. Et rursus actus reflexus dicitur magis "uerbum" quam rectus, quia intellectus per actum reflexum magis loquitur sibi ipsi de re quam per rectum actum. Per actum enim rectum solum intelligit rem, quod est quoddam loqui mentale, set per actum reflexum loquens manifestius sibi ipsi dicit se intelligere etc. Sic ergo patet quid sit uerbum in nobis, quia ipsemet actus intelligendi confusus uel expressus rectus uel reflexus, quamuis secundum magis et minus, quia, ut prius dictum fuit, actus intelligendi non habet rationem "uerbi", nisi prout induit rationem "manifestatiui". Et quia hec ratio magis et perfectius conuenit uni actui intelligendi quam alteri, ideo ratio "uerbi"; propter quod quamuis unus actus intelligendi non sit magis intelligere quam alius, quia genus uel species non predicantur secundum magis et minus de suis inferioribus, tamen est magis uerbum, quia magis manifestat rem.'

235 Cf. Durand of St.-Pourçain, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 27, q. 2, a. 2 (transcr. Guldentops, p. 817–8,514–29): 'ideo uerbo mentis competit representare rem eodem modo quo cognitio est representatiua rei cognite; […] set uerbum mentis non est productum per actum dicendi nec dicere est producere uerbum mentale, imo dicere est habere uerbum, quia cum uerbum mentale non sit aliud quam notitia rei apud intellectum, per quem homo cogitans sibi ipsi loquitur, dicere uel loqui non est aliud quam habere in se notitiam rei que est uerbo eius.'

expands the discussion by summarizing Durand's position, in his turn, with three claims: first, every act of intellective cognition is a mental word; second, an act of expressed cognition is a mental word more than an act of confused cognition; and third, an act of reflexed cognition is a mental word more than an act of direct cognition.[236] The rebuttal of these claims is the way to confute Durand's reduction of mental words to the acts of intellective cognition.

As regards the first claim, Hervaeus notes that a mental word is something produced by a subject through an act of mentally uttering (*a dicente*). But not every act of intellective cognition is produced by somebody who is mentally uttering such an act, since some acts of intellective cognition are stimulated directly by the cognized thing; so not every act of intellective cognition is a mental word. If an act of intellective cognition were the same as an act of mental uttering, since a mental word is produced by an act of mentally uttering, an act of intellective cognition too would be produced by that same act; but, clearly, the opposite is true.[237]

As regards the second claim, Hervaeus argues that an act of mental uttering is an act of manifesting (*manifestare*).[238] But we cannot manifest something unless we previously cognized it. This entails that even if mental words were equated with the acts of manifestation, one should concede that at least one act of intellective cognition occurred before a mental word. So not every act of intellective cognition is a mental word. Nor can one say that no act of intellective cognition occurs before a mental word, for otherwise there would be no way of explaining why it is the intellect and not the object that produces a mental word. Finally, if an act of expressed cognition were a mental word as well as an act of confused cognition, a mental word would be a genus and, *qua* genus, it could not be attributed to any species of act in

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[236] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 8, a. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 48vb): 'Primum est videre quid sit verbum. Secundum est videre quomodo intelligere et dicere se habeant. Quantum ad primum est duplex opinio. Prima est quod verbum est idem realiter quod actus intelligendi et precipue expressus. […] Isti tria dicunt. Primum est quod omnis actus intelligendi est verbum. Secundum est quod expressus magis dicatur verbum quam confusus. Tertius quod reflexus est magis verbum quam rectus.'

[237] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 8, a. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 49ra): 'Primum non potest stare. Hoc probo unica ratione, quia omne verbum est ab aliquo dicente; sed non omnis actus intelligendi est in nobis ab aliquo dicente. […] Si dicas quod intelligere tali actu intelligendi est dicere, contra: quia dicere est producere verbum, et per consequens si verbum est actus intellectus, dicere est producere actum intelligendi; sed intelligere non est producere actum intelligendi […]; ergo ex hoc quod homo vel intellectus intelligit tali actu non potest vere dici dicens.'

[238] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 8, a. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 49ra): 'dicere est manifestare sibi, loquendo de dicere mentali. Tunc quaero de isto qui manifestat sibi aliquid per actum dicendi, aut hoc facit illud praeintelligens, aut non. Si sic, igitur ante omnem actum dicendi est actus intelligendi in nobis, quo intellectus est praeintelligens antequan dicat sibi; sed illud quod praecedit omnem actum dicendi non est verbum, quia omne verbum est per aliquem actum dicendi; ergo in nobis est aliquid actus intelligendi qui non est verbum. Si dicas quod non oportet ad hoc quod dicat quod sit praeintelligens […] si in intellectu est aliqua virtus activa ad producendum actum intelligendi. Et per consequens equaliter poterit convenire ipsi obiecto dicere sicut intellectui; sed obiecto non convenit dicere.'

particular. But this would be against the common opinion that mental words are, first of all, acts of expressed cognition.[239]

As regards the third claim, Hervaeus reaffirms that, by definition, a mental word is the result of an act of mental uttering. But for his opponents, a mental word is the outcome not of a direct act of cognition, but of an act of reflection of the intellect on itself, which results in an expressed cognition of the cognized thing. Hervaeus replies that if every act of intellective cognition were a mental word, and every mental word were a reflexive act of cognition, every act of intellective cognition would be reflexive—which is obviously absurd and moreover in conflict with the second claim (since no reflexive act provides a cognition that is more express than that provided by a direct act of cognition).[240]

After having rejected each point of Durand's position, in the solution of the question, Hervaeus reaffirms the same position as that found in the *Tractatus de verbo*, although he now appears to be less sure about the nature of mental word, since he now concedes that an act of expressed cognition too might probably (*probabiliter*) be said to be a mental word and be produced by an act of mental uttering.[241] His preference however (*non minus probabiliter* Hervaeus says earlier in his solution, *probabilius* later) is once again for the view that a mental word is an intellect's specular form (*forma specularis*), in which and through which the intellect speculates about its own cognized object.[242] Why should someone accept this solution? Hervaeus's suggestion seems to be that mental acts supporting intellective cognition should

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[239] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 8, a. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 49ra): 'Secundum etiam quod dicunt non potest stare, quia sic verbum esset genus vel species ad omnia verba, quia licet una species sit nobilior alia, non tamen genus convenit uni magis quam alii.'

[240] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 8, a. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 49ra–b): 'Tertium dictum eorum est in se falsum et secundo contradicit. Primum patet sic, quia secundum eos actus intelligendi quo quis dicit sibi est reflexus; sed omne illud quo quis dicit sibi est verbum mentale; ergo omne verbum mentale est actus reflexus secundum eos […]; ergo omnis actus intelligendi est reflexus, quod est falsum.'

[241] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 8, a. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 49rb–va): 'Quantum autem ad illud quod principale est in isto tertio, scilicet quid sit verbum, licet probabiliter possit teneri quod actus intelligendi expressus sit verbum et quod dicere sit producere tale actum intelligendi, non tamen minus etiam probabiliter teneri potest quod verbum sit quedam forma specularis in qua, scilicet quasi in quadam forma speculari, cognoscatur veritas de omnibus exterioribus, sive istud formetur in intellectu subiective sive formetur in fantasmate, ut quidam dicunt, ita tamen quod sive sic sive sic ponatur, semper se habeat ut forma in qua speculatur intellectus obiectum suum. Teneo tamen ut probabilius quod in intellectu formetur quidam actus intelligendi, qui sit talis forma [*here the text is uncertain. The 1486 Venice edition has a better text*: Teneo tamen ut probabilius quod in intellectu formetur quedam forma que non est actus intelligendi, licet talis forma fit in eo]. […] Sic igitur probabiliter potest teneri quod verbum non est actus intelligendi, sed aliquid aliud in quo res cognoscitur. Dico igitur sicut alias dixi, quod verbum non est actus intelligendi, sed est quedam forma specularis in qua res cognoscitur, ita quod etiam ipsa forma aliquo modo est nota. Et homo per talem formam in se causatam <cognoscit>, alio modo per actum intelligendi confusum: supposito etiam intellectu agente et specie, intelligitur res expressius quam intelligitur per primum actum confusum.'

[242] For a similar account of mental word, to which Hervaeus's seems to be indebted, see Henry of Ghent, *Quodlibet* VI, q. 1, ed. G.A. Wilson, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1987, p. 13,67–16,31.

not be confused with the cognized things they concern. Consider one of Hervaeus's examples. Regarding the proposition 'The stars are even or odd in number' that I can mentally utter, I can perform one of the following acts: either I can doubt about it or I can assent/dissent to it, so my act of mentally uttering such a proposition cannot be the same as the act of my doubting about or as the act of my assenting/dissenting to.[243] Likewise, you and I can fulfill two different mental acts with respect to one and the same concept expressed by a mental proposition, so a concept cannot be reduced to our mental acts. To take another example given by Hervaeus, suppose that a first cause exists. I could have the false belief that a first cause does not exist and you the true belief that a first cause exists. But a false belief and a true belief are different mental acts, for they are different kinds of act of believing, while the first cause believed is the same for me and you.[244] Nor can one escape such an argument by identifying the act of forming a mental proposition with the act of doubting about or assenting/dissenting to it—like Durand actually does when he equates the object of an act of doubting or assenting/dissenting with the convenience (*convenientia*) of the predicate with the subject in those acts.[245]

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[243] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 8, a. 3, arg. 1 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 49rb): 'Primo sic, quia respectu complexorum omnis actus intelligendi videtur esse vel dubitare vel assentire vel dissentire; sed conceptus mentis, accipiendo conceptum mentis pro verbo, nullum est istorum; ergo et cetera. […] Illud quod stat cum quolibet istorum non est aliquid istorum, quia unum istorum non stat cum aliquo, quia pure dubitans non assentit nec dissentit, nec assentiens dissentit vel e converso; sed similis conceptus mentis stat cum quolibet istorum: nam formando conceptum quem ista propositio significat, scilicet quod stelle sunt pares vel impares, quandoque contingit dubitare, quandoque assentire, quandoque dissentire; ergo et cetera.' On this example and the non-reduction of concepts (or mental words) to acts of cognizing, see also the early *Determinatio de intellectu et species*, III, ed. Stella, p. 146,31–147,20: 'Quanto vero ad tertium, scilicet quomodo se habeat verbum mentale ad actum intelligendi, videtur mihi, quanto occurrit ad nunc, quod verbum mentale non sit idem quod actus intelligendi. […] Sic igitur videtur mihi probabiliter quod verbum mentale sit diversum ab actu intelligendi.'

[244] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 8, a. 3, arg. 2 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 49rb): 'Secundo sic contra idem: similem conceptum complexum format ille qui dissentiendo [discendo *ed.*] errat et ille qui assentiendo scit, verbi gratia iste qui credit primam causam non esse errando et iste qui scit primam causam esse veritatem assentiendo [attingendo *ed.*] formant similem conceptum de complexo cui assentitur vel dissentitur, scilicet existentia primae causae; sed opinio erronea et notitia scientifica non sunt similes actus intelligendi; ergo conceptus non est actus intelligendi qui habetur de re concepta.'

[245] See Durand of St.-Pourçain, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 27, q. 2, a. 2 (transcr. Guldentops, p. 818–20,549–78, esp. 818–9,549–65): 'Ad secundum dicendum quod illud de quo principaliter dubitatur quandoque et cui quandoque assentitur et quandoque dissentitur non est aliud quam conuenientia uel disconuenientia rerum importatarum per subiectum et predicatum de quibus dubitatur utrum insint sibi an non insint, sicut cum dubitatur an stelle sint pares an impares, dubitatur solum an paritas conueniat stellis ut passio uel qualiscunque proprietas suo subiecto; secundario autem potest dubitari de ueritate intellectus qui huic assentiret et de ueritate propositionis que hoc significaret. Fingere autem quod in nobis sit quedam forma de qua dubitamus est irrationabilis fictio; uerum est quod intellectus, siue dubitans siue assentiens siue dissentiens, habet notitiam quid significetur per terminos, ut quid sit stella et quid sit paritas, set hec notitia in dubitante non est actus distinctus ab actu dubitandi nec in assentiente ab actu assentiendi nec in dissentiente ab actu dissentiendi, et ita non sunt duo actus intelligendi simul, set in quolibet istorum actuum manet notitia terminorum indistincta.'

For Hervaeus, this reply does not fly. If the act of intellective cognition expressed by a mental proposition such as 'The stars are even or odd in number' were the same as the acts of doubting about or assenting/dissenting to that proposition, the acts of doubting or assenting/dissenting would actually apply to different propositions. In fact, since they are different kinds of act, one of these acts could not be compared with the other. This means that we could not be said to be doubting about or assenting/dissenting to one and numerically the same proposition. If, on the other hand, one were to insist that the mental word is but the act of intellective cognition of what is signified by a proposition such as 'The stars are even or odd in number', one should however concede that the act of mentally uttering the proposition comes before the act of doubting about or assenting/dissenting to that proposition. As a result, one could not escape the conclusion that two acts of cognition are simultaneously present in our intellect when we are in doubt about the number of stars in the heavens.[246]

Hervaeus's arguments are worthy of attention. They promote the distinction between mental acts and their contents, a distinction that, for Hervaeus, is needed to preserve the difference between the objective content of a cognitive act and the numerically different mental acts that can concern one and the same content. Historically speaking, however, they do not give us Hervaeus's final word, if any, on the nature of concepts. In fact, with respect to the dispute with Durand, unfortunately we do not have Hervaeus's replies to Durand's counterarguments in the third redaction of the *Scriptum*, by means of which Durand tried to explain how to reconcile the idea that mental words are acts of intellective cognition with the idea that acts of intellective cognition are not simultaneously present in the intellect. Hervaeus's point seems to be, however, that the simultaneity of acts of intellective cognition is unavoidable for any mental-act account of concepts. In fact, the true reason leading to such a conclusion is that many supporters of the opposite position concede that an act of expressed cognition (ending with a mental word) is obtained through an act of confused cognition.[247]

In summary, Hervaeus offers many arguments for avoiding the reduction of concepts to acts of intellective cognition, although not every argument seems to achieve

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246 Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 8, a. 3, arg. 2 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 49rb): 'Sed forte dicetur ad ista quod iste conceptus de quo quandoque dubitatur, quandoque assentitur, quandoque dissentitur, est notitia quid nominis, scilicet quid est illud quod dicitur per illud complexum; sed assentire et dissentire est cognoscere, quia ita est vel ita non est. Contra: notitia quid nominis aut est idem cum assentire vel dissentire, aut non. Si non, igitur sunt duo actus intelligendi simul. Si sic, sequitur quod similis conceptus non potest stare cum dissentire et assentire, quia assentire non potest stare simul cum dissentire.' The two final arguments given by Hervaeus in the solution underscore the parallel between intellective and sensory cognition (both obtain thanks to the mediation of fictions, *idola*), and the similarities between human word and divine word.

247 Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 8, a. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 49vb): 'Et quando ulterius dicitur quod hoc posito, sequitur quod duo actus intelligendi sint simul, dico quod ista difficultas equaliter currit contra ponentes verbum esse actum intelligendi sicut contra non ponentes, et similiter contra ponentes verbum non produci per actum intelligendi confusum sicut contra ponentes verbum produci per talem actum, quia omnes concedunt quod ad actum intelligendi expressum attingitur mediante actu confuso intelligendi.'

this goal. For example, some problems still remain with the explanation of intellective cognition as an immanent action. If nothing is produced by an act of cognizing, concepts could be ruled out simply by stressing the one-to-one correspondence holding between acts and concepts. This will be, for instance, the strategy adopted by Walter Chatton in rejecting William of Ockham's early account of concepts as *ficta*. But from Hervaeus's point of view this argument does not work either. Hervaeus indeed seems to think that the complete achievement of an action is not actually different from the action itself. Nevertheless, formally speaking, the achievement cannot be reduced to the action itself, for otherwise either no action actually would come about or every action would remain unachieved. Hervaeus's explanation of what an immanent action is suggests that acts of intellective cognition are not brought about in order to produce concepts; all the same, acts of intellective cognition make things cognized and this feature remains once acts are completely achieved, just like slimming remains once the act of slimming is over. Working with concepts is therefore needed, since an achieved action is formally something different from the same action as-yet unachieved. Admittedly, a theory of knowledge including concepts as items distinct from acts is not so ontologically inflationary as one might think at first, because the advocates of mental-act accounts of concepts must also in the end allow for the existence of supplementary items such as habits serving the function of storing knowledge and providing intellective cognition with universality and stability.

In conclusion, two major points are concerned in the Hervaeus–Durand dispute: first, the correct identification of the mental items that may be endowed with representational power; and second, the correct way of distinguishing cognitive acts from the cognitive products or traces that they can leave on the intellect. As has been said, Hervaeus is of the opinion that concepts are not reducible to the acts of intellective cognition, on the argument that one and the same concept can be associated with different acts of intellective cognition. Moreover, Hervaeus thinks that concepts also display an objective mode of existence (when they are considered as to their contents), whereas acts of intellective cognition only a subjective one. A possible result of the distinction between acts and concepts seems to be the equation of concepts to the cognized things. As we shall see in the next section, however, already in the *Tractatus de verbo* Hervaeus rejects or at least qualifies this equation.

4. The Metaphysical Status of Concepts II: Hervaeus's *Tractatus de verbo*, q. 1, aa. 3–4

In order to bring our reconstruction to an end, let me go once again through Hervaeus's explanation of the mechanisms of intellective cognition. Once the intelligible species of a thing has been formed and an act of intellective cognition has been elicited, as was seen, a thing becomes cognized. Why cannot concepts be identified with the things as cognized? Here matters are complicated because thin are the boundaries

between such entities. For excluding this identification, Hervaeus gives three reasons. First, the cognized thing is external to the intellect, at least as to its remote foundation, while the concept is always formed by the intellect and hence only exists inside the intellect. Second, the cognized thing can exist in the intellect objectively, and this occurs precisely when it is related to the intellect that is actually cognizing it (I postpone to the third study the discussion of this issue); the concept instead exists in the intellect *formally*, namely as a form through which the intellect performs a cognitive operation, and this entails that it exists subjectively, not objectively. In addition, every concept implies a cognized thing, but a concept is not cognized in the same way in which a thing is cognized. It is simply a means to cognize a thing, which is the true object of our act of intellective cognition. The third reason is that an act of intellective cognition confers on a thing an intelligible or intentional mode of being, but not a real being, since intellectively cognizing a thing does not change the nature of the thing cognized. Thus, while a concept, being a quality of the intellect, has a real being in the intellect, the thing imported by the concept has a non-real kind of being.[248]

It must be noted that, while discussing this last point, Hervaeus introduces a distinction that clarifies the position expressed by Aquinas in *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 8, a. 1. As I have illustrated in the first study, Aquinas distinguishes the concept and the cognized thing, but the relationship between them is not explained in detail.[249] Hervaeus clarifies this point. He explains that we cannot cognize a thing if not through a concept and every time we cognize a thing we cognize the concept as well; but cognizing a concept amounts to cognizing the thing itself. In fact, something can be said to be cognized in two ways. Firstly, that is intellectively cognized to which an act of intellective cognition is principally directed and intellectively cognized in this sense is the extramental thing. Secondly, something is intellectively cognized in the sense that the intellect makes use of it in order to fulfill its acts of intellective cognition, and intellectively cognized in this sense is the concept:

> And therefore it must be said otherwise that something can be called cognized in two ways. In the first way, as that to which cognition is principally directed, and in this way among the things subject to transmutation the extramental thing is that which is cognized. […] In a different way something can be called cognized insofar as the intellect makes use of it as a certain mean of cognition that is oriented to a term, so that the cognition of the intellect does not pause principally on it, but, through it, tends to something else, as those who while looking at the image of Hercules begin to consider which individual human being was Hercules among those who are represented to us in that image. […] Being established therefore these things, I say that the mental word is not principally

[248] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *De verbo*, q. 1, a. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 11va): 'Secundum Augustinum verbum est cogitatio formata quam constat esse in anima formaliter; res autem exterior intellecta, que est principale et ultimum obiectum ipsius intellectus, non est cogitatio quecumque sive formata sive informis, nec est in anima formaliter, sed obiective. […] Licet res fiat intellecta vel universalis per intellectum, non tamen dicimus quod ipsa res que est facta intellecta vel universalis per actionem intellectus, simpliciter fiat per actionem intellectus; verbum autem quantum ad illud quod est dicitur simpliciter esse productum per actionem intellectus.'

[249] See above, notes 78ff.

> the object of the intellect or what is principally cognized, since this is the thing outside the soul in which principally pauses the cognition of the intellect, but it is as something that is in the place of another thing cognized according to the intention of the subject-cognizer, insofar as the intellect makes use of it as some instrument to cognize another thing.[250]

In an act of intellective cognition of an extramental thing our intellect makes use of concepts, but it does not principally dwell (*sistit*) on them. For example, when I mentally utter that Hercules the Hero is a human being, I produce a propositional mental word to intellectively cognize Hercules more expressly. Hercules is what I mean to cognize in the first instance and the concept of human being has been uttered to cognize Hercules more expressly; the concept of human being indeed indicates what is expressly cognized *about* Hercules. Human being can be intellectively cognized as such only in the second instance; secondarily indeed can my act of mental uttering become an object of a distinct act of cognition, for example if I reflect on it by means of other mental words.

Incidentally, from this distinction Hervaeus draws some semantic implications contrary to those drawn by Durand. He first observes that 'a spoken sound [*vox*] is said to signify, by means of a mental word, the thing for which a mental word stands, rather than the mental word itself',[251] then he makes clear that 'a spoken sound signifies both a mental word and the thing cognized by means of the mental word, because it signifies the mental word only as taking the place of something else'. Hervaeus notes that this is the right understanding of both Aristotle's claim that 'spoken sounds signify the passions of soul' and Augustine's claim that 'an exterior spoken sound signifies an interior word'.[252] We may thus summarize Hervaeus's

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[250] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *De verbo*, q. 1, a. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 11vb): 'Et ideo aliter dicendum est quod aliquid potest esse dupliciter intellectum. Uno modo, sicut id cuius cognitio principaliter [principalis *ed.*] intenditur, et isto modo […] ipsa res exterior est ipsum intellectum […]. Alio modo potest aliquid dici intellectum inquantum intellectus utitur eo ut quadam ratione intelligendi ad terminum, ita quod cognitio intellectus non in eo principaliter sistat, sed mediante eo in quoddam aliud tendat, sicut videntes imaginem Herculis incipimus considerare qualis fuit ipse homo ex eis que de ipso in illa imagine nobis representantur. […] Hiis ergo visis, dico quod verbum non est principaliter obiectum intellectus sive principale intellectum, quia hec est res extra animam in qua sistit cognitio intellectus principaliter; sed est quasi pro alio intellecto [intellectuali *ed.*] quantum ad intentionem intelligentis in quantum intellectus utitur eo ut quodam instrumento ad intelligendum alterum' (my translation).

[251] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *De verbo*, q. 1, a. 3, ad 1 (ed. Venice, 1513, fols. 11vb–12ra): 'Ad primum argumentum ergo dicendum quod sicut convenit uti imagine ut quadam re, sicut dicimus demonstrata quadam imagine quia illa imago est lapidea vel sculptilis vel aliquid tale, et utimur imagine ut est ductiva in alterum, sicut diximus de demonstrata imagine Herculis, ille fuit probus miles, sic cum verbum sit quedam imago et similitudo representativa rei intellecte, possumus uti verbo vel ut quadam re […] vel ut similitudine duct<iv>a in cognitionem alterius, et tunc significamus eum [*scil.* Herculem] per voces aliarum rerum non secundum quod est res quedam, sed secundum quod gerit vicem alterius. Unde magis debet dici vox significare illud alterum cuius vicem gerit verbum, mediante verbo, quam significare verbum.'

[252] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *De verbo*, q. 1, a. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 12ra): 'in tali igitur significatione verbi vox significat et verbum et rem representatam per verbum, quia nec significat nisi vice alterius. Et illo modo intelligit Philosophus quod voces significant passiones anime et isto modo Augustinus intelligit quod vox exterior significat verbum interius.' In the same vein, see *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 8 (ed.

position as follows: names are imposed to signify things on the basis of concepts, but they are not imposed to signify concepts, albeit they also signify concepts to a certain degree (namely, insofar as concepts are taken in the place of something else). This is Hervaeus's clue to reconcile Aristotle with Augustine and avoid an excessively mentalistic construal of the signification of names. When Augustine says that an act of intellective cognition is a (mental) word—Hervaeus explains—he means that an act of intellective cognition is the *cause* of a (mental) word.[253] This way of understanding Augustine's doctrine becomes clearer in the final article of *Tractatus de verbo*, q. 1, when Hervaeus explains the meaning of the expression 'formed cogitation' (*cogitatio formata*). According to his interpretation, by 'formed cogitation' Augustine meant to distinguish *cogitation*, generally understood as the action by means of which something is intellectively cognized, from *formed cogitation*, understood as the result of the action of intellective cogitation. An action of cogitation is a discursive act of thought, so a mental word is properly speaking the result of a discursive act of thought. Specifically, our intellect forms mental words with the scope of making cognitively clearer the thing that has been cognized in a confused way by means of an intelligible species. It is evident that, for Augustine, not every mental word is a formed cogitation (since not every mental uttering is a cogitation), although every formed cogitation is a mental word. It is also evident that, for Augustine, no formed cogitation is an act of intellective cognition, although acts of intellective cognition are needed for obtaining formed cogitations.[254]

Hervaeus seems to think that distinguishing between a concept and its content is crucial to reach a correct understanding of the nature of intellective cognition and of the semantics of common names as well. Our intellective cognition appears to

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Venice, 1513, fol. 50rb): 'nec verbum est quod vocibus significatur, sed res representata per verbum. Unde verbum dicimus illud mediante quo imponimus voces ad significandum'; III, q. 1 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 69va): 'actus intelligendi est necessarius ad significandum rem, quia nullus potest significare nisi quod actu intelligit et id ipsum significat quod per actum intelligendi intelligit; hoc autem est res intellecta. Unde notandum quod id ipsum quod actus intelligendi representat intelligenti, vox significativa representat alii.' On the conventional signification of words, see *Quodlibeta*, I, q. 16 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 30vb).

[253] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 8, a. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 50va): 'Ad auctoritates Augustini, quas illi inducunt pro se, qui ponunt actum intelligendi esse verbum, dicendum quod in illis auctoritatibus est predicatio qua effectus predicatur de causa, eo modo quo dicimus quod latio solis super terram est dies quia est causa diei. Unde omnes auctoritates que dicunt quod verbum est notitia vel intueri vel aliquid tale sunt predicationes causales.'

[254] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *De verbo*, q. 1, a. 4 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 12rb–va): 'cogitatio potest accipi pro actione [vel passione] qua producitur. […] Alio modo potest accipi cogitatio formata pro forma producta per actionem cogitandi, que est ipse cogitatus mentis […], et sic accipiendo cogitatio formata est vere verbum. Unde notabiliter dicit Augustinus quod cogitatio formata est verbum, ut facta differentia inter cogitationem et formatam cogitationem […] cogitare addit super dicere discursum rationis. […] Ad primum in oppositum patet responsio per iam dicta, quia Augustinus ibi accipit cogitationem formatam pro forma per actum cogitandi producta et non pro actione intellectus per quam verbum producitur. Ad secundum etiam patet responsio, quia non omne dicere est cogitare, sed dicere quod est cum discursu rationis, accipiendo proprie cogitatione, et ideo non omne verbum est cogitatio formata, licet e converso omnis cogitatio formata sit verbum.'

be a phenomenon naturally characterized by intentionality insofar as it displays a certain intrinsic and immediate *referentiality*. Our intellect indeed turns itself into a thing, and in doing so, it works to express the first, confused impression received from that thing. Both our first act of pointing to a thing and our second act of explicating our first acquaintance with that thing are world-oriented, i.e. naturally intentional, acts of thought. In particular, a concept is what is actively formed by the intellect once the intellect has been informed by an intelligible species. Although intelligible species and concepts have some features in common—both exist subjectively in the intellect and both are similitudes of one and the same thing—they are not similitudes of the same kind, since (i) unlike a concept, an intelligible species is not cognized or co-cognized when a thing is cognized and (ii) an intelligible species expresses a still confused cognition of a thing.[255] On its own, a concept has two proper features, namely that of being causally produced by the intellect and that of being able to represent a thing.[256] These two features are also the key to accommodating some of Aquinas's contrasting claims concerning the function of word in a Trinitarian context. As to this, Hervaeus points out that the first feature alone is exhibited by all the Persons of the Trinity, and this allows us to claim that the divine word is said essentially of each Person. But once kept together with the second feature, they induce us to claim that the divine word, properly speaking, is said personally and only of the second Person of the Trinity.[257]

5. The Intellective Process Reconstructed

In the previous sections I proposed a reconstruction of Hervaeus's position on concepts and made a comparison between Hervaeus and Durand. His position lies in an articulate conception of the intellective process. Before moving to the second issue of this study, namely the extramental foundation of concepts, it may be useful to summarize Hervaeus's view of the mechanisms of intellective cognition in

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[255] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *De verbo*, q. 1, a. 1 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 10va); see also *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 36, q. 1 (ed. Venice, 1505, fols. 53vb–57ra).

[256] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *De verbo*, q. 2, a. 1 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 22rb): 'Respondeo dicendum quod, ut ex dictis patet, duo sunt de ratione verbi unde verbum est: unum et primum est quod sit representativum rei, et hoc ei convenit ut est similitudo vel exemplar ipsius rei cognite. Secundum est quod sit productum ab aliquo intelligente'; a. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 23ra); a. 4 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 23vb); *Quodlibeta*, I, q. 7 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 14va–b).

[257] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *De verbo*, q. 2, a. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 23ra): 'De ratione verbi sunt duo: unum quod sit representativum rei et cum hoc quod sit productum ab aliquo intelligente. Primum autem horum est commune toti Trinitati et est essentiale […] et ideo invenitur frater Thomas posuisse quod potest esse et essentiale et personale, extendendo nomen verbi. Sed si accipiamus non solum quod sit representativum rei, sed etiam quod sit productum ab aliquo intelligente et per modum intellectus, oportet dicere de necessitate quod sit personale […] et ideo etiam frater Thomas alibi posuit quod […] verbum proprie accipatur cum solum personale.' In this study my focus has not been on the Trinitarian implications of the doctrine of mental word. For more on this Trinitarian issue, see R.L. Friedman, *Medieval Trinitarian Thought from Aquinas to Ockham*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

human beings. The analysis of mental word Hervaeus provides in the first question of the *Tractatus de verbo* reveals that intellective cognition is seen as a particularly complex phenomenon. At least seven items and/or stages are involved:

1. *The cognitive potency*, i.e., the intellect, which is able to bring about *acts of intellective cognition* which result in an action or activity, i.e., the intellective cognizing itself (*intelligere*), and which in turn gives rise to a relation that holds between the extramental thing and the intellect; in particular, it is the agent intellect that plays the role of first efficient cause of the intellective process: it abstracts the intelligible species from the phantasms of things and impresses it on the possible intellect. Acts of cognition belong to the Aristotelian category of Quality, but cognizing to that of Action.[258]

2. *The (external) thing*, which designates what the intellect is oriented to cognize and which gives the starting-point to intellective cognition.

3. *The intelligible species* (if any), which has to narrow down the cognitive capacity of the possible intellect by driving it to a certain kind of cognition. The intelligible species is the formal cause of intellective cognition, as taught by Aquinas. The first intelligible species of a thing is called by Hervaeus 'impressed species' (*species impressa*), while the intelligible species as obtained after acts of intellective cognition is called 'expressed species' (*species expressa*).

4. *The act of confused cognition*, which the intellect elicits after it has formed the intelligible species and which ends with the formation of a simple concept.

5. *The extramental thing qua cognized*, which corresponds to the concept that is the end-product of the act of confused cognition. As we shall see better in the third study, such a thing is presented as the formal correlate of the concept and also as a universal similitude of extramental things. Extramental things are said to be endowed with objective being in the intellect, while cognized things, together with the agent intellect, are the efficient causes of the intellective process. The things cognized through concepts are the proper object of the signification of common names.

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[258] On the non-reducibility of the act of intellective cognition to the intellective potency, see *Quodlibeta*, III, q. 8 (*Utrum actus intelligendi dicat aliquid superadditum potentie*) (ed. Venice, 1513, fols. 79va–80vb). There Hervaeus makes three claims. First, an act of intellective cognition adds something to the intellective potency, to the extent that the actualization of a potency in general is something really different from the potency. On the other hand, the act of intellective cognition expresses an absolute perfection, for otherwise there would be no difference in perfection between a subject who is actually cognizing and a subject who is not cognizing (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 79va). Second, an act of intellective cognition is not really different from the activity of cognizing, although, if the act is understood as the end-product of the activity, they can be categorized differently (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 79va). Third, an act of intellective cognition originates from a mental object or from a species, if any: 'Descendendo autem ad propositum dico quod in potentia intellectiva quando aliquis in actu intelligit fit quidam actus absolutus, qui formaliter non dicit relationem, licet relatio consequatur ad ipsum. Et intelligens dicitur formaliter intelligens tali actu, subiective a potentia intellectiva, effective ab obiecto et intellectu agente, vel a specie secundum alios' (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 79rb).

6. *The act of expressed cognition* by means of which we know what a thing is or that a thing is so-and-so. The acts of intellective cognition that the intellect elicits stemming from cognized things are acts of expressed cognition and they end with the formation of definitional, propositional, or argumentative concepts. Such concepts are what are called, properly speaking, *concepts* or *mental words*.

7. *The concept*, which ends an act of expressed cognition and manifests to the intellect the cognized thing; concepts as such exist subjectively in the intellect, but they are also representations of cognized things, which exist objectively in the intellect. Hervaeus calls concepts 'specular forms', since things are cognized by means of and in them.

In his works, Hervaeus never gives the list above, but in *Quodlibet* II he sorts six elements. At first sight, this list is different since Hervaeus gives it not according to the psychological items involved in the process of intellective cognition, but according to the phases in which an object gets progressively cognized by the intellect. In fact, Hervaeus distinguishes two possible re-organizations of these six elements, according to whether or not one is disposed to admit the existence of intelligible species. So, if one accepts them, one finds, first, the object (understood as the external thing) which impresses its species on the intellect; second, the impressed species; third, the act of intellective cognition; fourth, the object as cognized in itself; fifth, the object as driving to the cognition of something else that shines in it; and sixth, the (reflexive) cognition through which one knows that the object drives to the cognition of something else. Anyone who does not accept the species obviously gives up the second point (point 3 on our list above).[259]

As emerges from Hervaeus's list, the Dominican Master puts a certain emphasis on the notion of *object*, which stands as a crucial notion in his epistemology. The object and the agent intellect serve the function of efficient causes (each partial, together total) of intellective cognition, while the cognized extramental thing is the material cause and the intelligible species, if any, the formal one. A concept or mental word is the final cause. A concept is the result of an act of confused cognition first, then of an act of expressed cognition or mental uttering. This means that at an

[259] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 3, a. 2 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 39rb): 'Circa scire autem et intelligere absolute secundum ponentes species est considerare sex. Et hoc dico quod intellectus movetur ab obiecto ad intelligendum. Nam ibi est primo obiectum imprimens suam speciem. Secundo est ibi ipsa species impressa. Tertio est ibi actus intelligendi. Quarto est ibi considerare ipsum obiectum primum ut intellectum in se. Quinto est ibi considerare obiectum primum prout ducit in cognitionem alterius relucentis in ipsum sive cognoscibilis per ipsum, ut quando una res cognita ducit in cognitionem alterius. Sexto est ibi cognitio qua cognoscitur tale obiectum ducere in cognitionem alterius, ut quando intellectus reflectitur super cognitionem suam. Secundum autem non ponentes speciem, non sunt ibi nisi quinque, scilicet obiectum prout preintelligitur ante omnem cognitionem ut movens ad actum intelligendi. Secundum est actus qui est respectu primi talis obiecti. Tertium est ibi considerare ipsum obiectum ut in se cognitum. Quartum est considerare ipsum obiectum ut movens ad cognitionem alterius relucentis. Quintum est ibi considerare causalitatem ipsius obiecti primi in movendo ad cognitionem secundi, ut quando intellectus reflectitur super suum actum.'

earlier stage of cognition, for Hervaeus, we reach confused concepts, produced by acts of confused cognition stemming from intelligible species (if one admits them) or from the object itself. In turn, such concepts elicit other acts of less confused and more express cognition. At a later stage, our intellective activity has the scope of making the initial concept more and more explicit. Specifically, as has been seen, concepts or mental words introduce two fresh aspects in cognition.

The first is that the act of forming a mental word is not the same as the act of cognizing a thing (which obtains through abstracting and forming an intelligible species, if any), nor the act of doubting about or assenting/dissenting to a proposition concerning the thing. Normally, we form a mental word by virtue of a discursive act of thought, but this does not entail that through such an act we are also assenting/dissenting to it.[260] This has important consequences for the theory of truth, since forming a true proposition, saying that such a proposition is true and assenting/dissenting to it amount to different cognitive acts.[261]

The second aspect is that a mental word is produced within the scope of cognizing absent or inexistent things, or to make clearer and explicit the cognition of an existent and/or present thing, which is first cognized in a confused way.[262] This entails that we can have confused cognition of a thing without having any mental word at all. At an earlier stage of cognition indeed, it is enough to have a thing joined together with a modification of the intellect, realized by an intelligible species.[263] Later, Hervaeus holds that we form mental words for four goals: (i) to make more and more manifest a cognition; (ii) to assent/dissent to a proposition; (iii) to cognize a thing with respect to other things; and finally (iv) to distinguish things which are united to each other.[264]

Other features characterize this account of concepts and intellective cognition. One is this: Hervaeus holds that, once mental words are formed, irrespective of whether they are simple or complex, there is always a mental *object* that corresponds to them. This is a very idiosyncratic feature of his theory, which seems to introduce an 'internalist' turn with respect to Aquinas. I shall reserve a large part of the third study to clarifying this feature. For the purposes of this second study, I limit myself to noting that objects, for Hervaeus, are made in such a way that they are intrinsically one, that is, regardless of their complexity, every mental word formally has only one correspondent object. Moreover, they too are representative of the things we are oriented to cognize and are predicable of each of them.[265] These objects (like human being, which corresponds both to the simple concept of human being and

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260 *De verbo*, q. 3, a. 1 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 17ra–b).
261 The issue is treated extensively in *Quodlibeta*, III, q. 1 (ed. Venice, 1513, fols. 67va–70ra).
262 *De verbo*, q. 3, a. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fols. 17vb–18rb).
263 *De verbo*, q. 3, a. 2 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 17va).
264 *De verbo*, q. 4, a. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 20va–b).
265 *De verbo*, q. 4, a. 1 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 19rb–vb).

to the definitional concept of rational animal) are the precipitate of the repeated activity of our intellect's acts of gathering and unifying the essential features of extramental things. Every concept has thus an object: concepts refer primarily to mental objects and only secondarily to extramental objects.

Having reconstructed the articulation of cognition according to Hervaeus and introduced these distinguishing aspects of Hervaeus's account of concepts, we are now ready to make the final step of our reconstruction, namely, to clarify the relationship that, for Hervaeus, such mental objects have with their extramental counterparts.

6. The Extramental Foundation of Concepts

The explanation of concept formation leads us to the second issue we mentioned at the beginning of this study—viz., the extramental foundation of concepts. In many works, Hervaeus emphasizes that concepts or mental words represent primarily mental *objects* and not the extramental things in themselves. They can represent extramental things as well, but they can do so only because the objects that are primarily represented by them in turn represent extramental things. In short, when we analyze the representing mechanism of a concept such as that of human being, three items should be distinguished in Hervaeus: the concept of human being, the mental object-human being, and the extramental singular human beings.

How to explain the universal way of representing of the concept of human being? In answering this question, Hervaeus makes it clear that the concept of human being is not universal insofar as it has a universal being. Every concept in fact exists subjectively in the intellect and what exists in this way exists as singular. The universality of a concept lies in its *representational power* and in that of the corresponding mental object. As to the universality of such objects, Hervaeus's answer is qualified. Formally speaking, universality designates the intellect's typical mode of cognizing things, but also a kind of relation that extramental things bear to the intellect that is actually cognizing them, a relation that determines, on the side of things, a special kind of being cognized, which consists in their being universal. As I have shown elsewhere,[266] Hervaeus distinguishes different kinds of universality. Something can be said to be universal in being, in representation, in signification, or in predication, and being universal in predication expresses the core sense of universality. A concept or mental word is universal only in representation, while the mental object represented by the concept is universal both in representation and in predication. The concept of human being, for example, represents primarily the mental object-human being and secondarily the singular extramental individual human beings, which are represented by the mental object-human being and of

[266] See Amerini, *I trattati 'De universalibus'*, p. 27ff.; Amerini, *La logica di Francesco da Prato*, p. 141ff. Also see Amerini, 'Hervaeus Natalis on Universals'.

which the mental object-human being is essentially predicated.[267] But how can the property of being universal be grounded on extramental things?

In the *Tractatus de verbo*, Hervaeus rejects the so-called "extreme realist" position, maintaining that it is not necessary to posit a strict one-to-one correspondence between concepts and extramental entities. Extramental things are singulars but also have a nature or essence. So one can explain the fact that we derive from one and the same thing different but recurrent and predicable essential concepts simply by assuming that an extramental thing's nature is made in such a way that it can be cognized and then direct our intellect to cognize it through concepts representing it differently.[268] Concepts formation is the result of an act of abstraction and unification of the essential properties of extramental things, which is achieved by our intellect through the formation of an intelligible species that represents the extramental things' nature.

In the *Tractatus de verbo* Hervaeus does not explain further the metaphysical status of the things' natures, since he is interested there only in explaining what happens in the intellect when such natures are cognized and hence how they stimulate the production of mental words by the intellect. Nonetheless, Hervaeus seems to assume that, on the metaphysical side, these essential properties depend, in the case of human beings, on their soul. The human soul has a certain complexity since it is the causal principle of a variety of biological and cognitive operations performed by human beings or by the soul itself, and this complexity is enough to justify the foundation of our different essential concepts of extramental things. In particular, our intellect proceeds by abstracting things' natures from the singularity and materiality of the instances in which they are instantiated and by unifying such natures into mental objects.

In the *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus* Hervaeus specifies this idea by explaining that, once a thing's nature has been cognized, our intellect can reflect on such mental objects, compare them with the extramental things or with other mental objects, and so arrive at forming what Hervaeus calls the 'intentional' properties. Being universal belongs to this kind of properties. This account of the property of being universal entails that such a property can be predicated of a thing's nature only accidentally. As already noted by Aquinas, an extramental thing's nature, that is, is not universal by itself, essentially, but becomes universal only when it relates to the intellect that is actually cognizing it and, certainly, being in relation to the intellect is accidental to a thing's nature.[269]

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[267] See, e.g., Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, d. 2, q. 2, ed. Dijs, p. 184,1–185 (ed. Doyle, p. 380–81). For further details, see Amerini, 'Hervaeus Natalis on Universals'. In what follows, my concern is about essential concepts. The case of accidental concepts is different. For the different foundations of such concepts, see *Quodlibeta*, I, q. 9 (ed. Venice, 1513, fols. 18vb–22vb, esp. fols. 20va–21vb).

[268] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *De verbo*, q. 3, a. 4 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 18vb).

[269] For details and references to texts, see the third study. I extensively reconstructed the mechanisms of universality for Hervaeus in Amerini, *I trattati 'De universalibus'* and Amerini, 'Hervaeus Natalis on Universals.'

Hervaeus says something more about the extramental foundation of essential concepts in other works, for example in *Quodlibet* I, q. 9, and *Quodlibet* III, q. 3. His position is that essential concepts have distinct foundations, which are distinguished from each other only according to reason. This does not mean, for Hervaeus, that they have just a merely conceptual distinction; some distinction of reason is indeed based on the thing's nature, although a comparative act of the intellect is needed to make such a distinction emerge.[270] Inspired by such a belief, Hervaeus proceeds as follows. First, he tries to prove that not only the real distinction, but also the distinction of reason between things is remotely founded on the extramental thing's nature. This entails, conversely, that the unity of reason too, viz., the one which is imported by a specific or a generic concept, is founded on some real conformity (*conformitas*) among things.[271] Second, such a conformity has different extensions among extramental things, i.e., can be greater or lesser. Strictly speaking, it does not coincide with the unity of reason reached by the intellect, but expresses the remote foundation of that unity; it can be said however to have a real unity in the sense that it expresses the foundation of the real relation that the extremes of such a conformity bear to each other.[272] Third, the intellect plays a role in singling out the degrees of unity of conforming things and hence the unity of reason of essential concepts. Thus, one and the same thing can generate different essential concepts insofar as the intellect, through comparing that thing to other things, can bring to

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[270] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, I, q. 9 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 19ra): 'Ad cuius evidentiam primo intendo ostendere quod in uno et eodem individuo genus generalissimum et omnes differentie intermedie dicunt unam et eandem rem et sumuntur ab una et eadem re. Secundo intendo ostendere quod ille differentie intermedie quarum una est communior altera fundantur in illa re in ordine ad diversa. Tertio ostendam quomodo in uno et eodem individuo in ordine ad diversa possunt fundari tales differentie'; III, q. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fols. 71vb–72ra): 'Et ideo aliter videtur mihi dicendum et melius quod omnis distinctio rationis habet ortum a re, ab aliqua distinctione reali, mediante comparatione intellectus […] aliqua res secundum diversas rationes obiectivas obiiciatur rationi, et non alia, oportet quod habeat aliquem ortum a re; sed non posset ortum habere a re, nisi talis distinctio aliquo modo mediante operatione intellectus acciperetur a re […] licet quorundam distinctio rationis possit accipi per comparationem ad intra […] in aliis tamen oportet quod accipiatur per comparationem ad extra.'

[271] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, I, q. 9 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 19va–b): 'Et ideo videtur mihi aliter dicendum. Ad cuius evidentiam sciendum quod sicut distinctio secundum rationem habet ortum a re, sicut a fundamento remoto, mediante tamen conceptu intellectus, sicut dictum est in questione de formalitatibus [*scil.* q. 2, fols. 5vb–6rb], ita etiam convenientia sive unitas aliquorum secundum rationem. […] Unde sciendum quod inter diversas res ex natura rei, circumscripta omni operatione intellectus, est conformitas, et ista invenitur maior vel minor respectu diversorum. Et ista conformitas non est ipsa unitas rationis, sed est suum fundamentum remotum'; III, q. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 72rb).

[272] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, I, q. 9 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 19vb): 'Ad cuius evidentiam notandum quod aliquid potest esse duorum duplicter. Uno modo, quod sit amborum subiective […] et unum sic commune est unum secundum rationem et est ipsum universale. […] Alio modo potest esse aliquid plurium unius ut subiecti in quo est et alterius ut termini ad quem est […] et illud unum quod est duorum isto modo non est unum secundum rationem tantum, sed est unum secundum rem. Et isto modo est conformitas inter res ex sua natura. […] Et ab ista conformitate que est in rebus ex natura rei accipitur unitas secundum rationem, que est unitas generis vel cuiuscumque alterius predicabilis, sicut a fundamento remoto.'

light the different unities of reason corresponding to the different real conformities that such a thing bears to the other things that have been compared.

Consider again the case of Hercules the Hero. I generate the concepts of human being and animal when my intellect, through comparing Hercules the Hero with other human beings or other animals, defines the different unities of reason corresponding to the different real conformities (i.e., humanity and animality) that Hercules the Hero bears to other human beings and other animals. Conversely, two human beings differing in number but sharing the same substantial conformity are predisposed by nature (*nati sunt*) to generate always one and the same specific concept in the intellect. Such a concept is really of one thing (and also really one in itself) and to it corresponds one object (viz., human being, taken indeterminately), which is one in itself.[273]

In his early Commentary on the *Sentences*, Hervaeus specified the conformity holding between things in terms of the different capacities or abilities (*habilitates*) and operations (*operationes*) fulfilled by a thing (biological and cognitive, in the case of human beings) and indicated them as what extramentally grounds the different concepts that can be essentially and truly predicated of that thing. In the early stages of his career, too, Hervaeus thus considered it necessary, for the formation of essential concepts, to have an act of comparing things with each other, on the side of the intellect, and a conformity in nature, on the side of things.[274]

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[273] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, I, q. 9 (ed. Venice, 1513, fols. 19vb–20ra): 'Duo homines ex tali conformitate nati sunt movere ad unum conceptum, qui est unius [*pro* unus; *see ed. Venice, 1486, ad loc.*] secundum rem, cui ut unum obiectum respondet homo indeterminate sine Sorte et Platone. Et unitas istius obiecti que sibi convenit, ut sic est in intellectu obiective, sicut cognitum in cognoscente, eiusque separatio a singularibus est unitas et separatio secundum rationem. Et simile est de conformitate hominis et equi in animalitate […] unitas cuiuscumque predicabilis […] ab illa conformitate reali accipitur ut a fundamento remoto, sed a conceptu intellectus indeterminate representante rem intellectam accipitur illa unitas immediate prout indeterminate respondet illi uni conceptui […], sic ergo posse habere maiorem vel minorem conformitatem ad diversa est causa quare idem per eandem formam potest movere ad diversos conceptus magis et minus confuse rem representantem.' As Hervaeus underscores, such a conformity is not a relation, although it may be considered as the foundation of a relation: 'Et ad hoc breviter dicendum quod illa conformitas, prout hic de ipsa loquimur, non est relatio, licet possit esse fundamentum relationis. […] quidem conceptus est unus re, licet obiectum ei respondens non sit unum re'. Also see *Quodlibeta*, III, q. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 72vb): 'Secundo modo dicitur differentia rationis accipi in comparatione ad diversa re, quia licet in illo in quo sola ratione differunt non sit aliquid de ratione unius, secundum rem loquendo, quod non sit de ratione alterius, tamen in sua communitate accepta nata sunt inveniri diversa re in aliqua natura, in qua unum est realiter de ratione unius quod non est de ratione alterius, sicut iustitia et scientia sunt unum realiter in Deo et quicquid est de ratione unius est de ratione alterius, in quantum sunt in Deo, tamen absolute accepte inveniuntur diversa re et aliquid est de ratione unius quod non est de ratione alterius.'

[274] See Hervaeus Natalis, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 2, q. 2, a. 1–3 (ed. Venice, 1505, fols. 10va–11rb). For further details of the mechanisms of concept foundation, see *Quodlibeta*, I, q. 2 (ed. Venice, 1513, fols. 5vb–6va); q. 5, ad 2 and ad 1 *in speciali* (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 11va–b); and, for other extensive treatments, *Quodlibeta*, I, q. 2 (ed. Venice, 1513, fols. 5va–7va); *Tractatus de relationibus*, q. 1 (ed. Venice, 1513, fols. 54va–55ra); *De verbo*, q. 4, a. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 20va). Further details can be found in the *Determinatio de intellectu et specie*, ed. Stella, p. 141–66. For more on the unity/

Hervaeus seems to maintain this position throughout his career. For example, the essential role assigned to the intellect's act of comparison in making essential concepts emerge explains why in the *Tractatus de verbo* Hervaeus says that when we form a complex, propositional mental word, nothing complex corresponds to it in the external world. The acts of comparison and composition pertain to the intellect, while in the outer world it is enough to postulate one real nature that is predisposed by itself to direct our intellect towards the formation of the concepts of the subject and predicate of the proposition.[275] Hervaeus thinks that the manifestation of the composition obtains only at the level of objective being in the intellect, when one real nature is epistemically broken down into its essential components.

Hervaeus's explanation of the extramental foundation of essential concepts is quintessentially metaphysical. Hervaeus is clearly interested in understanding how from one single thing different true concepts can be extracted. The modes in which essential concepts express universal modes of cognition of a thing are not clarified. Nonetheless, on the basis of Hervaeus's explanation one could think that with respect to one singular thing, essential concepts from the bottom to the top of the Porphyrian tree indicate degrees of increasingly less distinctness in intellective cognition. Thinking of Socrates as an animal, for example, is thinking of Socrates less distinctly than thinking of him as a human being. But with respect to different things, they indicate degrees of increasingly less distinctness in representing the conformity that things have of their own. Thinking of Socrates and Brunellus the horse as animals, for example, is thinking of a conformity that is less specific than that of which we think when we are thinking of Socrates and Plato as human beings.

7. Conclusion

As we have seen in this study, Hervaeus elaborates a theory of concepts that is very close to that of Aquinas but with some important differences. Specifically, Hervaeus inserts into an Aquinas-like doctrinal framework a sophisticated account of mental being, with the scope of disambiguating the twofold status of a mental similitude. At first sight, Hervaeus departs from Aquinas on two points.

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distinction of reason divide, see F. Amerini, 'What is Real. A Reply to Ockham's Ontological Program', *Vivarium* 43/1 (2005), p. 187–212.

275 Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *De verbo*, q. 4, a. 2 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 20rb): 'in re extra que est obiectum intellectus non invenitur aliqua complexio secundum esse quod habet in singularibus, nisi vocetur complexio compositio materie et forme, vel subiecti et accidentis, vel partium quantitativarum; tamen secundum esse quod habet in intellectu obiective convenit sibi esse complexio in quantum idem re est quod significat per predicatum et subiectum sub diversis tamen rationibus, quarum convenientia significat enunciatio […] pluralitas quam requirit enunciatio est pluralitas rationum eiusdem rei. Sufficit enim ad formandum enunciationem invenire aliquid unum cui diverse rationes conveniant.' On this, see F. Amerini, 'Le statut de la proposition chez Hervé de Nédellec', in A. Maierù – L. Valente (eds.), *Medieval Theories on Assertive and Non-Assertive Language. Acts of the 14th European Symposium on Medieval Logic and Semantic (Rome, June 11th–15th, 2002)*, Florence: Olschki, 2004, p. 333–54.

First, Hervaeus emphasizes that when the intellect mentally utters a word in order to cognize a thing more expressly, the intellect somehow cognizes the mental word as well.[276] Aquinas instead held—at least according to his late works—that a mental word is not cognized when a thing is cognized. I diffusely illustrated this point in the first study of this volume. However, if we look more closely at Hervaeus's texts, we can realize that Hervaeus is cautious and carefully distinguishes the function of a mental similitude from that of a pictorial image. As one will remember, Durand noted two shortcomings of Hervaeus's proposal: the possible skepticism involved in Hervaeus's explanation of mental word and the impossibility of experiencing a concept directly.[277] After this criticism, Hervaeus seems to gain awareness of the weaknesses of his account, so in his reply to Durand's first criticism he introduces the key distinction between what occurs to the intellect as an *object* of cognition and what occurs as an *instrument* of cognition. This distinction is the tool that many scholars have elaborated, and I too proposed in the Conclusion of the first study, to reconcile representationalism and direct realism in Aquinas. The same can be said in the case of Hervaeus. For him, an image meets the first condition, while a mental word the second.[278] Although the intellect produces a mental word by reflecting on the cognized thing to a certain degree and a mental word can be said to be co-cognized in the sense that it is what is cognized about a thing, nonetheless forming a mental word does not express a reflexive act of cognition but a direct one, for Hervaeus. Our intellect forms especially mental words to make things manifest, thereby expanding its own cognitive capacity of cognizing things; it does not direct itself back to itself. Hervaeus's conclusion is that, strictly speaking, no concept as such is the principal object of our cognition.

A second difference with Aquinas is Hervaeus's emphasis on the fact that the content of a concept or mental word exists in the mind objectively and not subjec-

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276 Cf., e.g., *De verbo*, q. 1, a. 2 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 11va–b).

277 See above, note 231.

278 Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 8, a. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 50ra): 'Ad primum istorum dicendum ad maiorem quod ista non habet veritatem universaliter, sed habet veritatem tantum de illis que nata sunt se offerre intellectui magis ut obiectum cognitum quam ut cognoscendi medium, et propter hoc licet ydolum in fantasmate possit accipi ut res cognita et ut medium cognoscendi, non tamen oportet quam sit magis notum quam res cuius est ydolum. Similiter est quando utimur voces ad docendum alterum: non oportet quod voces significative sint magis note quam res quarum sunt signa. Ad illud autem quod inducunt ad confirmandum istam rationem dicentes quod homo videns imaginem alicuius existentis retro in speculo magis novit imaginem existentem in speculo quam illud cuius est, dico quod accidit hoc in quantum ista imago magis nata est se offerre ut obiectum quam ut medium cognoscendi, sicut etiam accidit de imagine Herculis et illo cuius est. Sed si illa species magis nata esset se magis offerre ut medium cognoscendi quam ut obiectum cognitum, non ita esset, sicut patet de ydolo fantasmatis. […] Unde sciendum quod duplex potest esse cognitio talis conceptus. Una qua per ipsum et in ipso aliud cognoscitur principaliter, et talis cognitio est actus rectus; alia est cognitio qua talis conceptus consideratur secundum illud quod est in se principaliter, et talis cognitio est reflexa, sicut quando aliquis considerat de ipsis conceptibus qualis nature sunt et quales res.' It is worth noting that the same distinction also occurred in early writings such as *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 36, q. 1, a. 2 (ed. Venice, 1505, fols. 53va–54ra), or *Tractatus de verbo*, q. 1, a. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 11vb).

tively. Unlike Aquinas, Hervaeus clarifies the nature of a mental similitude by distinguishing the similitude from its content. Precisely, a concept exists subjectively in the intellect and, as such, it is an intellect's means of cognition. As Hervaeus explains in *Quodlibet* II, q. 8, a. 4, a mental word is a habit or a disposition of the intellect, not however as something permanent but as something disposing the intellective potency to bring about an act of intellective cognition.[279] This entails that a mental word can be present in the absence of any occurrent act of intellective cognition. The content of the representation, instead—what Hervaeus calls the 'object'—exists in the intellect in an objective way. I shall consider closely this mode of being in the next study. What is important to note in the present Conclusion is that a representation's content expresses, for Hervaeus, the nature of an extramental thing and such a nature plays the role of the formal object of the intellect.[280] This correlate of the representation is something mind-independent as to its essential being (insofar as it is what is by itself), but mind-dependent as to its unity and mode of existence (insofar as it is the intellect that makes it exist as one object). This distinction is the hallmark of Hervaeus's theory of concepts and what differentiates him from Aquinas.

Despite this, one should however concede that on the basis of the statements scattered throughout his works, just like Aquinas, Hervaeus cannot be said to be committed in a special way to representationalism rather than to direct realism in epistemology. But the reasons for saying this are different in their cases. The difficulty in capturing Aquinas's position—as I have affirmed in the Conclusion of the previous study—is that Aquinas does not delve into the relationship that a mental similitude bears to its content. So it remains debatable whether a mental similitude has to be explained as a mental replacement of an extramental thing's nature or rather as the extramental thing's nature itself as present in the intellect under the guise of a similitude. The difficulty with Hervaeus is instead different and consists in the fact that he treats a mental similitude as a twofold item, which encompasses both the similitude (which is a means of cognition, existing subjectively in our intellect) and the thing to which the similitude refers (which is an

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279 Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 8 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 50va): 'Ad rationem autem primam quam adducunt, dicendum quod verbum se habet per modum habitus sive dispositionis, non quidam accipiendo habitum pro eo quod habet permanentiam continuam, sed accipiendo habitum sive dispositionem que non est actus, sed disponit potentiam ad actum, licet non stet nisi solum cum actu.' More details about the ontological status of a concept can also be found in *Quodlibeta*, III, q. 3 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 71va), and q. 12 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 84vb), where different senses of the word '*ratio*' are discussed by Hervaeus. On this, see also *Opinio de difficultatibus contra doctrinam fratris Thomae*, a. 7, ed. P. Piccari, *Memorie Domenicane* n.s. 26 (1995), p. 87. The relationship that the acts of intellective cognition bear to the intellective potency is investigated, as has been said, in *Quodlibeta*, III, q. 8 (ed. Venice, 1513, fols. 78rb–80vb).

280 See, e.g., *Quodlibeta*, I, q. XII (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 26va). For Hervaeus, the intellect's proper object is the concept of a thing's essence or species, though this is not what initially presents itself in the order of knowledge. See *Quodlibeta*, III, q. 12 (ed. Venice, 1513, fols. 84vb–86rb).

objectively existent cognized object). What conclusion, therefore, should we draw about Hervaeus's epistemology?

As has been said in the Conclusion of the first study, if by 'representationalism' we mean any theory of cognition that attributes a crucial and indispensable role to some sort of mental representation, then Hervaeus, like Aquinas, may be considered a representationalist. But unlike Aquinas, he should be counted among the advocates of what can be called the 'strong version' of representationalism. As has been seen, Hervaeus frequently says that we cognize a thing by means of a specular form and, more significantly, that we cognize a thing *within* a specular form. Furthermore, as Hervaeus himself acknowledges, if we cognize a thing within a specular form, necessarily we cognize the specular form itself to a certain degree. On the other hand, if by 'representationalism' we mean any theory of cognition according to which no extramental thing can be intellectively cognized without a concept being formed as an intermediate object of intellection, then Hervaeus's representationalism is open to question, and for the same reasons we illustrated in the case of Aquinas.[281]

One point is, however, clear and may help us to understand correctly Hervaeus's epistemology. For Hervaeus, a concept is not that from which an act of cognition stems but only what ends an act, since it says what is cognized about an extramental thing. Hervaeus clarifies this point by distinguishing between the moving object (*obiectum movens*) and the terminating object (*obiectum terminans*) of an act of intellective cognition: in our usual example, Hercules the Hero (or, more correctly, Hercules the Hero's nature) is the first, human being is the second. It is as though intellective cognition were to make a leap, the point of departure and the point of arrival no longer coinciding. Here we are dealing with an epistemology in which what initiates cognition and what brings it to completion—its alpha and omega—are not the same.[282] Taking as read the distinction between point of departure and point of arrival of the process of intellective cognition, Hervaeus holds that when we turn to intellectively cognize an extramental thing, we cognize it when we know what kind of thing it is. But when we know what a thing is, we are cognizing the thing itself. This is to say that I cannot intellectively cognize Hercules the Hero without cognizing that he is a human being; nonetheless, cognizing Hercules while cognizing that he is a human being does not amount to being cognizing human

[281] For these two understandings of representationalism, see above, Study I, § 12.

[282] For this terminology, see Kretzmann, 'Aquinas's Philosophy of Mind', p. 89. For the distinction between the two objects, see Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 5 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 42ra); IV, q. 11 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 107va–b); also *Determinatio de intellectu et specie*, ed. Stella, p. 162,34–163,20. According to such a distinction, Hervaeus states that God could produce on us acts of intellective cognition without a moving object, but He could never produce acts of intellective cognition without a terminating object. See *Quodlibeta*, III, q. 8 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 80va); IV, q. 11 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 107vb). For further elaboration on this distinction in Hervaeus, see Amerini, *I trattati 'De universalibus'*; Amerini, 'Realism and Intentionality'; and Amerini, 'Hervaeus Natalis on Universals'.

being and not Hercules. Thus Hervaeus appears to be committed to no form of skepticism—contrary to Durand's accusation—when he maintains that we cognize a thing by means of a mental similitude or a specular form.. If such a similitude or form is understood as a means rather than as an object of cognition, no skepticism is involved in intellective cognition. As Hervaeus emphasizes, our intellect does not pause on the similitude or the specular form, as if it were its principal object of cognition, but through cognizing it, it immediately transits to the thing of which it is a similitude or a specular form. When we cognize a thing through a concept we are referred directly to the thing and do not stop at the concept.

At first sight, like in the case of Aquinas, this form of weak epistemological realism is fully compatible with representationalism. But after closer inspection, the case of Hervaeus could be more complicated. As has been seen, Hervaeus presents the mental objects, which are the formal correlates of concepts, as intramental entities. Hervaeus's doctrine, unlike that of Aquinas, thus represents a form of *internalist representationalism*. Yet this internalist variant of representationalism appears to make the alleged compatibility all the more elusive, notwithstanding Hervaeus's reiterated intention to uphold the extramental extension of intellective cognition, as shall be demonstrated in the ensuing study.

III

Hervaeus Natalis on Cognizing and Being Cognized

1. Introduction

The goal of this third study is to reconsider some recent interpretations of Hervaeus Natalis's account of intentionality and the nature of intentional objects. The present study is divided into two parts. In the first part (§§ 2–5), I shall reconsider some aspects of Aquinas's account of the intentionality of mind and of his explanation of the ontological status of the cognized thing. As has been seen in the previous study, Aquinas's thought is an indispensable premise for Hervaeus's account of intentionality, since the latter may be understood to a certain degree as an attempt at addressing some difficulties in Aquinas's account. In the second part (§§ 6–8), I shall focus on Hervaeus Natalis. I shall present first some problems connected to his account of intentionality and then propose my interpretation of the correct way of understanding his explanation of cognizing and being cognized. I shall conclude in § 9.

For the sake of clarity, let it be understood that in this study I shall feature some material from an article I devoted to first and second intentionality in Thomas Aquinas and Hervaeus Natalis.[283] My purpose here is to reassess and expand some issues that I left in the background in that article. To be precise, my expansions will concern the discussion of some difficulties with Aquinas's account of intentionality and John Duns Scotus's criticism of it (§ 4–5), and the discussion of Hervaeus's relational interpretation of being cognized (§ 7) and of some recent interpretations of Hervaeus Natalis's account of intentional objects (§ 8).

The link between Aquinas and Hervaeus is in a way expected. As I illustrated in the previous study, Hervaeus generally follows Aquinas's epistemology, but he also departs from him on some points. For example, Hervaeus explains that when we intellectively cognize a thing, the thing acquires a new kind of being, viz., the cognized being or 'objective' being—a notion not used by Aquinas. This kind of being in no way modifies the real nature of the thing cognized. It simply indicates that the thing has become an object of the intellect and a thing ends up being such only when, thanks to an act of intellective cognition, it develops a relation with the intellect that is oriented to it. In this study my claim is that this notion in Hervaeus should not be understood in substantial terms, but in *relational terms*. That is, the phrase 'objective being' does not designate a kind of substantial being that things newly acquire when they are cognized, but only a kind of being that follows from

[283] Amerini, 'Thomas Aquinas and Hervaeus Natalis'.

the relation they have with our intellect. It is a transparent and ontologically uncommitted way of presenting things to the intellect.

Specifically, like Aquinas, Hervaeus describes intellective cognition as an action that necessarily entails a relation and—like any relation—that which ensues from intellective cognition too is supposed to entail two directions: one that goes from the intellect to the thing and the converse one that goes from the thing to the intellect.[284] Aquinas and Hervaeus agree that the first direction expresses a real relation, while the second expresses a relation of reason. Aquinas and Hervaeus share this correlational theory of intentionality. If Aquinas stated but did not examine in detail the converse relation of the relation of intellective cognition, such an exploration is at the center of Hervaeus's works. As we shall see, the Master General of the Dominican Order makes it clear that what Aquinas called 'spiritual' or 'intentional' being is, in the case of intellective cognition, nothing other than a relational being. The relation of cognition gives rise to the property of 'being cognizing', whose subject is our intellect, while the converse relation gives rise to the property of 'being cognized', whose subject is the thing itself. More precisely, as we shall see in what follows, the thing as cognized is the proximate subject of the property of being cognized, while the extramental thing is the remote subject. Once again, Hervaeus finds the source of this distinction in Aquinas and elaborates on it.

2. Thomas Aquinas's Account of Cognizing and Being Cognized

Before examining Hervaeus's position on cognizing and being cognized, let me recall some aspects of Aquinas's account of intentionality which will be of some utility for understanding Hervaeus's position.

In the *Quaestiones de potentia*, Aquinas distinguishes two orders of extramental things that can be intellectively cognized by human beings. He says that things cognized in the first instance are the things that exist in external reality, while things cognized in the second instance are the intentions that follow from our mode of cognizing the things cognized in the first instance. Our intellect cognizes this second kind of things secondly insofar as it reflects on itself, cognizing itself to cognize and the way in which it cognizes.[285] As I noted in my article mentioned

[284] For an introduction to medieval theories of relation and their metaphysical assumptions, see M.G. Henninger, *Relations. Medieval Theories. 1250–1325*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989. For details on Hervaeus's account of relation, see T. Dewender, 'Der ontologische Status der Relationen nach Durand von St.-Pourçain, Hervaeus Natalis und Petrus Aureoli', in S.F. Brown – T. Dewender – T. Kobusch (eds.), *Philosophical Debates at the University of Paris in the First Quarter of the Fourteenth Century*, Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2009, p. 287–308.

[285] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 7, a. 9 (ed. Pession, p. 63–4): 'Prima enim intellecta sunt res extra animam, in quae primo intellectus intelligenda fertur. Secunda autem intellecta dicuntur intentiones consequentes modum intelligendi: hoc enim secundo intellectus intelligit in quantum reflectitur supra se ipsum, intelligens se intelligere et modum quo intelligit'. For details

above, not all is clear with this distinction.[286] Without entering into the details I discussed in that article, for our purposes here only one point needs to be noted and is that Aquinas holds that the things cognized in the first instance are the extramental things and that they are so called because our intellect firstly bears on them. In one sense, what is cognized are the extramental singular things; in another, however, it is not so. As one will remember from the first study, in *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 8, a. 1, Aquinas characterizes the concept of a thing, what we cognize about a thing, as the 'termination' of the act of intellective cognition that is activated by the intelligible species of that thing.[287] I there noted that intellective cognition expresses in Aquinas a kind of immanent action, and this feature justifies the above claim that the concept is a 'termination'. In the first study, I took Aquinas to mean by such a characterization that a concept is not the end-product of the action of intellective cognition, viz., something distinct produced by such an action, but simply the full achievement of the action itself: intellectively cognizing Hercules the Hero just amounts to performing the action of cognizing a human being, and the full achievement of this action is presented by Aquinas as something 'quasi-constituted' (*quasi … constitutum*) by the action. This interpretation permits us to reconcile two apparently conflicting accounts of cognition as immanent action that can be found in Aquinas's texts.[288]

For Aquinas, intellective cognition is an act that includes a sort of leap. It begins with an extramental singular thing (say Hercules the Hero) and ends up with a dif-

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of Aquinas's view of intentionality of mind, see R.W. Schmidt, *The Domain of Logic According to Saint Thomas Aquinas*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966; A.J. Lisska, 'Axioms of Intentionality in Aquinas', *International Philosophical Quarterly* 16/4 (1976), p. 305–22; J.-L. Solère, 'La notion d'intentionnalité chez Thomas d'Aquin', *Philosophie* 24 (1989), p. 13–36; Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind*; Stump, 'Aquinas's Account'; D.L. Black, 'Mental Existence in Thomas Aquinas and Avicenna', *Mediaeval Studies* 61 (1999), p. 45–79; Pini, *Logic and Categories*; de Rijk, 'A Study on the Medieval Intentionality Debate'; Brower – Brower-Toland, 'Aquinas on Mental Representation'; E. Baltuta, 'Remarks on Thomas Aquinas's Philosophy of Mind: Intentionality', *Chora* 7–8 (2009–2010), p. 315–32; G. Galluzzo, 'Aquinas on Mental Being', *Quaestio* 10 (2010), p. 83–97; Amerini, *Tommaso d'Aquino e l'intenzionalità*; Klima, 'Intentionality and Mental Content'; and Amerini, 'Thomas Aquinas and Hervaeus Natalis'. I refer to these studies for further literature. See also A. Freile, 'The Issue of Intentionality in Contemporary Thomism', *Studia Gilsoniana* 11/2 (2022), p. 207–28, for a consideration of the topic with respect to contemporary Thomism. Note that I shall not linger here on other cases of intentionality, such as that of perception, which is likely involved in the act of cognition of extramental things, that of action or that of emotions. On the intentionality of perception in particular, see A.J. Lisska, *Aquinas's Theory of Perception. An Analytic Reconstruction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 32–63; A.A. Renani, 'Aquinas' Theory of Knowledge and the Representative Theory of Perception', *Aisthema* V/1 (2018), p. 109–26; C. Ehret, 'Aquinas on Intentionality in Perception', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 98/4 (2025), p. 467–91. On the intentionality of action, see J. Müller, 'A Medieval View of Practical Intentionality. "Intention" in Aquinas's Psychology of Action', *Phänomenologische Forschungen* 2 (2018), p. 155–76. On the intentionality of emotions, see M.P. Drost, 'Intentionality in Aquinas's Theory of Emotions', *International Philosophical Quarterly* 31/4 (1991), p. 449–60; M. Pickavé, 'On the Intentionality of the Emotions (and of Other Appetitive Acts)', *Quaestio* 10 (2010), p. 45–63.

286 Amerini, 'Thomas Aquinas and Hervaeus Natalis', § 2.1.

287 See above, note 78.

288 See above, note 79.

ferent thing (viz., the concept of Hercules, which expresses the nature of Hercules and, intellectively, the termination of my act of cognition of him). Hercules I am oriented to cognize and what I have cognized about Hercules do not coincide. I intellectively cognize Hercules only when I know that Hercules is a human being.

Aquinas never distinguishes in a clear way the point of departure from the point of arrival of intellective cognition, but frequently he says that our knowledge starts from the senses and that concepts are the terminations of the intellective acts. So he seems to be aware that Hercules as such cannot be what is primarily cognized intellectively by me. In his early Commentary on the *Sentences*, for example, Aquinas says that when we are oriented to intellectively cognize an extramental thing, we intellectively relate to the mental similitude of the thing first, and then, only through the similitude, do we relate to the extramental thing itself.[289] At first, this text appears to be in conflict with what Aquinas says in the *Quaestiones de potentia*. But as has been said in the first study, it in fact is not, if one reads the text in light of the leap that intellective cognition involves.[290] As far as I can understand Aquinas, the mental similitude of the thing is the first thing cognized in the sense that it is the first thing we cognize about a thing. All that is nothing more than an involuted way of saying that we first intellectively cognize a thing in universal, then in particular.

Qualification is also needed in the case of the things secondly cognized. Aquinas says that the things cognized in the second instance result from an act of reflection of the intellect on itself. By this act, our intellect is said to cognize both the fact that it is cognizing and the mode in which it is cognizing (viz., the things cognized in the first instance). As I noted in my article, the act of self-reflection of our intellect involves a complexity that Aquinas does not explain.[291] When my intellect reflects on itself and knows the mode in which I cognized Hercules the Hero, for example, my act of reflection appears to be, in the first instance, an act that discovers a fact that concerns my intellect. This logically entails that, if things cognized in the second instance arise in consequence of such an act of reflection, they should be predicated on the intellect and not on the thing cognized in the first instance. This is not, however, what Aquinas says. For him, things cognized in the second instance refer to the thing that has been cognized in the first instance, and not to the intellect. As we shall soon see, however, the idea that Aquinas clearly illustrates in *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 8, a. 1, namely that a concept is but a termination of an act of intellective cognition, explains why the move from my intellect's act of reflecting on itself to my intellect's act of reflecting on the cognized thing is seen as not problematic by Aquinas.

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[289] See *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 35, q. 1, a. 2 (ed. Mandonnet, I, p. 814–5). See the text above, note 69.

[290] For further discussion of such an apparent conflict, see Scarpelli Cory, 'Aquinas's Intelligible Species'.

[291] Amerini, 'Thomas Aquinas and Hervaeus Natalis', § 2.1.

3. Intentionality as Relationality

Reflecting on myself while I am cognizing Hercules the Hero is an act that involves a certain complexity, as has been said. When I perform such an act of reflection, I not only know the fact that I am cognizing Hercules and likely the mode in which I am cognizing him, but I am also able to focus on the concept of human being that is involved in my act of intellective cognition of Hercules. Aquinas says that, through this act of reflection, we can arrive at what he calls 'intentions', namely at some logical properties such as being a species, being universal and the like. My intellect's act of reflection is seen by Aquinas as an act through which I can consider myself cognizing as well as the thing that has been cognized by me. All that presupposes that my act of cognizing includes the cognized thing and that, thus, when I reflect on myself, I can move from myself cognizing a thing to the thing that is cognized by me. However, reflecting on my act of cognition is not a sufficient condition for forming intentions. Aquinas also requires that an act of comparison supplement my act of focusing on the cognized things. How do intentions arise? Our intellect compares a cognized thing with the extramental things from which the cognized thing has been abstracted or even with other cognized things, hence obtaining the concepts of intentions.[292]

I have reconstructed and discussed the crucial aspects of this mechanism of generation of intentions elsewhere and it is not important to dwell further on them here.[293] For the present issue, only two things must be noted. First, Aquinas deduces intentions from considerations concerning predication. For example, it is from ascertaining that the concept of human being can be predicated on many individual human beings that can we derive the concept of species; similarly, from ascertaining that the concept of animal can be predicated on many animal-species that can we derive the concept of genus. The second thing to be noted is that Aquinas is unequivocal in saying that, when our intellect reflects on itself, it moves to focus on and compare the cognized things and, in doing so, it attaches intentions not to itself but to the cognized things themselves.[294] Although the relation between the acts of reflection, of focusing on and of comparison are not clarified by Aquinas,[295] one thing is clear, which is that the comparison of a cognized thing with the extramental things or with other cognized things gives rise to what Aquinas calls 'relations of

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[292] For a clear description of this process, see Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, I 10 (Opera Omnia, 1* 1, p. 51,130–50). See the text below, note 294. See also *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 7, a. 11 (ed. Pession, p. 212).

[293] See Amerini, 'Thomas Aquinas and Hervaeus Natalis', § 2.2.

[294] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, I 10 (Opera Omnia, 1*/1, p. 51,130–50): 'Quandoque enim attribuitur ei sic considerato aliquid quod pertinet ad solam actionem intellectus, ut si dicatur quod homo est predicabile de multis aut uniuersale aut genus aut species; huiusmodi enim intentiones format intellectus attribuens eas nature intellecte, secundum quod comparat ipsam ad res que sunt extra animam'.

[295] For further discussion of this point, see Pini, *Logic and Categories*, p. 59ff.

reason' and this relational feature expresses the core meaning of what an intention is.[296] In the medieval theories of relation, the technical notion of relation of reason is used to designate a relation that has no real counterpart in the outer world but that only arises in consequence of an act of the reason. For our argument, it is important to underscore one possible implication of this notion, namely that intentions are items that are understood by Aquinas as relational in character. This point is never established in an explicit way by Aquinas and may be subject to dispute, but some evidence can be found in his works for this interpretation. In his early *De ente et essentia*, for example, Aquinas describes the formation, via predication, of the intentions of species and genus, and there the relational nature of intentions is more evident. The predicative being of a thing is in fact the result of an act of comparison, and in the genesis of intentions such as being a species and being a genus different forms of comparison are concerned.[297] Since Aquinas understands predication as an act completed by the reason,[298] being predicable is the way in which we linguistically translate the cognized thing's property of being in relation with another cognized thing or with the extramental things.

Aquinas's analysis of the formation of intentions in *De ente et essentia* induces us to think that, for Aquinas, the property of being predicable is a property that things have of their own. This is true: things can be predicated indeed by virtue of their own nature: human being for example can be predicated on Hercules the Hero by virtue of itself. Nonetheless, the concept of being predicable does not enter into the definition of human being: in what it is, a human being is not a thing whose being is captured by being predicable of Hercules the Hero, but merely by being a rational animal — as Hercules too is. The concept of being predicable is formed by our intellect in consequence of an act of comparison and not of an act of abstraction. So the concept of human being is something that by virtue of itself is predicable of different human beings, but the property of being predicable, which we attribute to the concept of human being, does not enter into the definition of the concept of human being, but into that of the concept of species. This is so because, as has been said, the property of being predicable emerges only in consequence of an act of comparison performed by the intellect.[299]

According to the analysis Aquinas offers in the *De ente et essentia* and in other texts like *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 7, a. 6, one can conclude that all the intentions

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[296] See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 7, a. 11 (ed. Pession, p. 212); also *Summa theologiae* I[a], q. 28, a. 1 (Opera Omnia, IV, p. 318).

[297] See *De ente et essentia*, c. 3 (Opera Omnia, XLIII, p. 375,91–146).

[298] See *De ente et essentia*, c. 3 (Opera Omnia, XLIII, p. 375,134–6): 'Predicatio enim quiddam quod completur per actionem intellectus componentis et diuidentis.'

[299] See *De ente et essentia*, c. 3 (Opera Omnia, XLIII, p. 375,134–6): 'Vnde ratio predicabilitatis potest claudi in ratione huius intentionis que est genus, que similiter per actum intellectus completur. Nicholiminus tamen id cui intellectus intentionem predicabilitatis attribuit, componens illud cum altero, non est ipsa intentio generis, sed potius illud cui intellectus intentionem generis attribuit.'

express relations of reason that concern things insofar as they are cognized and compared either with each other or with the extramental things. As I suggested in my article mentioned above, such relations of reason are expected to be relations of reason of a different kind with respect to the fundamental cognitive relation that a thing entertains with the subject-cognizer when it is intellectively cognized.[300] One is the relation that a thing develops with the subject-cognizer and a different one is the relation that a thing cognized develops with the extramental things or with other cognized things. As to the thing's relation with our intellect, as has been anticipated in the Introduction to this study, Aquinas understands it too as a relation of reason. In our usual example, when I am cognizing Hercules the Hero, I am put in a real relation with Hercules, while Hercules is put in a relation of reason with me. As to the foundations of these relations, Aquinas seems to think that while the relation I have with Hercules is really founded on my act of intellective cognition, the relation Hercules has with me has no proper and distinct real foundation in Hercules that has been cognized by me.[301] Notwithstanding this, Aquinas recognizes that intentions can be said to be founded on the cognized things. When forming the intentions, in fact, our intellect is not mistaken because it does not attribute the intentions directly to the extramental things but only to the cognized things as such (*secundum quod huiusmodi*). Aquinas's conclusion is that intentions can be said to be founded proximately on the cognized things, even though they can be said to be remotely founded on the extramental things themselves.[302]

4. Some Possible Difficulties with Aquinas's Account of Intentionality

Aquinas's account of intentionality we have briefly recalled above is clear in many respects, but opaque in others. We have already underscored some points of unclearness. Here let me elaborate on these points in order to appreciate, later, John Duns Scotus's criticism and Hervaeus's rethinking of Aquinas's position. Consider again our usual example and suppose that I am performing an act of intellective

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[300] See Amerini, 'Thomas Aquinas and Hervaeus Natalis', § 2.2.

[301] Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio in XII libros Metaphysicorum*, V, lec. 17 (ed. Spiazzi, n. 1026–7). For a typology of the relations of reason, see *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 26, q. 2, a. 1 (ed. Mandonnet, I, p. 630–1); and *Summa theologiae*, I^a, q. 13, a. 7 (Opera Omnia, IV, p. 152–3). On the relation that a thing bears to the intellect as a relation of reason, see *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 20, q. 1, a. 1; d. 30, q. 1, a. 3, ad 3; *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 7, a. 11. On this relation, see especially J.J. Haldane, 'Intentionality and One-Sided Relations', *Ratio* 9/2 (1996), p. 95–114. For more on Aquinas's theory of relation, see A. Krempel, *La doctrine de la relation chez Saint Thomas. Exposé historique et systématique*, Paris: Vrin, 1952; Schmidt, *The Domain of Logic*, p. 130–74; and Henninger, *Relations*, p. 18–39.

[302] See, e.g., *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 2, q. 1, a. 3 (ed. Mandonnet, I, p. 67); *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 7, a. 6 (ed. Pession, p. 60); also q. 1, a. 1 (ed. Pession, p. 10–11). For a closer discussion of these texts, see Pini, *Logic and Categories*, p. 54ff., and de Rijk, 'A Study on the Medieval Intentionality Debate', p. 120ff.

cognition of Hercules the Hero. As said, I bring about my act when I reach the concept of Hercules, that is, I intellectively cognize Hercules when I know that he is a human being. I then cognize Hercules in a universal way and being a human being is what has been universally cognized about Hercules. When I reflect on myself and on my act of cognition, I know that I am cognizing Hercules universally, viz., as a human being. If I limit my reflection to myself and my act of intellective cognition, I may make such claims as 'I am cognizing Hercules' or 'Cognizing universally is the mode by which I am cognizing Hercules'. Through my act of reflection, I can single out the property of being cognizing universally, which I can attribute to me as the subject-cognizer. But when I am reflecting on myself and my act of intellective cognition, I not only know that I am cognizing Hercules universally, but also that Hercules is cognized universally by me and that being a human being is what is cognized universally about Hercules. As noted above, I can move from the consideration of me as the subject-cognizer to the consideration of Hercules as the object-cognized, from the active to the passive side of the intellective cognition of Hercules. This move could be further bifurcated. I could focus on human being and consider it either as the thing that has been cognized (viz., Hercules the Hero who has been cognized), or as a cognized thing as such (viz., human being as such). Despite this further distinction, one point of this move still needs an explanation.

Take for example the property of 'being universal' and the concept of human being. Aquinas does not explain whether this property must be attributed to human being considered as a thing *qua* cognized (*res ut intellecta*) or rather to human being considered *precisely as* a cognized thing *qua* cognized (*res intellecta ut intellecta*). In the first case, the property of 'being universal' would designate a mode of being of a thing's nature, say human being, which a thing (accidentally) acquires when it is cognized. In this case, it might be considered as a mind-independent feature of a thing to a certain degree. In the second case instead, it would designate a mode of being of a thing precisely *qua* cognized, and so it might be considered as a mind-dependent feature. Aquinas's texts leave room for both interpretations. For example, when Aquinas in *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 7, a. 11, says that our intellect does not attribute intentions to the things as they are in themselves but to the cognized things insofar as they are cognized (*rebus intellectis prout sunt intellectae*), it seems to incline to the second prong of the alternative. But when in a text such as *Expositio libri Perihermenias* 10 Aquinas says that the intellect attributes intentions to a thing's nature that has been cognized (*nature intellecte*), he instead seems to incline to the first prong.[303]

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[303] See Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 7, a. 11 (ed. Pession, p. 212); *Expositio libri Peryermenias*, I 10 (Opera Omnia, 1*/1, p. 51,130–50). See also *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 7, a. 6 (ed. Pession, p. 60): 'Sunt autem quaedam rationes quibus in re intellecta nihil respondet; sed ea quorum sunt huiusmodi rationes, intellectus non attribuit rebus prout in se ipsis sunt, sed solum prout intellectae sunt; sicut patet in ratione generis et speciei, et aliarum intentionum intellectualium: nam nihil est in

If one did take the first prong to be the right one (in fact it seems to match better most of Aquinas's pronouncements), one might think that Aquinas had in mind the following sequence of mental acts: the intellect reflects on itself and on its mode of cognizing, hence it considers the active property of 'being cognizing universally' and from this it moves, first, to the correlate passive property of 'being cognized universally', and second, to the property of 'being universal', which it attaches to the cognized thing. This interpretation, however, does not tell the whole story about the mechanisms of the formation of intentions. In fact, when we say that 'human being is universal', we do not mean that human being has been cognized universally, but that it can be predicated on many things in a universal way. What I mean is that 'being universal' conveys not cognitive but metaphysical information concerning the predicative nature of things. This predicative meaning only emerges in consequence of my intellect's act of comparison of human being with extramental individual human beings. Only through comparing the nature of human being with this or that human being, for example, can I reach the property of being universal and attribute it to human being. Here 'being universal' does not mean a mode of being cognized of a thing, but a mode of being of a cognized thing. A universal thing is what it is in that it is *universally predicable* of many things, not in that it is universally cognized. The sequence envisaged by Aquinas would include therefore different modes of being universal, which are not clearly distinguished. In particular, Aquinas does not seem to draw any clear distinction between the epistemic and the predicative aspect of intentionality.[304]

5. John Duns Scotus's Criticism

As Giorgio Pini has shown, Scotus criticizes many points of Aquinas's account of intentionality. Scotus complains of a certain confusion on the part of Aquinas, first, about the item to which intentional properties must be attributed, whether the intellect or the cognized thing, and second, about the different causal role played by the intellect and the extramental things in the formation and foundation of

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rebus quae sunt extra animam, cuius similitudo sit ratio generis vel speciei. Nec tamen intellectus est falsus: quia ea quorum sunt istae rationes, scilicet genus et species, non attribuit rebus secundum quod sunt extra animam, sed solum secundum quod sunt in intellectu. Ex hoc enim quod intellectus in se ipsum reflectitur, sicut intelligit res existentes extra animam, ita intelligit eas esse intellectas: et sic, sicut est quaedam conceptio intellectus vel ratio,—cui respondet res ipsa quae est extra animam—, ita est quaedam conceptio vel ratio, cui respondet res intellecta secundum quod huiusmodi; sicut rationi hominis vel conceptioni hominis respondet res extra animam; rationi vero vel conceptioni generis aut speciei, respondet solum res intellecta.'

304 See Pini, '"Absoluta consideratio naturae"'. See also Galluzzo, 'Aquinas on Common Nature' and Amerini, 'Thomas Aquinas, Alexander of Alessandria'. As I said in my article devoted to first and second intentionality in Aquinas and Hervaeus, it would be wrong however to say that Aquinas does not in any way make this distinction. See Amerini, 'Thomas Aquinas and Hervaeus Natalis', § 2.2. On this, see also R. Moser, 'Thomas Aquinas, *esse intentionale*, and the Cognitive as Such', *The Review of Metaphysics* 64/4 (2011), p. 763–88.

intentions. Scotus gives up the act of comparison between a cognized thing and the extramental things; he only maintains that intentions result from our intellect's acts of comparison of cognized things with each other.[305]

In one respect, Scotus's criticism sounds ungenerous. Although Aquinas does not sharply distinguish, as said, between the epistemic and the predicative aspect of the phenomenon of intentionality, one must recognize that his position is clear about some of the points criticized by Scotus. We have seen that Aquinas considers intentions to be relations of reason resulting from some comparative acts of the intellect and attributes them to the cognized things and not to the intellect. It is also beyond doubt that Aquinas takes the intellect to permit intentions to be founded on the cognized thing, while things play no direct role in the formation of intentions. The move we noted above from the cognizing intellect to the cognized thing, in the act of the intellect's self-reflection, is possible because Aquinas conceives of intellective cognition as an immanent action, as said, and, by consequence, conceives of concepts as internal terminations of actions rather than as products left on the intellect by the action of intellective cognition when it is occurring or is over. If concepts are nothing other than achieved actions, then through the same act by which the intellect reflects on itself and on its way of cognition, it also reflects on the cognized thing.[306]

In other respects, however, Scotus has some good reasons for complaining that Aquinas failed to distinguish the different relations involved in the process of intentionality. In fact, Aquinas never distinguishes in a clear way the cognitive relation that ensues from the intellect's act of reflection on the cognized thing from the relation of reason that a cognized thing bears to another cognized thing (or also to extramental things). Despite this, however, Aquinas seems to be fully aware of both relations. With respect to the cognitive relation a thing bears to the intellect, in particular, he holds that intellective cognition belongs to the Aristotelian category of Action and not to that of Relation, but since every action entails a relation, it follows that necessarily the subject-cognizer is in an intellective relation with the cognized thing when it is bringing about an act of cognition. Specifically, through an act of intellective cognition I am put in a real relation with Hercules the Hero, while Hercules is put in a relation of reason with me. As to the foundation of these relations, their asymmetry means that while the relation I have with Hercules the Hero is really founded on my act of cognition, the relation that Hercules has with me is without a proper and distinct foundation.

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[305] For details and references to Scotus's works, see G. Pini, *Logic and Categories in Duns Scotus*, Leiden: Brill, 2002, p. 99ff., esp. p. 120–5; also Pini, 'Two Models of Thinking', p. 26ff. On the influence of Scotus on Hervaeus's interpretation of Aquinas's philosophy, see I. Iribarren, 'The Scotist Background in Hervaeus Natalis's Interpretation of Thomism', *The Thomist* 66/4 (2002), p. 607–27. See also H. Lagerlund, 'Hervaeus Natalis on the Historical Problem of Intentionality', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 98/4 (2024), p. 411–26.

[306] See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I^{a}, q. 14, a. 6, ad 1 (Opera Omnia, IV, p. 176; see the text above, note 174).

This kind of relation of reason must be distinguished from that which holds between two cognized things. A relation of reason such as that of being predicable of different human beings, for example, is also without a proper and distinct foundation in the cognized thing-human being, but unlike the relation of reason expressed by the property of being cognized, this relation is included in the definition of the concept of species, which is accidentally predicated on human being. So while all intentions seem to be essentially relational in what they are, no intention is essentially a cognized thing and no cognized thing is essentially intentional and relational in what it is. To be precise, a cognized thing is not essentially relational *qua* thing but could be *qua* cognized. In fact, Aquinas's point is that being cognized expresses a property of the relational kind and, as Aquinas for example says in the *Summa contra Gentiles*, the being of a cognized thing as such consists in its being cognized. Being cognized means, for a thing, to be in a relation of reason with the intellect.[307]

Aquinas thus seems to recognize that our intellective cognition endows things with a new mode of being, viz., being cognized, which is the presupposition for any intentional property. However, he does not linger on the link between the two kinds of relation. One of the purposes of Hervaeus Natalis will be precisely that of clarifying this point, namely the different relations that are involved in the processes of intention formation, foundation, and predication. From that follows the position Hervaeus takes on the properties of cognizing and being cognized.

6. Hervaeus Natalis's Account of Cognizing and Being Cognized

In his *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, Hervaeus spends much time justifying the need for the converse relation of being cognized, one of the points most criticized by his critics[308] Hervaeus's point is that an act of intellective cognition of a thing is not

[307] See *Summa contra Gentiles*, IV, c. 11 (ed. Pera – Marc – Caramello, p. 265, n. 3466).

[308] His *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus* dates from approximately 1307–1316. On this, see Pinborg, 'Zum Begriff der "intentio secunda"', p. 54, and J. Dijs, 'Introduction', in *Hervaeus Natalis. De secundis intentionibus*, p. 81, to which I refer for further bibliographical references. On the date of the treatise, see also *A Treatise of Master Hervaeus Natalis (d. 1323) the 'doctor perspicacissimus' on Second Intentions*, ed. J.P. Doyle, Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2008, p. 14–5. Doyle says to incline more toward 1316 than 1307, after confrontation with other texts, but no decisive argument is given. De Rijk proposes ca. 1313 as a reasonable date. See de Rijk, 'A Study on the Medieval Intentionality Debate', p. 251–2. I discussed the detail of Hervaeus's theory of intentionality and of its criticism in Amerini, *La logica di Francesco da Prato*; Amerini, 'Realism and Intentionality'; Amerini, 'Thomas Aquinas and Hervaeus Natalis'. On Hervaeus's theory of intentions, see also Pinborg, 'Zum Begriff der "intentio secunda"'; D. Perler, 'Peter Auriol vs. Hervaeus Natalis on Intentionality. A Text with Introductory Remarks', *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge* 61 (1994), p. 227–62; Doyle, 'Hervaeus Natalis, O.P., (d. 1323) on Intentionality'; Koridze, *Intentionale Grundlegung der philosophischen Logik*; J. Dijs. 'Hervaeus Natalis' Theory of Intentions', in F. Amerini (ed.), *Dal convento alla città. Filosofia e teologia in Francesco da Prato O.P. (XIV secolo)*, Florence: Zella Editore, 2008, p. 179–95; J. Dijs, 'Intentions in the First Quarter of the Fourteenth Century: Hervaeus Natalis versus Radulphus Brito', in S.F. Brown – T. Dewender – T. Kobusch (eds.), *Philosophical Debates at the University of Paris in the First*

a sufficient condition for saying that the thing is cognized by me. This at first sounds odd. In fact, a thing may be called cognized by me precisely when I am cognizing that thing, and this seems to be enough. But it is not so for Hervaeus. Why is a converse relation needed? For at least two reasons. The first concerns a predicative requirement: for Hervaeus, a thing can intrinsically be denominated so-and-so only in virtue of a form that inheres in that thing. For example, a person can intrinsically be denominated father in virtue of the form of paternity that inheres in that person. Now, the relation of intellective cognition I have with a thing only permits us to intrinsically denominate me as cognizing, given that such a relation is founded on my act of intellective cognition. The relation of intellective cognition can permit us to denominate a thing as cognized only extrinsically. For Hervaeus, however, this is not enough. The most proper denomination is intrinsic, so only by positing a relational form inhering in the thing cognized is it possible to denominate intrinsically the thing as cognized.[309]

The second reason is epistemic: intentionality is a phenomenon that can be examined from the point of view of the subject-cognizer and from that of the object-cognized. Neither side is sufficient on its own to explain what intentionality is on the whole. I can cognize Hercules the Hero not only because I am able to bring about an act of intellective cognition of him, but also because nothing in Hercules's

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Quarter of the Fourteenth Century, Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2009, p. 213–24; J. Dijs, 'Hervaeus Natalis on the Proper Subject of Logic', *Quaestio* 10 (2010), p. 197–205; J. Dijs, 'Introduction', in *Hervaeus Natalis. De secundis intentionibus*, p. 3–103; M.K. Minerd, *Logic and Intentionality according to Hervaeus Natalis*, PhD Dissertation, The Catholic University of America, Washington D.C., 2017; C. Girard, 'The Realm of "entia rationis" and Its Boundaries: Hervaeus Natalis on Objective Being', *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales* 87/2 (2020), p. 349–69; M. Klein, 'Mental Gaze and Presence: Hervaeus Natalis, Peter Auriol, and John Buridan on Objects of Cognition', *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales* 87/2 (2020), p. 371–92; H. Taieb, 'Presences and Directednesses: Intentionality beyond Aquinas', *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 99/1 (2025), p. 119–40; Amerini, 'Toward a Unified Account of the Intentionality of Mind'. On the origin of the notion of 'objective being', which will be discussed in what follows, see L. Dewan, 'Obiectum. Notes on the Invention of a Word', *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge* 48 (1981), p. 37–96.

309 This is, at least, the position Hervaeus finally endorses in the *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*. See, e.g., Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, d. 2, q. 3 (ed. Dijs, p. 195,9–21, n. 177): 'Tertia ratio sumitur ex differentia denominationis quae est ab extrinseco. Ad cuius evidentiam sciendum quod sunt quaedam denominationes ab extrinseco, sicut denominatur effectus a causa et econverso; sicut calor denominatur solaris a causa sua, et sol denominatur calefaciens a calore quem facit. Aliae sunt denominationes ab intrinseco, vocando intrinsecum omne quod inest rei alicui subiective, sicut dicitur aliquod album ab albedine sibi inhaerente. Et isto modo denominat relatio; unde, licet relatio sit ad aliud, tamen non denominat illud aliud ad quod est, sed illud in quo est, sicut paternitas non denominat aliquod nisi illud in quo est paternitas. Et ex hoc sic arguitur: Relatio non denominat nisi illud in quo est. Sed relatio intelligentis non est in re intellecta. Ergo relatio intelligentis non denominabit rem intellectam, ita quod secundum eam dicatur relata.' In the Commentary on the *Sentences*, the position is not yet clarified and an act of intellective cognition is also seen as a sufficient cognition for denominating a thing cognized as cognized. See, e.g., *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, II, d. 9, q. 1, ed. Paris 1505, fol. 15vb: 'Item, intelligens dicitur intelligens et intellectum dicitur intellectum secundum actum intelligendi. Idem enim actus intelligendi intelligentem esse intelligentm denominat et rem intellectam esse intellectam.' In this question devoted to angelic illumination, Hervaeus abstracts from the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic denomination.

nature prevents him from being cognized by me. Hervaeus seems to conceive of intellective cognition as the result of the combination of two potentialities, namely my potentiality to cognize and that of the thing to be cognized.[310]

Someone could find this position bizarre. It seems to entail that, if the converse relation of the relation of cognition were not given, I could be in the paradoxical situation that I am cognizing Hercules but Hercules is not cognized by me. This is a consequence that Hervaeus, too, could not bring himself to draw. Indeed, on the cognitive plane Hervaeus seems to think that an act of intellective cognition is a sufficient condition to trigger the process of intellective cognition. The paradoxical situation above could obtain only if the converse relation of the relation of cognition were supposed to be a real relation. But for Hervaeus this is not the case, for the converse relation is a relation of reason, as has been said. When I am cognizing Hercules the Hero, only one relation is really at work, viz., that which goes from me to Hercules. The need for the converse relation is that, if it were not posited, we could not correctly explain all the predicative features implicated by the operation of intellective cognition. This is a constraint depending on Hervaeus's acceptance of Aristotle's doctrine of categories and of its extension to the sphere of the mental to a certain degree. We shall return to this point later. For the time being, let me introduce a second aspect relative to the converse relation.

Hervaeus was the first to coin the abstract term 'intentionality' (*intentionalitas*) to refer to such a converse relation. The corresponding concrete term 'intention' (*intentio*), accordingly, is intended to designate every thing that is in such a relation with the intellect and that is thereby the bearer of the property of being an intention. The first/second intention divide concerns intentionality understood in the concrete and indicates the order of the things that are cognized with respect to our intellect. At first approximation, if the thing that is related to the intellect is the extramental thing, it is a first intention, while if it is the thing cognized, it is a second intention.[311] Hervaeus appears to resolve the vacillations regarding the order of knowability which were present in Aquinas. However, he does not abandon Aquinas's explanation of intellective cognition. Like Aquinas, Hervaeus believes that our operation of intellective cognition starts from a singular extramental and culminates with a universal concept. By the way, there is a point of novelty in Hervaeus's account of intellective cognition, which is that—as has been noted in the previous study— for each universal concept there is a corresponding mental object. A thing

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[310] See, e.g., Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, d. 1, q. 2 (ed. Dijs, p. 135–6, n. 66; p. 139–40, n. 77).

[311] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, d. 1, q. 1 (ed. Dijs, p. 116,22–28, n. 16): 'Alio modo dicitur intentio illud quod se tenet ex parte rei intellectae; et hoc modo dicitur intentio res ipsa quae intelligitur inquantum in ipsam tendit [tenditur *ed.*] intellectus sicut in quoddam cognitum per actum intelligendi. Et intentio sic dicta formaliter et in abstracto dicit terminum ipsius tendentiae sive ipsam terminationem, quae est quaedam habitudo rei intellectae ad actum intelligendi. In concreto autem et materialiter dicit illud quod intelligitur, quicquid sit illud.'

becomes an object when it serves as the correlate of an act of intellective cognition that terminates in a concept.[312] For Hervaeus, 'objective being' and 'being cognized' are synonymous: both designate the intramental mode of being that things acquire when they are cognized and so become objects of the intellect, namely the correlates of our concepts. As we shall argue in the next section, such a kind of being is relational in character.

7. Hervaeus on the Relational Character of Being Cognized

How can we distinguish a thing from its being cognized? As I argued elsewhere,[313] if one constructs the ontology of intentionality according to the medieval theories of relation, as Hervaeus does, one major problem to solve is that of explaining the foundation of the converse relation, viz., the relation of intentionality. One could think that just like the relation of paternity is founded on the father's real property of being generating and the converse relation of filiation on the son's real property of being generated (it does not matter how one explains such properties), so the relation of intellective cognition is founded on the intellect's real property of being cognizing and the converse relation of intentionality on the thing's real property of being cognized. This comparison is only partially correct, however. The property of being cognized on which the converse relation of cognition is supposed to be founded is indeed a property of reason, for Hervaeus, while the property on which is founded the converse relation of filiation is a real property. The fact that being cognized is a property of reason could authorize someone to think that the converse relation of being cognized, since it has no real foundation, has no foundation at all. For, if it did have, one could not avoid the circularity of saying that the converse relation of being cognized is founded upon the thing's property of reason, which is that of being cognized.

How can Hervaeus defend the need of the converse relation and prove that no circularity is involved? Let me start by resuming briefly here what I reconstructed in my article mentioned above.[314] A first thing Hervaeus does is to stress that the converse relation of the relation of intellective cognition does not presuppose any distinct real property in the cognized thing, on which to be founded, as is in the case of the relation of filiation, since it is nothing but a relation of reason. Hervaeus, however, does not limit himself to noting the dissimilarity between the two cases, but also adds that being cognized should not be treated as a property (of reason) on which such a relation is founded. Hervaeus concedes this point to the adversaries

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[312] See, e.g., Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, d. 1, q. 1 (ed. Dijs, p. 119–20, n. 21–3).

[313] Amerini, 'Thomas Aquinas and Hervaeus Natalis', § 3.2.

[314] For further discussion of this point, see Amerini, 'Thomas Aquinas and Hervaeus Natalis', § 3.2.

but at the same time he contests their inference. Saying that no property is present in the thing as the distinct foundation of the converse relation of being cognized does not mean that such a relation has no foundation at all. If it had no foundation, it would be only a different way to describe the real relation of cognition. Hervaeus does not make this point any clearer, but notes that just as the converse relation of being cognized cannot be said to be a real relation, so it cannot be said to be anything other than the real relation of cognition itself considered according to reason. A relation of reason is a true relation, while a real relation considered according to reason is just a way of considering a true relation.[315] A rational consideration of the real relation of cognition is not enough to justify the relational aspect involved in the notion of being cognized. Hervaeus's position thus can be summarized in the following claim: the thing cognized develops its own relation to the intellect and this converse relation of being cognized is founded on the cognized thing in the sense that it is founded on the thing to which corresponds an act of intellective cognition as the foundation of the opposite relation (i.e., the relation of intellective cognition).[316]

As I warned in my article mentioned above,[317] Hervaeus should not be misunderstood here. He does not want to affirm that the act of intellective cognition is the foundation also of the converse relation of being cognized, but only that this

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[315] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, q. 2, a. 3 (ed. Dijs, p. 194,6–196,14, n. 73–8): 'Si relatio qua refertur res intellecta ad intelligentem, est ipsa relatio realis quae est fundata super actum intelligendi, sequitur quod relatio intelligentis ad rem intellectam non differt realiter a termino formali ad quem est. Sed hoc est inconveniens. Ergo etc. […]. Quarta ratio sumitur ex hoc quod isti non possunt salvare quod relatio rei intellectae ad intelligentem sit relatio rationis, quia aliud est relationem aliquam esse relationem rationis et esse relationem alicuius secundum rationem quia quando dicitur aliqua relatio esse relatio rationis, intelligitur quod illa relatio non habeat aliud esse quam secundum rationem; quando autem dicitur quod aliqua relatio, quae est realis, est alicuius secundum rationem, non intelligitur quod relatio illa absolute non habeat esse nisi esse secundum rationem, sed quod non sit relatio illius relati nisi secundum rationem. Si ergo res intellecta refertur ad intelligentem per relationem realem fundatam super actum intelligendi, licet posset salvari quod illa relatio non esset relatio realiter rei intellectae, tamen non potest salvari quod illa relatio quae est relatio rei intellectae, esset tantum ens secundum rationem, vel quod esset tantum relatio rationis, quod videtur inconveniens, quia talis relatio communiter ponitur esse relatio rationis tantum. Et sic patet quod illa relatio rei intellectae ad actum intelligendi vel ad intelligentem non ponit aliquam rem in intellectu, nec etiam in re extra, quia omnes concedunt quod in re intellecta nihil reale ponitur ex eo quod intelligitur.'

[316] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, q. 4, a. 3 (ed. Doyle, p. 494): 'Quando ergo quaeritur utrum esse intellectum vel esse obiective in intellectu, quod est primum inter secundas intentiones, fundetur super rem ut est intellecta aut super rem absolute, dicendum est quod non super rem absolute, excluso actu intelligendi, immo oportet includere actum intelligendi ut fundamentum oppositae relationis […]. Quando dicitur "ut intellecta", li "ut intellecta" potest accipi vel prout res denominatur ab ipso actu intelligendi et tunc est sensus: res ut intellecta, id est, res ut sibi correspondet actus intelligendi; vel potest accipi prout res denominatur ab ipsa habitudine rationis quam habet ad actum intelligendi et tunc est sensus: res ut intellecta, id est, res ut habet habitudinem ad actum intelligendi. Quare dico quod ista habitudo, scilicet esse intellectum sive esse obiective in intellectu, fundatur super rem ut est intellecta primo modo.' For further discussion of this characterization, see Amerini, 'Realism and Intentionality', and Dewender, 'Der ontologische Status der Relationen nach Durand von St.-Pourçain, Hervaeus Natalis und Petrus Aureoli', to which I refer for other bibliographical references.

[317] Amerini, 'Thomas Aquinas and Hervaeus Natalis', § 3.1.

relation necessarily follows as the converse of the relation of intellective cognition whose foundation consists in the act of intellective cognition. Hervaeus envisions a case in which the thing, considered as the terminus of an act of intellective cognition, also provides the foundation for the converse relation of being cognized. For example, my act of cognizing Hercules the Hero is the foundation of the relation of intellective cognition I bear to Hercules; such a relation is the necessary condition for the converse relation of being cognized to arise. Hervaeus's characterization is a way of arguing that the converse relation has no distinct foundation, but that nonetheless, since we may imagine a procedure of foundation, a foundation is then possible. Is the relation of cognition thus a sufficient condition for having the converse relation too? Despite what one might expect, Hervaeus seems to think it is not. A supplementary property seems needed and that of 'being the correlate of the real relation of cognition which is founded on the act of cognition' could be the candidate we are searching for to ground the converse relation of being cognized on the cognized thing.

One could object to Hervaeus that such a property, if any, is very elusive, for it is not a property that a thing can have before it has been cognized, so it cannot provide the foundation of the converse relation of being cognized and hence we can give it up.[318] I think that from Hervaeus's texts one can extrapolate an answer to that objection, which helps us to provide a final interpretation of Hervaeus's claim. The impression is that Hervaeus is indeed not looking for a property from the side of things that precedes the act of intellective cognition, but just for a condition that allows the cognized thing to enter into a relation with the intellect and the converse relation to have a foundation to a certain degree. This extrinsic condition is simply given by the act of intellective cognition itself. It grounds the relation of cognition and so permits the converse relation of being cognized to arise and to be founded on the thing that has been cognized, although no proper and distinct property in the cognized thing needs to be presupposed, as such, as the foundation of the converse relation. The only foundational property is just that of being the correlate of the real relation of cognition that is founded on the act of intellective cognition, as has been said. As we shall see better in a moment, it is possible to propose, however, a

[318] For worries about the converse relation, see, e.g., Peter Auriol, *Scriptum super IV libros Sententiarum*, I, d. 23 (ed. de Rijk, p. 717ff., n. 70ff.); Gerard Odonis, *De intentionibus*, I, a. 1 (ed. de Rijk, p. 394,18–395,14, n. 14–6). On Auriol's and Odonis's criticism, see de Rijk, 'A Study on the Medieval Intentionality Debate'; Amerini, 'Realism and Intentionality'; H. Taieb, 'What Is Cognition? Peter Auriol's Account', *Recherche de théologie et philosophie médiévales* 85/1 (2018), p. 109–34; and Taieb, 'Presences and Directednesses', to which I refer for further bibliographical references. See also F. Amerini, 'Hervaeus (and His Heirs) vs. Duns Scotus (and the Scotists) on Mental Being', in F. Benevich – H. Taieb (eds.). *Mental Being and Intentionality*, Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming (On What There Was. Conceptions of Being 500-1650 Series). For further discussion of the difficulties entailed by the conviction that intentionality is the converse relation of the relation of intellective cognition, see Girard, 'The Realm of "entia rationis"', p. 360ff.

refinement of this understanding and identify a more primitive property from the side of the thing cognized that precedes the act of intellective cognition.

Hervaeus is aware of the difficulties of his notion of intentionality,[319] and engages himself to clarify how the converse relation of being cognized can be said to be founded on the thing cognized. His position is that the converse relation is *actually* founded on the thing cognized (in the way that has been indicated above), but *aptitudinally* it is founded on the extramental thing itself.[320] He seems to have in mind the following way out of the difficulties. Consider again the example of my act of intellective cognition of Hercules the Hero. When I am cognizing Hercules, Hercules enters into a relation with me. My act of cognizing makes Hercules be cognized by me. The relation of Hercules to my intellect is founded on Hercules I am cognizing. At this point, Hervaeus avoids any circularity by saying that the converse relation is founded on Hercules *that is cognized* but not on Hercules *qua cognized*, since Hercules becomes cognized precisely in virtue of the relation he bears to me. Therefore, Hercules's relation of being cognized is actually founded on Hercules cognized by me (and for this to be given, my act of cognition of Hercules is sufficient) and aptitudinally on Hercules in the flesh. Actual foundation on Hercules I am cognizing means that the converse relation of being cognized can be founded on Hercules only after I have developed an intellective relation with him. But since Hercules has an aptitude to be cognized by me, and this aptitude is connatural to Hercules and not dependent on my act of intellective cognition, the converse relation of being cognized may be said to be aptitudinally founded on Hercules himself. This is a different way of saying that Hercules has by himself the possibility of developing the converse relation of being cognized with me, although Hercules actually realizes this converse relation only in consequence of an actual act of intellective cognition by me. Since Hercules's natural aptitude to be cognized by me pertains to Hercules by himself, this explains why Hervaeus takes the thing itself as the remote foundation of the converse relation of being cognized. When Hercules is actually cognized by me, then his natural aptitude to be cognized is realized and so Hercules may be taken as the proximate foundation of the converse relation of being cognized.[321] Identifying the foundation of the converse relation of being cognized with Hercules's property of having the aptitude to be cognized by me may be seen as that refinement of Hervaeus's claim we were searching for—viz., that the foundation of such a rela-

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[319] See *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, d. 1, q. 2 (ed. Dijs, p. 139, n. 76–7).

[320] See *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, q. 3, a. 1 (ed. Doyle, p. 420–2).

[321] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, q. 3, a. 1 (ed. Doyle, p. 422): 'est impossibile quod praedicta intentionalitas quae est relatio rei intellectae ad intellectum actu intelligentem fundetur super aliquam rem nisi sit actu intellectum obiective. Est tamen aptitudine extra quia potest esse non existente actu intelligentis.' For further discussion of this text, see also Girard, 'The Realm of "entia rationis"', p. 363–6. For a slightly different interpretation of the actual/aptitudinal foundation divide, see H. Taieb, 'The "intellected thing" (*res intellecta*) in Hervaeus Natalis', *Vivarium* 53/1 (2015), p. 26–44.

tion consists in the property of being the correlate of the real relation of intellective cognition that is founded on the act of intellective cognition itself.

Things' natural aptitude to be cognizable by us does not enter into the essence or the definition of things, yet it is a property that necessarily follows from their essence. Hercules is not what he is insofar as he is cognizable by me, but necessarily he has the property of having the aptitude to be cognizable by me. In Aristotelian terms, such an aptitude is not an essential property (a *per se primo modo* property), but a necessary property (a *per se secundo modo* property).[322] If one understands the foundation of the converse relation of being cognized on the cognized thing in the sense indicated by Hervaeus, namely that such a relation is founded on the thing to which the fact of being cognized accidentally happens, then circularity is avoided. My act of cognition does nothing indeed but actualize Hercules's property of being aptitudinally cognizable by me.

Technically, in his *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus* Hervaeus explains this point by resorting to the distinction between two senses in which a cognized thing can be said to be conjoined with the property of being cognized: in one sense, a cognized thing can be taken as 'composed of this' property and the thing itself (*compositum ex hiis*), in another sense, as a thing 'composed with this' property (*compositum huic*).[323] The adversaries understand composition in the first way, but Hervaeus emphasizes that the correct understanding is the second. Probably Hervaeus borrows this distinction from Aquinas,[324] although it is a distinction that ultimately rests on Avicenna's celebrated doctrine of the indifference of essence. Such a distinction entails that a cognized thing can be described either as the actual compound of the thing itself plus the property of being cognized or just as a thing that is accidentally

[322] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, q. 4, a. 1 (ed. Doyle, p. 463–4): 'Quantum ergo ad hoc, scilicet, in quomodo dicendi per se est ista, scilicet *ens est intelligibile*, videtur mihi quod sit in secundo modo dicendi per se. Ad cuius evidentiam sciendum quod ex hoc dicitur aliquid intelligibile quod est natum intelligi. Ex hoc autem dicitur aliquod natum intelligi quod eius repraesentatio nata est esse apud intellectum, sive ista repraesentatio sit actus sive aliqua similitudo, a quocumque ista similitudo causetur. […] Ex hoc autem quod talis repraesentatio est apud intellectum consurgit quaedam relatio inter intellectum talem repraesentationem habentem et ipsam rem repraesentatam, ita quod intellectus in quo est talis repraesentatio, refertur realiter ad ipsam rem repraesentatam, in qua formaliter ipsa repraesentatio nihil ponit. Sed res ad ipsam repraesentationem refertur secundum rationem. Et sicut ista repraesentatio consequitur per se et necessario ipsum intellectum, et hoc secundum aptitudinem, ita repraesentari et habere habitudinem rationis ad talem repraesentationem secundum aptitudinem acceptam necessario et per se consequitur illud quod natum est intelligi et repraesentari ab intellectu, ita quod sicut relatio quae nata est per se consequi aliquam rem per se et necessario convenit sibi in secundo modo dicendi per se […], ita esse intelligibile convenit cuique rei contentae sub primo et per se obiecto intellectus in secundo modo dicendi per se' (punctuation slightly modified). As is known, the distinction between two types of *per se* properties and predications traces back to Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics* I, c. 4–6.

[323] See Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, q. 3, a. 1 (ed. Doyle, p. 418). For further discussion of this distinction in Hervaeus, see Amerini, *La logica di Francesco da Prato*, p. 205ff., and recently Girard, 'The Realm of "entia rationis"', p. 362–3.

[324] See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio in XII libros Metaphysicorum*, VII, lec. 13 (ed. Spiazzi, n. 1570).

conjoined with such a property. Hervaeus clarifies this distinction with an example. Consider a white thing. Whiteness can be said to be founded upon it. But whiteness is not founded on the actual compound of thing plus whiteness, because a thing is white precisely in virtue of whiteness. Whiteness can be said to be founded on the white thing in the sense that it is founded on a thing to which the property of being white accidentally accrues. Thus, whiteness is founded on the thing *qua* aptitudinally predisposed to be white, not on the thing *qua* actually white.[325] What holds for the property of being white also holds for the property of being cognized. The converse relation of being cognized is founded on the cognized thing considered *qua* thing and not *qua* cognized, namely *qua* thing to which accidentally corresponds an act of intellective cognition as the foundation of the opposite relation.[326]

In my article dedicated to Thomas Aquinas and Hervaeus Natalis on first and second intentionality, I concluded by noting the heavy internalism of this account of intellective cognition, but also that we should be cautious with this impression. I there limited myself to referring to a question of his treatise on second intentions reserved to proving the extramental extension of intellective cognition.[327] This point can now be clarified better to reach a more accurate understanding of Hervaeus's position on the relationship between cognizing and being cognized. There are a couple of Hervaeus's texts that should retain the attention of the reader.

The first is *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, q. 3, a. 1. In that question Hervaeus argues that the fact that the cognized thing is inside the intellect does not impede us from distinguishing the thing from its being cognized, so that there is a sense in which the thing can be said to be outside the intellect as well. When discussing the foundation of first intentions, Hervaeus points out that the cognized thing can be said to exist outside the intellect aptitudinally. The thing that is cognized in act is the same as the thing that was in potency to be cognized, and this aptitude to be cognized is what allows us to say, as has been seen, that the converse relation of being cognized is remotely founded on the extramental thing itself. The property of being *cognizable* is a property that pertains to the thing as such and is prior to the thing's property of being *cognized* by the intellect.[328]

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[325] See Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, q. 3, a. 1 (ed. Doyle, p. 418).

[326] See Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, q. 4, a. 3 (ed. Doyle, p. 494; see above, note 316). The example was considered confounding by the Franciscan Gerard Odonis, since whiteness, unlike intellective cognition, is not a relation and so does not need any foundation. See Gerard Odonis, *De intentionibus*, I, a. 1 (ed. de Rijk, p. 394,18–395,14, n. 14–6).

[327] Amerini, 'Thomas Aquinas and Hervaeus Natalis', § 3.2.

[328] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, q. 3, a. 1 (ed. Doyle, p. 420–1): 'Si autem quaeratur utrum illud super quod fundatur prima intentionalitas sit ens in intellectu, […] si autem quaeratur de esse obiective in intellectu, ut sit sensus quaestionis quaerere utrum illud super quod fundatur prima intentionalitas sit ens extra intellectum per oppositum ad esse in intellectu obiective, dicendum quod illud super quod praedicta intentionalitas fundatur, quando actu talis intentionalitas super ipsum fundatur, non est ens extra intellectum obiective et actu. Immo actu est ens existens in intellectu obiective, licet non sit ipsum esse in intellectu […]. Sed aptitudine et in potentia

Hervaeus reaffirms this point in another text: *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, q. 4, a. 1, where he explains how a cognized thing can be partly internal and partly external to the intellect. A thing can exist outside the intellect in two ways, subjectively or objectively. The first way occurs when it does not exist subjectively in the intellect. The second way occurs when it does not present itself to the intellect as an object of cognition. In the first way, intentional properties (among which Hervaeus also includes the property of being cognized) refer to things outside the intellect to the extent to which they refer to something that does not exist subjectively in the intellect. In this sense, they refer to things even when we say that they refer to cognized things: a cognized thing in fact does not exist subjectively in the intellect. In the second way, we need to make a distinction. If we mean that a thing exists objectively outside the intellect in the sense that it does not include in its essence such properties as 'existing in the intellect' or 'being objectively in the intellect', then intentional properties can refer to things that exist outside the intellect. In fact, every thing's nature is what it is independently of the fact of being cognized. Otherwise, if being cognized were included in a thing's essence, we would be in the paradoxical situation of cognizing only things that are already cognized. Instead, if we mean that a thing exists objectively outside the intellect in the sense that it does not exist objectively in the intellect, then no intentional properties refer to things outside the intellect in this sense, since intentional properties emerge only as a consequence of the fact that things exist objectively in the intellect.[329] Things in

propinqua est ens extra animam distinctum per oppositum ad esse in intellectu obiective. Primum patet, quia praedicta intentionalitas fundatur super rem actu intellectam. Sed omne quod actu intelligitur, est actu obiective in intellectu. Ergo etc. […] Secundum etiam, scilicet, quod fundamentum dictae intentionalitatis est ens extra aptitudine, faciliter patet. Quia illud dicitur ens extra, per oppositum ad esse in intellectu obiective, quod habet esse in rerum natura circumscripta operatione intellectus […]. Sed fundamentum primae intentionalitatis natum est esse in rerum natura circumscripta operatione intellectus, quia natum est etiam esse sine praedicta intentionalitate. Ergo etc.' (punctuation slightly modified). For a slightly different interpretation of this text, see Taieb, 'The "intellected thing"', p. 37ff.

[329] Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, q. 4, a. 1 (ed. Doyle, p. 459): 'Quantum ad secundum sciendum quod, sicut supra dictum fuit, dicitur dupliciter "aliquid esse extra intellectum", scilicet obiective vel subiective. Subiective quia scilicet est aliquid quod non est in intellectu sicut in subiecto; vel obiective quia scilicet non obiicitur intellectui sicut cognitum cognoscenti. Loquendo ergo de esse in intellectu primo modo, planum est quod secundae intentiones verificantur de rebus extra animam, quia habent verificari de obiecto intellectus, quia consequuntur rem prout est obiective in intellectu. Sed esse obiectum intellectus non est aliquid existens in intellectu sicut in subiecto. Immo, prima obiecta eius sunt res sensibiles quae sunt extra. Ergo secundae intentiones verificantur de rebus extra, accipiendo "extra" subiective. Si autem accipiatur "extra" obiective, illud scilicet quod non obiicitur intellectui sicut cognitum cognoscenti, dupliciter potest intelligi secundas intentiones verificari de re extra sic accepta. Uno modo quod verificentur de re quae non includit in sua ratione ipsum esse in intellectu et quae nata est esse circumscripto actu intelligendi, et sic verificantur de re extra. Nam prima obiecta intellectus non includunt in sua ratione ipsum esse in intellectu, alioquin primum et formale obiectum intellectus esset ipsa habitudo obiecti ad intellectum, quod falsum est. […] Alio modo potest intelligi quod secundae intentiones verificentur de re extra obiective sic quod secundae intentiones conveniant actu alicui et quod illud quod tunc sit extra obiective non sit obiective in intellectu. Et istud est impossibile, quia talia non conveniunt rebus nisi quando intelliguntur et, per consequens, nisi sint obiective in intellectu' (punctuation slightly modified). Hervaeus also dealt with

the intellect are therefore in one way things external to the intellect; when they offer themselves as objects to the intellect, they are simply in relation to the intellect. If our reconstruction of Hervaeus's position is right, then the claim that Hervaeus's position is strongly internalist needs to be nuanced.

At the end of our discussion on Hervaeus's treatment of intellective cognition a question remains to be answered: did Hervaeus neutralize John Duns Scotus's criticism of Aquinas? It is difficult to respond to this question since Hervaeus does not confront Scotus's criticism directly. He only engages himself in confuting some Parisian philosophers, such as Simon of Faversham and Radulphus Brito, and the Franciscan Peter Auriol. What is certain is that Hervaeus made a great effort to clarify all the elements involved in intellective cognition, especially those on which Scotus's criticism focused. Hervaeus does not depart from Aquinas's account of relation; in particular, he does not abandon the principle that every action entails a relation and that every relation entails a converse relation. But he goes ahead by illustrating the different relations of reason involved in intentionality and in providing a more explicit relational account of intentions. In the operation of intellective cognition, at least three relations are in play. First, the relation that Hervaeus calls 'intentionality' (viz., the converse relation of the relation of cognition, namely cognition as passively understood): it is the fundamental presupposition for every intention, although such a relation does not enter into the definition of any of them. In particular, second intentions, such as being predicable, being cognized, being a species and so on, arise when a cognized thing is actually related to our intellect that is actually reflecting on it. As Hervaeus says, it is one thing to hold that intentionality is co-existing and another to hold that it is co-cognized when intentions are formed and cognized. Acts of definition of intentions metaphysically presuppose the relation of intentionality, which makes such acts possible, but this relation is not cognized every time our intellect forms an intention.[330] To this relation, intentions add two other kinds of relationships: those resulting from the comparisons of the

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this issue in the early *Determinatio de intellectu et specie*, where he explained how to reconcile the claim that the object of the intellect is the true thing existent outside the mind and the claim that the object of the intellect is universal. Hervaeus there distinguished between two ways of cognizing the universal. See *Determinatio de intellectu et specie*, ed. Stella, p. 163,21–164,6.

330 Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, d. 2, q. 6 (ed. Dijs, p. 231,3–16, n. 162): 'Si autem quaeratur utrum aliae secundae intentiones possint manere in intellectu sine habitudine, dico quod aliae intentiones manere in intellectu sine dicta habitudine dupliciter potest intelligi, vel sine ea coexistente vel sine ea cointellecta. Primo modo aliae intentiones non possunt esse sine illa habitudine, quia impossibile est quod aliae intentiones secundae quae consequuntur rem ut est in intellectu obiective, possint esse vel etiam intelligi sine tali habitudine illa et secundae intentiones aliae consequentes rem ut est obiective in intellectu, quia sine ea esse non possunt vel etiam intelligi; posito quod aliquid intelligatur, statim consequitur talis habitudo. Sed secundo modo possunt aliae secundae intentiones intelligi sine dicta habitudine et sine ipsa cointellecta, quia non oportet quod quando intelligantur aliae secundae intentiones (puta intentio universalitatis vel generis), quod intelligatur dicta habitudo rei intellectae ad intellectum.'

cognized things (i) with each other and (ii) with the extramental things.[331] Unlike Scotus, Hervaeus does not renounce the second act of comparison, although, like Scotus, he dedicates a large number of pages in his treatise on second intentions to the first act. The relation that things bear to our intellect determines the properties of 'being cognized' and 'being an intention', which are the fundamental intentions that can be attributed to cognized things.[332]

There is another point of Scotus's criticism that is addressed by Hervaeus. It concerns the move from the subject-cognizer to the cognized thing, which we have underscored in Aquinas's explanation of the intellect's operation of self-reflection. The two sides are clearly distinguished by Hervaeus and such a move is clarified. Hervaeus explains that intellective cognition is activated by some mental similitude of the thing (such as the intelligible species, if any), which exists in the intellect as in its subject. It represents things as cognized, which Hervaeus calls mental 'objects'. Etymologically, the word 'intention' means an act of tending to a target, so both mental acts and intended things can be called intentions—Hervaeus explains—but differently. From the side of the intellect, similitudes are intentions essentially and intrinsically, since by virtue of their very nature they refer to something else, while intended things are intentions only denominatively and extrinsically, namely to the extent to which the intellect tends to them. But from the side of the cognized thing, intended things are said to be intentions denominatively but intrinsically, i.e., by virtue of the relation they bear to the intellect. No cognized thing is, however, an intention essentially since it does not refer by its very nature to anything else.[333]

These specifications on the word 'intention' lead Hervaeus to distinguish two ways of understanding (second) intentions: the epistemic way and the predicative way. He illustrates the distinction through the example of the property of being universal. When the intellect intellectively cognizes a thing, its instruments of intellective cognition (viz., intelligible species, acts, concepts, and so on) may be called universal *by representation*. They exist in the intellect subjectively and can represent things universally (see the text in note 334, point 1). When the intellect

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[331] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, q. 3, a. 2 (ed. Doyle, p. 428): 'Existentibus ergo istis, scilicet re intellecta et actu intelligendi, consequuntur duae relationes: una realis, quae est ipsius intellectus ad rem intellectam, et alia rationis, quae est rei intellectae ad intellectum actu intelligentem. Post istas sequuntur alia entia rationis, sive dicant privationem, sicut hoc quod dico *abstractum*, sive dicant habitudinem unius intelligibilis ad aliud intelligibile prout est obiective in intellectu, sicut hoc quod dico *superius* et *inferius*, *praedicatum* et *subiectum* et similia, quae sequuntur rem correspondentem apprehensioni simplici, et postea sequuntur intentiones quae consequuntur intellectum componentem et dividentem, et ultimo illae quae consequuntur intellectum conferentem et unum ex alio inferentem; vel potius rem respondentem intellectui componenti et dividenti, conferenti et inferenti' (punctuation slightly modified).

[332] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, d. 1, q. 2 (ed. Dijs, p. 132,22–133,6, n. 58–59); q. 3, a. 2 (ed. Doyle, p. 431).

[333] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, d. 2, q. 3 (ed. Dijs, p. 195,3–21, n. 76–7). See also *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, d. 1, q. 1 (ed. Dijs, p. 118,5–24, n. 19–20).

instead considers the cognized thing and compares it with the extramental things (or with other cognized things), the thing becomes the subject of the property of being universal but in this case the thing is called universal *by predication*. Things cognized exist in the intellect objectively and can be predicated on things universally (point 2). In its operation of reflection, the intellect moves from a first act of reflection on itself to a second act of reflection on the cognized thing. If the first act of reflection allows us to single out above all *epistemic* features of the operation of intellective cognition (like 'representing universally' or 'being represented universally), the second directs to *predicative* features (like 'being predicated universally'). By such a distinction, Hervaeus invites us to be careful and distinguish, when explaining intellective cognition, the epistemic and the predicative aspect of intentionality, and consequently what happens on the side of the intellect that is cognizing from what happens on the side of the thing that is cognized.[334] This may be considered the major contribution Hervaeus makes to the clarification of Aquinas's account of intellective cognition.

8. Hervaeus Natalis on Intentional Objects

In many of my works, I have defended the view that Hervaeus champions a realistic interpretation of intellective cognition. As has also been said in this study, when I intellectively cognize Hercules the Hero, Hercules and I are in relation. The relation from me to Hercules is real and founded on my act of intellective cognition, while

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[334] Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, d. 2, q. 2 (ed. Dijs, p. 186,8–187,16, n. 56–7): 'Ad secundum dicendum ad maiorem quod in omni actione reali praesupponente subiectum aliquod reale acquiritur aliqua forma vel actio. Et quando dicitur in minori quod intellectus agens facit universalitatem, dicendum quod, sicut saepe dictum est [see d. 2, q. 1 (ed. Dijs, p. 172,20–173,5, n. 23)], duplex est "universale"; scilicet (1) *per repraesentationem*, et sic actus intelligendi et species, si ponatur species, conceptus mentis dicitur universale. […]. Et de tali universali verum est quod intellectus agens facit universalitatem sive universale actione reali. […] (2) Alio modo dicitur universale *per praedicationem*, et universale sic dictum non habet factionem realem sed consequitur factionem realem existentem in alio. Nam facta in intellectu intellectione vel conceptione repraesentante rem universaliter et indeterminate sicut facta conceptione repraesentante hominem indeterminate absque Sorte et Platone, consequitur hoc quod est hominem esse indeterminate repraesentativum et esse obiective in intellectu indeterminate. Et hoc non habet factionem realem sed secundum rationem. Sicut enim quando dicimus quod res aliqua est facta in intellectu, non ponitur factio realis in illa re, ita nec, quando dicitur facta universalis, idest indeterminate intellecta, nulla factio realis est in ea nec aliquid reale acquiritur in ea. Dicendum ergo ad formam argumenti quod intellectus actione reali facit universalitatem et universale per repraesentationem, quod quidem universale est quaedam forma acquisita in intellectu sicut in subiecto; et isto modo universale non est secunda intentio. Sed universale per praedicationem quod est secunda intentio, non fit ab aliqua factione reali quae per se terminetur ad tale universale, nec aliquid realiter acquisitum in aliquo sicut in subiecto; sed facto realiter universali per repraesentationem, universale per praedicationem consequitur rem prout est obiective in intellectu secundum tale esse quod habet obiective in intellectu, cui rei sic existenti obiective in intellectu nulla factio realis convenit' (numbers inserted and emphasis are mine). On the different meanings of 'universal' see already the early *Determinatio de intellectu et species*, ed. Stella, p. 162,13–19. For more on Hervaeus's position on universals, see Amerini, 'Hervaeus Natalis on Universals'.

the relation from Hercules to me is of reason and founded on the thing cognized, in the way we explained above. Thus, intellective cognition entails the conjunction of two relations: the relation of cognizing and the converse relation of being cognized. Defending the converse relation of being cognized is the hallmark of Hervaeus's position. Such a relation is what allows a thing to be endowed with being cognized and with what Hervaeus calls 'objective being'. But what is the nature of this peculiar kind of being that a thing acquires when it is cognized? To answer this last question, let me draw attention to a couple of points of Hervaeus's account of intellective cognition that have been disputed by scholars in recent years.

The first concerns the metaphysical status of the converse relation. We have seen that, for Hervaeus, such a relation is involved in any act of intellective cognition, no matter whether it bears on an extramental thing or on a cognized thing. Such a relation is pluralized according to the individual intellects, while the cognized thing remains one and the same. In fact, my act of cognizing Hercules is numerically different from yours, just as Hercules's relation of being cognized by me is different from his relation of being cognized by you, but Hercules who is cognized is a real thing and is just one and the same for me and you, as it is what is cognized about Hercules by me and you, namely that he is a human being or that he belongs to the animal genus. Moreover, if I am cognizing Hercules distinctly or indistinctly, such modes of cognizing depend on my intellect and concern acts that exist subjectively in me. But Hercules I am cognizing only exists objectively in my intellect—as the object of my act of intellective cognition. Thus, when I am cognizing Hercules as a human being or as an animal, I am bringing about two different acts of cognition, one less and one more distinct, that lead to two different objects, i.e., the human being-object and the animal-object. The modes of cognizing ultimately depend on the objects through which I am cognizing Hercules, either as a human being or as an animal: human being and animal are two objects that express, with regard to Hercules, two different degrees of clarity in cognition, but they are the same for any subject-cognizer.

The second point concerns the foundation of such a relation. We have seen that Hervaeus holds that such a relation is founded not on the act of cognition, but on the thing cognized. He adds that we must distinguish here. Since Hercules can be said to be cognized in virtue of the relation he has with my intellect, we have seen that in order to avoid any circularity we have to say that such a relation is not founded on Hercules *qua* cognized or precisely on Hercules's property of being cognized. Such a relation is founded on Hercules only when he is cognized, and this means that it is founded on Hercules taken as a certain nature to which the property of being cognized accidentally happens. The act of intellective cognition is a necessary condition for Hercules to be cognized, not however a sufficient one. Despite the fact that I turn my intellect to him, Hercules could not be said to be cognized by me if he developed no relation with my intellect. The formula Hervaeus finally adopts is

that the relation of being cognized is founded on the thing insofar as corresponds to it an act of intellective cognition as the foundation of the opposite relation.[335]

Philosophically speaking, Hervaeus's relational account of being cognized has an edge and a disadvantage. The first consists in assuming that an act of intellective cognition does not really affect the nature of a thing. Hercules remains a human being, and a human being potentially cognizable, even if he were never cognized. When Hercules is placed in 'the prospect of the intellect' (*in prospectu intellectus*)—as Hervaeus puts it—he does not acquire a new real being but only a being of reason, i.e., an objective way of being, which Hervaeus conceives as a relational and not as a substantial being. The textual clue to justify this interpretation is that in his works Hervaeus always uses the term in the adverbial form (*esse obiective*), never in the substantive form (*esse obiectivum*). For Hercules, to exist objectively in my intellect simply means to be related to my intellect, to be in the prospect of my intellect.[336] Accordingly, one can think that objective being expresses, so to speak, an ontologically uncommitted kind of being, since it is fundamentally an epistemic notion.

This is true, however such an uncommitted status needs to be specified. If it is true that, metaphysically speaking, intellective cognition does not really change the nature of a thing, it is also true that, for Hervaeus, it is not the individual extramental thing as such that is in a relation with us, but the thing that has become cognized. When Hercules is cognized by me, not only does he change his relational status, then coming into relation to my intellect, but he also acquires a new being, since my act of cognition transforms Hercules into a universal nature, viz., that of human being. In other words, Hercules exists objectively in my intellect always in the guise of the human being-nature, which my intellect has abstracted from the singularity and materiality of Hercules.[337] It could be supposed that such a nature

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[335] See above, note 316. See also Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, q. 3, a. 1 (ed. Doyle, p. 421); also d. 1, q. 1 (ed. Dijs, p. 119, n. 21–23).

[336] See Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, q. 3, a. 1 (ed. Doyle, p. 421): 'nihil aliud est esse obiective in intellectu quam esse in prospectu intellectus ut cognitum in prospectu cognoscentis.'

[337] See Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, q. 4, a. 3 (ed. Doyle, p. 496): 'homo est obiective in intellectu et terminat actum intelligendi sine Sorte et Platone et aliis particularibus, et ex hoc dicitur abstractum, ulterius quia homo existens in intellectu modo praedicto obiicitur intellectui sine illis quibus determinatur ad Sortem et Platonem et est indifferens ad plura solo numero differentia, et ideo dicibile de eis et potest accipi pro quolibet eorum.' In his article 'The "intellected thing"', p. 42–3, note 51, Taieb criticizes the distinction I have often used in my writings (and that I have also used in these studies) between "that which is cognized" and "what is cognized about it", which I have understood as a distinction concerning, in the process of natural knowledge, Socrates (that which is cognized) and human being (what is cognized about Socrates). For him, in a text such as that quoted above (Taieb actually refers to a similar text from q. 1, a. 1, ed. Dijs, 119,17–120,5) Hervaeus assumes that that which is cognized is not Socrates but human being. In the second study, I related such a distinction to that between moving object and terminating object. In light of the distinction between the two kinds of objects, it seems to me quite clear that human being, in separation from Socrates and Plato, is what terminates and not what moves an act of intellect cognition (as Hervaeus says in the text

must have some kind of substantial being in the intellect, because otherwise it could not develop any relationship with my intellect. However, if objective being referred to a new kind of substantial being acquired by the thing, the Franciscan Peter Auriol could be right when he objects to Hervaeus that objective being precedes the relation of intentionality. The fact that Hervaeus rejects Auriol's criticism reveals that for him a thing's nature, probably, is not provided with a new substantial being in the intellect in consequence of an act of intellective cognition.[338] He seems to think, rather, that our intellect is simply connected to the thing's nature, which can be described as existent in the extramental world. The act of intellective cognition only permits a thing's nature to be abstracted, unified and actualized in the intellect, in brief to be in relation to the intellect. Echoing what has been said in the first study,[339] we could call this capacity of our intellect to form mental objects 'objectifying power', a primitive power that allows a thing to be related to the intellect and be grasped as one single object.

Although this objectifying power is not clarified any better by Hervaeus and the real nature of objective being remains not completely elucidated, in my opinion Hervaeus does not conceive of objective being as a mental duplicate of a thing's real being. To establish this point, the key words are 'term' (*terminus*) and 'termination' (*terminatio*), words we already encountered in Aquinas. Hervaeus describes the relation of intentionality as the termination of the relation entailed by the act of intellective cognition. Although the notion of termination is not fully elaborated, one point, I believe, can be taken for granted: by this notion Hervaeus means that this relation is not something really different from the relation implied by the act of intellective cognition, but expresses only its reverse direction. We could say that it simply indicates the actualization of the relation entailed by the act of cognition. 'Term' designates the thing that is denominated by such a termination. The important point here is that Hervaeus identifies the term denominated by such a relation with the extramental thing. Hervaeus is explicit in saying (i) that this term is the object of the intellect insofar as it terminates my act of intellective cognition, and (ii) that this object is an extramental thing.[340] Clearly, the term doess not refer to the

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above). So human being should be understood to be cognized in the sense that it is what is cognized about extramental things, from which our act of intellective cognition is started. The same distinction of objects however does not impede us from assuming that human being can be the moving object of another act of intellective cognition leading to a different, more complex terminating object, for example its definition, rational animal.

338 On the dispute between Hervaeus and Peter Auriol, see Amerini, 'Realism and Intentionality'.

339 See above, Study I, § 10.

340 Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, q. 4, a. 1 (ed. Doyle, p. 456–7): 'quando dicitur quod homo, vel aliquid tale, dicit primam intentionem concretive, non est accipiendum quod dicit ipsam intentionalitatem denominantem. Sed dicit illud quod ab intentionalitate denominatur, ita quod intentionalitas ipsa est ipsa habitudo quae potest dici terminatio actus intelligendi. Sed terminus dicit ipsam intentionem […] homo vel aliae res exteriores sunt illud cui a talibus in concreto acceptis convenit denominari, sicut quando dicitur quod hoc est terminus actus intelligendi. […] Sed

thing as extramentally existing, for this latter is singular, while mental objects are universal, but this does not prevent us from saying that it is an extramental thing. Precisely, it is the nature of an extramental thing, which the intellect has abstracted and unified.

Did Hervaeus change any aspect of this view of objective being across his career? In a recent article, Charles Girard has answered this question in the affirmative. Hervaeus's position evolved. While in the Commentary on the *Sentences* (e.g., II, d. 17, q. 1, a. 4) and in *Quodlibet* II Hervaeus understands this kind of being as a neutral kind of being, which does not affect the nature of the thing cognized, in the later *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus* he characterizes it as a being of reason.[341] In my opinion, this evolution is doubtful. My interpretation is that the basics of Hervaeus's doctrine remain unchanged and lie in the assumption, formulated by Hervaeus in opposition to Peter Auriol, that when we consider a thing cognized, we can distinguish the contribution that comes from the world from the contribution that is supplied by the mind. When I am intellectively cognizing Hercules, in my act three things at least are involved: first, the extramental thing, i.e., Hercules, I am oriented to cognize; second, my intellect's mode of cognizing that thing (e.g., clearly/confusedly, particularly/universally, etc.); and third, the relation that Hercules's nature, once abstracted, has with my intellect. There are properties that can be attributed to a thing under certain conditions and properties that a thing has of its own. These latter are those that enter into the definition of the thing, while the properties that my intellect supplies depend on the relation the thing's nature has with my intellect. If in the early works Hervaeus does not focus yet on the twofold relation holding between a thing and the intellect, in the treatise on second intentions this point is carefully examined. Hervaeus's conviction has two implications.

The first is that the thing cognized is one and the same for all people who are cognizing that thing, while what changes are the individual acts of cognizing and consequently the individual relations that the thing cognized has with individual intellects. Two acts of intellective cognition are numerically distinct insofar as they are acts of two numerically distinct intellects. Two acts are instead formally distinct insofar as they are acts of two formally distinct objects. This entails that if two objects are formally the same, two acts are formally the same. Arguably, two objects are formally the same when they amount to one and the very same extramental thing's nature.[342]

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obiectum intellectus, quantum ad primum genus intelligibilium, est res extra habens esse reale.' For further details, see d. 2, a. 6; q. 3, a. 3; q. 4, a. 2.

341 Cf. Girard, 'The Realm of "entia rationis"'. The *Sentences* Commentary likely dates to 1303–1304, while the second *Quodlibet* to around 1308. For more on this, see also C. Girard, 'À la racine des concepts de genre et d'espèce: Intentions secondes et être objectif chez Hervé de Nédellec', *Recherches de Theologie et Philosophie Medievales* 91/1 (2024), p. 87–112.

342 Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, d. 1, q. 2 (ed. Dijs 2012, p. 135–6, n. 66): 'Et ideo aliter est dicendum quod, cum ita sit quod intentio tam prima quam secunda in abstracto,

The second implication is that the cognized thing remains an extramental thing even when it is cognized, given that the converse relation of being cognized only confers on a thing a relational kind of being. The point to emphasize here is that, for Hervaeus, a thing does not transform itself into a being of reason when it is cognized, even though an act of intellective cognition gives rise to a relation of reason with our intellect, which is a being of reason. In other words, a thing does not become a being of reason when it is cognized, even though a being of reason is conferred on it. Thus, objective being continues to be an ontologically uncommitted kind of being even in the later works. Our intellect is neutral with respect to the nature of the thing that is cognized. In the *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, for example, Hervaeus expresses himself in the same way as in *Quodlibet* II, q. 7, acknowledging that the object of an act of intellective cognition oriented to a first intention is an extramental being. Our intellect only supplies the mode of cognizing, namely the indeterminacy through which a thing's nature is cognized.[343]

Someone could contest my claim about the ontologically uncommitted nature of objective being. What does it mean exactly that objective being does not modify a thing's nature? One could be speaking (1) about the thing as existing in the world, or (2) about the thing that we come to cognize, or (3) about the thing *qua* cognized, or the object in Hervaeus's vocabulary. It is clear that case (1) is not in discussion here, for no one would claim that for Hervaeus things are changed in their nature when they acquire objective being (Hercules who is cognized by me remains a human being in the external reality). Nor is case (2) in discussion, for Hervaeus is at great pains to explain that objective being is compatible with cognizing the things as they are. But if case (3) is at stake, Hervaeus would be unable to reply to the objection

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scilicet ipsa intentionalitas, sit ipsa habitudo rei ad actum intelligendi, haec autem habitudo plurificatur plurificatis actibus intelligendi, diversitas autem formalis actuum intelligendi est accipienda penes distinctionem formalem obiectorum intelligibilium'; (ed. Dijs, p. 139–40, n. 77): 'Sed ad hoc dico quod "esse obiective in intellectu" potest accipi et formaliter et in abstracto; et tunc est esse rationis tantum et habitudo rei intellectae ad actum intelligendi. Et, licet forte quaedam habitudines rationis fundentur in re mediante isto esse rationis, tamen illud esse sive habitudo non fundatur in ipsa re intellecta mediante alia, quia eodem modo quaereretur de illa et sic iretur in infinitum. Alio modo dicitur esse in intellectu materialiter et concretive, scilicet ipsa res vera quae intelligitur; quando scilicet intelligo lapidem, ipse lapis est obiective in intellectu. Modo dico quod illud quod est sic obiective in intellectu, idest ipsa res vera quae intelligitur, est fundamentum huius relationis rationis.' For a sharp distinction between what comes from the world and what is supplied by the mind, see also *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 7 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 43rb).

343 Compare Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibet* II, q. 7 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 43rb): 'quando intelligo hominem indeterminate, homo dicit rem veram existentem extra animam, sed indeterminatio ipsa est secundum rationem, quia scilicet talis indetermiantio convenit sibi prout est obiective in intellectu indeterminate ipsum intelligentem', with *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, d. 1, q. 3 (ed. Dijs, p. 147, n. 96): 'licet universalia quantum ad suam universalitatem quae est secunda intentio non sic sint in rebus extra, tamen res quae universaliter intelligitur vel significatur, puta homo vel bos, est res extra animam existens. Alioquin nulla scientia esset de rebus habentibus esse reale extra animam. Licet enim "homo" vel "bos" significet indeterminate et in universali, non tamen significat ipsam indeterminationem vel universalitatem.'

that a real human being is in the intellect when Hercules is cognized. In this case, I could not distinguish my position from that of Girard.

I think that Girard is absolutely right when he notes that objective being does not add anything to the thing that we come to cognize. My disagreement with him is that Hervaeus never departs from this conviction across his career. The fact that objective being does not add anything to the thing does not entail however that the thing we are cognizing is precisely the thing as it exists in the outer world. Hervaeus tries to prove that cognition should not be explained as a real transferring of a thing from outside to inside the intellect, nor as mere production of a mental alias of the extramental thing. Intellectively cognizing is just entering into a relationship with the thing, and this explains Hervaeus's claim that objective being is a relational being. Only as to this relational aspect can a thing be said to be modified, but not in its nature. So, in a way, nor is case (3) at stake here, since things *qua* cognized are things already provided with objective being. What objective being does not modify is the nature of the thing that is cognized, not the thing considered according to one or another mode of being. Objectifying Hercules's nature and placing it in the prospect of the intellect is just to confer on the thing objective being. But when we look closely into the nature of this being, we realize that, for Hervaeus, it is nothing but a relational being. Nothing less, nothing more. That said, I might agree that not all of Hervaeus's proposal is convincing; in fact, a more substantive treatment of objective being might fit better with Hervaeus's belief that our intellect is endowed with such objectifying power.

At the end of the day, I am inclined to side with Judith Dijs's interpretation of Hervaeus's view of objective being.[344] The *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus* does not put forward any ontologically committed theory of objectivity. Hervaeus sharply reads the first/second intention divide in terms of the distinction between firstly and secondly intelligible things. The difference of intelligibles is given in terms of the intelligibles' different relationship with the intellect. It consists in this: while the first intelligibles are those in which definition is not included or any reference to the intellect implied, the second intelligibles are those in which definition is included or a reference to the intellect is implied. This entails that the class of first intelligibles is wide, including real things (such as human beings or stones) as well as negations and privations (such as blindness), and also figments (such as chimaeras). They can all be called epistemologically mind-independent, although only real things are also metaphysically mind-independent. The class of second intelligibles instead is stricter, including only beings of reason, such as species, genus and the like.[345]

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344 See Dijs, 'Hervaeus Natalis' Theory of Intentions'; Dijs, 'Introduction', p. 21ff.

345 Cf. Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, d. 1, q. 2 (ed. Dijs, p. 136–7, n. 68): 'Duplex ergo genus intelligibilium secundum quod dicitur prima intentio et secunda: Accipitur secundum esse reale et esse rationis. Et accipitur secundum esse reale, sive affirmative sive negative, omne illud quod rebus convenit in sua realitate vel vera vel ficta, circumscripto opere intellectus, sic scilicet

According to this distinction, objective being continues to be a transparent mode of presenting things to the intellect. My interpretation does not make purposeless any passage of Hervaeus's *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*. What is of interest to Hervaeus is just to explain the mechanisms of intentionality that account for a denominative and not—as held by Peter Auriol—an essential predication of the intentions with respect to things. Thus, the case of negations is not a counterexample for my interpretation, as Girard seems to suppose.[346]

Although in early works Hervaeus does not illustrate his position on objective being in all details, he seems to formulate in *Quodlibet* II, q. 7, the same position he will adopt later in his *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*. In the fourteenth argument to the contrary, for example, an opponent advocating John Duns Scotus's view of the univocity of the concept of being argues that if we could find a concept that is univocal to real beings and beings of reason, *a fortiori* we could find a concept that is univocal to the ten Aristotelian categories. The antecedent can be affirmed because I experience with certainty that I can cognize something and doubt whether it is a being of reason, say a figment, or a real being. But this would not be possible if the thing I am cognizing did not fall under a concept that is univocal to real beings and beings of reason.[347]

Some connections in the argument remain unexplained. For example, the opponent does not clarify the reason for inferring the univocity of the concept of being from the fact that we can know and doubt about the same thing. This weakness is, however, irrelevant to our purposes here. Hervaeus calls the argument astonishing (*mirabilis*), because it argues for a concept that is essentially univocal to beings and non-beings, given that a figment is a non-being rather than a being of reason. A possible way out for the opponent could be to say that a figment has to be understood not as what a non-being is absolutely but as something that is formed by the intellect. But, for Hervaeus, this response does not work. What is formed by the intellect is a concept and regardless of whether it is a true or a false concept, it is a real being. The argument therefore only proves that there can be a concept that is univocal to two different real beings (i.e., one mental and one extramental).[348] What matters to Hervaeus here is to prove that being conceived or being cognized can be predicated denominatively and not essentially of both the true thing and the figment that one

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quod in sua ratione non includit habitudinem ad intellectum nec aliquem modum convenientem rebus <ut sunt obiective in intellectu. Accipitur autem secundum esse rationis esse illud quod convenit rebus> ut sunt obiective in intellectu.' For more on the cognition of first intentions, see E. Lacca, 'La cognitio "per primas intentiones" nel "Tractatus de secundis intentionibus" di Erveo di Nédellec (1250–1323)', *Disputatio. Philosophical Research Bulletin* 9/14 (2020), p. 203–33.

346 Cf. Girard, 'The Realm of "entia rationis"', p. 357ff.

347 See Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 7, arg. 14 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 44vb).

348 See Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 7, ad 14 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 46ra).

is conceiving or cognizing.[349] In this text Hervaeus does not mention objective being; nonetheless he implicitly distinguishes the metaphysical from the epistemological plane of knowledge when he says that the figment is a non-being and that despite this it can be represented by an act of cognition: a figment is epistemologically but not metaphysically real.

Hervaeus says the same in the *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, although in a more elaborate fashion. Hervaeus explains that a figment, say a chimera, is a non-being, not a being of reason; nonetheless it is a first intention since in its definition no mention of the relation with the intellect or of something implied by the relation with the intellect is given. Insofar as it is an object of cognition, it also can receive the predication of some intentional properties. For example, we may say that a chimera is a figment. While the concept of chimera is of the first intention, that of figment is of the second intention. When I think of a chimera or of a human being, that of which I am thinking is in relation with me, but I am not thinking of it as something in relation with me, so it may be considered a mind-independent subject of intentional properties, which are instead mind-dependent.[350]

In conclusion, Hervaeus does not seem to change his idea on the nature of objective being over time. A thing can exist objectively only when it becomes an object cognized by our intellect. Existing objectively amounts to existing with a reason-dependent mode of existence, but a thing that comes to exist objectively does not change its nature. The domain of things existing objectively in the intellect includes real beings, negations, privations and fictitious beings, in brief every thing in which definition is not included or any reference to the relation to the intellect

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[349] See Hervaeus Natalis, *Quodlibeta*, II, q. 7, ad 14 (ed. Venice, 1513, fol. 46ra): 'Dicendum igitur quod quando aliquis concipit rem veram vel figmentum, esse conceptum vel esse cognitum praedicatur de utroque praedicatione denominativa et per consequens nec esse conceptum nec esse cognitum dicit aliquod univocum essentiale commune eis.'

[350] See Hervaeus Natalis, *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, d. 1, q. 5 (ed. Dijs, p. 156–61, n. 120–30): 'Ad evidentiam istius quaestionis primo sciendum quod, sicut saepe dictum est, hic quaeritur de intentione prout se tenet ex parte rei intellectae et accipiendo intentionem non pro intentionalitate quae consequitur rem intellectam in habitudine ad actum intelligendi, sed pro ipso intelligibili quod a tali intentionalitate denominatur. Prout supra dictum est quod prima intentio est primum genus intelligibilium, scilicet omne illud quod non includit aliquid conveniens rei in habitudine ad intellectum prout est in intellectu obiective, quod vocatur esse rationis prout distinguitur esse rationis contra esse reale; secunda vero intentio vocatur illud intelligibile quod in sua ratione includit tale esse rationis sicut est genus, universale, probabile [*pro* praedicabile] et consimilia. Secundo sciendum quod aliud est quaerere utrum figmentum sive ens secundum apparentiam et fictionem dicat secundam intentionem, et quaerere utrum hircocervus vel mons aureus dicat intentionem secundam, quia, licet verum sit dicere quod hircocervus vel mons aureus sit figmentum vel ens secundum fictionem et non secundum veritatem, tamen mons aureus vel hircocervus non includit in sua ratione vel significato talem fictionem (unde si definiretur mons aureus, diceretur quod est mons de auro). Et ideo, licet esse figmentum formaliter loquendo dicat illud quod pertinet ad secundam intentionem, tamen "hircocervus" vel "mons aureus" non hoc dicit vel significat […]. Hircocervus enim non est ille actus imaginationis vel intellectus quo fingitur hircocervus, quia tunc vere hircocervus et in rerum natura haberet esse, quia iste actus vere res quaedam est, sed illud quod representatur per ipsum non est res vera, immo est vere non-entitas. Hiis praemissis dico quod chimera, hircocervus et consimilia pertinent ad primam intentionem.'

implied. The investigation of the nature of this relation of intentionality explains precisely how a thing can come to exist objectively while remaining a thing and what predicative implications this mode of existence has.

9. Conclusion

Thomas Aquinas and Hervaeus Natalis defend a form of epistemological realism in which the cognized thing is distinguished from its property of being cognized. The hallmark of Hervaeus's position, in particular, is that intentionality expresses an idiosyncratic kind of relation, namely the passive relation of being cognized that a thing bears to our intellect when we are actively engaged in cognizing it. In this study I especially dwelled on some difficulties connected to the characterization of intentionality as the converse relation of the relation of cognition. However complex Aquinas's and Hervaeus's explanations may be considered to be, their theoretical goal is clear: to distinguish the side of the subject-cognizer from that of the object-cognized and give some sound metaphysical reasons for distinguishing the epistemic and the predicative aspect of intentionality.

To a modern reader, their account of intellective cognition may appear heavily internalist, as has been said. I suggested that we should be cautious with this impression, because both Aquinas and Hervaeus construct their account with the purpose of defending the extramental extension of intellective cognition. Both Aquinas and Hervaeus hold that the thing cognized remains one and the same when faced with numerically and subjectively different acts of intellective cognitions. I argued that the converse relation of being cognized gives rise to a special kind of mental being, viz., the objective being, which expresses a kind of being of reason of the relational kind. Nevertheless, the thing to which such a being applies does not transform into a being of reason. If the thing cognized is a being of reason, it remains a being of reason, and if it is a real being, it remains a real being, one and the same for all people. Aquinas does not yet use the objective/subjective being terminology in his works, while the distinction between these two kinds of being is at the center of Hervaeus's speculation. Hervaeus's relational interpretation of objective being can be understood as a way of interpreting and developing Aquinas's account of intellective cognition. My principal claim in this study has been that objective being or being cognized only expresses a relational and ontologically uncommitted kind of being, for Hervaeus, and the Master General of the Order did not change his mind about this throughout his career.

Conclusion

This volume has collected three studies on medieval theories of concepts and intentional objects. In the first study, *Thomas Aquinas on Concepts*, I reviewed the contemporary debate on Aquinas's representationalism vs. direct realism in epistemology. In the second study, *Hervaeus Natalis on Concepts and Intentional Objects*, I carried on this line of investigation, focusing on Hervaeus Natalis's explanation of the nature of concepts and his debate with his confrere Durand of St.-Pourçain. In the third study, *Hervaeus Natalis on Cognizing and Being Cognized*, I reconsidered finally some recent interpretations of Hervaeus's account of intellective cognition and objective being. What are the principal conclusions I reached?

In the first study, I tried to show that in Aquinas's texts there is evidence supporting a representationalist as well as a realistic interpretation of his theory of concepts. My interpretation has been that representationalism and direct realism may be reconciled to a certain degree. 'Realist Representationalism' is the label I adopted for summarizing Aquinas's position on concepts. Such a label justifies the apparently paradoxical claim that one can find in Aquinas's texts, namely that the natures of extramental things are *immediately* related to our intellect, although *mediately*, namely through the mediation of concepts. We know things by means of their mental similitudes, but we do not know the similitudes at the same time. My interpretation is not new in the literature, but I have sought to make an original attempt at illustrating Aquinas's position on concepts by examining the interplay between epistemology and semantics. In particular, I stressed two points: first, that from the beginning to the end of his career Aquinas portrays a concept as a mental similitude of a thing, and second, that he regards the mental similitude of a thing and the thing to which the similitude refers as one and the same in some relevant sense. Since Aquinas emphasizes that names primarily signify the mental similitudes of extramental things, but names are imposed to signify things, I concluded that Aquinas subscribes to a position on the semantics of names that does not commit him in a special way to representationalism rather than to direct realism in epistemology. Quite the opposite, Aquinas's treatment of the semantics of common names leads us to reconcile representationalism with direct realism.

As explained in the general Introduction to this volume, the rationale behind the first study is that Aquinas equates the object of signification with the object of cognition, so a correct understanding of the semantics of common natural-kind terms can help us to shed light on Aquinas's understanding of the function and nature of universal natural-kind concepts such as the concept of human being. Across his career, Aquinas never changed his semantic views, although he importantly

modified his position on concepts. Specifically, we have recalled that in his mature works (such as the *Summa theologiae* and the *Quaestiones de potentia*), Aquinas rejects the identification of a concept with what medieval thinkers, including himself, call the 'intelligible species' of a thing. Concepts are no longer understood as the starting-point of intellective cognition but as its end-product, while intelligible species continue to be described as the activating principle of the intellective process. According to this new theory of concepts, Aquinas attributes to common names the function of signifying in the first instance not the intelligible species but the concepts of extramental things. Aquinas makes it clear that those concepts must not be understood, however, as items psychologically rooted in the human soul but rather as the extramental things themselves *qua* existing within the intellect according to a new and peculiar mode of existence—what Aquinas calls 'spiritual' or 'intentional' being. As Aquinas emphasizes, common names are not introduced into a language in order to speak about mental items, but rather about real things.

In his later works, Aquinas shows no particular interest in distinguishing the concept from the thing cognized by it. This is one of the reasons why both medieval and contemporary interpreters disagree on Aquinas's final word, if any, about the ontological status of concepts. Aquinas's lack of a distinction between the concept and the cognized thing led interpreters to collocate Aquinas either among the advocates of representationalism or among the supporters of direct realism in epistemology. In the first study, I provided an interpretation of Aquinas's treatment of the signification of natural-kind terms that helps to reconcile this alternative when we attempt to explain Aquinas's account of the mechanisms of intellective cognition supporting the ordinary semantic function of spoken or written language.

My interpretation has been qualified. I pointed out that mental similitudes are, for Aquinas, what replaces in the intellect the forms that extramental things exhibit, but such similitudes are also the way in which the forms themselves of extramental things can exist in the intellect. From my point of view, the two theses called in literature 'conformality thesis' and 'representation thesis' tend to overlap. It should be noted, in fact, that all intellective similitudes are universal in character and that no universal, for Aquinas, can exist in the external reality. A universal exists always and only as a nature that has been abstracted and unified by our intellect, but this abstracting and unifying act brought about by our intellect just amounts to producing a similitude. Aquinas says that the similitudes are *formed* by the intellect, and this is a clear point—as emphasized by some scholars—in favor of the classification of Aquinas among the advocates of representationalism. Moreover, Aquinas explains the function of a similitude in terms of representing and denies that the represented being of a thing is a way of being that is different from that of existing in the intellect. But it is also true that Aquinas says that the similitudes are *similitudes of* things' natures and that when the intellect reflects on itself and on its process of

intellective cognition it attaches the so-called intentional properties directly to the nature of the thing cognized and not to itself or to the similitudes as such.

We should indeed not forget that Aquinas finally distinguishes concepts from both the acts of intellective cognition and the intelligible species (very clearly in *Quaestiones de potentia*, q. 8, a. 1). Intelligible species are the activating principle of the intellective process, while concepts are described as the terminations of the acts of intellective cognition, something quasi-constituted by such acts. For Aquinas, intellective acts designate a special kind of action, namely immanent actions—that is, actions that do not proceed outward from the intellect but terminate in the acts themselves. I interpreted the concepts as the cognitive actions themselves taken as achieved actions. On this interpretation, there are not two conflicting accounts of cognitive actions in Aquinas, as argued by some scholars. My impression is that the albeit qualified identification between similitudes and things' natures, which Aquinas on occasion gives (for example, in *Quodlibet* VIII, q. 2, a. 2), and Aquinas's account of intellective cognition as an immanent and intransitive action, try to keep together two elements that will be distinguished after Aquinas: the demand for a certain 'objectivity' of our knowledge and the refusal to admit a third dimension of being in the mental. These are the key that permitted us to harmonize direct realism and representationalism.

In the second study, the focus was on the Master General of the Dominican Order, Hervaeus Natalis, who proposed an understanding of Aquinas's theory of concepts that would exert a deep influence on the history of so-called Thomism at least up to the Renaissance. One of Hervaeus's goals was to clarify the relation between the concept and the cognized thing, which was left unexplained by Aquinas. While Hervaeus describes a concept as something mind-independent, he accounts for the thing that is conceived as something mind-dependent. According to a standard technical vocabulary in Hervaeus's time, the former is said to exist 'subjectively' in the intellect, and the latter 'objectively'.

Among the first interpreters of Aquinas, there was great controversy over what concepts are. Two major questions were debated: first, whether concepts can be reduced to the acts of intellective cognition that originated them, and second, whether the concept of a thing can be distinguished from the thing itself *qua* cognized through that concept. In the second study, Hervaeus's answer to these questions was brought to light via his dispute with another important Dominican author, Durand of St.-Pourçain. Durand criticizes what Hervaeus said in the *Tractatus de verbo* in his first redaction of the Commentary on the *Sentences*, to which Hervaeus replies in his second *Quodlibet*. In his turn, Durand reacts to Hervaeus's counterarguments in his third redaction of the Commentary on the *Sentences*. Hervaeus does not provide any further reply to Durand. Hervaeus's final position (first stated in the *Tractatus de verbo*, then in the *Quodlibet*) is that a concept cannot be reduced

to an act of intellective cognition—the position held by Durand—since two or more numerically different acts can be associated with one and numerically the same concept. The concept is also different from the thing *qua* cognized. The intellect is the efficient cause of a concept, but the cognized thing that the intellect imports through a concept is ultimately the extramental thing itself. As we have seen, the dispute between Hervaeus and Durand also concerns the interpretation of two chief authorities: Augustine (about the notion of 'formed cogitation') and Aristotle (about the account of intellective cognition as an immanent and intransitive action). Both read Augustine through Aristotle, but they deeply diverge on the meaning to attribute to 'formed cogitation' and on the correct understanding of what an immanent action is.

I argued that Hervaeus elaborates a theory of concepts that is very close to that of Aquinas but with some significant differences. Specifically, Hervaeus inserts into an Aquinas-like doctrinal framework a sophisticated account of mental being, within the scope of disambiguating the overlap of concepts and cognized things. At first sight, Hervaeus departs from Aquinas on two points.

First, Hervaeus emphasizes that when the intellect mentally utters a concept or mental word in order to cognize a thing more expressly, the intellect somehow cognizes the mental word as well. Aquinas instead held—at least according to his later works—that a mental word is not cognized when a thing is cognized. However, looking more closely at Hervaeus's texts, we have seen that Hervaeus is cautious and carefully distinguishes the function of a mental similitude from that of a pictorial image. Durand of St.-Pourçain underscores the possible skepticism involved in Hervaeus's explanation of mental word (since if we cognize the mental word as well, we primarily cognize concepts and not things) and the impossibility of having a direct experience of a concept. After this criticism, we have seen that Hervaeus recognizes the weaknesses of his position, so that in his reply to Durand's first criticism he introduces the key distinction between what occurs to the intellect as an *object* of cognition and what occurs as an *instrument* of cognition. An image meets the first condition, while a mental word is the second one. Although the intellect produces a mental word by reflecting on the cognized thing to a certain degree and a mental word may be said to be co-cognized given that it is that which is cognized about a thing and that in which a thing is cognized, nonetheless forming a mental word does not express a reflexive act of cognition but a direct one. The intellect forms mental words to make things more and more manifest, thereby expanding its own cognitive capacity of cognizing things; it does not direct itself back to itself. Hervaeus's conclusion is that, strictly speaking, no concept is an intermediate object of cognition, although we cognize things *through* concepts and *in* the concepts. Hervaeus indeed describes concepts as specular forms: by cognizing them we are referring to things, just like by seeing a form in a mirror we are referring to the thing that is in front of the mirror.

A second difference with Aquinas is Hervaeus's emphasis on the fact that the content of a concept or mental word exists in the mind objectively and not subjectively. Unlike Aquinas, Hervaeus clarifies the nature of a mental similitude by distinguishing the similitude from the thing to which the similitude refers. Aquinas's twofold understanding of concepts, thus, is definitively clarified by Hervaeus. Precisely, a concept exists subjectively in the intellect and, as such, it is an intellect's means of cognition. As Hervaeus clarifies in his *Quodlibet* II, q. 8, a mental word is a habit or disposition of the intellect, not, however, as something permanent, but as something that disposes the intellect to perform a full-fledged act of intellectual cognition. This entails that a mental word can be present in the absence of any occurrent act of intellective cognition. The content of the mental similitude, instead, exists in the intellect in an objective way. A mental similitude's content expresses, for Hervaeus, the nature of an extramental thing and such a nature plays the role of formal object of the intellect. This correlate of the mental similitude is something mind-independent as to its essential being, but mind-dependent as to its unity and mode of existence. I presented this distinction as the hallmark of Hervaeus's theory of concepts and the most important point of divergence with Aquinas.

Despite this, I argued that on the basis of the statements scattered throughout his works, just like Aquinas, Hervaeus cannot be said to be committed in a special way to representationalism rather than to direct realism in epistemology. But the reasons for saying this are different in their cases. The difficulty in capturing Aquinas's position—as has been said—is that Aquinas does not delve into the relationship that a concept bears to its content. So, it remains debatable whether Aquinas explains a concept as a mental replacement of an extramental thing's nature or rather as the extramental thing's nature itself *qua* present in the intellect under the guise of a concept. The difficulty with Hervaeus is instead another and consists in the fact that he treats a concept as a twofold item, which includes both a mental similitude (which is a means of knowledge and exists subjectively in the intellect) and a thing to which the mental similitude refers (which is an objectively existing cognized object).

If in the case of Aquinas a form of weak epistemological realism may be fully compatible with representationalism after all, the case of Hervaeus appears more complex. The co-presence in a specular form of the similitude itself and the thing cognized may lead an interpreter to assess Hervaeus's theory of concepts as being a form of 'internalist representationalism' and it is clear that this internalist version of representationalism tends to make the compatibility between direct realism and representationalism more elusive, despite Hervaeus's often-stated intention of wishing to defend the extramental extension of the process of intellective cognition.

In the third study, I completed my reconstruction of Aquinas's and Hervaeus's positions on concepts and intentional objects by comparing them on the question of the nature of the property of being cognized. In particular, I reassessed some recent in-

terpretations of Hervaeus's account of objective being and expanded what I said in a recent article of mine on Thomas Aquinas's and Hervaeus Natalis's views of first and second intentions. In his *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*, Hervaeus explains that when we cognize a thing, the thing acquires a new kind of being, viz., the cognized being or 'objective' being. This kind of being in no way modifies the real nature of the thing. It simply indicates that the thing has become an object of the intellect (it has been placed 'in the prospect of the intellect') and a thing works out to be such only when, thanks to an act of intellective cognition, it actually develops a relation with the intellect. Borrowing from Aquinas, Hervaeus describes intellective cognition as an action that entails a relation, and, like any relation, that which ensues from intellective cognition too is thought to entail two directions: one that goes from the intellect to the thing and the converse one that goes from the thing to the intellect. Aquinas and Hervaeus agree that the first direction expresses a real relation, while the second expresses a relation of reason. If Aquinas stated but did not examine in detail the converse relation of the relation of cognition, such an exploration is at the center of Hervaeus's *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus*. The Master General of the Dominican Order makes it clear that what Aquinas called 'spiritual' or 'intentional' being is, in the case of intellective cognition, nothing other than a relational being. The relation of cognition gives rise to the property of 'being cognizing', whose subject is our intellect, while the converse relation gives rise to the property of 'being cognized', whose subject is the thing itself. More precisely, the thing cognized is the proximate subject of the property of being cognized, while the extramental thing is the remote subject. Hervaeus inherits this distinction from Aquinas.

Historically speaking, I noted that Hervaeus is the first to coin the abstract term 'intentionality' (*intentionalitas*) to refer to the relation of being cognized that a thing bears to the intellect. While 'intentionality' formally expresses a being of reason (in that it expresses a relation of reason), the thing that can be denominated an intention can be a being of reason as well as a real being. In Hervaeus's interpretation, the act of intellective cognition makes possible the converse relation of being cognized and this in turn makes possible the objective being of the thing. Our act of intellective cognition posits the thing in a sort of 'intellective perspective' with respect to the intellect. Hervaeus reproposes Aquinas's conviction that in an act of intellective cognition what comes from the world (i.e., the thing's nature) can be distinguished from what is supplied by the mind (i.e., the mode of cognition and the relation of being cognized). Hervaeus maintains this conviction across his career, defending it from the criticism addressed to him by some of his contemporaries.

Hervaeus's solution, though, reveals a difference when compared to Aquinas. If this latter described the concept as the internal *termination* of an act of intellective cognition, so emphasizing the identity between the subject-cognizer and the thing cognized, for Hervaeus there is an intellective distance between the intellect and the thing cognized. If, for Aquinas, when I am thinking of Hercules, I am simply

in the mental state of being informed by the intelligible species of a human being's nature and so of performing an intellective action, for Hervaeus my thought of Hercules obtains when I am in a relation with the object that is referred to by the intelligible species of human being, i.e., the human being-nature. In the third study, I elaborated on the significance of this difference.

My conclusion was that Thomas Aquinas and Hervaeus Natalis defend a form of epistemological realism in which the cognized thing may be distinguished from its property of being cognized. In particular, the hallmark of Hervaeus's position is a relational understanding of intentionality and the duplication of the cognitive relationships is likely the main distance from any contemporary usage. Intellective acts oriented to extramental things express a form of direct cognition, while acts oriented to cognized things express a form of reflexivity. But formally speaking, the second does not differ from the first, for both intellective acts entail a cognitive converse relation that ensues from the act of intellective cognition and gives rise to the property of being cognized. But in the case of second intentions, reflexivity takes the form of a composition of two cognitive acts: one of focusing on the things that have been cognized and one of comparison of such things with other cognized things or with the extramental things. But there are also some second intentions that result from comparing things directly with the intellect itself, like 'being cognized' and 'being an intention'. These relations are at the basis of any other relation of reason. In the third study I considered John Duns Scotus's criticism of Aquinas's explanation of the mechanisms of intentionality and Hervaeus's adjustments.

The intellect's activity of comparison is not explained in detail by Aquinas, but it is closely considered in Hervaeus's treatment. If, on the one hand, Hervaeus's position presents itself as a proposal for resolving some problems present in Aquinas's account, on the other hand, it introduces other difficulties. In the third study, I reconsidered more closely the apparent circularity of the relation of intentionality with the thing's property of being cognized, expanding especially the issue of the ontological commitment of objective being. However complex Aquinas's and Hervaeus's explanations may be considered to be, their theoretical goal is clear: to distinguish what happens on the side of the subject-cognizer from what happens on the side of the thing-cognized and give some sound metaphysical reasons for distinguishing the epistemic and the predicative aspects of intentionality.

As I noted, to a modern reader Hervaeus's account of intentionality may appear heavily internalist. I suggested being cautious with this impression, however, because Hervaeus constructs his account of intentionality with the purpose of defending the extramental extension of our process of intellective cognition. In fact, he makes a realist and anti-reductionist claim about the nature of the cognized thing. In particular, Hervaeus devotes a part of his *Tractatus de secundis intentionibus* to explaining, first, in which sense the cognized thing may be said to be the same as the extramental thing, and second, in which sense the cognized thing may be said to

be partly internal and partly external to the intellect. So, at the end of the day, being objectively in the intellect indicates to a certain degree a mind-independent kind of being, although merely intramental. All that allows Hervaeus to hold that the thing cognized remains one and the same when faced with numerically and subjectively different acts of cognitions. I argued that, in the case of Hervaeus, the relation of intentionality gives rise to a special kind of mental being, viz., the objective being, which expresses a kind of being of reason of the relational kind. Nevertheless, the thing to which such a being applies does not transform into a being of reason. If the thing cognized is a being of reason, it remains a being of reason, and if it is a real being, it remains a real being, one and the same for all people. In conclusion, objective being or being cognized only expresses a relational and ontologically uncommitted kind of being. Contrary to some recent interpretations, I defended the view that Hervaeus does not change this position on objective being across his career.

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