

## The Ground of the Universal in the Singular According to Thomas Aquinas: Common Nature, Similitude, and/or Idea?<sup>12</sup>

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**Abstract:** In this article, I aim to analyze, in Thomas Aquinas's philosophy, (i) whether the "essence absolutely considered" (or "common nature") can play a role of ground for the universal in the singular thing or in the individual and (ii) whether it is simultaneously obtained through the intelligible abstraction of the essence with the intention of universality or through a "double abstraction". Additionally, I will investigate whether the "essence absolutely considered" requires, from Aquinas, an appropriation of a certain theory of ideas, and whether the association between this essence and the ideas is something required to justify the "similitude" among universals and individuals. Finally, I will approach some different receptions of Thomas Aquinas in the 20th and 21st centuries, most of them used to frame his thought under so distinct perspectives, such as of a direct realist, an essentialist, an indirect realist, a representationalist etc.

**Keywords:** Abstraction, Essence, Universal, Singular, Representation, Idea.

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## 1. Introduction

In the “The Issue of the Universal According to Thomas Aquinas”<sup>4</sup>, Landim Filho understands that the “common nature” or the “essence absolutely considered”<sup>5</sup> (that is, the essence considered according to the *ratio propria*, not according to the *esse proprium*, or, rather, the essence considered according to its “proper notion”, devoid of mode of being and, therefore, common both to the universal and to the singular thing, for it is accidental whether it is universal or singular) is a quidditative content that (i) plays the role of ground of the universal in the thing and (ii) is obtained through a “double abstraction”. In fact,

- (i) Due to the quidditative content being universally in the mind, it can be attributed to multiple singulars; due to the content not being, it itself, a universal, it can exist (be) in a singular. Thus, it is possible to think a quidditative content as universal in the intellect and as singular in the singular things. But if one neglects its singular or its universal mode of being, this content would have a qualitative identity in the intellect and in the thing. Demonstrating the thesis that there is qualitative identity between *what the thing is* and *what is intellectually thought* of this thing means to demonstrate that the universal has its ground in the thing. (LANDIM FILHO, 2009, p. 419-420. Our emphasis).
- (ii) The *nature* or *essence absolutely considered* is the result of a non-precise double abstraction: the abstraction of the individuation principles of the singular content of the sensitive image (abstraction of the whole) and the abstraction of the universality intention. From this double abstraction, an intelligible structure is obtained considered independently from its relations with the intellect and things. (LANDIM FILHO, 2009, p. 420-421. Our emphasis).<sup>6</sup>

Before directly commenting (i) and (ii), it is important not to confound the “double abstraction” present in (ii) with Aquinas’ remarks of a “double abstraction” in the context of the distinction between the “abstraction of the form of the sensitive matter” (called formal or precise abstraction) and the “abstraction of the universal from the particular, which is the abstraction of the whole”<sup>7</sup> (called non-precise abstraction<sup>8</sup>). What (ii) explains it as “double abstraction” is clearly a first abstraction from the whole or non-precise abstraction (which abstracts the universal) followed (whether logically and/or temporally) by a second abstraction also of the whole or non-precise abstraction (which abstracts the “common nature” or the “essence absolutely considered”, hereinafter EAC).

But in “Abstraction and Judgement: remarks on the notion of entity and being in Thomas Aquinas”<sup>9</sup>, Landim Filho seemed to defend another scheme of double abstraction, according to which the first would

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<sup>4</sup> LANDIM FILHO, 2009, p. 407-428.

<sup>5</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS. *DEE*, III; *In DA*, 2 I. 12, n. 6; *SCG*, 2, chap. 52, n. 3; *ST*, I, q. 85, a. 2, *ad2m*; *Quodl.*, q. 8, a. 1, Ans... Abbreviations of Aquinas’ texts: *DEE*: *De ente et essentia*; *ST*: *Summa Theologiae*; *SCG*: *Summa Contra Gentiles*; *Ex DTrin.*: *Expositio super librum Boethii De Trinitate*; *Quodl.*: *Quaestiones de quodlibet*; *DV*: *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*; *DP*: *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia*; *In Met.*: *Setentia libri Metaphysicae*; *In DA*: *In Aristotelis librum De anima Commentarium*.

<sup>6</sup> In the launching of his book (2009) in the Universidade de São Paulo I asked Landim Filho the following question: once the double abstraction solves the problem of the grounding of the universal in the individual and extramental thing, then according to his reading, does the Thomistic theory of knowledge work without God? The author answered that the double abstraction was at his own risk and that in another published text he had developed a different reading of the essence absolutely considered.

<sup>7</sup> “[...] *abstractio formae a materia sensibili*. [...] *abstractio universalis a particulari, quae est abstractio totius*”. THOMAS AQUINAS. *Ex DTrin.*, q. 5, a. 3, Ans. Cf. also *ST*, I, q. 40, a. 3; *In DA*, III, 12; *In Met.*, I, 10, 158; III, 7, 405.

<sup>8</sup> The expressions “non-precise abstraction” and “precise abstraction” (synonyms of “abstraction of the whole” and “formal abstraction”, respectively) are not Aquinas’ himself, but Thomists’ like, for example, Cajetan. Notwithstanding, they are expressions derived from Thomas Aquinas from passages in which the Latin expressions *non praecisio* and *praecisio* (which mean “non-exclusion” and “exclusion”) are mobilized to explain the respective abstractions. Cf. *DEE*, II, §28; III, §36, IV, §63.

<sup>9</sup> LANDIM FILHO, 2004, p. 189-208.



be from the whole or non-precise abstraction and the second abstraction would be precise, with considerable limitations to the judgement by composition and division, that is, the second operation of the intellect:<sup>10</sup>

- (iii) The intellect, by means of a series of linked operations, produces, through the non-precise abstraction, a quidditative concept: a universal representation of what the thing is. This concept, as universal, is an indetermined representation of the concrete singular. It is a property that, connected with sensitive images, can be attributed to different singular things. Obtained by precise abstraction, the quidditative concept is indifferent to existence, it is not a possible predicate and if it expresses a quiddity, the former expresses the latter as part of a whole, not as an indetermined whole. (LANDIM FILHO, 2004, p. 196. Our emphasis).

In (iii), the mention of a “quidditative concept” “indifferent to existence” seems to refer to the EAC, which indeed, as previously mentioned and will be clarified further from the *DEE*, III, is indifferent to existence, but it can hardly be understood as result of a precise or formal abstraction mainly because Aquinas himself will make clear that the absolute consideration of the essence keeps considerable horizons for predication, which are similar to some modal logics. Notwithstanding, it is possible that Landim Filho does not refer to the EAC in (iii), but to the term “mankind” in the sense of part, obtained, in this case, by an abstraction of the part (either formal or precise), different from the term “man” in the sense of whole, obtained by abstraction of the whole (or non-precise), which abstracts from matter and individuation conditions, but which contains them implicitly and indistinctively (does not include them, nor excludes

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<sup>10</sup> “[...] *duplex est operatio intellectus. Una, quae dicitur intelligentia indivisibilium, qua cognoscit de unoquoque, quid est. Alia vero, qua componit et dividit, scilicet enuntiationem affirmativam vel negativam formando.*” THOMAS AQUINAS, *Ex DTrin.*, q. 5, a. 3, Ans.. “[...] the intellect has two operations, one called the “understanding of indivisibles,” by which it knows *what* a thing is, and another by which it joins and divides, that is to say, by forming affirmative and negative statements.” Translated by Armand Mauer, 1953, in <https://isidore.co/aquinas/english/BoethiusDeTr.htm#53>. Cf. also ST, I, q. 85, a. 2, ad3m. In other words and very briefly, the first operation is the intellection of the indivisible or individuals (by means of the abstraction and concretion, as I will explain next) and the second, shortly put, is the judgment that composes and divides, building affirmative or negative propositions. In several of Landim Filho’s articles referred here (for example, 2004, 2008, 2009a, and 2009b), I understand that the explanation of the role of the two operations of the intellect (with emphasis on the adjudicative act) for the constitution of a metaphysical discourse on the act of being or on being as act, not simply and generically on the entity as entity, as other interpreters defend, is what makes this commentator’s reading of Thomas Aquinas one of the most interesting ones currently: “thus, if the starting point of metaphysics is an adjudicative act, it can then be shown that its object, though generic, is not achieved through an abstractive process. Consequently, even if one concedes that the object of metaphysics is the *ens commune* or the *entity as entity*, the main subject matter of this science is not on *what is*, but on *that through which the entity is*.” (LANDIM FILHO, 2004, p. 207-208. Our emphasis). It seems to me that NASCIMENTO, 2006a, p. 35, presents a similar reading, although he conceives more analytically and less synthetically the conditioning anteriority of the first operation of the intellect and the conditioned posteriority of the second operation, which is considerably problematized by the commentator regarding the association or non-association of the composition and division with the judgement and assent (cf. NASCIMENTO, 2006a, p. 29-32). For the purposes of this article, I will not problematize in this way the second operation of the intellect and sometimes I will refer to it simply as “judgment and division”, according to the reasons I will explain in the context of the analysis of the *DEE*, III.

them, in the concept of “man”<sup>11</sup>). However, in “Essence and Reduplication in Thomas Aquinas”, Silva (2013) implies that he reads (iii) as referring to the EAC by developing a reading subtly contrasting with Landim Filho’s and other commentators’ with the interpretation that the reduplication is not of the first operation of the intellect, but of propositions, the so-called reduplicative propositions and sentences,<sup>12</sup> which explains the meaning absolutely considered of a term through its reduplication (for example, “A insofar as it is A is B”, “man insofar as he is man is rational”... ):

- (iv) In literature, there is a common interpretative tendency in relation to the notion of precision presented by Thomas Aquinas in the *De ente et essentia*, chapter II. Authors like van Riet (1952) and Landim Filho (2004) consider precision as a kind of abstraction, as if, through a mental act, the essence of the man was obtained and, then, the essence of mankind was obtained through another mental act. Cunningham (1958) presented an even stronger thesis because he added the distinction between the first and second intention in order to explain this distinction between abstraction and precision. This would lead to the unnecessary multiplication of entities – which in my view is not admitted by Thomas Aquinas –, insofar as we would have to admit that things would have side by side an essence and an essence absolutely considered distinct from the first. *Precision is actually a semantic property* and it consists of a distinction, presented by Thomas Aquinas, of the signification mode of abstract names and concrete names. (SILVA, 2013, p. 111-112. Our emphasis).

From (iv) on, I agree with what concerns the “unnecessary multiplication of entities” derived from Landim Filho’s reading in (iii) and I add, also in (ii), but I am hesitant regarding the reading that the absolute consideration of essence is exclusively semantic if that means that it is an exclusive consideration of the second operation of the intellect, for it is maybe also, and still primarily, a common property of the singular thing and of the universal apprehended by the first operation of the intellect simultaneously with the apprehension of the essence with the intention of universality or intelligible species, not consecutively (either logically or chronologically) to the apprehension of the universal or the intelligible species. Thus, I will focus on the absolute consideration of essence in the sense of whole (not as part, as it is presented in the DEE, II, and it can lead to a certain confusion with the other consideration of the essence developed in the DEE, III), in the context of understanding it in relation to the intentions of universality (not primarily in relation to the problem of understanding what is composed in the composed substances, which is the concern of the DEE, II).

Thus, I intend to develop the hypothesis that (i) and (ii) do not immediately derive from the Thomasian texts and that if they did, they would be counterproductive, that is, instead of solving the problem of the ground of the universals and concepts in singular things, the “double abstraction” would maybe

<sup>11</sup> “It is, therefore, clear that this name men and this name mankind mean the essence of the man, but diversely, as said. For this name men signifies it [the essence] as a whole, that is, insofar as it does not prescind from the designation of matter, but contains it implicitly and indistinctly, as was said that the genus contains the difference; thus, this name men is predicated of individuals. But this name mankind signifies it as part, for it does not contain in its signification but that which belongs to the man insofar as he is man and prescinds from every designation of matter; whence one does not predicate of the individuals of the man. And, because of that, sometimes the name essence is found predicated of the thing; in fact, we say that Socrates is a certain essence; and sometimes we deny it, just as we say that the essence of Socrates is not Socrates.” *“Sic igitur patet quod essentiam hominis significat hoc nomen homo et hoc nomen humanitas, sed diversimode, ut dictum est, quia hoc nomen homo significat eam ut totum, in quantum scilicet non praedicat designationem materiae, sed implicite, continet eam et indistincte, sicut dictum est quod genus continet differentiam; et ideo praedicatur hoc nomen homo de individuis. Sed hoc nomen humanitas significat eam ut partem, quia non continet in significatione sua nisi id, quod est hominis in quantum est homo, et praedicat omnem designationem. Unde de individuis hominis non praedicatur. Et propter hoc etiam nomen essentiae quandoque invenitur praedicatum in re, dicimus enim Socratem esse essentiam quandam; et quandoque negatur, sicut dicimus quod essentia Socratis non est Socrates.”* DEE, II.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. SILVA, 2013, to verify the several modalizations of the affirmative and negative reduplicative propositions with essential, accidental, and infinite predicates. For a discussion on the negative reduplicative proposition with infinite predicate, in comparison with Duns Scotus, cf. LALLEMENT, 2001, p. 373-378.

reiterate the duplication of the problem. Rather, if the “common nature” or the EAC is obtained through the “double abstraction” mentioned in (ii), then it replicates the problem of the ground of the universal in the thing, now with the addition of the problem of the ground of this third notion (the EAC) in the universal and in the thing.<sup>13</sup> After all, the EAC according to (ii) would be obtained through an abstraction that presupposes the abstraction of the whole and that, in addition, performs another abstraction, which abstracts the intention of universality (and, we add, the singularity), resulting in an exclusively logical notion, however dependent on mental operations and are more rarefied than the universal, from which derives the problem of the cognitive void of this concept. Consequently, before grounding the universal *in re*, the EAC obtained according to (ii) replicates the problem, that is: how can an even more abstract notion, dependent on mental operations, guarantee the ground of the intelligible human knowledge in the extramental things?<sup>14</sup>

In *DEE*, III, §39, Thomas Aquinas presents a “similitude” or “similarity” (*similitudo*) as a link between the intention of universality and the *res extra anima*. Further, especially in the dialogue with Landim Filho (2011) and Panaccio (2000), I will seek to develop a reading according to which the “similitude” between the abstract representation and the extramental thing can only play the role of ground if it is understood as not isolated from a physics and metaphysics, which will demand an investigation of some of Aquinas’ passages, as the ones regarding the analogy between a universal and a statue,<sup>15</sup> from which some commentators understand that this “similitude” is not natural (cf. PASNAU, 1997, p. 110), with the consequence, I suppose, of proposing, in Aquinas, a representationalist “theory of knowledge”, emptied of realism and difficult to sustain in a pre-critical author, neither a nominalist, nor a modern empiricist. Indeed, the “similitude” is not natural, is not properly a created nature; it derives from an abstractive or illuminative operation in things, but that does not mean that the “similitude” does not have its ground in a nature or reality, simply speaking, because a reading hypothesis will be presented further, according to which the intelligible ground of the “similitude” results from a more complex dynamic adequacy among different levels of reality.

Thus, in the first part of this article, I will problematize the readings of the quotations (i) and (ii), especially from the *DEE*, III, in which I will seek to show that the Avicennian scheme of non-inclusion and non-exclusion (both of the material, accidental, and individualizing features of the universal and of the universal and singular modes of being in the EAC, an scheme that explains why the abstraction of the whole abstracts the form or the essence without including, but also without excluding, the individualizing determinations with which it exists as compound in the world because for Aquinas there are only singulars or individuals, composed of matter and form, in the world of human experience) does not solve the problem I suggested was duplicated by the abstraction duplication, for I will defend the reading that the Avicennian scheme of non-inclusion and non-exclusion (*non praecisio*) is indeed condition for the first

<sup>13</sup> SILVA, 2013, does not seem to solve the problem of the ground of the universal in the singular thing, although he says that “Thomas Aquinas seeks to characterize the grounding *in re* of the universal as a grounding with respect to nature, not with respect to universality as such” (p.120). I fully agree with his position, but in this work, Silva isolates Thomas Aquinas’ theory of predication in his Metaphysics and Physics, without which the grounding *in re* seems impossible.

<sup>14</sup> “[...] *extra anima*”. *DEE*, III, §39.

<sup>15</sup> For the universality of this form does not take place according to this being it has in the intellect, but insofar as it refers to things as similarity [similitude] of things. In the same way, if there was a body statue representing many men, it is said that that image or species of the statue would have a singular and proper being insofar as it was in this matter; but it would have the notion of community insofar as it was the common representation of many”. “[...] *quia non est universalitas illius formae secundum hoc esse quod habet in intellectu, sed secundum quod refertur ad res ut similitudo rerum, sicut etiam, si esset una statua corporalis representans multos homines, constat quod illa imago vel species statuaria haberet esse singulare et proprium secundum quod esset in hac materia, sed haberet rationem communitatis secundum quod esset commune repraesentativum plurium.*” *DEE*, III, §40.



and second operations of the human intellect,<sup>16</sup> but separately it is not what solves the question of whether there is correspondence or abstraction between the human mode of knowing (immaterial, universal, and necessary) and the mode things are in the world (material, singular, and contingent things) according to Aquinas' philosophy because an essential harmony among reality, thinking and language could not be established from an intellective consideration (let us say, abstract) of the essence or nature that is not logically independent from human mental operations.

Consequently, I will also investigate to what extent Aquinas presupposes a metaphysics and a physics in his theory of abstraction and in the "similitude" between the concept and the sensitive thing, without resting on an understanding of Thomas Aquinas as an essentialist and as a direct realist. Thus, I intend to point out in general lines the metaphysics and physics without with Aquinas' indirect or representationist realism is disconcerted. For this purpose, I will also make use of another of Landim Filho's article, called "Thomas Aquinas: a direct realist?" (2011), in which the commentator resumes the EAC, but without any mention to the schemes of "double abstraction" of (ii) and (iii), in order to defend in Aquinas, and to a certain extent with Panaccio's (2000) support, a representationist realism, whose ground between the concept (or representation) and the singular things is a "similitude"<sup>17</sup>, not a formal identity, as a large critical literature that sees Aquinas as a direct realist and, in some cases, as an essentialist, proposes.<sup>18</sup>

Lastly, in a shorter and more modest part of the article, I will analyze some famous passages of Thomas Aquinas' work (*Quodl.* q. 8, a. 1, Ans.; *ST*, I, q. 84, a. 5, Ans.; q. 85, a. 2, *ad2m*) in which the EAC or "common nature" keeps an essential relation with the ideas in God's mind and the nature of the singular thing. Among other aspects, they are passages that capture a certain synthesis of Platonisms, Aristotelianisms, and Augustinianisms in Aquinas' work, which warn the reader that both his theory of abstraction or illuminative abstraction and his physics and metaphysics of the entity insofar as entity and of the act of being are not exclusively Aristotelian, but they absorb in a very peculiar manner a theory of illumination and presuppose ideas as copies and notions in the divine intellect, which play a fundamental role as formal, efficient, and final causes of creatures.

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<sup>16</sup> See footnote 9.

<sup>17</sup> "The relation of the concept with the singular things is a relation of similitude: the quiddity that the concept expresses is an abstract similitude of the singularized quiddity in the particular things. From the ontological point of view, the relation of similitude between the abstract quiddity in the intellect and the quiddity consolidated in the singular entity presupposes hylomorphism. From the epistemic point of view, the intentional similitude is based on the fact that the intelligible *species*, extracted from the phantasm by abstraction, are a similitude because the phantasm is a '[sensitive] *similitude of the particular things*.' Thus, the ground of the similitude of the *species* is found in the mode of receptivity of the external senses, in the formation of the phantasms by the internal senses and in the nature of the process of abstraction. The concept, created from the abstracted intelligible *species*, expresses an abstract and indetermined quiddity of the particular things. But the act of intelligizing culminates in the formation of the concept and it extends *immediately and simultaneously* over what Aquinas calls conversion to the phantasm. Therefore, one considers the abstract quiddity '*in the existing particular*' or, according to another of Aquinas' expressions, one sees '*the intelligible species in the phantasm*.' Thus, the act of intelligizing ends with the apprehension of the particular things through its abstract quiddities." (LANDIM FILHO, 2011, p. 34. Our emphasis). It seems that Landim Filho has abandoned here the scheme of double abstraction because his understanding that "the act of intelligizing culminates in the formation of the concept, extends *immediately and simultaneously* over what Aquinas calls conversion to the phantasm" allows the interpretation, with which I agree, that in this extension of the act of intelligizing there is also the apprehension of the essence with the intention of universality and of the EAC *immediately and simultaneously*, so that there is the consolidation *immediately and simultaneously*.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. OWENS, 1959; Perler, 2000; Edwards, 2002.

## 2. Abstraction and the EAC (or Common Nature) in the DEE, III<sup>19</sup>

That being said, I begin a more detailed and purposefully didactic analysis of chapter III<sup>20</sup> of the opusculum *De ente et essentia* (DEE).<sup>21</sup> Right in the first paragraph of chapter III, Aquinas states that one must know how the notions of genus, species, and difference relate to essence, which is also named “nature” or “quiddity”. The notions of genus and species are also called “logical intentions”, so that the issue is establishing how the “logical intentions” or the “universals” relate to the “essence”. In other words, in Aquinas’ realist thinking, the essence is found in the sensitive things, that is, in the singulars, but insofar as the universal concepts refer to the sensitive things, then one must know how the universals relate to the essence because the universals are not the essence (strictly speaking, they cannot be the essence) and the essence is found *in re*, in the sensitive things, but not only in them, since the universals exist only in the intellective soul.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> For the purposes of this article, the reading I will present of the DEE approaches it indirectly in relation to Thomas Aquinas’ positions in a “quarrel of universals”, but it is maybe Aquinas’ most important work to discern his reading and “solutions” of Porphyry’s inventory, presented in the prologue to the *Isagoge*. And it is not a coincidence that the DEE is the main work used by Libera in the chapter “The Doctrine of the Universals in Thomas Aquinas” (LIBERA, 1996, p. 262-283). With regard to the reductionism implicated in the reunion of so different authors and traditions, from so different times and cultural domains, in a “quarrel of the universals”, with the review of the critical literature that provided this perhaps arbitrary interpretation of the description of a medieval problem of the universals, with particular reference to the fortune of the reception of the *Isagoge* by Boethius and in which the Latin author discerns, among others, a problem regarding the subsistence of the “universals” (in contrast to Porphyry himself, who nowhere in his “Introduction” to the *Categories* used the term *kath’ólou*, that is, “universal”), cf. OLIVEIRA, 2017.

<sup>20</sup> According to the Brazilian edition, 2015, which seems to have followed the Leonina edition. But according to the text established in the *Corpus Thomisticum*, chapter III starts at the end of chapter I and continues as chapter II.

<sup>21</sup> A possible scheme of the argumentative movement of the DEE, III:

§30: The problem of the meaning of essence for the notion (*ratio*) of genus, species, and difference (logical intentions);

§31-33: Rejection of the meaning in the sense of part in favor of the meaning of essence in the sense of whole for the “logical intentions”;

§34: Two modes of consideration of the essence in the sense of whole. The (1) first is the essence absolutely considered (EAC), according to its *ratio propria* (“proper notion”);

§35: (2) Second mode of consideration of essence in the sense of whole, according to its *esse proprium* (“proper being”);

§36: The (2) second mode of consideration has a “double being: (2.1) one in the singulars, (2.2) another in the soul [as universal]”. Comparison of essence (1) with essence (2) and predication possibilities of each;

§37: The notion of universal does not befit the essence (1) and on the predication (1) of the individual;

§38: The notion of genus and species does not befit the essence in the individual and demands a universal notion;

§39: The notion of genus and species does not befit the essence that has to be in the intellect (2.2) and on the relation between the universal and the individuals through the “similitude” (“*similitudo*”);

§40: Analogy between the notion of universality and a statue, still on the “similitude”;

§41: Relations of predication among (1), (2.1), and (2.2);

§42: On the *fundamentum in re* of the notions and of the predication;

§43: Conclusion.

<sup>22</sup> “The Thomist thesis on the universals is, therefore, that one from Aristotle visited by Averroes: the universals are/exist (*sont*) only in the intellect. Aquinas’ originality is reaching this thesis making use of Avicenna’s ontology, once he resumes his theory of the indifference of the essence and the distinction between the essence and being.” Our translation. (LIBERA, 1996, p. 281).



Stated differently, Thomas Aquinas shows that the notions of species, genus, and difference do not hold without the attribution to the sensitive things, and this attribution to the sensitive things can only take place through a conception of essence obtained by a consideration that abstracts from it any of its modes of existence. Thus, the task of showing the possibility of instantiation of the universals in the singulars, as well as of predication, is necessary because if there is no such attribution and predication, the universals have no use in knowledge. After all, the universals are not that which (*quod*) is known, but only the means through which (*quo*) the things in themselves are known.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, a conception of essence in its absolute consideration, that is, the EAC, devoid of any mode of existence, does not mean an autonomization of the intellect in relation to the very things (*rei*), as if, once the highest level of abstraction is reached, the intellect could “intelligize” in actuality the logical intentions or concepts without returning or converting to sensibility.<sup>24</sup> On the contrary, the essence and its mode of absolute consideration will be necessary precisely so that the sensitive things are the object proper to human knowledge. The observation will also be important in the second part of this article, in which I will deal with Thomas Aquinas’ theory of ideas, but without resting on a certain essentialism from which could result the hypothesis, against Aquinas’ text, that the ideas would be “intelligized” by the human intellect. In this occasion, it will also be fundamental to clarify why, for Thomas Aquinas and differently from what Plato and a large Platonic tradition intended, the ideas are not the universals through which the human intellect “intelligize”.

According to the immanence of the text, the problem of the relation between the logical intentions and the sensitive entities is initially faced by Aquinas in the *DEE*, III, through the refutation of precisely some Platonic or Platonizing philosophical positions that defend that there is no relation between the universals and the essence of composed substances. After all, if the universals were essences existing outside the singulars, then the universals could not be predicates of the individuals, of the sensitive things, so that the absurd consequence “saying that Socrates is this which is separated from him” and also that “that which is separated would [not] take advantage of the knowledge of this singular.”<sup>25</sup>

It is remarkable that in this moment Thomas Aquinas rejects the meaning of “mankind” and “animality” in the sense of part, that is, obtained by formal or precise abstraction, to understand the universals because if the universals were separated substances, they would have to be conceived in the sense of part. Now, if “humanity” and “animality” existed in themselves, they would strictly exist separately, apart from matter. This passage of the beginning of the *DEE*, III, is fundamental in order not to confound the essence in the sense of part (which in other contexts, as in the *DEE*, II, plays a positive role) and the essence in its absolute consideration, which will be further developed and will be characterized in the sense of whole. Besides that, in the beginning of chapter III, Thomas Aquinas, as he had been doing since the Prologue, mobilizes two operations of the intellect as, in a certain way, interchangeable. In fact, be universals separated substances, be “humanity” understood in the sense of part, in both cases they could not be predicate of the individuated singulars or instantiated in matter.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. *ST*, I, q. 85, a. 2, Ans.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *ST*, I, q. 84, a. 7.

<sup>25</sup> “[...] Socrates sit hoc quod ab eo separatum est”. “[...] illud separatum proficeret in cognitionem huius singularis” *DEE*, III, §32 (Brazilian. Ed., 2005, p. 27).

<sup>26</sup> “However, once that which befits the notion of genus, species, or difference is predicated of this mentioned singular, it is impossible that the notion of universal, that is, of genus and species, befit the essence insofar as it is signified in the sense of part, as by the name of mankind and animality. And, for this reason, Avicenna says (*Metaf.* V, 6, 90b, A) that rationality is not difference, but principle of difference; and, for the same reason, mankind is not a species, nor animality a genus.” “*Quia autem id, cui convenit ratio generis vel speciei vel differentiae, praedicatur de hoc singulari signato, impossibile est quod ratio universalis, scilicet generis vel speciei, conveniat essentiae secundum quod per modum partis significatur, ut nomine humanitatis vel animalitatis. Et ideo dicit Avicenna quod rationalitas non est differentia, sed differentiae principium; et eadem ratione humanitas non est species nec animalitas genus.*” *DEE*, III, §31.

Consequently, I intend to establish how the notions of genus and species concern the essence and can be predicated from the essence in the singulars. “Thus, the notion of genus or of species befits the essence insofar as it has the sense of whole, as in the name “men” or “animal”, insofar as it implicitly or indistinctly contains this whole that belongs to the individual.<sup>27</sup> It is required that the intentions of genus and species refer to the essence of the individuals in the sense of whole. However, it is important to better explain what the “essence in the sense of whole” means, for the essence has the meaning of whole in two ways. The order of presentation of both meanings of the essence in the sense of whole in Aquinas’ text is the following: (1) first in its absolute consideration, that is, according to its notion or *ratio propria*; (2) second, unfolded in two, (2.1) according to the being it has in the singulars and (2.2) according to the being it has in the soul as universal.<sup>28</sup>

- (1) Now, the nature or essence, understood in this way [in the sense of whole], can be considered in two modes. In one mode, according to its proper notion (*ratio propria*), and this is the absolute consideration of itself. Thus, nothing is true of it, except what befits it as such; then, whatever is distinct from and attributed to it, the attribution will be false. For example, to the man, for being man, befits the animal and others that belong to his definition. However, white, black, or something of the kind that does not pertain the notion of mankind (*de ratione humanitatis*), does not befit the man, for being man. Whence, if one asks whether this nature, considered in this mode, can be said to be one or several, none can be admitted because both are out of the intellection of mankind and both can occur. In fact, if the plurality pertained to its intellection, it could never be one, whereas, however, it is one insofar as it is in Socrates. In the same way, if unity pertained its notion, then the notion of Socrates and Plato would be one and the same and could not be plurified in many.<sup>29</sup>
- (2) It is considered in the other mode, according to the being (*esse*) it has in this or in that. Thus, something is predicated of it by accident due to that in which it is, just as one says that the man is white because Socrates is white, although that does not befit the man for being man. This nature has, however, a double being: (2.1) one in the singulars, (2.2) another in the soul, and, according to both, accidents occur to the mentioned nature. In the singulars, it also has a multiple being according to the diversity in the singulars.<sup>30</sup>

In other words, (1) the first way of understanding the essence in the sense of whole is according to the notion or its proper reason or according to its absolute consideration, according to which it is only

<sup>27</sup> “Et ideo relinquitur quod ratio generis vel speciei conveniat essentiae, secundum quod significatur per modum totius, ut nomine hominis vel animalis, prout implicite et indistincte continet totum hoc, quod in individuo est.” DEE, III, §33 (Brazilian Ed., 2005, p. 27).

<sup>28</sup> Libera provides a complementary scheme of the several considerations of “essence”: “[1] as part (*per modum partis*); [2] as separated (as ‘thing’ existing outside the singulars); [3] as whole (*per modum totius*), that is: [3.1] in itself (according to its proper ‘reason’), [3.2] according to the being it has in *this* or in *that*, that is: [3.2.1] according to the being it has in the singulars, [3.2.2] according to the being it has in the spirit.” (LIBERA, 1996, p. 277).

<sup>29</sup> “Natura autem vel essentia sic accepta potest dupliciter considerari: uno modo, secundum rationem propriam, et haec est absoluta consideratio ipsius. Et hoc modo nihil est verum de ea nisi quod convenit sibi secundum quod huiusmodi. Unde quicquid aliorum attribuitur sibi, falsa est attributio. Verbi gratia, homini in eo quod est homo convenit rationale et animal et alia, quae in diffinitione eius cadunt. Album vero aut nigrum vel quicquid huiusmodi, quod non est de ratione humanitatis, non convenit homini in eo quod homo. Unde si quaeratur utrum ista natura sic considerata possit dici una vel plures, neutrum concedendum est, quia utrumque est extra intellectum humanitatis et utrumque potest sibi accidere. Si enim pluralitas esset de intellectu eius, nunquam posset esse una, cum tamen una sit secundum quod est in Socrate. Similiter si unitas esset de ratione eius, tunc esset una et eadem Socratis et Platonis nec posset in pluribus plurificari.” DEE, III, §34.

<sup>30</sup> “Alio modo consideratur secundum esse quod habet in hoc vel in illo, et sic de ipsa aliquid praedicatur per accidens ratione eius, in quo est, sicut dicitur quod homo est albus, quia Socrates est albus, quamvis hoc non conveniat homini in eo quod homo. Haec autem natura duplex habet esse, unum in singularibus et aliud in anima, et secundum utrumque consequuntur dictam naturam accidentia. Et in singularibus etiam habet multiplex esse secundum singularem diversitatem.” DEE, III, §35-36.

true what is attributed to it as essential property and, inversely, any attribution or predication that is not present in its definition will be false. Thus, the essence must be considered “in the sense that it does not include but what is in its definition” (LIBERA, 1996, p. 281), in the sense that of it I can only have essential predications. Therefore, from man I can predicate the rational, the animal, that is, what belongs to its definition, but not that it is black or white because nothing that does not befit mankind befits the man. Similarly, unity and plurality do not belong to its definition, unity and plurality do not befit it, although both can ensue it. After all, the non-inclusion of unity or plurality, of white or black, of any accidents in its definition, is simultaneously non-exclusion (*non praecisio*), the reason why although they do not befit the essence as such, they can occur.<sup>31</sup>

I will go back to this point in order to better explain why unity and plurality, although do not belong to the definition of the EAC, they can be present in it, which will demand a more direct mention to its abstraction from all modalities of existence or being, as well as to discuss Landim Filho’s reading of a “double abstraction” in (ii) because if there was such “double abstraction”, perhaps it would not make sense in the context of the argument to present the meaning of essence (1) previously to the meaning of essence (2). Before that, I should say a few words on the (2) second mode of signifying essence in the sense of whole, which unfolds in (2.1) and (2.2). According to the quotation (2), the second mode understands the essence “according to the being it has in this or in that”, according to its *esse proprium*, which means that of it is possible to do what was interdicted in (1). More precisely, from which we can predicate the accidents of the singulars (2.1) and the plurality (2.2), according to its mode of being universal in the intellective soul, making it possible to say that “the man is white” because “Socrates is white”, although whiteness does not belong to the definition of “man insofar as man”.

One should observe, however, that saying that the essence (2) has the being according to this or that does not mean that it exists only according to the singulars in the sensitive world because it also has a mode of being in the intellective soul, which will be better explained next from the *ST*, I, q. 84, as intellective act. For now, the essence considered in the second mode has a double being or two modes of being: one in the singulars, another in the soul, and its mode of being in the soul is its existence as universal. But in relation to the essence (1) absolutely considered, it does not fit any of these modalities of existence because, if it did, the essence could only be considered either in the singular or in the soul, but never in both, and the human intellect would not be capable of correlating the essence in its mode of being in the soul with the essence in its mode of being in the singular things. The problem Aquinas faces, and which had been already presented by Abelard<sup>32</sup>, is overcoming the aporia of stating that the essence exists either only in the singulars or in the universals, from which would result the impossibility of any common predication of individuals. Aquinas’ formulation is a consideration of the essence that concedes stating that it exists both in singulars and universals, but, for that, an absolute consideration of the essence without inclusion and without exclusion of its different modes of existence is necessary.

<sup>31</sup> “The essence so considered is Avicenna’s *indifferent* essence. The difference in Avicenna is that where he problematically left place for a *being of essence* or of the nature considered in itself, a being prior to the being it has in the subject and prior to the one it has in the soul, Aquinas does not affirm that the consideration of the essence in itself implies acknowledging a ‘proper being’ of essence. The consideration of the essence in itself is on its *ratio propria*, not on its *esse proprium*: ‘The nature of man absolutely considered abstracts (*abstrahit*) from all being, but in a way that it does not exclude none.’ Contrary to the essence *ut pars* and to the essence taken as a ‘thing existing outside the individuals’, which were not predicable of any individual, the ‘nature absolutely considered is predicated of all’: in fact, attributing an essence *E* (man) to an individual *x* (Socrates), we do not attribute to it any property *P* that *E* would have insofar as the latter is in this or that, but only that one it has in its definition. In other words: the rejection of the *being of essence* and the real distinction of the essence and of the being grounds the possibility of the essential predication.” (LIBERA, 1996, p. 281-282. Our emphasis).

<sup>32</sup> For an accurate, clear, and didactic presentation of Abelard’s position, cf. ESTÊVÃO, 2015, especially chapter IV “A lógica moderna”, p. 37-55.

Indeed, it is false to say that the essence of the man, as such, has the being in this singular; for if being in this singular befitted the man, insofar he is man, he would never be outside this singular; similarly, if befitted the man, insofar as he is man, not being in this singular, he would never be in it. Therefore, it is clear that the nature of the man, absolutely considered, abstracts from any being, however in such a way that there is no exclusion (*non fiat praecisio*) of none of them. And it is this nature, so considered, that is predicated of all individuals.<sup>33</sup>

From the analysis of the non-precise abstraction mentioned above will be possible to question the scheme of “double abstraction” in (ii). What Aquinas tells us is that the intellect considers the essence absolutely by means of an abstraction from the whole or a non-precise abstraction, according to which the notion of essence does not exclude what it does not include, that is, what is not included in it are the modes of existence, which, nonetheless, are not excluded either. The good question seems to be the following: is there only one non-precise abstraction that abstracts simultaneously the essence according to the *ratio propria* and the *esse proprium*, or are there two progressive abstractions, one operating in the other? As I have stated in the introduction, the reading proposed in (ii) is that there would be first the non-precise abstraction of the essence according to the *esse proprium* and, subsequently, there would be a second abstractive operation, which would abstract the essence and its modes of being and would consider it absolutely according to its *ratio propria*.

Notwithstanding, it does not seem to derive from Aquinas’ text, first because the meaning (1) of essence, according to its “proper notion”, is presented in *DEE* previously to the meaning (2) of essence, according to its “proper being”. The order of exposition, however, could be considered ancillary, that is why I present the argument that is perhaps more consistent resuming the two operations of the intellect to defend, to a certain extent from Silva’s (2013) quotation (iv) mentioned above, that the absolute consideration of the essence is semantic, not doubly abstractive. Or rather, the two meanings of “essence” are distinguished by the second operation of the intellect (the judgement by composition and division) and, not by a coincidence, the development of the EAC by Thomas Aquinas stresses from the beginning to the end the definition (*ratio*) and the predication. Thus, the abstraction from the whole or non-precise remains a single abstraction – only distinct from the formal abstraction or from the part – which came into play in the beginning of the *DEE*, III, – to be rejected – with the Platonizing conception that hypostatized the universals as real entities outside sensitive things. Thus, this single abstraction from the whole or non-precise simultaneously abstracts the EAC and the essence with the intention of universality, which will be better explained further from the notion of “similitude”, whose comprehension seems to request a “common nature” or an EAC simultaneously constitutive of the essence universally abstracted.

I focus here only on the intellective abstraction according to the *DEE*, III, but it is clear that it presupposes the operation of the sensitive faculty, also a very complex one, which, in sum, is first modified by the sensitives, and with the operation of the senses and of the imagination constitutes, then, from a sensitive abstraction (now it must indeed be said to be prior to the intellective abstraction) the “sensitive image” or “fantasy”, in which the agent intellect operates or which the agent intellect illuminates<sup>34</sup> in order to apprehend its intelligibility, the essence with the intention of universality, which before that is potentially both in the thing

<sup>33</sup> “*Falsum enim est dicere quod essentia hominis in quantum huiusmodi habeat esse in hoc singulari, quia si esse in hoc singulari conveniret homini in quantum est homo, nunquam esset extra hoc singulare. Similiter etiam si conveniret homini in quantum est homo non esse in hoc singulari, nunquam esset in eo. Sed verum est dicere quod homo non in quantum est homo habet quod sit in hoc singulari vel in illo aut in anima. Ergo patet quod natura hominis absolute considerata abstrahit a quolibet esse, ita tamen quod non fiat praecisio alicuius eorum. Et haec natura sic considerata est quae praedicatur de individuis omnibus.*” *DEE*, III, §36.

<sup>34</sup> The Thomasian appropriation of the theory of illumination will be examined in the second part of this article, mainly from the *ST*, I, q. 84, a. 5.



itself and in the “sensitive image”.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, it makes sense considering that the intellection apprehends in a single intellective abstraction the essence of the singular thing without including and without excluding the individualizing conditions, among which is the mode of being singular, the actualized essence with the intention of universality, and the EAC.

Or rather, the actualized essence with the intention of universality, due to the fact that it is the act of the intellective soul, has being in the soul, but it is still the essence of the thing, so that it is necessarily an essence (that is to say, the EAC) common to the singular and the universal, and, therefore, it is simultaneous to the intellection of the universality. Consequently, the distinction between the essence (1), signified according to its “notion” or “definition”, and the essence (2), signified according to the being in this or in that, is not reached through the apprehension of the essence of the thing, that is, in the first operation of the intellect, which apprehends abstractly the one and the same essence, though in the mode of the cognizer. The distinction between essences (1) and (2) is held, therefore, exclusively in the second operation of the intellect, properly adjudicative and the only that can compose defining propositions in order to formulate the *ratio* or the definition<sup>36</sup> of the EAC itself. Next, the analysis of the “similitude” will enable us to explain more clearly why it is reasonable to consider that the essences (1) and (2) are simultaneously apprehended in a single non-precise abstraction.

### 3. On the Similitude Between the Logical Intention and the Thing

At this moment, it is worth resuming the brief discussion of the introduction of this article on the “similitude”. Now, from the *DEE*, III, the consideration of the EAC is necessary so there can be the so-called concreteness (or concretization, or “concretive synthesis”, according to Maréchal’s expression, without problematizing whether it is a synthesis or spontaneity) and essential predications of the individuals, being the first instantiation of the universals in the particulars, also expressed by Aquinas as a conversion to the sensitive or as a conversion to the fantasies,<sup>37</sup> presented at the end of the *DEE*, III, although not with these words. The instantiation of the universals in the sensitives and the essential predications of the individuals (for example, “Socrates is a man”, “Plato is rational”) are only possible according to the “similitude” between the content of the logical notions of universality and the things in themselves outside the soul. Thus, the universality of the essence in the intellect is only universality because it keeps a certain “similitude” with things outside the soul, but not mere “similitude” or “similarity” collected from the sensitives through

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<sup>35</sup> “There are two operations in the sensitive part. One in regard to change only, and thus the operation of the senses takes place by the senses being changed by the sensible. The other is formation, insofar as the imagination forms for itself an image of an absent thing, or even of something never seen. Both of these operations are found in the intellect. For in the first place there is the passion of the possible intellect as informed by the intelligible species; and then the possible intellect so informed forms a definition, or a division, or a composition, which is expressed by a word. Thus the notion signified by a word is its definition, and a proposition signifies the intellect’s division or composition. Words do not therefore signify the intelligible species themselves, but that which the intellect forms for itself for the purpose of judging external things.” (British Edition, 1923, p. 455). “*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.*” *ST*, I, q. 85, a. 2, ad3m.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. LIBERA, 1996, p. 278, where is found an interesting explanation of the Thomasian reception of the Aristotelian distinction, through Albert the Great, between the *logos*-form and the *logos*-formula, the latter referenced by Aquinas as *ratio* or “notion” in the majority of times.

<sup>37</sup> “And, therefore, for the intellect to understand actually its proper object, it must of necessity turn to the phantasms in order to examine the universal nature existing in the individual.” (British Edition, 1923, p. 450). “*Et ideo necesse est ad hoc quod intellectus actu intelligat suum obiectum proprium, quod convertat se ad phantasmata, ut speculetur naturam universalem in particulari existentem.*” *ST*, I, q. 84, a. 7, Ans. Cf. LANDIM FILHO, 2013.

exclusively a process of knowledge, such as perhaps a modern empiricist could consider. After all, strictly speaking, there is no “theory of knowledge” in Aquinas in the modern or contemporary sense, that is, with autonomy in relation to other disciplines; strictly speaking, no intermediary science, which takes as principles the conclusions of the subordinating discipline, is autonomous; in other words, only the science of God is autonomous, according to a complex hierarchy structure and subordination of the sciences.<sup>38</sup>

Consequently, the “similitude” the universal shares with the things outside the soul, though obtained through the abstraction of their individualizing features, provides true and necessary (let us say, apodictic) knowledge regarding the nature of sensitive things. “The universality of this form is not due to this being that [someone] has in the intellect, but insofar as it refers to things as similarity [similitudo] of things.”<sup>39</sup> In other words, the universality of the species or genus is not universality due to the mode of being that the universal has in the intellect, that is, because the universal always exists in this or in that intellect, if the universality depended on this mode of being, universal and essential features could never be predicates of the individuals. “In fact, if the community belonged to the man’s intellection, then in any one in which mankind was found one would find the community, but this is false. For one does not find any community in Socrates, but everything there is in him is individualized.”<sup>40</sup>

Thus, the universality is universality due to the “similitudo” that it abstracts from the sensitive things and in which it has its “ground”. Further, the “ground”, which is named at the end of the *DEE*, III, will be problematized in the light of the quotation (i) mentioned in the introduction of this article. For now, we will deal with the difficulty that Aquinas presents right after announcing the notion of “similitudo”, which is: the universal is in a certain way particular. Because the nature universally intelligized only exists in this or in that intellect, the nature is also particular. In fact, “although this intelligized nature has the notion of universal insofar as it is compared with things outside the soul (*extra animam*), for it is the single similarity [similitudo] of all, insofar as it has to be in this or in that intellect, it is a certain particular intelligized species.”<sup>41</sup>

The context of this passage is also of the discussion with Averroes against the unity of the separated possible intellect, which, according to the Thomasian reading, would have been postulated as a separated intelligence from (a deduction?) the universality of the intelligized form.<sup>42</sup> However, for the purposes of this article, we will focus on the difficulty derived from a conception of universal that is at the same time particular, for it is intellection of this or that intellect, whose “similitudo” with the sensitive things is exemplified by Aquinas as if it was “in the same way” that or “just as” (*sicut*) the “similitudo” of a statue that represented many men, simultaneously singular and common.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. NASCIMENTO, 1998 (especially the chapter “O estatuto epistemológico das ‘ciências intermediárias’ according to Saint Thomas Aquinas”); STORCK, 2004.

<sup>39</sup> “[...] *universalitas illius formae secundum hoc esse quod habet in intellectu, sed secundum quod refertur ad res ut similitudo rerum*” *DEE*, III, §40.

<sup>40</sup> “*Si enim communitas esset de intellectu hominis, tunc in quocumque inveniretur humanitas inveniretur communitas. Et hoc falsum est, quia in Socrate non invenitur communitas aliqua, sed quicquid est in eo est individuatum.*” *DEE*, III, §37.

<sup>41</sup> “*Et quamvis haec natura intellecta habeat rationem universalis secundum quod comparatur ad res extra animam, quia est una similitudo omnium, tamen secundum quod habet esse in hoc intellectu vel in illo est quaedam species intellecta particularis.*” *DEE*, III, §40.

<sup>42</sup> “And, thus, the Commentator’s mistake is clear, in the third book of the *On the Soul* (*In de An.*, III, 5, 117v), who intended to derive from the universality of the intelligized form the unity of the intellect in all men.” “*Et ideo patet defectus Commentatoris in III de anima, qui voluit ex universalitate formae intellectae unitatem intellectus in omnibus hominibus concludere.*” *DEE*, III, §40. For a more detailed commentary on this passage, cf. LALLEMENT, 2001, p. 392-397. On the unity of the intellect from Averroes’ point of view, precisely from Commentary 5 on the Book III of the *De anima*, cf. LIMA, 2012; 2017.

Also in the same way [*sicut*], if there was a body statue representing many men, that image or species of the statue would have to be singular and proper insofar as it was in this matter; but it would also have the notion of community insofar as it was the common representation of many.<sup>43</sup>

In this passage, the vocabulary related to the “representation” used to explain the “similitude” raises our awareness. My hypothesis is that passages as this one must be read within the limits of an example and analogy, so that it avoids a reading inclined to Nominalism to the benefit of an alleged arbitrariness in the “gathering” of “similitude” or “similarity” features among the many sensitive individual entities, such as an sculptor would arbitrarily choose the common physical features among the individual men in order to print a sensitive image of “man” in marble or brass. Furthermore, one should observe, maybe anachronistically, that from Aquinas’ example the arbitrariness would be such that it would probably be an image of the male human being “representing” the human being in general. Consequently, the limits of the example of the universal concepts – “just as” (*sicut*) a statue – face, from the start, the difference between “intelligible species” and “sensitive image”. Thus, in one case the “similitude” is intelligible, formal, and necessary, in the other case it is sensitive, material, and contingent, so that if the “similitude” between the universals and the sensitive things kept any degree of arbitrariness, it would not be intelligible and the human knowledge would not have any grounding.<sup>44</sup>

Eleonore Stump, in a recent paper (1998), contends that there is nothing mysterious here: cognitive similitude, she says, is just the sharing of a form. This, however, does not amount to more than what we have found so far: some sort of isomorphism is needed between mental representations on the one hand and the external things — or their quiddities — on the other hand. One must take care, though, that talking of the *sameness* of a form, as Stump proposes, naturally invites the question: which sort of form would it be that the mind — or something in it — needs to share with the cognized thing? Not an accidental form, obviously, like being of the same colour, since the mind normally does not take on the accidents of the cognized thing: nothing is red in my mind when I think of red objects — or of redness. But not a substantial form either: you need not really take on the substantial form of a rabbit in order to know rabbitness. You need only take it on *intentionally*. Intentionally taking on the form of a rabbit, however, means nothing more, as we saw, than having in one’s mind a similitude of rabbital nature...<sup>45</sup>

Next, I will deepen the investigation on the “isomorphism” between the mental representations and the exterior things mentioned by Panaccio, for I will develop the hypothesis, anticipated in the introduction, that the ground of universals in the singular things presupposes a certain indirect and not unequivocal correspondence among different levels of essence, entities, realities, and intellections. In any case, the emphasis on a common form or isomorphism between the mental representations and the external things is textually supported in the *DEE*, III, §39, where Aquinas mentions for the first time in this chapter the

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<sup>43</sup> “[...] *sicut etiam, si esset una statua corporalis repraesentans multos homines, constat quod illa imago vel species statuæ haberet esse singulare et proprium secundum quod esset in hac materia, sed haberet rationem communitatis secundum quod esset commune repraesentativum plurium.*” *DEE*, III, §40.

<sup>44</sup> Wolterstorff’s criticism of the *similitudo* goes in that direction, when it understands Aquinas’ realism as “a crucial and incurable ambiguity or incoherence” (WOLTERSTORFF, 1970, p. 146). Edwards’ essay (2002) is developed mainly against Wolterstorff’s reading.

<sup>45</sup> PANACCIO, 2000, p. 17-18.



*similitudo* and explains that as a “uniform notion to all individuals outside the soul”.<sup>46</sup> Thus, by reading the notion (*ratio*) of uniformity as a “common form”<sup>47</sup> between the universal notion and the extramental things, the “similitudo” requires the comprehension and grounding in combination with the EAC or “common nature”.

Right after “explaining” the *similitudo* by means of the analogy between the universal notion and the statue, Thomas Aquinas addresses the problem of predication derived from the essence (2.2), apprehended with the intention of universality, which cannot be predicated from the essence (2.1), existing singularly in the individuals. It is remarkable that the approach of this problem also takes place with a clear mention to the EAC, the essence (1) in its absolute consideration, which concedes the possibilities of essential predications of the individuals (“Socrates is a man”, “Plato is a man”). Therefore, now acclimated to the context of the discussion on the “similitudo”, the EAC is, in a certain way, the common intelligible structure or uniformity between the concepts and the things, being constitutive of the “similitudo” and which provides a better comprehension of its intelligibility, clarifying even more the limits of analogy between a universal notion and a statue, or to what extent the statue is conceived as a “copy” that depends on the intelligible abstraction model, not otherwise.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Here is the passage in its context: “It results, therefore, that the notion of species occurs to the human nature in accordance with that being one has in the intellect. In fact, the human nature itself has in the intellect a being abstracted of everything that individualizes and, thus, has a uniform notion to all the individuals outside the soul, insofar as it is also similarity [similitudo] of all of them and as enables them to be known insofar as they are men. And, for having such a relation to all the individuals, the intellect finds out the notion of species and attributes it to the latter; whence the Commentator says, in the beginning of the *On the Soul* (In: *De An.*, I, 8, 4v), that ‘the intellect produces the universality in things’; Avicenna also says it in his *Metaphysics* (V, 1-2, 87b, E; 87c-d, C-D).” “Relinquitur ergo quod ratio speciei accadat naturae humanae secundum illud esse quod habet in intellectu. Ipsa enim natura humana in intellectu habet esse abstractum ab omnibus individuantibus, et ideo habet rationem uniformem ad omnia individua, quae sunt extra animam, prout aequaliter est similitudo omnium et ducens in omnium cognitionem in quantum sunt homines. Et ex hoc quod talem relationem habet ad omnia individua intellectus adinvenit rationem speciei et attribuit sibi. Unde dicit Commentator in principio de anima quod intellectus est qui agit universalitatem in rebus. Hoc etiam Avicenna dicit in sua metaphysica.” DEE, III, §39.

<sup>47</sup> Panaccio’s argumentation in favor of a representationist realism and against a direct and essentialist realism is primordially based on an interpretation of the “common form” as “similitudo”, not as “identity”, with which I agree. Cf. PANACCIO, 2000, p. 15-19 (section “2.3 From identity to similarity”).

<sup>48</sup> “And, as concerns human nature, in accordance with its absolute consideration (1), what is predicated of Socrates and the notion of species (2.2) does not befit it in accordance with its absolute consideration (1), but the accidents that follow it in conformity with the being in the intellect (2.2), just as the name of the species is not predicated of Socrates, so that one says that Socrates is species, which would happen, by necessity, if the notion of species befitted the man according to the being it has in Socrates (2.1), or according to its absolute consideration (1), that is, insofar as he is man; in fact, whatever befits the man insofar as he is man (1) is predicated of Socrates.” “Et quia naturae humanae secundum suam absolutam considerationem convenit quod praedicatur de Socrate, et ratio speciei non convenit sibi secundum suam absolutam considerationem, sed est de accidentibus, quae consequuntur eam secundum esse, quod habet in intellectu, ideo nomen speciei non praedicatur de Socrate, ut dicatur: Socrates est species, quod de necessitate accideret, si ratio speciei conveniret homini secundum esse, quod habet in Socrate vel secundum suam considerationem absolutam, scilicet in quantum est homo. Quicquid enim convenit homini in quantum est homo praedicatur de Socrate.” DEE, III, §41.

#### 4. Grounding of the Logical Intentions in Singular Things (*DEE*, III, §42; *ST*, I, q. 85, a. 2, ad2m)

In the *DEE*, III, §42, Aquinas' next step is to investigate even further and more directly the second operation of the intellect (judgement by composition and division<sup>49</sup>), mentioning what in other works can be called concretion, concretization, or conversion to the sensible or to the fantasy as condition for predication, let us say, with true or real content. More precisely, Aquinas relates three notions in a difficult way to understand, which are the "intention of genus" (*intentio generis*), the "notion or intention of predication" (*ratio* or *intentio predicabilitatis*), and the EAC or "common nature", mentioned, nonetheless, indirectly as "ground in the thing itself" (*fundamentum in re ipsa*) of the act or "action of the intellect that composes and divides" and three times mentioned as (I) "this to which" (*id cui*), (II) "that to which" (*illud cui*) "the intellect attributes the intention of predictability" and/or the "genus intention", and (III) "as what is" (*sicut quod*) "signified by this name animal". The whole passage is worth reading:

And, however, being predicate concerns, by itself, the genus since it belongs to its definition. In fact, the predication is something that is completed by the action of the intellect that composes and divides, having its ground in the thing itself [*fundamentum in re ipsa*], the unity of those of which one is said of the other. Whence the notion [*ratio*] of predictability can be embedded in the notion [*in ratione*] of this intention [*huius intentionis*] that is the genus, which, similarly, is completed by the action of the intellect. Nonetheless, that to which [*id cui*] the intellect attributes the intention of predictability, composing it with another, is not the intention of the genus itself [*intentio generis*], but, rather, that to which [*potius illud cui*] the intellect attributes the intention of genus [*intentionem generis*], as what is [*sicut quod*] signified by this name animal.<sup>50</sup>

With a remarkable capacity to summarize, Aquinas seems to say that the intellect act of composing and dividing predicatively, which obviously presupposes the first act of intellection, is only completed and accomplished as such, that is, as action or intellectual movement from the potency to the act, by returning to the "grounding in the thing itself" or to "that which" or to which the intellect attributes or predicates with the intention of universality, which indeed seems to play the role of that through which (*quo*) the intellect knows what (*quod*) the singular thing or the object proper to the human intellectual knowledge is (as will also be said in the *ST*, I, q. 85, a. 2, Ans.). It is worth reminding that this passage derives immediately from §41, in which the possibility of essential predications from the individuals, without removing from them their individuality, according to the Avicennian scheme of non-inclusion and non-exclusion, was clarified from the EAC.

Thus, the *quod* or the *fundamentum* concerns the EAC or the "common nature" that concedes the attribution or predication of the logical intentions to and of reality, the attribution to and predication of the real entities themselves, existing in the world as composed substances, which according to Gilson, are

<sup>49</sup>In the *DEE*, III, §42, Aquinas seems to exclusively refer to the composition and division in judgment, but composition and division do not necessarily occur in the adjudicative mode. "It is important to remind that Thomas Aquinas approaches directly the necessity of the composition and division in question 85 of the first part of the *Summa Theologica* (cf. a. 5), for this aspect is part of the successive and progressive (*ordo*) character of the human knowledge, which is the theme of the articles 3 to 8 of this question. There is, however, two other aspects that associate with this: judgment and assent. The three aspects are far from being equivalent. It is possible to be composition and division but not judgment, or judgment without composition and division. It is also possible to be composition and division without assent. The first case occurs when, for example, one adds the difference to the genus or, rather, when an utterance is formed, whose meaning is captured, but one does not comment on it, not saying whether it is true or false. The second case occurs in the sensorial knowledge and, according to Aquinas, in the knowledge of the angels and of God [...]. The third occurs when we find ourselves in doubt." (NASCIMENTO, 2006a, p. 31-32).

<sup>50</sup>"Et tamen praedicari convenit generi per se, cum in eius diffinitione ponatur. Praedicatio enim est quiddam, quod compleitur per actionem intellectus componentis et dividens, habens fundamentum in re ipsa unitatem eorum, quorum unum de altero dicitur. Unde ratio praedicabilitatis potest claudi in ratione huius intentionis, quae est genus, quae similiter per actum intellectus compleitur. Nihilominus tamen id, cui intellectus intentionem praedicabilitatis attribuit, componens illud cum altero, non est ipsa intentio generis, sed potius illud, cui intellectus intentionem generis attribuit, sicut quod significatur hoc nomine animal." *DEE*, III, §42.



the “existential base”<sup>51</sup> (let us say, essential, but *a posteriori*) of the human intellection. In other words, we could say that in the quotation of the *DEE*, III, §42, is found an exposition on the synthesis between the logical forms and the empirical content as condition for the possible human knowledge, with the proviso that in this pre-critical domain there is obviously no synthetic *a priori* judgment, but exclusively *a posteriori* ones, and the sensitive and intelligible apprehension is of the *noumenon* or the thing itself, though in the mode of the cognizer or receptacle, not in the mode of the known or the cognizant,<sup>52</sup> besides a metaphysics and a physics of Aristotelian root, but also with Platonic elements, conditioning of the acts of being of the entities: these are some reasons for our reservations regarding the consideration of realism in Thomas Aquinas as a “critical realism”,<sup>53</sup> according to Maritain, Lallement, and others intend.

The passage of the *DEE*, III, §42, can be compared with the answer to the second initial argument of the *ST*, q. 85, a. 2, to help us understand the role of the EAC as “common nature” of the truly singular entity and of the abstracted entity with the intention of universality, or of the role of the EAC as intelligible adequacy of the essence in its several modes of being,<sup>54</sup> or of the EAC as means of explanation for why the “similitude” is an intelligible structure, with “grounding in the thing itself”. The passage of the *ST*, I, q. 85, a. 2, *ad2m*, requires attention to discern the mention to the EAC or “common nature”, which is presented as the “very nature”:

In these words “the thing actually understood” there is a twofold meaning: (I) the thing which is understood, and (II) this that it is understood. In like manner the words “abstract universal” imply two understood, (I) the very nature of the thing and (II) the abstraction or universality. Therefore (I) the very nature to which it falls to

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<sup>51</sup> In Gilson’s work, the context is of the analysis of the common aspects of the five proofs of God’s existence: “the presence of an existential base is [...] a first common aspect” (GILSON, 1944, p. 113).

<sup>52</sup> [...] the sensible form is conditioned differently in the thing which is outside the soul, and in the sense which receives the forms of sensible things without matter such as the color of gold without receiving gold. So, also the intellect, according to its own mode, receives under conditions of immateriality and unchangeableness the species of material and changeable bodies; for the received is in the receiver according to the mode of the receiver. We must conclude, therefore, that through the intellect the soul knows bodies by a knowledge which is immaterial, universal, and necessary.” “[...] *forma sensibilis alio modo est in re quae est extra animam, et alio modo in sensu, qui suscipit formas sensibilibus absque materia, sicut colorem auri sine auro. Et similiter intellectus species, corporum, quae sunt materiales et mobiles, recipit immaterialiter et immobiliter, secundum modum suum, nam receptum est in recipiente per modum recipientis.*” *ST*, I, q. 84, a. 1, Resp. (British Edition., 1923, p. 441).

<sup>53</sup> Gilson is resounding: “His philosophy has nothing of a critical philosophy. Undoubtedly, the analysis of our faculty of knowing will have as result to limit its reach, but Saint Thomas does not think of denying it the apprehension of being in itself; his reservations only concern the nature of the being that our reason can immediately apprehend and the manner according to which it apprehends it.” (GILSON, 1944, p. 69-70). For a reading on the continuities and mainly discontinuities between the scholastics (specially Duns Scotus) and Kant, cf. PAIVA, 2015. For a stimulating a provoking reading on the impossibility of understanding the moderns without the medievals, cf. ESTÉVÃO, 2011.

<sup>54</sup> “Keep in mind [...] these two capital truths for all intellectual knowledge, which are: it is the intelligence that does the universal; but the natures to which the intelligence give the universality are really in the singulars, and they are, in the singulars, what is intelligible to us.” (LALLEMENT, 2001, p. 401).

be understood (II), or to be abstracted, or to bear the intention of universality is only in individuals; but that it understood (II), abstracted, or bears the intention of universality is in the intellect.<sup>55</sup>

Without focusing on the difficulty of understanding the EAC with a sense of “abstract universal”, I move on to the schematic and parallel presentation of the notions comparatively explained:

- “(I) the intelligized thing” corresponds to “(I) the very nature of the thing”;
- “(II) this which is the intelligized being itself” corresponds to “(II) the abstraction or universality”.

Therefore, it is clear that the intelligized *res* takes on the meaning of “very nature”, a name with which the EAC or the “common nature” steps in in the *ST*, I, q. 85, a. 2, *ad 2m*. That way, understanding that the intellection is of the *res*, that is, of the thing itself existing singularly, requests the comprehension that the ground of the intelligibility of the “similitude” relies constitutively on the extramental thing itself. After all, “the truth of the intellect comes from the fact that it complies with the thing”,<sup>56</sup> an ante-predicative conception of truth that could be extensively developed from the questions on the truth (*ST*, I, q. 16; *DV*, q. 1, a. 1-2. For a comparison with these works, cf. PAZOS, 2018). Saying, therefore, that the ground of intelligibility – of the “similitude”, of the universal notion, or of the EAC – is found in the extramental *res* is not enough if one does not understand that the Thomasian realist grounding of the human knowledge, in the state of present life, takes place not unequivocally by means of a direct correspondence with the singular thing, the abstract content and its content, but by means of the complex existential and essential conformity among the divine, metaphysical, physical, intellective, and predicative levels.<sup>57</sup>

It is opportune to also resume the reading of (ii) the “double abstraction”, now from the *ST*, q. 85, a. 2, *ad 2m* perspective, because it does not seem to derive from this work the double abstractive operation, one acting over the other. The emphasis on the act can help us understand that if there were two abstractions,

<sup>55</sup> “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 accedit 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.” *ST*, I, q. 85, a. 2, *ad 2m* (British Edition, 1923, p. 454-455. Our modifications and our brackets). “The passages of the *Summa* assume the triple consideration of the essence, formulating it by means of the distinction between 1) the nature of the thing, 2) the being intelligized or abstracted or endowed with universality (intention of universality) and 3) its being in the singulars. One may say that these passages of the *Summa* combine the Avicennian distinction with the Abelardian distinction between the mode of being and the mode of intelligizing, used in the *Summa*, First Part, Question 84, articles 1 and 2”. NASCIMENTO, 2006b, p. 46. It is worth comparing the *ST*, I, q. 85, a. 2, *ad 2m* with this one from the *In DA*, 2 I. 12: “So in this way it is clear that the notion of universality can be attributed to a common nature only as regards its existence in intellect. For [such a nature] is one from many only inasmuch as it is intellectually cognized without the principles by which one is divided into many. The result, then, is that universals, inasmuch as they are universal, exist only in the soul. But the natures to which the notion of universality applies exist in the world (*in rebus*). And for this reason the common names signifying those natures are predicated of individuals. But this is not the case for names signifying [logical] notions. For Socrates is a human being, but he is not a species, even though human being is a species.” “Sic igitur patet, quod naturae communi non potest attribui intentio universalitatis nisi secundum esse quod habet in intellectu: sic enim solum est unum de multis, prout intelligitur praeter principia, quibus unum in multa dividitur: unde relinquitur, quod universalis, secundum quod sunt universalis, non sunt nisi in anima. Ipsae autem naturae, quibus accedit intentio universalitatis, sunt in rebus. Et propter hoc, nomina communia significantia naturas ipsas, praedicantur de individuis; non autem nomina significantia intentiones. Socrates enim est homo, sed non est species, quamvis homo sit species.” *In DA*, 2 I. 12, translated by Pasnau, 1999, p. 201.

<sup>56</sup> “[...] veritas intellectus est ex hoc quod conformatur rei”. *Ex DTrin.*, q. 5, a. 3, Ans.

<sup>57</sup> My reading is compatible with NASCIMENTO’s, 1996, p. 209-210: “Therefore, the three degrees or levels of being, of knowing, and of speaking are correlated and there are possible mediations of one to the other; but the three are not equivalent or overlapping. One of Thomas Aquinas’ constant concerns in relation to what he calls, on the one hand, ‘Plato and the platonics’ and, on the other hand, ‘the first philosophers’, was precisely to combat this pretension of homogeneity or isomorphy within the three levels. He believed that, following ‘the intermediary path’ (Ia, 84, 6), open by Aristotle, one could better equate the demands of things, of thinking, and of language.”

there would be two degrees of actuality, the second actualizing the intellect in a higher degree than the other. Effectively, this takes place with the intelligible abstraction (which abstracts the “universal” or the “intelligible species”) in relation to the sensitive abstraction (which abstracts the “species”, or the “sensitive image”, or the “fantasy/phantom”), however, it does not take place in the intelligible abstraction, which can be understood as a single abstractive operation that abstracts simultaneously (I) and (II), that is, “(I) the intelligized thing” or “the very nature of the thing” and (as addition, not consecutively) (II) “this which is the intelligized thing itself” or “universality”.

Therefore, the distinction between the two “abstract universals” seems to be only analytical, not *de facto*, as also stated previously in the context of the *DEE*, III, which concedes that the comprehension that the distinction between both essences considered in the sense of whole (I) and (II) is a semantic distinction and accomplished by the second operation of the intellect (of composing and dividing in judgment), but not effectively in the first operation, which demands a simultaneous comprehension of the EAC or “common nature” and of the essence without exclusion of its modes of being. Still in relation to the intelligible abstraction, it also seems to be a distinction exclusively analytical and not *de facto* that one that in the *Commentary on the De anima* 2 I. 12 explains the abstracted nature not precisely on the genus as universal, that is, without including and without excluding the differences, and the abstracted nature not precisely in the species, that is, without the individualizing principles.

For the truth of an apprehension does not require that, when one apprehends something, one apprehends all the things in it. So in this way, without falsity, intellect abstracts genus from species insofar as it cognizes the nature of the genus without any cognition of the differentiae. Likewise, intellect abstracts species from individuals insofar as it cognizes the nature of the species without cognizing the individuating principles.<sup>58</sup>

Or rather, if from there derived two abstractions *de facto*, we would now have two abstractions within the intention of universality, which would present the difficulty of establishing in which logical and/or chronological order they would unfold and be added to the abstraction of the “common nature” or of the EAC, according to the “double abstraction” of (ii), turning it into an inconsistent “triple abstraction”. It is not this, however, that seems to effectively happen in the intelligible abstraction, which can be understood as a single act that abstracts or extracts a single quiddity or essence, which analytically, nonetheless, can be understood in a discursive way from several considerations. After all, when a human being faces a particular dog, they simultaneously apprehend in a single act that this is an individual with canine nature, therefore, with animal nature, instantiated and singularized in that matter.

## 5. The Divine and Human Intellections: Ideas, Common Nature, and Intelligible Species

In this last section, I will examine some passages (mainly *Quodl.*, q. 8, a. 1, Ans.; *ST*, I, q. 84, a. 5), very much visited mainly by a certain essentialist critical literature, in order to defend, on the one hand, that the ideas in God’s mind do not play any direct role in human intellection and, on the other hand, that despite the impossibility of direct apprehension of the ideas in the present state of human life, they nonetheless do play a certain indirect role in the human knowledge insofar as they are copies of the created things and, thus, fundamental for the ontological and intelligible structure of the world. For this reason, it is

<sup>58</sup> “Non enim exigitur ad veritatem apprehensionis, ut quia apprehendit rem aliquam, apprehendat omnia quae insunt ei. Sic igitur intellectus absque falsitate abstrahit genus a speciebus, inquantum intelligit naturam generis non intelligendo differentias. Et similiter abstrahit speciem ab individuis, inquantum intelligit naturam speciei, non intelligendo individualia principia.” “Sic igitur patet, quod naturae communi non potest attribui intentio universalitatis nisi secundum esse quod habet in intellectu: sic enim solum est unum de multis, prout intelligitur praeter principia, quibus unum in multa dividitur: unde relinquitur, quod universalis, secundum quod sunt universalis, non sunt nisi in anima. Ipsae autem naturae, quibus accidit intentio universalitatis, sunt in rebus. Et propter hoc, nomina communia significantia naturas ipsas, praedicantur de individuis; non autem nomina significantia intentiones. Socrates enim est homo, sed non est species, quamvis homo sit species.” In *DA*, 2 I. 12. (Translated by Pasnau, 1999, p. 200-201).



important to emphasize that the reading I propose keeps reservations in relation to certain essentialist interpretations of Aquinas, which postulate a formal identity or an identical intelligible structure among the essence and the *res*, its idea-copy and its universal apprehension by the human intellect, considering that the EAC or “common nature” coincides directly with this formal identity or intelligible structure.<sup>59</sup> Here is a famous passage that accepts relating the EAC or “common nature” with the ideas in God’s mind and the instantiated nature in the individuals:<sup>60</sup>

That which is prior is always the reason of what is posterior; and when the posterior is removed, the prior remains, but not the contrary. Whence what is attributed to a nature according to the absolute consideration is the reason it is attributed to some nature according to the existence it [the latter] has in a singular, not inversely. For Socrates is rational because the man is rational, not the contrary. Consequently, if Socrates and Plato did not exist, rationality would still be attributed to the human nature. Similarly, the divine intellect is also the reason of the nature absolutely considered and of the nature in the singulars. And the very nature absolutely considered and in the singular is the reason of human intelligence and, somehow, its very measure.<sup>61</sup>

That there is a common base or “measure” of intelligibility among the essence or nature absolutely considered, the existing nature in the singular thing and the nature of the thing as idea-copy in the divine mind (already clearly announced in the *Quodl.*, q. 1, a. 8, Asw.), is undeniable. Supposing, however, that there is a direct correspondence between distinct levels existentially and essentially, to say the least with regard to the difference, means disconsidering that in the Thomistic thinking everything is said in many ways. Thus, one needs to acknowledge, on the one hand, that the EAC or “common nature” keeps a certain intelligible structure with correspondence, but not identity, with the idea-copy in the divine intellect and with “the very nature of the thing” (*ST*, I, q. 85, a. 2, *ad2m*), and also, on the other hand, that the ground between the universal and the singular thing is not exclusively sustained by a sense of the EAC as abstracted notion, devoid of essential harmony (which, one should rephrase, is not identity) with the physical level (of the composed substances) and metaphysical level (of the ideas-copies<sup>62</sup>).

In addition, it results from a certain Thomasian reception of the theory of ideas – mainly via Augustine’s question *De ideis*,<sup>63</sup> and from which Aquinas names question 15 of the *ST*, I – a rereading of the theory of illumination, according to which the abstractive capacity must be understood also as an illuminative capacity, capable of “illuminating” the sensitive matter, making intelligible in actuality what is contained there as potentially intelligible. This abstractive and illuminative capacity (potency) is what he [Aquinas] calls agent intellect.” (NASCIMENTO, 2006a, p. 26). It is not the case of further investigating the probable

<sup>59</sup> Cf. OWENS, 1959, p. 218-221; EDWARDS, 2002, p. 111.

<sup>60</sup> Several other passages of Thomas Aquinas’ work also accept the relation of the EAC with the ideas and the singulars, or contrasting the ideas with the intelligible species, for example: *DP*, III, a. 5, *ad2m*; *ST*, I, q. 14, a. 1, *ad1m ad2m, ad3m*, q. 15, a. 1-3; q. 84, a. 5-6. For a detailed and refined exposition on the ideas (mainly from the *ST*, I, q. 15, a. 1-3) as copies and notions in the divine intellect, distinct from the intelligible species or universals with which the human being intelligizes, as well as reflection of the continuities and ruptures among Plato’s, Augustine’s, and Aquinas’ “theory of ideas” (to whom, for example, there are ideas of the individuals), cf. OLIVEIRA, 2008.

<sup>61</sup> “[...] *illud quod est prius, semper est ratio posterioris; et remoto posteriori remanet prius, non autem e converso; et inde est quod hoc quod competit naturae secundum absolutam considerationem, est ratio quare competit naturae alicui secundum esse quod habet in singulari, et non e converso. Ideo enim Socrates est rationalis, quia homo est rationalis, et non e converso; unde dato quod Socrates et Plato non essent, adhuc humanae naturae rationalitas competeret. Similiter etiam intellectus divinus est ratio naturae absolute consideratae, et in singularibus; et ipsa natura absolute considerata et in singularibus est ratio intellectus humani, et quodammodo mensura ipsius.*” *Quodl.*, q. 8, a. 1, Ans.

<sup>62</sup> On the conception that the ideas-copies play the role of formal, efficient, and final causes of the created things, cf. DOOLAN, 2008, p. 33-41. In a certain way, the ideas in the divine intellect are already presupposed in the proofs of God’s existence in *ST*, I, q. 2, a. 3, mainly in the fourth, where the “causality” needs to be perhaps more clearly understood as simultaneously “participation”, but also at least in the second, third, and fifth questions. Cf. PAZOS, 2018, for a better comprehension of the place of question 14 in the section that starts in the *ST*, I, q. 14 and that in the 16<sup>th</sup> resumes the definition of truth of the *DV* with some discontinuities.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. AGOSTINHO DE HIPONA, 2008.



development, in subsequent works to the *DEE*, of the abstractive potency as also being illuminative, especially because this would demand a discussion on a developmental reading of the *corpus thomisticum* as a whole, but it is important to notice that the addition of an optical model (of the illumination) to the mechanic model (of abstraction) in an investigation of the human intellection does not seem to violate the letter and the spirit of the *DEE*. After all, from a conception of illumination compatible with the abstraction – that is, an illumination that does not have to do with a direct human intellection of the ideas in God’s mind, but with an action of the intellect, strictly speaking, of the agent intellect, which illuminates the phantasms of the extramental things by extracting from them and by actualizing their potential intelligibility – derives from a conception of the act of the human knowledge in strict continuity with the present one in the *DEE*.

It is true that expressing the abstraction as illumination emphasizes the participation between the human intellect and the divine intellect, notably in what concerns the analogy between the mode of the human knowing and the mode of the divine knowing, obviously dissimilar,<sup>64</sup> but also similar to the point of being possible to glimpse the operation mode of one “mimicking” the other. The emphasis, however, does not seem to indicate discontinuities with the *DEE*, since a similarity (and always, at the same time, dissimilarity) between the first act (God) and the act of being of the creatures has been already distinguished in the *DEE* itself, which, indeed, read backwards, manifests an order of realities<sup>65</sup> according to which everything that is, it is by causality and participation in the pure and first act.<sup>66</sup>

Let us go back to the comprehension of the abstractive act as illuminative. In *ST*, I, q. 84, a. 5, Aquinas deepens his reception of Augustine’s *De ideis*, now in the context of the problem of whether the soul knows the corporals, which are inferior to them. In the frame of this general problem of question 84, the dialectic question of article 5 is “Whether the Intellective Soul Knows the Material Things in the Eternal Reasons”, taking “eternal reasons” as “ideas”, as Augustine himself explains as synonymous expressions

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. *ST*, I, q. 14, a.1.

<sup>65</sup> Precisely because the *DEE* follows the order of human knowledge: “we must receive the knowledge of the simple from the compound and reach the prior from the posterior”. “[...] *ex compositis simplicium cognitionem accipere debemus et ex posterioribus in priora devenire*”. *DEE*, Prooemium.

<sup>66</sup> In the *DEE*, IV, §55, one finds a proof of God’s existence from the efficient cause, with particular reference to the intelligent creatures: “And since everything that is through another is reduced to what it is by itself, as a first cause, one needs something that is the cause of being to all things, that is why it is only being; otherwise, one would go on to the infinite in the causes, for everything that is not only being has the cause of its being, as it was said. It is clear, therefore, that the intelligence [separated or angelical] is form and being; and that has the being from the first entity that is only being; and this [being] is the first cause that is God.” “*Et quia omne, quod est per aliud, reducitur ad illud quod est per se sicut ad causam primam, oportet quod sit aliqua res, quae sit causa essendi omnibus rebus, eo quod ipsa est esse tantum. Alias iretur in infinitum in causis, cum omnis res, quae non est esse tantum, habeat causam sui esse, ut dictum est. Patet ergo quod intelligentia est forma et esse et quod esse habet a primo ente, quod est esse tantum. Et hoc est causa prima, quae Deus est.*” In the following paragraphs, Aquinas resumes the analysis of the mode of composition of immaterial substances or separates intelligences in contrast to the divine simplicity and with emphasis on the composition of act and potentiality, without which one could not “find multitude in separated substances” (“*invenire multitudinem in substantiis separatis*” – §57). In the *DEE*, IV, §57-58, Aquinas also relates them to the human intellective soul, emphasizing its highest degree of potency among all the intellective substances, that is, emphasizing its possible or passive intellect, which explains why it is comparable to a “*tabula rasa*” or “a clean tabula, on which nothing is written” (*tabulae, in qua nihil est scriptum* – §58).

in the beginning of his *De ideis*.<sup>67</sup> It is surprising that Aquinas' answer is intermediary, according to the expression he will employ, not exactly in the same context, in the following article<sup>68</sup> because it is clear that, on the one hand, he will deny the human being a direct intellection of the ideas in the state of present life, exclusive for the blessed ones, but he will not say either, on the other hand, that the intellection through intelligible species (the universals) completely excludes some indirect mode of acquiring science of material things through the ideas. In fact, the letter of the text does not interdict the interpretation that the indirect mode of acquiring science of material things by ideas is precisely through the intelligible species. Let us check a substantial part of the *ST*, I, q. 84, a. 5, Ans.:

When, therefore, the question is asked: Does the human soul know all things in the eternal reasons? we must reply that one thing is said to be known in another thing in two ways. (A) First, as in an object itself known, as one may see in a mirror the images of things reflected there. In this way the soul, in the present state of life, cannot see all things in the eternal reasons, but (A) the blessed know all things thus in the eternal reasons, for they see God, and all things in Him. (B) Secondly, one thing is said to be known in another thing as in a principle of knowledge; thus we might say that we see in the sun what we see by the sun. And in this way (B) we must say that the human soul knows all things in the eternal reasons, since by participation of these reasons we know all things. For the intellectual light itself which is in us is nothing other than a participated similarity of the uncreated light, in which are contained the eternal reasons. Hence it is written (Ps. 4. 6, 7), *Many say; who showeth us good things?* which question the Psalmist answers, *The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us*, as though he were to say: By the seal of the Divine light in us, all things are made known to us.<sup>69</sup>

For the purposes of this article, what interests us the most is the meaning (B) of the expression “one thing is said to be known in another thing”, that is, “as in the principle of knowledge”. According to this mode of saying, how and where the human being knows intelligibly the material things in the state of present life, one can say that the human soul does not know in the ideas, but through the ideas or eternal reasons, just as one says metaphorically that something visible illuminated by the sun is seen in the sun. Something similar happens in relation to the way the intellect acquires intelligible knowledge of the material things. It does not know them directly in the ideas, neither does Aquinas say here that it knows them because they participate in the ideas (although one must also admit this participation from the *ST*, I, q. 15), but it knows them because the human intellect itself participates and, thus, is a certain similarity with the uncreated light, which is the divine intellect. Therefore, the emphasis here is on the participation

<sup>67</sup> “We can express ideas in Latin as forms or species, if we wish to translate them literally. If we call them reasons, we move away from the exact translation, for reasons are called in Greek λόγοι, not ideas. But who wishes to use this word will not deviate from the thing itself. In fact, the ideas are certain main reasons of things, stable and mutable, which are not formed and, therefore, are eternal and always remain in the same way, contained in the divine intelligence. And although they do not emerge or perish, we say that it is according to them that all that can emerge and perish and all that emerges and perishes is formed.” *Ideas igitur latine possumus vel formas vel species dicere, ut verbum e verbo transferre videamur. Si autem rationes eas vocemus, ab interpretandi quidem proprietate discedimus; rationes enim Graece λόγοι appellantur non ideae: sed tamen quisquis hoc vocabulo uti voluerit, a re ipsa non abhorrebit. Sunt namque ideae principales quaedam formae vel rationes rerum stabiles atque incommutabiles, quae ipsae formatae non sunt ac per hoc aeternae ac semper eodem modo sese habentes, quae divina intellegentia continentur. Et cum ipsae neque oriantur neque intereant, secundum eas tamen formari dicitur omne quod oriri et interire potest et omne quod oritur et interit.” AUGUSTINUS, 1975, q. XLVI, 2.*

<sup>68</sup> “[...] *media via*”. *ST*, I, q. 84, a. 6, Ans.. Cf. NASCIMENTO, 2002 and 1996, for a detailed analysis of the “intermediary path” that Aristotle would represent to Aquinas.

<sup>69</sup> “Cum ergo quaeritur utrum anima humana in rationibus aeternis omnia cognoscat, dicendum est quod aliquid in aliquo dicitur cognosci dupliciter. Uno modo, sicut in obiecto cognito; sicut aliquis videt in speculo ea quorum imagines in speculo resultant. Et hoc modo anima, in statu praesentis vitae, non potest videre omnia in rationibus aeternis; sed sic in rationibus aeternis cognoscunt omnia beati, qui Deum vident et omnia in ipso. Alio modo dicitur aliquid cognosci in aliquo sicut in cognitionis principio; sicut si dicamus quod in sole videntur ea quae videntur per solem. Et sic necesse est dicere quod anima humana omnia cognoscat in rationibus aeternis, per quarum participationem omnia cognoscimus. Ipsum enim lumen intellectuale quod est in nobis, nihil est aliud quam quaedam participata similitudo luminis increati, in quo continentur rationes aeternae. Unde in Psalmo IV, dicitur, multi dicunt, quis ostendit nobis bona? Cui quaestioni Psalmista respondet, dicens, signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui, domine. Quasi dicat, per ipsam sigillationem divini luminis in nobis, omnia nobis demonstrantur.” *ST*, I, q. 84, a. 5, Ans. (British Edition, 1923, p. 447, with our modifications and emphasis).

of the human agent intellect in the divine intellect, not in the ontological participation of the things in the ideas. In other words, it seems to result from this passage that the human soul in a certain way knows the material things in the eternal reasons, not insofar as it would “intelligize” their essence directly in them, but insofar as it operates in the phantasms an illuminative act that extracts abstractively from them an intelligible structure, that is, the intelligible species or universal, potentially present in them and that, for the human intellect, plays a similar role to the one the ideas play in the divine intellect.

With regard to the “similitude” presented in the *ST*, I, q. 84, a. 5, Ans., one should notice that it is not the same “similitude” present in the logical intentions examined previously; furthermore, there is a notable equivocity in the term *similitudo* in Thomas Aquinas<sup>70</sup>. Thus, the “similitude” between the divine and human intellects is due to the participation of one in the other, which makes the operation mode of both similar, but also diverse. Their similarity and dissimilarity have already been anticipated in the *ST*, I (q. 4, a. 1, *ad 2m, ad 3m*; q. 15, a. 2, Ans.), where the similarity concerned, as here in the *ST*, I, q. 84, a. 5, Ans., the operation mode of an intellect that “intelligizes” from notions presented in itself, and the dissimilarity concerned the nature of these notions, in one case (of the divine intellect) they are the ideas or eternal reasons eternal, in the other case (of the human intellect) they are the intelligible ideas or the universals. Nonetheless, subsequently to the Answer to the question 84, a. 5, Aquinas finally mentions the participation of the material things in the eternal reasons, so that this participation also seems to play an indirect role in the human intellection of things in consortium with the intelligible species.

But since besides the intellectual light which is in us, intelligible species, which are derived from things, are required in order for us to have knowledge of material things, therefore this same knowledge is not due merely to [*per solam*] a participation of the eternal types, as the Platonists held, maintaining that the mere participation of ideas sufficed for knowledge.<sup>71</sup>

Aquinas seems to number three fundamental factors of the human intellection: (a) the intellection light or the agent intellect with abstractive or illuminative capacity, that is, a light participating in the uncreated light and whose operation bears similarity and dissimilarity with the divine operation, (b) the intelligible species, which are the result of the operation of the human intellect and the (c) eternal reasons, which somehow, not very clear in the question 84, article 5, contribute with the intelligible species so that the human being acquires science of material things. After all, the underlined passage clearly states that “we do not have mention of the material things *per solam* participation in the eternal reasons”, that is, “only” or

<sup>70</sup> Cf. PAZOS, 2018, p. 181-182, on another sense of *similitudo*, that is, between the ideas in God’s minds and the creatures in the context of the ideas as copies and of a “metaphysics of the creation”.

<sup>71</sup> “*Quia tamen praeter lumen intellectuale in nobis, exiguntur species intelligibiles a rebus acceptae, ad scientiam de rebus materialibus habendam; ideo non per solam participationem rationum aeternarum de rebus materialibus notitiam habemus, sicut Platonici posuerunt quod sola idearum participatio sufficit ad scientiam habendam.*” *ST*, I, q. 84, a. 5, Ans. (British Edition, 1923, p. 447. Our emphasis and brackets).

“only through” the participation of things in the ideas, which means that the knowledge of things through the intelligible species does not exclude their indirect knowledge through ideas.<sup>72</sup>

My interpretative hypothesis is that the indirect mode of knowing things through ideas and the human mode of knowing through abstraction of the intelligible species or of the universals can only be conciliated from the “common nature” or EAC. In this case, the correlation of the “common nature” with the ideas in God’s mind, with the nature instantiated in singular things and with the nature intelligized by the human intellect, a correlation presented in *Quodl.*, q. 8. A. 1. Ans.,<sup>73</sup> offers a complete solution on whether the ground of universals in the singular things is found in the similitude, on the common nature, and/or in the ideas, insofar as one must reply that the similitude, the common nature, and also the ideas play simultaneously and dynamically (neither in a univocal, nor in a direct way) a role of ground of the human knowledge. Still, on the other hand, the ground of the human knowledge derives from a certain dynamic and complex adequacy among the eidetic level (the ideas in the divine mind), the real level (metaphysical and physical, of the substances composed of form and matter, act and potency, entity and essence...), mental level (abstractive or illuminative), and the linguistic level (semantic and predicative).

## 6. Final Remarks

In conclusion, emptying out the “common nature” or the EAC of a ground in the metaphysical and physical levels that structure the real implies disconcerting the Thomasian indirect realism, reducing the “common nature” to a mere concept or name, with a “similitude” devoid of intelligibility, because it is

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<sup>72</sup> It is worth saying a few words on the very Aristotelized Augustine that Aquinas presents us at the end of the *ST*, I, q. 84, a. 5, Ans., immediately after the last quotation presented above: “And so Augustine says (De Trin. IV, 16) ‘Although the philosophers prove by convincing arguments that all things occur in time according to the eternal reasons were they able to see in the eternal reasons, or to find out from them how many kinds of animals there are and the origin of each? Did they not seek for this information from the history of times and places?’” *“Unde Augustinus dicit, in IV de Trin., ‘numquid quia philosophi documentis certissimis persuadent aeternis rationibus omnia temporalia fieri, propterea potuerunt in ipsis rationibus perspicere, vel ex ipsis colligere quot sint animalium genera, quae semina singulorum? Nonne ista omnia per locorum ac temporum historiam quaesierunt?’”* *ST*, I, q. 84, a. 5, Ans.. (British Edition, 1923, p. 447, with our modifications). Augustine’s passage is precisely from the *De Trinitate*, IV, xvi, 21, in which, in its argumentative context of origin, the “philosophers” to whom Augustine refers are the *platonici*, who primarily refer to Plato, Plotinus, and Porphyry, but here they seem to concern more properly his followers. Either way, the reference to the *platonici* explains why the eternal reasons or ideas are mentioned there. Furthermore, the chapter relates to the context of an apology of humbleness and of a criticism of pride (the latter associated to the “philosophers”), regarding the utility of faith to anticipate invisible realities and specially an end of history towards the future life (hence the relevance of “history”, which leads us to believe that the “philosophers” only look to the past, in contrast with the faith that provides a certain anticipation of the future, in a context of appreciation of the prophecy too). Moreover, right before the passage quoted by Aquinas, Augustine makes reference to Romans 1, 20 (“[...] *praeclaram incommutabilemque substantiam per illa quae facta sunt intellegere potuerunt*”, “[The proud] were able to intelligize/understand the sublime and immutable [divine] substance through the created things.”). Saying that from the creatures the human being is able to indirectly understand the eternal reasons, as ground or the order and rationality of the creation, could lead to an approximation with Aquinas, who not by accident is backed by this *a posteriori* characteristic of knowledge in the state of present life (or in the human condition, in a more Augustinian way) to manifest his argumentation aligned with Saint Augustine’s authority. By the way, not by a coincidence Aquinas’ next and last step in his answer to the question 84, a. 5, is quoting the §2 of Augustine’s *De ideis*, in order to say: “that Augustine did not understand all things to be known in their ‘eternal reasons’ or in the ‘immutable truth’, as though the eternal reasons themselves were seen, is clear from what he says — namely, that ‘not each and every rational soul can be said to be worthy of that vision’, namely, of the eternal reasons, ‘but only those that are holy and pure’, such as the souls of the blessed.” *“Quod autem Augustinus non sic intellexerit omnia cognosci in rationibus aeternis, vel in incommutabili veritate, quasi ipsae rationes aeternae videantur, patet per hoc quod ipse dicit in libro octoginta trium quaest., quod ‘rationalis anima non omnis et quaelibet, sed quae sancta et pura fuerit, asseritur illi visioni’, scilicet rationum aeternarum, ‘esse idonea’; sicut sunt animae beatorum.”* *ST*, I, q. 84, a. 5, Ans. British Edition, 1923, p. 447, with our modifications). In Augustine, however, there is no mention to an abstractive process through “intelligible species”, and “*intellegere*” has a very different meaning from the Thomasian technical one, always related to the abstracted universals, mainly because the problem concerning sensation and reason is articulated from another theory of the soul, to say the least.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. *supra* footnote 61.

arbitrarily and relatively collected by the sensitive and intellectual faculties. After all, if that was the case, nothing would validate logically and ontologically a statue – with the intention of resuming Aquinas’ metaphor, but outside the limits established above –, that represented many human beings through the “similitude” printed in them by a sculptor, was fundamentally common to the “similitude” sculpted by other sculptors in different statues and with which human individuals are supposedly represented in them. Therefore, the reading I propose of Aquinas is of an indirect realist or representationist philosopher, but which emphasizes his metaphysical and physical realism as base for the representation, in order to avoid relapsing in a conceptualism that empties out the mental verb (concepts) and the human interiority of dynamism and actuality. In short, the Thomasian “theory of knowledge” does not work if isolated and disconnected from the mythologies of ideas and the hylomorphic and participatory structure of things.

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