

Aquinas on Internal Sensory Intentions: Nature and Classification

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ABSTRACT: This paper suggests several *summa genera* for the various meanings of *intentio* in Aquinas and briefly outlines the genera of cognitive *intentiones*. It presents the referential and existential nature of intentions of harm or usefulness as distinguished from external sensory or imaginary forms in light of Avicenna's threefold sensory abstraction. The paper offers a terminological clarification regarding the quasi-immaterial existential status of intentions. Internal sensory intentions account for a way in which one perceives something, as is best seen in light of the distinction between formal and material objects. Against the imagist account of intentions that denies the memorative power an immanent object, it shows that the memorative's proper and immediate object is the intention of the past, while its extrinsic mediate object is the imaginary phantasm.

ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN much discussion of cognitive intentionality in recent years, Aquinas's comments on those intentions found in the internal senses (as distinguished from the myriad other kinds of intentions) have never been the object of an *ex professo* study.¹ This paper aims to show that an analysis of such intentions is indispensable for understanding Aquinas on the psychology of both human and non-rational animals. The first section suggests several *summa genera* for the various meanings of *intentio*, outlines the genera of cognitive *intentiones*, and lists the kinds of internal sensory intentions. Section two analyzes Aquinas's account of the referential and existential nature of intentions as distinguished from external sensory forms and imaginary phantasms in light of Avicenna's doctrine of intentions. This section suggests applying the Aristotelian principles of form and matter to the objects of the internal senses, and elucidates three essential characteristics of estimative or cogitative intentions. The third section suggests a terminological clarification regarding the immaterial status of cognitive sensory forms and intentions. The fourth section studies Aquinas on individual intentions and argues that the animal estimative has access to them. The fifth section argues that the intention of the past is the proper object of the memorative power and then presents the two functions of memory shared by humans and animals.² The study concludes with a

¹The most extensive treatment of Aquinas on *intentio* is by André Hayen, *L'intentionnel dans la philosophie de St Thomas* (Paris, France: Desclée de Brouwer, 1942). His discussion of "L'intentionnel aux confins de l'intelligence" (chap. 4) briefly addresses cogitative intentions. The same holds for H.-D. Simonin, "La notion d' 'intentio' dans l'oeuvre de saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 19 (1930): 445–63. Alberto Gómez Izquierdo focuses on intellectual intentions in "Valor cognoscitivo de la 'Intentio,'" *Ciencia tomista* 29 (1924): 169–88.

²Where I consider the meaning clear from the context, I use "animal" to refer to non-rational animals.

brief analysis of the “intention of sensation” (*intentio sensus*) that Aquinas attributes to the common sense.

I. OVERVIEW OF *INTENTIO* IN AQUINAS

Aquinas’s use of “intention” includes both the current, volitional meaning of the word, as in one’s intention to perform an act, and three other broad semantic categories. There are at least four *summa genera* for *intentio*: cognitive, volitional, logical, and instrumental.³ The only meanings of “intention” and “intentional” directly relevant to philosophical psychology are the cognitive (the mode of being of a known object) and the volitional (the act of an appetite directed toward an end). The logical sense refers to a logical category, as in the distinction between first and second intentions (such as “human” and “species”). What I term the “instrumental” sense has at least two meanings. The metaphysical usage of instrumental *intentio* refers, for example, to the effect of a principal agent on an instrumental cause.⁴ Aquinas no longer employs this sense in his later works.⁵ Perhaps he realized the need to limit somewhat the overlong list of meanings of *intentio*.

The other use of instrumental *intentio* refers to the existence (*esse*) of sensory forms in the medium as transmitted by light, sound, and so on. An intention in the medium is an imperfect type of being that exists independently of any human knower. One might be inclined to term this a “natural” sense insofar as these forms, while potentially knowable, are neither psychological nor properly metaphysical in nature, but rather a phenomenon in the physical universe. Yet this contrast was not as clear for Aquinas as it is for us, and thus Aquinas explicitly opposes intentions in the medium to the natural forms that exist in things. Light exists “intentionally” (*intentionaliter*) in the medium as opposed to an accidental form, such as heat, which exists “naturally” (*naturaliter*) in a subject.⁶ The distinction between a

³These categories are meant to improve on the five meanings and dozens of sub-meanings of *intentio* in Roy Deferrari, *Lexicon of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Univ. of America Press, 1948), s.v., which are not systematically presented and do not clearly distinguish the most important usages such as the technical use of *intentio particularis* to refer to a distinctive object of the cogitative and estimative powers. Deferrari’s definition follows that in Ludwig Schütz, *Thomas-Lexikon* (Stuttgart, Germany: Frommanns Verlag-Günther Holzboog, 1895), s.v., which Simonin had already critiqued (“La notion d’‘intentio’ dans l’oeuvre de saint Thomas d’ Aquin,” p. 445). Schütz argued that the cogitative power should be eliminated from Aquinas’s psychology in “Die *vis aestimativa seu cogitativa* des hl. Thomas von Aquin,” *Görres-Gesellschaft zur Pflege der Wissenschaft* (Jahresbericht der Section für Philosophie für das Jahr 1883; Köln: J. P. Bachem, 1884): 38–62. It seems likely that his critique of Aquinas on this issue colored his dictionary definition, and this oversight was then inherited by Deferrari.

⁴“In re corporali non potest esse virtus spiritualis secundum esse completum; potest tamen ibi esse per modum intentionis, sicut in instrumentis motis ab artifice est virtus artis.” *Commentary on the Sentences*, Bk. 4, dist. 1, q. 1, art. 4, qc. 2, reply to the fourth objection [henceforth, abbreviated as “*Sentences* 4.1.1.4.2 ad 4”]. I cannot discuss the possible broader metaphysical uses of *intentio* (e.g., as a synonym of *ratio*) here.

⁵Cf. Simonin, “La notion d’‘intentio’ dans l’oeuvre de saint Thomas d’ Aquin,” pp. 448–51.

⁶E.g., “Light is in air . . . by way of intention . . . such intentions essentially depend on the forms of natural bodies” (*lumen est in aere . . . per modum intentionis . . . hujusmodi enim intentiones dependent a formis naturalibus corporum per se*), *De Potentia*, q. 5, art. 1, reply to the sixth objection [henceforth, “*De Pot. 5.1 ad 6*”]; cf. *De Pot. 5.8*. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated. Cf. George Klubertanz, “*De Potentia, 5.8: A Note on the Thomist Theory of Sensation*,” *Modern Schoolman* 26 (1949): 323–31.

quality in a medium and in a substance is valid, but the Averroistic terminology is not just obsolete but even equivocal. Relying on Averroes's terminology, Aquinas uses "spiritual intention" (*intentio spiritualis*) to refer both to subjective being, as in the form received in the eye, and to objective being, as in the form in the medium as transmitted by light or a mirror image.⁷ This equivocally uses the same term for two different natures.⁸

In the *De Veritate*, Aquinas explicitly teaches that "intention" is used equivocally when applied on the volitional and cognitive registers. Aquinas contrasts the intention of the end, which is in the will, and the intention of the good signified by a definition, which refers primarily to the cognitive usage.⁹ In the memorative power, an intention is a cognitive entity (albeit one that can elicit an appetitive movement), whereas in an act of the divine will or animal appetite, intention is volitional, either supereminently (as compared to a created will) or analogically speaking.¹⁰ By modern standards, Aquinas makes use of analogy rather freely in his explanation of terms. Yet, in this case, Aquinas himself precluded any debate as to whether *intentio* is analogical when said of these two *summa genera*. While there may be instructive comparisons between cognitive and volitional intentions, the two are mutually irreducible. Given the equivocality in the meanings of *intentio*, it is pointless to look for a prime analogate underlying the term's heterogeneous uses. Henceforth, this study focuses primarily on cognitive intentions.

⁷E.g., *Sentences* 4.44.3.1.3.

⁸For an example of the confusion generated by this equivocal usage, cf. John of St. Thomas, *Cursus Philosophicus Thomisticus*, part 4, q. 8, art. 4 (Marietti ed., vol. 3, p. 266, lines 23–40): the soul causes sensed species to emit unsensed species; and "the heavenly power helps greatly in this since it has an eminent influence on intentional actions, as Thomas says in *De Pot.* 5.8." Cf. Klubertanz, "*De Potentia*, 5.8," on the need to take modern science into account in evaluating Aquinas on intentions in the medium.

⁹"When it is said that the end is prior in intention, 'intention' refers to the act of the mind, which is to intend. But when we compare the intention of the good and the true, 'intention' refers to the notion signified by a definition; whence it is used equivocally in the two cases" (*cum dicitur quod finis est prior in intentione, intentio sumitur pro actu mentis, qui est intendere. Cum autem comparamus intentionem boni et veri, intentio sumitur pro ratione quam significat definitio; unde aequivoce accipitur utrobique*), *De Veritate* q. 21, art. 3, ad 5 [henceforth, abbreviated as "*DV* 21.3 ad 5"]. Given that to intend is an act of the will (e.g., *Summa theologiae, Prima secundae* q. 12, art. 1 [henceforth, abbreviated as "*ST* 1-2.12.1"]), "mind" here refers primarily to the will. Surely Aquinas refers to the will as "mind" to stress that the will never operates independently of intellect. Cf. Simonin on *DV* 21.3 ad 5: "in the order of knowledge, the notion of *intentio* completely loses its motive sense; it belongs to the object within the mind whose special mode of being it designates . . . passing unduly from the [volitional] to the [cognitive] domain is not using the analogical breadth of one notion but . . . falling into equivocation" ("La notion d' 'intention' dans l'oeuvre de saint Thomas d' Aquin," p. 461).

¹⁰Contrast Miguel A. García Jaramillo, who suggests that "intention" is applied analogically to the volitional and cognitive domains insofar as there is "a certain affinity or analogy between the *intentio* conserved in sense memory and the *intentio* as act of the will." *La cogitativa en Tomás de Aquino y sus fuentes* (Pamplona, Spain: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1997), p. 245. He cites *ST* 1-2.12.5 in support of his thesis: "To intend is to tend to something; and this belongs both to the mover and to the moved. According, therefore, as that which is moved to an end by another [i.e., God] is said to intend the end . . . even irrational animals intend an end, inasmuch as they are moved to something by natural instinct." Rather, Aquinas's point is that animals are said to "intend" as something moved since he views instinctual drives as a participation in the intention of nature or of the Creator. Aquinas's use of the vague "instinct" (which can refer to animal cognition, appetite, or both) may have contributed to García's misreading.

The three kinds of cognitive intention are: (1) *intellectual*, (2) *external sensory*, and (3) *internal sensory* (i.e., as found in the estimative, cogitative, and memorative powers). Scholars have made various attempts to establish one unified meaning for the various cognitive intentions.¹¹ Properly universal concepts or “understood intentions” (*intentiones intellectae*) are the terminus of the act of understanding, in contrast to the intelligible intentions that are its principle.¹² External sensory intentions are synonymous with external sensory forms, impressions, likenesses, or “species.”¹³ The immutation of an external sense generates an intention of a sensory form in the respective organ; for example, a color is received in the eye intentionally.¹⁴ Aquinas only ascribes these immutative intentions to the external senses; he never uses *intentio* for forms received in the common sense.

I submit that “intention” can be used in a broad sense as a genus for the four species of internal sensory intentions, that is, the four aspects under which one views an object or oneself as a subject. They are listed here in their order of prominence in Aquinas:

- (1) Intentions of harm or benefit
Object *as* harmful or useful
Estimative/cogitative power
- (2) Individual intentions
Object *as* Callias, son, etc.
Cogitative/estimative power
- (3) Intention of the past (*Ratio praeteriti*)
Object *as* past
Memorative power

¹¹Hayen holds that a cognitive intention is always “a relationship going from the mind to an object” (“une relation allant de l’esprit à l’objet”), *L’intentionnel dans la philosophie de St Thomas*, p. 217. Klubertanz suggests paraphrasing *intentio* as “cognition, under the aspect of its having a direction (finality, or tendency) toward an object” in *The Discursive Power: Sources and Doctrine of the Vis Cogitativa According to St. Thomas Aquinas* (St. Louis MO: Modern Schoolman, 1952), p. 232. These are accurate etymological definitions of *intentio* (from *intendere*, literally, “to tend toward”). Yet Klubertanz’s description confuses the volitional and cognitive registers by invoking “finality.” It is also unclear how it applies to external sensory intentions that are primarily receptive. Similarly, Gómez says that the “essence” of cognitive intentions for Aquinas is an “active relation of the power to the known object,” yet without clarifying what he means by “active” (“Valor cognoscitivo de la ‘Intentio,’” pp. 178–80). Perhaps one could salvage Gómez’s amorphous definition by specifying that “active” refers to the mind’s more perfect activity as opposed to the inertia of physical matter. In contrast to the underdescribed suggestions by Klubertanz and Gómez, Simonin defines the core meaning of cognitive *intentio* as “the object of knowledge envisaged as such” (“La notion d’‘intentio’ dans l’oeuvre de saint Thomas d’Aquin,” p. 460) and suggests that the various subsets are analogically related (*ibid.*, p. 457).

¹²E.g., *Contra gentiles* Bk. 1, chap. 53; Leonine ed., n4 [henceforth, abbreviated as “1.53n4”] and *ST* 1.85.1 ad 4.

¹³Cf. Gómez, “Valor cognoscitivo de la ‘Intentio,’” p. 177: “the words *species*, *forma*, *similitudo* and *intentio* are used indifferently to designate the objective element which, joined to the activity of the sense power, produces knowledge of exterior things.” I would add that each term has its own nuance or emphasis; e.g., *intentio* can be used to stress the intentional (vs. physical) nature of sensation (as in the next footnote).

¹⁴“The intention of color, which is in the pupil, does not make it white” (*intentio coloris, quae est in pupilla, non potest facere album*) *ST* 1-2.5.6 ad 2. Cf. *ST* 1.78.3: *immutatio spiritualis, per quam intentio formae sensibilis fiat in organo sensus*. *Spiritualis* here is a synonym for *intentionalis*.

(4) Intention of sense (*Intentio sensus*)Subject *as* sensing

The common sense

Each kind of intention will now be analyzed, beginning with the most fundamental kind, i.e., intentions of harm and benefit.

II. THE REFERENTIAL AND EXISTENTIAL NATURE OF INTENTIONS

In standard medieval fashion, Aquinas does not often explicitly name his sources and interlocutors. Thus, it is all the more significant that he acknowledges his indebtedness to Avicenna for the doctrine of intentions of harm or usefulness in *Summa theologiae* 1.78.4, even using Avicenna's *De Anima*, the Latin translation of the *Shifa, al-Nafs (Cure, On the Soul)* as his authority in the *sed contra*.¹⁵ Aquinas's precise use of "intention" as a technical term for the object of the estimative and cogitative powers stems from the Latin translation of Avicenna's technical term *ma'na*.¹⁶ Following the Latin translation of Avicenna, Aquinas consistently avoids using *intentio* to refer to the content of imagination.¹⁷ Intentions of harm or benefit were the first historical kind of internal sensory intention, as Avicenna posited them prior to Averroes's or Aquinas's developments. They are also the most fundamental kind in terms of psychology since they correspond to basic instincts such as fight or flight. I call these positive or negative apprehensions "action-oriented" intentions.¹⁸

In *Summa theologiae* 1.78.4, Aquinas provides an original teleological argument for the existence of such intentions.¹⁹ Sensations of pain and pleasure are insufficient for animal survival. Higher animals also require a perception of what is advantageous or harmful independently of immediate sensations of pain or pleasure.²⁰ Many of these intentions are innate: a mouse flees the smell of cat instinctively, prior to the painful experience of being scratched by it. Although a swallow experiences no

¹⁵For a helpful presentation of Avicenna on estimation, see Deborah Black, "Estimation (*Wahm*) in Avicenna: The Logical and Psychological Dimensions," *Dialogue* 32 no. 2 (1993): 219–58. For an overview of Avicenna, Averroes, Albert, and Aquinas, see Black's "Imagination and Estimation: Arabic Paradigms and Western Transformations," *Topoi* 19 no. 1 (2000): 59–75.

¹⁶E.g., Bk. 4, chap. 1 of *Avicenna Latinus: De Anima*, ed. S. van Riet (Leiden, Holland: Brill, 1968), vol. 2, pp. 6–11 [henceforth, "*Avicenna Latinus* DA 4.1; ed. van Riet, 2: 6–11"]; cf. Amélie-Marie Goichon, *Lexique de la langue philosophique d'Ibn Sina (Avicenne)* (Paris, France: Desclée de Brouwer, 1938), s.v.

¹⁷Deferrari's *Lexicon* lists "image" under the fourth meaning of *intentio*; yet, since "intention" is never used for the images found in the imaginative power, it is best to specify that this could only refer to an image in external sensation. Aquinas uses *imago* for imagination and memory in a manner explained below (section five).

¹⁸I use "action-oriented" rather than "practical" since animals have no share in the practical in the specific sense of ethical activity: sensory operations (*aisthesis*) are not a sufficient cause for moral action (*praxis*), as in *Nicomachean Ethics* 6.2, 1139a19–20.

¹⁹Cf. Black, "Imagination and Estimation," p. 66.

²⁰"It is necessary that the animal seek or flee certain things, not only because they are agreeable or disagreeable to sensation, but also on account of other advantages and uses, or detriments (*nocumenta*); just as the sheep flees upon seeing the approaching wolf, not due to the repugnance of its color or shape, but as from its natural enemy; and similarly, a bird gathers up a twig, not because it pleases its senses, but because it is useful for building a nest." *ST* 1.78.4. The term *nocumenta* could also be rendered as "harmful qualities."

pleasure in picking up bits of mud, it does so since it “estimates” their usefulness for nest-building. Throughout his works, Aquinas avoids referring to imaginary forms as intentions so as to prevent confusion between the internal senses that apprehend sensory forms (i.e., the common sense and imaginative) and those that apprehend intentions (i.e., the cogitative or estimative and memorative).²¹ While, for Avicenna, both humans and animals have an estimative faculty, Aquinas reserves “estimative power” for non-rational beings such as animals or infant humans. Aquinas refers to the estimative as it is found in humans who possess the use of reason as the cogitative power. The human cogitative has other functions in addition to the perception of action-oriented intentions.²²

Avicenna rightly notes that no sensory form can represent danger as such, but only dangerous things. One can helpfully consider intentions as a kind of relation between two things (e.g., between a given object and pain or danger).²³ Aquinas adopts Avicenna’s account of intentions as apprehended in relation to something that is sensed, viewing it *as* threatening or useful. One could add that intentions are not limited to individual things but can be apprehended in relation to discrete sensory qualities or to the combination of qualities present in a real or imagined situation (such as a poorly lit place). Insofar as an intention allows one to perceive something as (*qua*) harmful or helpful, it is similar to an intellectual concept, by means of which (*quo*) one considers a physical singular under a universal, for example, as animal.²⁴ Like a concept, an intention is that by which one perceives a reality. Such intentions do not represent a particular thing but rather an aspect of something insofar as it is related to the perceiver in either a positive or negative way, i.e., as beneficial or dangerous.

Two important notes about the doctrine of intentions are as follows. First, one can most fully understand action-oriented intentions as having a threefold character. These intentions have a definite qualitative content, enable the categorization of objects on that basis, and are inherently relational. These three characterizations of intentions are interrelated. By the estimative, an animal apprehends the intention of

²¹The only apparent exception is: “For among the forms which the soul acquires through sense while it is in the body, certain ones are individual intentions, which are conserved in the powers of the sensitive part . . . others are universal intentions” (*Disputed Questions on the Soul*, q. 20, obj. 2). Yet the use of terminology in objections is often less precise than Aquinas’s, especially in a disputed question. Since one exception does not invalidate the standard meaning, this usage can be considered anomalous.

²²*ST* I.78.4: “For other animals perceive such intentions only by a certain natural instinct, but man does so by a certain comparison as well (*etiam*).” *Etiam* indicates that the cogitative fulfills both the instinctive role and a higher role due to its continuity with intellect.

²³“The other mode [of estimation besides the innate or instinctive] is that which happens by something like experience. For whenever an animal undergoes pain or pleasure, or sensible utility or harm joined to a sensible form reaches it, and the form of this thing and the form of what is joined to it is imprinted in the formative power [i.e., imagination], and the intention of the relation which exists between them has been imprinted in the memory, along with the judgment regarding [that relation] . . .” (*Alius autem modus est sicut hoc quod fit per experientiam. Animal etenim cum habuerit dolorem aut delicias, aut pervenerit ad illud utilitas sensibilis aut nocumentum sensibile adiunctum cum forma sensibili, et descripta fuerit in formali forma huius rei et forma eius quod adiunctum est illi, et descripta fuerit in memoria intentio comparationis quae est inter illas et iudicium de illa . . .*), *Avicenna Latinus* DA 4.3; ed. van Riet, 2: 39, lines 39–44.

²⁴Aquinas explicitly compares the estimative to intellect in this respect in *ST* I.78.4 ad 4.

harm regarding an object, categorizes the object as harmful, and views the object as harmful in relation to itself. The threefold epistemological status of action-oriented intentions applies in important ways to the other kinds as well. Only rational animals can reflectively consider an intention's qualitative character since this requires a higher faculty, namely, intellect.

Second, although Aquinas never explicitly defines the object of the estimative or cogitative powers, the distinction between formal and material objects sheds much-needed light on the relation of these powers to the other powers of the soul.²⁵ One apprehends a material object by means of a formal object; thus, color is the formal object of vision, and a given thing is its material object.²⁶ In a similar way, I consider the estimative power's formal object to be intentions, and its material object to be the phantasms to which these intentions are applied. One's perception of a black widow spider engages the concomitant judgments of external sense ("black and red"), the common sense ("small, moving, eight-legged object"), the cogitative power ("dangerous"), and the intellect ("black widow spider"). The external sensory forms become the material object of the common sense, to which the common sense adds a new formality, that of "unified whole." The cogitative takes the unified whole as its material object and views it under the formal object of "danger." Finally, the phantasm of the thing received in imagination is the intellect's material object, while intellect's formal object is the concept "black widow spider." The intellect can either second the cogitative apprehension of danger with its own judgment, or it can counter it by considering the object as harmless under the present circumstances.

Thus, the proper understanding of intentions requires relating them to phantasms as form to matter, with the form actualizing the matter. The application of formal and material objects to the internal senses relies on the fundamental principles of hylomorphism, namely, form as actual and matter as potential. In this context I use "form" and "matter" in an analogical sense, similar to Aristotle's notion that what something is and what it is made of (i.e., its formal and material causes) are "said in many ways" (*pollachos legetai*). That which one externally senses is material with regard to the various kinds of intentions. While the acts of external sense, the common sense, the imagination, and the cogitative are posterior to each other in the order of analysis, they ordinarily occur simultaneously, or nearly so. Yet one must separate out the constitutive elements of experience in order to analyze it.

The experiential unity of the acts of the cognitive powers shows their continuity and synergy within the one soul. Although caricatures of "faculty psychology" portray each faculty as a separate entity within the soul, Aquinas explicitly avoids hypostatizing the soul's faculties. It is not just intellect, but the soul or the human who understands: "Understanding . . . is attributed to the soul, or even to the human,

²⁵James Reichmann also reaches this conclusion in *Philosophy of the Human Person* (Chicago IL: Loyola Press, 1985), chap. 5. Aquinas speaks of the *ratio objecti* rather than the "formal object"; e.g., *Disputed Questions on the Soul*, q. 13 ad 4.

²⁶Cf. *Sentences* 2.24.2.2 ad 5: *actiones quae differunt secundum diversa objecta, ostendunt diversitatem potentiarum: ut tamen accipiatur differentia objectorum secundum id quod ad propriam rationem objecti pertinet: homo enim et lapis differunt genere, sed conveniunt secundum quod sunt objectum visus in colore: et ideo visio hominis et lapidis pertinent ad unam potentiam . . .*

for it is said that the soul understands, or the human, by the soul.”²⁷ Elsewhere he states more precisely: “Properly speaking, it is not sense or intellect that knows, but man that knows through both of them.”²⁸ From a hylomorphic perspective, the soul-body composite is responsible for cognition; the individual sees thanks to the visual power, perceives danger by the estimative, and so on. (These observations regarding the soul’s activities and powers may help allay Wittgensteinian misgivings about the objects and powers of the soul. These suspicions are, for the most part, misguided when applied to Aquinas’s psychology.)

Avicenna clearly distinguishes the referential and existential characteristics of estimative intentions from those of external sensory and imaginary forms.²⁹ While Aquinas does not adopt Avicenna’s language of a threefold sensory abstraction, he accepts the doctrine of three related but irreducible types of sensory objects, ranging from those most rooted in matter to those most separate from it. First are the sensory forms (*formae sensibiles*) received in the external senses and the common sense. These forms are received without matter but with material conditions.³⁰ The second level is that of the phantasms (*phantasmata*) received in imagination (*phantasia*), while the third is that of estimative or cogitative intentions. Both images and intentions can be related to something that is either present or absent.

The clearest criterion for the distinction between sensory and intellectual objects refers to the accidents or conditions of matter. Avicenna says that no sensory object is abstracted from material accidents such as time and place.³¹ Aquinas concurs: “In sensation a thing has being without matter, although not without the individuating material conditions, nor without a bodily organ.”³² Aquinas uses “sensation” (*sensus*), broadly speaking, to refer either to external sensation, or to internal sensation, or to both, as is the case here. In contrast, intellectual operations are fully immaterial; in

²⁷*Intelligere . . . attribuitur animae, vel etiam homini: dicitur enim quod anima intelligit, vel homo per animam. Contra Gentiles 2.62n9.*

²⁸*Non enim proprie loquendo sensus aut intellectus cognoscunt, sed homo per utrumque. DV 2.6 ad 3.*

²⁹Cf. *Avicenna Latinus* DA 4.3; ed. van Riet, 2: 44–46, where Avicenna speaks of the abstraction carried out by external sensation and imagination (e.g., *id quod est apprehendens formas singulares exteriores secundum affectionem imperfectae abstractionis et separationis a materia, nec abstractae aliquo modo ab appendiciis materiae sicut apprehendunt sensus exteriores*, 2: 44, lines 26–30), and the argumentation in 2: 44–54, which is duplicated almost verbally in *Avicenna’s Psychology: An English Translation of Kitab al-najat, Book II, Chapter VI*, trans. Fazlur Rahman (London UK: Oxford Univ. Press, 1952) [henceforth, “Najat (Rahman tr.)”], chap. 8, pp. 41–45. Herein, I also refer to Avicenna’s explicit presentation of four degrees of separation or abstraction from matter in Najat (Rahman tr.), chap. 7, pp. 38–40, a text to which Aquinas had no access.

³⁰*Sensus . . . recipit formam rei cognitae, sine materia quidem, sed cum materialibus conditionibus. ST 1.84.2; cf. 1.14.1. Cf. “A ‘sense’ is that which is receptive of the forms of sensory things without the matter.” Aristotle, *De anima* 2.12, 424a18–19.*

³¹“Consequently, one of the accidents which occur to the human quiddity through matter is multiplicity and divisibility. Besides these it is also subject to other accidents, namely, when it is present in any matter, it possesses to a certain degree quantity, quality, place, and position.” Najat (Rahman tr.), chap. 7, p. 38.

³²*Nam in sensu res habet esse sine materia, non tamen absque conditionibus materialibus individuantibus, neque absque organo corporali. Commentary on De Anima, Bk. 2, lectio 5; Marietti ed., n. 284 [henceforth, “In DA 2.5, n. 284”]. Cf. ibid., n. 285. Sensus et ratio non communicant in uno objecto; cum sensus apprehendat intentiones rerum cum conditionibus materiae; ratio autem et intellectus intentiones a conditionibus materiae separatas. Sentences 2.9.1.8 ad 1.*

universal formation, the intellect abstracts from place, time, and other individuating characteristics.³³ Sensation is only partially immaterial.³⁴ In contrast, Aquinas describes God as “most immaterial” (*immaterialissimus*).³⁵

The direct dependence of external sensation on matter helps clarify the precise difference between external sensory forms and phantasms. Likenesses received in the external senses depend directly on a physically present object.³⁶ The external sensory object is a physical substance, artifact, meteorological phenomenon, or the like that is perceived by a physical transient quality, such as light or sound. In contrast, imaginary phantasms may be of something absent or non-existent; to use Avicenna’s terminology, images “abstract” from matter itself. Nonetheless, phantasms refer directly to inherently material qualities sensed by the proper and common sensibles, and thus remain subject to the conditions of matter.

For Avicenna, although estimative intentions exist under material conditions and are related to physical objects, they are situated at a higher level of abstraction than external sensory and imaginary forms.³⁷ Estimative intentions are accidents of an ensouled organ.³⁸ Avicenna’s terminology of imaginative and cogitative abstraction helps bring out the increasing immateriality in the three different levels of sensory object (i.e., external sensory, phantasmal, and intentional). In contrast to Avicenna and Albert the Great, Aquinas restricts abstraction (*abstractio*) to intellect. Yet Aquinas concurs with Avicenna that neither the external senses nor imagination can grasp estimative intentions.³⁹

In light of brute animals’ apprehension of sensory forms and estimative intentions, Aquinas grants them a limited participation in immateriality: “Insofar as [non-rational animals] participate in a certain immateriality, to this degree they

³³E.g., *In DA* 2.5, n. 284: “For one thing is fully immaterial, namely intelligible being” (*nam quoddam est penitus immateriale, scilicet esse intelligibile*).

³⁴“Those operations which are attributed to living things according to fully immaterial being belong to the soul’s intellectual part; while those which are attributed to them according to a halfway [immaterial] being, belong to the soul’s sensory part. And according to this threefold being there is commonly distinguished a threefold soul: namely, vegetative, sensory, and rational” (*operationes autem, quae attribuuntur rebus viventibus secundum esse penitus immateriale, pertinent ad partem animae intellectivam; quae vero attribuuntur eis secundum esse medium, pertinent ad partem animae sensitivam. Et secundum hoc triplex esse distinguitur communiter triplex anima: scilicet vegetabilis, sensibilis et rationalis*). *Ibid.*, n. 285.

³⁵*Sentences* 3.2.1.3.2.

³⁶Cf. Aristotle, *De anima* 2.5, 417a7–9.

³⁷“For all this, however, [the estimative] does not abstract the form from all accidents of matter, because it apprehends it in its individuality and according to its particular matter and its attachments to sensible images conditioned by material accidents with the cooperation of representation [i.e., imagination].” Najat (Rahman trans.), chap. 7, p. 40, lines 8–13. Avicenna’s use of “form” here to refer to an intention is exceptional, yet understandable if one takes “form” in the most general sense; cf. Aquinas’s occasional use of *species* for the determination of any knowing power. For a somewhat similar text available to Aquinas, see *Avicenna Latinus DA* 4.3; ed. van Riet, 2: 54, lines 75–77: “When you have understood this regarding imagination, you have already understood it regarding estimation which does not apprehend anything it apprehends unless in a singular imaginable form, as we have shown.”

³⁸Cf. *Avicenna Latinus DA* 4.3; ed. van Riet, 2: 54, lines 75–77, where Avicenna applies his comments on the materiality of imagination to the estimative, *mutatis mutandis*. Cf. Najat (Rahman trans.), chap. 8, p. 45, lines 34–37.

³⁹“The estimative power is ordered to perceiving intentions, which are not received by sensation . . . such intentions, which external sense does not perceive.” *ST* 1.78.4.

participate in cognition and volition. Whence, animals know insofar as they receive the species of sensible things immaterially in the sensory organs, and they are inclined by intentions spiritually received from things to diverse objects by means of the sensory appetite.⁴⁰ In contrast to later scholastics who often fail to distinguish external sensory or imaginary species from estimative or cogitative intentions, Aquinas here clearly distinguishes sensory forms or species from the intentions of harm or benefit that elicit a movement in the sense appetite.⁴¹

Avicenna teaches that the proper referent of estimative intentions is non-material:

The faculty of estimation goes a little farther than [imagination] in abstraction, for it receives the intentions that in themselves are non-material, although they accidentally happen to be in matter. This is because shape, color, position, etc. are attributes that cannot be found except in bodily matters, but good and evil, agreeable and disagreeable, etc., are in themselves non-material entities and their presence in matter is accidental.⁴²

There is only sensation of dangerous *things*, not of danger itself. One cannot see, hear, taste, smell, or touch danger; thus, danger is non-material.⁴³ No object is necessarily perceived as dangerous: a cheerfully colored *phyllobates terribilis* looks charming behind an exhibit glass, even though touching this poisonous frog would be fatal. The concept of danger is applied to it after reading its description, but the intention of danger is not, and hence one does not feel fear. Conversely, upon being offered to touch a non-venomous snake, one's intellect may view it as harmless, yet one's cogitative may simultaneously apprehend it as dangerous, thus eliciting a fear reaction. An emotional response that runs counter to a cool intellectual evaluation is a clear indicator that the mind is apprehending an action-oriented intention as well as an abstract concept.

One can infer from Avicenna's statement that intentions "accidentally happen to be in matter" that there is no *per se* or absolute relationship between a given material object, living or non-living, and the perception of an action-oriented intention. Thus, the poison-dart frog is not universally or absolutely considered dangerous; the male frog's estimative would not judge a female as "evil," but as "good" for reproduction.

⁴⁰*Et secundum quod aliquam immaterialitatem participant, secundum hoc cognitionis et voluntatis participativa sunt. Unde et animalia cognoscunt, in quantum species sensibilibus immaterialiter in organo sensuum recipiuntur, et secundum intentiones spiritualiter ex rebus perceptas per appetitum sensibilem ad diversa inclinantur. Sentences 3.27.1.4.*

⁴¹E.g., "Memory does not just conserve but also knows species" (*memoria est cognoscitiva, non solum conservativa specierum*). John of St. Thomas, *Cursus Philosophicus*, part 4, q. 8, a. 2 (Marietti ed., 3: 255). In the context of an *ex professo* treatment of the internal senses, this is a severely underdescribed assertion, as it gives no indication of whether "species" is taken in a specific sense to refer to forms, or a generic sense that includes one or more kinds of internal sensory intentions. See discussion below in section five.

⁴²*Najat* (Rahman tr.), chap. 7, p. 39, lines 30–37.

⁴³"The proof of [intentions] being non-material is this: If it were of their essence to be material, then good and evil, agreeable and disagreeable would be inconceivable except as accidents in a physical body. But sometimes they are conceived in themselves apart from matter [i.e., by intellect]. It is clear that in themselves they are non-material and their being in matter is entirely by accident. It is such entities that the faculty of estimation perceives; and thus it perceives non-material objects which it abstracts from matter." *Najat* (Rahman tr.), chap. 7, p. 39 line 37 to p. 40, line 6. As noted previously, this does not entail that non-rational animals can reflectively consider the qualitative content of such intentions.

The frog is relatively and conditionally viewed as dangerous. For Avicenna, intentions only extend to sensory forms of “good and evil,” not to the metaphysical. Goodness as a transcendental property of being abstracts from material conditions, and therefore can only be the object of the intellect. The intellect’s perception of good is more abstract than the estimative’s grasp of it. Whereas intellection grasps the universal good, sensation only grasps particular goods.⁴⁴ The estimative perceives good or evil only as attached to a given singular and under material conditions. The estimative does not perceive good or evil in itself as an ontological property or the privation thereof. (It is likely in order to emphasize this that the later Aquinas avoids using “good” and “evil” to describe the estimative power’s object, preferring more precise synonyms such as “beneficial” or “harmful” that lack ethical or metaphysical connotations.)

Aquinas remarks that “the imaginative and estimative . . . are not distinguished from [external] sensation on the part of the thing known, for they are of what is present or quasi-present.”⁴⁵ In the case of present things, the estimative or cogitative applies an action-oriented intention to the phantasm of a present sensible. As for the quasi-present object, imagination renders something quasi-present by joining two phantasms, such as that of a man’s body and a bull’s head to form a “minotaur.” The estimative’s object is quasi-present when an animal is aware of absent or future things insofar as it is seeking or avoiding them. Thus, a bird’s estimative applies an intention of usefulness to something absent when it flies off in search of a specific nest-building material. The animal estimative relies on innate or acquired intentions to guard against future threats, as evidenced by precautionary measures against possible predators. These actions regard absent dangers or future goods as if (*quasi*) they were present. The intention of danger is present in a prey animal’s consciousness when it goes to an exposed spot such as a waterhole, even if no predators are actually there.

To take a case involving humans, the analysis of stage fright reveals the apprehension of an intention of danger in relation to the imaginary depiction of a public failure. One’s attitude toward a future contingent renders it quasi-present, thus engendering a fear reaction in the sensory appetite.⁴⁶ “Attitude” refers to the disposition of the cogitative in collaboration with the imaginative and memorative; past failures strengthen the negative intentional association.

Unlike the human intellect, the animal estimative seeks to obtain future goods or to avoid future evils without perceiving such events as future.⁴⁷ An action-oriented

⁴⁴Cf. *ST* 2-2.2.3.

⁴⁵*Non facit autem de aliis mentionem, scilicet de imaginatione et aestimatione, quia haec non distinguuntur a sensu ex parte rei cognitae; sunt enim praesentium vel quasi praesentium. Commentary on De Sensu, lectio 1; Marietti ed., n. 9.*

⁴⁶Some scholars overlook the role of the cogitative (or estimative) in fear reactions by focusing on *ST* 1.83.1 ad 2; e.g., Robert Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2009), pp. 68ff. Yet this is better considered to be superseded by *In DA* 3.4, n. 634–35, which matches up with Aquinas’s account in *ST* 1.78.4. Although I cannot argue the point here, it seems that there can be no emotional reactions of fear or anger in response to external sensation or imagination independently of an intention of harm or benefit.

⁴⁷Cf. *ST* 1.86.4 obj. 3 and ad 3.

intention suffices to direct animal conative activity. Similarly, the human cogitative cannot conceive of the future as future. Thus, cogitative anticipation of a future good or evil need not be conscious in the way an intellectual judgment on a future contingent is. The cogitative may subconsciously introduce a character of necessity or inevitability regarding future contingents, thus yielding inordinate fear or hope. Here “necessity” is intended in a psychological rather than a logical sense, i.e., in the sense of the immediacy and non-contingency characteristic of an event that is perceived as if it were present.

III. MATTER AS A CO-PRINCIPLE OF SENSORY INTENTIONALITY

Thus far, I have employed Aquinas’s and Avicenna’s language of “immateriality” as fully attributable to intellectual concepts, and attributable in a lesser way to immanent sensory forms and intentions, as contrasted with the physical objects sensed or perceived by means of them. The immaterial or intentional status of sensory forms has recently become the subject of considerable debate among English-speaking philosophers. Some suggest that, for Aquinas, external sensory and imaginary forms are explainable in purely physical terms rather than in terms of immateriality or intentionality.⁴⁸ Others hold that intentional forms are rightly termed immaterial in some sense of the term.⁴⁹ The latter viewpoint follows Aquinas’s own terminology. As is customary in discussions of Aquinas’s epistemology, the aforementioned scholars make no mention of distinctively estimative or cogitative intentions.

Prior to investigating Aquinas on the intentionality of sensation, one must first define the relevant terms, such as “material” and “immaterial.”⁵⁰ Much of the debate stems from a lack of clarity regarding what Aquinas means by these terms, especially in light of the philosophy of nature. The following distinction sheds considerable light on the issue. The first sense of material is “that which is made of matter.”⁵¹ Lest

⁴⁸For a representative sampling of this view, see Sheldon Cohen, “St. Thomas Aquinas on the Immaterial Reception of Sensible Forms,” *Philosophical Review* 91 no. 2 (1982): 193–209; John Haldane, “Aquinas on Sense-Perception,” *Philosophical Review* 92 no. 2 (1983): 233–39; Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind* (New York NY: Routledge, 1993), pp. 34, 107; and Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature: A Philosophical Study of Summa theologiae Ia, 75–89* (New York NY: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2002), pp. 57–65. Haldane’s earlier paper is superseded by “A Return to Form in the Philosophy of Mind,” *Ratio* 9 no. 3 (1998): 253–77. Pasnau mistakenly lists Haldane’s earlier paper as in agreement with those who hold to the immateriality of sensation (p. 411 n14). Mortimer Adler held that “immaterial” is incoherent if taken univocally regarding animal and human minds in *The Difference of Man and the Difference It Makes* (New York NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), p. 196.

⁴⁹E.g., John Deely, “The Immateriality of the Intentional as Such,” *New Scholasticism* 42 (1968): 293–306. Deely agrees with authors such as Gredt (p. 298 n16) and interprets Aquinas’s talk of “immateriality” as analogical against Adler, *The Difference of Man and the Difference It Makes*.

⁵⁰Many scholars do not do so, or do not do so with sufficient clarity, e.g., Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, p. 59: “Aquinas is what I call a semi-materialist, in that he believes some [i.e., sensory] intentional states, and some forms of conscious experience, can have explanations that are, in our modern sense, wholly physical.” Yet Pasnau also states that defining what he means here by “wholly physical” surpasses the scope of the discussion (p. 411 n14). Pasnau’s claim is difficult to reconcile with Aquinas’s view that the soul is the primary locus of sensation. He does not sufficiently distinguish a *sine qua non* condition from a formal principle (e.g., p. 67); in sensation, the body is the former, while the soul is the latter.

⁵¹Raymond Anable, *Philosophical Psychology* (New York NY: Declan X. McMullen Co., 1947), pp. 49–50.

this definition seem question-begging, one can add that material in this sense means “constituted by extended parts.” One can thus call it “constitutionally material.” This takes “matter” in the ordinary language sense as a kind of thing. In Aristotelian terms, matter and form are principles that never exist on their own, but only in composites of substantial form and prime matter, wherein the former actualizes the latter. The matter in any composite is termed individuated matter (as in “this person’s bones and flesh”), in contrast to the abstractly considered matter in one’s concept of human, which is termed common matter (as in “bones and flesh”). The “constitutionally material” thus refers to individuated matter since neither prime matter (i.e., pure potency) as such nor common matter has extended parts.

The second sense of material is “that which is *intrinsically* dependent on matter in *all* its acts, and therefore in its very existence.”⁵² This can helpfully be termed “co-principally material” since a form in this sense is a co-principle with matter of a material substance.⁵³ “Matter” here primarily refers to prime matter, even though it could refer to prime matter as actualized by the forms virtually present within the substantial form, as in the water within the human body. For Aquinas, each material substance has only one substantial form. Since the elements within a material substance do not exist independently, they are parts rather than substances.

Correlatively, one can define “spiritual” as “that which in its subsistence and at least some of its acts is intrinsically independent of matter.”⁵⁴ This restricts “spiritual” to the human soul, separate substances, and God, and to their properly immaterial activities. The human soul is not material in either sense of the term since not all of its operations are dependent on matter; for Aquinas, the human soul is a subsistent form.

One can properly call the brute animal soul “material” in the term’s second sense, i.e., as a form that is intrinsically inseparable from matter as its co-principle. This corresponds to Aquinas’s own usage.⁵⁵ While the first sense of “material” matches up with the term’s ordinary language meaning, no form (even of an inanimate substance) is material in that sense.⁵⁶ The second sense expresses Aristotle’s technical understanding of matter as a co-principle of material substances rather than a thing in itself. Describing the animal soul as “co-principally material” is preferable to “partially immaterial” insofar as substantial form and prime matter

⁵²Ibid., p. 50.

⁵³This term is meant to express the intrinsic dependency of sensory forms (whether intentional, facultative, or substantial) on matter in a material composite. A different term would be required to express the ontological priority of form over matter and the determination of matter by form. “Substratively” or “dependently” material might do.

⁵⁴This is a modified version of Anable’s definition (*Philosophical Psychology*, p. 50). My argumentation is based on that of Anable, with modifications (such as the terminology for the two kinds of matter) and corrections. Haldane reaches substantially the same conclusion in “A Return to Form in the Philosophy of Mind,” part 2.

⁵⁵On one occasion (*In DA* 3.10, n. 745), Aquinas himself refers to the sensory soul as the “corporeal soul” (*anima corporealis*). He also refers to “material forms” in contrast to the subsistent human soul (e.g., *Compendium theologiae* Bk. 1, chap. 93).

⁵⁶Thus, one would need to specify whether the matter-form composite under discussion is animate or inanimate.

jointly constitute every material substance. While this language is not Thomistic, it is faithful to Aquinas's account of the non-separable, non-subsistent animal soul.⁵⁷

Aquinas says that human intellection is "thoroughly immaterial" (*penitus immateriale*) while animal cognition and appetite "participate in a certain immateriality." Aquinas's terminology is similar to that of Avicenna, who states that both estimative and intelligible intentions are "non-material." In both cases "material" cannot refer to the co-principally material since both philosophers assert the properly immaterial nature of the rational as opposed to the sensory soul. Still, such statements seem trivial insofar as no form is constitutionally material. Since Aquinas and Avicenna cannot be overlooking the difference in kind between the respective "immateriality" of the rational and the animal souls, they must be taking "immaterial" to refer to a mere difference in degree.

Much scholarly confusion has stemmed from Aquinas's use of "immaterial" to refer to both a difference in degree and a difference in kind.⁵⁸ "Immaterial" properly refers to a substantial difference, not to a quality. While qualities admit of more and less and of contrariety, substantial differences do not.⁵⁹ One predicates "immaterial" univocally and essentially of God, a spirit, or a separate soul, insofar as each is properly separate from matter as (respectively) pure act, a separate substance, or a subsistent form. Calling God "most immaterial" is metaphorical since something is either immaterial or not.⁶⁰ In contrast, "immaterial" is not predicated substantially of the animal soul's cognitive powers or acts. It is rather used as an equivalent to "intentional" to refer to a greater or lesser remoteness from matter. This use of "immaterial" thus refers to entirely different natures and in this respect is equivocal.

Yet the usage is better termed an extrinsic analogy than a pure equivocation. Extrinsic analogy refers to two things with some vague or accidental commonality, while equivocation refers to two entirely different natures with nothing in common. Extrinsic analogy is the basis of metaphor and metonymy; it is distinguished from the essential, intrinsic analogy of what is "said in many ways," such as the analogy of being.⁶¹ (For clarity's sake, I reserve "analogical" for the latter and use "analogous" for the former.) By extrinsic analogy, a brute animal's soul may be called "immaterial" as compared to the soul of a plant.⁶² This is why Aquinas qualifies such immateriality as "in some way" attributable to lower beings.⁶³

While the use of "immaterial" as a synonym for "intentional" may be evocative, synonyms are often perilous in philosophical discourse, especially when they are

⁵⁷"Thomistic" here refers exclusively to Aquinas's own usage, without attempting to comment on that of his followers.

⁵⁸E.g., *In DA* 2.5, n. 284: "Such immaterial being has two degrees [i.e., sensory and intellectual] in lower things" (*hujusmodi autem immateriale esse habet duos gradus in istis inferioribus*).

⁵⁹Aristotle, *Categories*, chap. 5, 2b15–29 and 3b34–4a9; chap. 8, 10b13–11a14.

⁶⁰This is less problematic in the context of revealed theology, given its greater reliance on metaphorical language.

⁶¹See W. Bruckmann, "Glossary" in *Summa Theologica*, trans. English Dominican Fathers (New York NY: Benziger Bros., 1948), vol. 3, p. 3555.

⁶²E.g., *In DA* 2.5, n. 285: "Those operations that befit a living entity according to material being are attributed to the vegetative soul."

⁶³E.g., *In DA* 2.5, n. 282.

merely analogous. One likely reason for Aquinas's use of "immaterial" in this loose sense is that he does not lightly depart from established terminology, especially when it seems to have some grounds in the astronomy of his time, whereby light, intentionality, spirituality, and separate substances are all somehow connected. To avoid the confusion generated by this usage, I suggest reserving "spiritual," "immaterial" and "non-material" in their proper sense for that which is ontologically (as opposed to merely mentally) separable or separate from matter, and thus not dependent on matter for some or all of its operations.

Aquinas distinguishes between "natural" and "intentional" or "spiritual" changes in animals. Thus, one's hand growing cold is a natural change, but feeling the change is intentional. I suggest replacing Aquinas's "natural" with "physical" since sensory intentions are an integral part of sentient animate nature. Here "physical" refers primarily to that which has extended parts, and secondarily to electro-magnetic or other energy that is a property or accident of what has extended parts. I further suggest using "intentional" to refer to the soul's cognition and appetite, both epistemologically and ontologically speaking. Hence, one would term the act or immanent object of an external or internal sense "intentional" rather than "spiritual" to express its non-physical aspect as an activity of the soul.⁶⁴ And one would say that primitive animals participate less in "intentionality" rather than in "immateriality" (that is, the latter term would be misleading).

If one were to insist on the Thomistic language of immateriality despite the term's obsolete scientific justification and analogous signification, one ought to state that cognized sensory forms are constitutionally immaterial rather than "somewhat" or "halfway" immaterial, or else specify that "immaterial" signifies by way of extrinsic analogy and is only said of purely sensory intentionality with improper supposition. One does not encounter the same terminological confusion with Avicenna's and Aquinas's talk of progressive remotion from material conditions as with their talk of immateriality since remotion admits of degrees in a way that proper immateriality does not (e.g., intentions are further removed from material individuation than phantasms are).

IV. INDIVIDUAL INTENTIONS

Having established the fundamental referential and existential characteristics of action-oriented intentions, and thereby of internal sensory intentions in general, one may now proceed to discuss the remaining kinds. The proper and common sensibles are sensed directly or *per se* by the external senses and the common sense. Incidental sensibles (*sensibilia per accidens*) such as "son of Diates" are attached

⁶⁴This rejects one Thomistic term in favor of another; e.g., *In DA* 2.24, n. 553: *in re sensibili [forma] habet esse naturale, in sensu autem habet esse intentionale et spirituale*. Yves Simon reaches a similar conclusion: "To obviate these misunderstandings [stemming from Aquinas's use of 'immaterial'] it is advisable to employ the term 'intentional existence,' a term fashioned by scholasticism to capture an insight of Aristotle." *Introduction à l'ontologie du connaître* (Paris, France: Desclée, 1934), p. 17. Cf. Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind*, p. 34. This use of *intentio* to refer to cognition as such has significant echoes in the discussions of intentionality in Husserl, Heidegger, and many other Continental thinkers; such echoes far exceed the scope of this paper.

to *per se* sensibles such as “white.”⁶⁵ In his *Commentary on De Anima*, Aquinas presents incidental sensibles as “what is apprehended by the intellect immediately upon the approach of a sensed thing.”⁶⁶ “Intellect” can refer either to universal reason or to the particular reason, i.e., the cogitative power. Aquinas mentions the object’s approach to bring out the shift from vague to clear perception. Thus, when one sees an object drawing near, one’s cogitative cannot identify the individual until it is sufficiently close.

Two less-noticed examples of incidental sensibles in the *De Anima* besides that of “Diores’ son” are “what a colored or sounding object is” and the beacon that one perceives to be fire.⁶⁷ One can take “what an externally sensed object is” as a broad description extending incidental sensation to include perceiving the natures (*ti esti*) of things, not just individual identities such as “Diores’ son.” Aquinas maintains that the intellect grasps the incidental sensible insofar as it represents a universal (such as “human”), while the cogitative grasps the individual incidental sensible (such as “this human”).⁶⁸ Aquinas further distinguishes universal from particular reason: “[the cogitative] is also called particular reason, from the fact that it compares individual intentions, just as universal reason compares universal notions.”⁶⁹ While Aquinas considers both universal and individual intentions to be incidental sensibles, he ordinarily reserves “incidental sensible” for individual intentions. I sometimes call individual intentions “factual” intentions to contrast them with action-oriented intentions.⁷⁰

Aquinas follows Averroes in referring to factual incidental sensibles as “individual” or “particular” intentions.⁷¹ In this precise sense “individual intention” refers to the cogitative’s perception of the individual as such. Even though “intention” and “incidental sensible” might appear to be synonymous, Aquinas never refers to action-oriented intentions as incidental sensibles. Rather, Aquinas consistently uses

⁶⁵*De anima* 2.6, 418a21.

⁶⁶*In DA* 2.13, n. 395.

⁶⁷*De anima* 2.6, 418a15–16 and 3.7, 431b5–6, respectively; cf. Averroes, *Long Commentary on the De Anima*, Bk. 2, t. 63; Crawford ed., p. 225, lines 40–50; and Aquinas, *In DA* 2.13, n. 384, and *In DA* 3.12, n. 777–78. In this gloss on *De anima* 431b5–6, the common sense only grasps the movement, not the nature of enemy, which would rather be grasped by means of the cogitative; contrast García, *La cogitativa en Tomás de Aquino y sus fuentes*, pp. 191–92. Perhaps the moving beacon’s being viewed as a threat helped inspire Avicenna’s attribution of an intention of harm to the cogitative.

⁶⁸*In DA* 2.13, n. 396.

⁶⁹*Dicitur etiam ratio particularis, eo quod est collativa intentionum individualium, sicut ratio universalis est collativa rationum universalium. In DA* 2.13, n. 396. Cf. *ST* 2-2.2.1: [*cogitatio*] *potest esse vel animi deliberantis circa intentiones universales, quod pertinet ad intellectivam partem, vel circa intentiones particulares, quod pertinet ad partem sensitivam.*

⁷⁰Ultimately, this terminology is in view of my distinction between individual intentions and sortals, i.e., cogitative or estimative intentions referring to more than one but less than all based on accidental characteristics. For discussion, see my forthcoming book.

⁷¹[*Cogitativa*] *est collativa intentionum individualium, sicut ratio universalis est collativa rationum universalium. In DA* 2.13, n. 396. Cf. *Sentences* 3.26.1.2; *ST* 1.78.4 and 1.81.3; *In Meta.* 1.1, n. 15. Cf. Averroes, *Long Commentary on the De Anima*, Bk. 2, t. 65, Crawford ed., p. 228, lines 40–52. Contrast Dag Hasse’s presentation of Aquinas in *Avicenna’s De anima in the Latin West* (London UK: The Warburg Institute, 2000), pp. 151–52, where the estimative is said to perceive “individual intentions such as the harmful and the useful.”

“incidental sensible” to refer to the distinct species of factual intentions.⁷² A genus and its species are only partially coextensive, and thus not synonymous.

Just as one cannot properly sense danger, but only dangerous things, one cannot perceive individual identity as such by external sensation; rather, one sees a given face and hears a given voice, and recognizes the possessor of these unique characteristics as a designated individual. Aquinas juxtaposes individual intentions such as “this man” with universal intentions such as “man.” In his *Commentary on the De Anima* 2.13, Aquinas writes: “the cogitative . . . insofar as it is united to the intellect in the same subject . . . knows this human insofar as he is this human and this wood insofar as it is this wood.”⁷³ The intellect cannot apply the concept “human” to an individual entity without the mediation of particular reason (i.e., the cogitative). This is not only true of named things such as “Callias” but of any individual thing perceived as such (as Aquinas indicates by the example of “this wood”).

One cannot know natures without one’s intellect, but one cannot know signate material individuals without the cogitative. Universal reason, upon seeing a person speaking or moving, can recognize that individual’s life. “Life” is on a higher level of abstraction than “human.” It is a universal intention that is only apprehended by intellect. Upon seeing someone speaking or moving, one’s intellect immediately apprehends “life,” and this apprehension may be followed by a judgment in which one applies that universal notion to the individual, as in “I see that he is alive.” In contrast, if one sees a human approach, the cogitative apprehends or perceives that it is so-and-so, and then applies this individual intention to him in a judgment such as “I see Socrates.” Thus, merely seeing someone’s face provides the matter for an individual intention, which actualizes the sensed form with respect to its knowability as belonging to a given individual. The cognitive disorder known as prosopagnosia provides a helpful example of how the external sensation of a face can remain merely potential rather than being actualized by an individual intention. Individuals with prosopagnosia can see faces but are unable to associate them with individuals.

Most scholars are either silent on the topic or assume that individual intentions are the exclusive domain of the cogitative and thus focus exclusively on action-oriented intentions regarding the estimative.⁷⁴ Aquinas’s *ex professo* account of the internal senses in *Summa theologiae* 1.78.4 seems to exclude the estimative perception of individual intentions. In light of Aquinas’s assertion therein that the cogitative alone

⁷²An apparent exception to the rule that action-oriented intentions are not called incidental sensibles is the early text where Aquinas gives as examples of incidental sensibles the following: “Socrates, et filius Diaris, et amicus” (*Sentences* 4.49.2.2). If taken adjectivally, *amicus* might seem to refer to an action-oriented intention. Nevertheless, given the juxtaposition with two primary substances and not two qualities, along with the wider context, it can be taken as factual.

⁷³*Nam cogitativa apprehendit individuum, ut existens sub natura communi; quod contingit ei, inquantum unitur intellectivae in eodem subiecto; unde cognoscit hunc hominem prout est hic homo, et hoc lignum prout est hoc lignum.* In *DA* 2.13, n. 398.

⁷⁴E.g., Cornelio Fabro, “Knowledge and Perception in Aristotelic-Thomistic Psychology,” *New Scholasticism* 12 (1938): 353; Rudolph Allers, “Intellectual Cognition” in *Essays in Thomism*, ed. Robert Brennan (New York NY: Sheed and Ward, 1942), p. 48; Robert Brennan, *Thomistic Psychology* (New York NY: MacMillan, 1941), pp. 142–43. Pasnau is silent on the issue (*Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, p. 271).

is able to “compare individual intentions” (*collativa intentionum individualium*), it seems reasonable to deny that the estimative has access to such intentions. Yet, at least two texts contradict this assumption. His commentary on the *Sentences* explicitly grants knowledge of incidental sensibles to animals: “[Incidental sensibles] are known *per se* as universals by intellect; but as particulars they are known by the cogitative power in man, and by the estimative in other animals.”⁷⁵ In the commentary on *De Anima* Aquinas again affirms that animals grasp individual intentions: “In the irrational animal the apprehension of an individual intention takes place by the natural estimative, insofar as a sheep knows its child (or something of the sort) by hearing or sight.”⁷⁶ Although a ewe does not see her offspring as falling under the intellectual universal “lamb,” she does recognize it as “this lamb” (as distinct from others) by means of an individual intention.⁷⁷ The phrase “or something of the sort” foreshadows Aquinas’s subsequent clarification.

Aquinas explains that the animal estimative’s grasp of an individual intention is not theoretical but ordered to perceiving the thing “insofar as it is an object or principle of some action or passion.”⁷⁸ The animal estimative’s perception of individuals is always subordinated to action-oriented intentions: “The sheep knows this lamb, not insofar as it is this lamb, but insofar as it can be nursed by it.”⁷⁹ Aquinas contrasts the estimative apprehension of an individual intention to the cogitative apprehension thereof, which knows the singular as subordinated to a universal notion.⁸⁰ The animal’s estimative power recognizes factual intentions only insofar as they are a springboard for subsequent action. Aquinas’s assertion that the ewe does not recognize “this lamb” as such is ambiguous. Taken to mean that the ewe’s individual intention for its lamb does not extend to the lamb’s nature as such, the statement is true. Taken to mean that the ewe views her lamb under an action-oriented intention independently of an individual intention, the statement is false. It is by an individual intention that the ewe distinguishes its lamb from other lambs, based on its distinctive sensory characteristics.

Aquinas proceeds to restrict the scope of apprehension of individual intentions by animals: “the animal in no way apprehends by its natural estimative those individual

⁷⁵*Sent.* 4.49.2.2: *Per accidens autem sentitur illud quod non infert passionem sensui . . . quae per se cognoscuntur in universali intellectu; in particulari autem a virtute cogitativa in homine, aestimativa in aliis animalibus.*

⁷⁶*In animali vero irrationali fit apprehensio intentionis individualis per aestimativam naturalem, secundum quod ovis per auditum vel visum cognoscit filium, vel aliquid huiusmodi.* In *DA* 2.13, n. 397.

⁷⁷A third possibility is *ST* 1.81.2 ad 2: “[the estimative] perceives those things which do not affect (*immutant*) sense, as has been said above” [i.e., *ST* 1.78.4] (*vis aestimativa, scilicet quae est perceptiva eorum quae sensum non immutant, ut supra dictum est*). However, this is not sufficiently explicit to support estimative individual intentions.

⁷⁸*Secundum quod est terminus aut principium alicuius actionis vel passionis.* In *DA* 2.13, n. 398. The present analysis explains why, in one instance (*Commentary on First Corinthians* 13:8), Aquinas refers to the intention “enemy” as applied to a predator as a “intention;” the expression is used to include both an individual and an action-oriented intention.

⁷⁹*Ovis cognoscit hunc agnum, non in quantum est hic agnus, sed in quantum est ab ea lactabilis.* In *DA* 2.13, n. 398.

⁸⁰*Ibid.* Cf. *DV* 10.5 regarding the intellect’s indirect knowledge of the singular through a cogitative judgment.

things which the animal can neither affect nor be affected by.”⁸¹ Thus, “incidental sensible” and “individual intention” have far greater extension when said of the cogitative’s object. *Summa theologiae* 1.78.4 does not delve into the distinction between estimative individual intentions ordered exclusively to action and cogitative individual intentions ordered either to action or to speculation. Nonetheless, the estimative’s subordination of individual intentions to action-oriented intentions does not entail that it lacks the former. The point of contrast in *Summa theologiae* 1.78.4 is the estimative power’s inability to compare individual intentions, not its inability to apprehend them.

The superficial nature of the estimative’s factual intentions is one indicator of its inability to compare or infer (*conferre*) based on such intentions. This is evidenced by phenomena such as imprinting. A gosling that classifies a human as its parent does not theorize as to why the human lacks feathers and wings; it recognizes that human by means of an individual intention, but one that is subordinated to the agglomerate of action-oriented intentions corresponding to “parent” or “one who provides benefit.” If raised apart from its conspecifics, the gosling will also attach individual intentions to other humans as subordinated to the action-oriented intentions for what humans would call “siblings.” Such estimative apprehensions are not the springboard for further reflection but for the application of various intentions linguistically describable as “useful for food,” “to be competed with,” and so on. Although the factual intention is uninformative regarding the parent’s nature, the gosling’s estimative does not err insofar as the human parent indeed acts as a provider of food and security.

The two extremes of the contemporary interpretive spectrum regarding animal cognitive abilities are anthropomorphism and behaviorism. Aquinas’s Avicennian-inspired insights help avoid both extremes. Anthropomorphizers elevate factual intentions to the level of intellectual judgments, and forget their necessary subordination to those action-oriented intentions that correspond to an animal’s fundamental instincts, e.g., as a herd animal or a predator. Behaviorists remove estimation entirely, reducing animal behavior to mere reactions to external sensory stimuli.

Experiential observation reveals the inherent pragmatism of estimative intentions. The anthropomorphic projection of theoretical intellectual capacities onto animals may lead to avoidable accidents, as when predatory animals attack their trainers. A lion’s estimative labels its trainer as the alpha male. The human concept “alpha male” corresponds to a network of interrelated estimative intentions of harm and of usefulness. The lion’s individual intention for the trainer is directly ordered to this set of action-oriented intentions and inseparable from it. However, the behavioral implications of “alpha male” change as a lion reaches adolescence, from the action-oriented intention of submission to that of challenging the alpha male’s dominance. If the subordinate animal becomes dominant, the new set of action-oriented intentions corresponding to “beta male” would apply to the former alpha, with the corresponding expectation of submissiveness in action and passion.

⁸¹*Illa individua ad quae non se extendit eius actio vel passio, nullo modo apprehendit sua estimativa naturali.* In *DA* 2.13, n. 398.

V. THE INTENTION OF THE PAST:
THE MEMORATIVE POWER'S PROPER AND IMMEDIATE OBJECT

Aquinas synthesizes Avicenna's account of memory as the faculty that preserves action-oriented intentions⁸² with Averroes's account of memory as the faculty that retains individual intentions.⁸³ Aquinas often refers to the faculty of memory (*memoria*) as the memorative power (*vis memorativa*).⁸⁴ It is not self-evident how to harmonize Aquinas's accounts of memory in texts such as the *Summa theologiae* and the commentary on *De Memoria*. In at least one text Aquinas refers to the presence of phantasms in the memorative power, which seems to contradict the notion that it has intentions rather than forms as its object.⁸⁵

Aquinas partially integrates Aristotle's view that memory is of an image known to refer to the past with his own more precise account of the difference between imagination and memory: "memory is a possession (*habitus*), that is, a certain habitual retention of a phantasm, not in itself (for this pertains to the imaginative power), but insofar as the phantasm is the image of something previously sensed."⁸⁶ Aquinas improves on Aristotle's image-based account of memory by introducing the "intention" or "notion" of the past (*ratio praeteriti/praeteritio*) that the memorative power applies to a phantasm so as to perceive it *as* past. Studying the intention of the past as a special kind of internal sensory intention sheds light on memory's proper object. Aquinas explicitly states that the *ratio praeteriti* is an intention.⁸⁷ This section provides an account of the nature and origin of this intention in contrast with the most noteworthy scholarly interpretations and concludes with a summary of memory's objects and functions.

Klubertanz suggests that the faculty of memory lacks a proper immanent object. He states: "it is very hard to see how a concrete relation can be expressed without

⁸²ST 1.78.4. Cf. *Avicenna Latinus* DA 1.5; ed. van Riet, 1: 89: *vis memorialis et reminiscibilis [est] retinens quod apprehendit vis aestimationis de intentionibus non sensatis singulorum sensibilium*. Ibid. 4.3; ed. van Riet, 2: 9–10: *thesaurus vero apprehendens intentionem est virtus custodiiva . . . cuius proprium est custodire has intentiones. Quae virtus vocatur etiam memorialis, sed est retinens ob hoc quod id quod est in ea haeret firmiter, et est memorialis propter velocitatem suae aptitudinis ad recordandum*.

⁸³*Compendia librorum Aristotelis qui Parva Naturalia vocantur*, ed. Aemilia Shields (Cambridge MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1949), p. 55, lines 26–30: *Virtus conservationis et rememorationis est idem in subjecto et duo secundum modum . . . illud quod comprehendit virtus rememorative est intentio illius picturae*.

⁸⁴The Latin Avicenna always uses *memoria* or *vis/virtus memorialis*, never *memorativa*. Aquinas likely uses *memorativa* as a shortened form of what the Latin Averroes calls *virtus rememorative*. *Memorativa* is also reminiscent of *memorativum*, employed in the Latin translation of *De Memoria* chap. 1 [henceforth, "*De Mem.* 1"], 450a10 (as cited in ST 1.78.4 obj. 3 and ad 3). Following Aquinas's usage, "memory" herein ordinarily refers to the memorative power, though it may also refer to that power's act or even be used in a broad sense, with the precise meaning being made clear from the context.

⁸⁵*Si autem dicatur quod hic homo non sortitur speciem ab ipsis phantasmatis, sed a virtutibus in quibus sunt phantasmata, scilicet imaginativa, memorativa et cogitativa . . . Contra Gentiles* 2.73n14.

⁸⁶*Memoria est habitus, idest habitualis quaedam conservatio phantasmatis, non quidem secundum seipsum (hoc enim pertinet ad virtutem imaginativam), sed in quantum phantasma est imago alicuius prius sensati. Commentary on De Memoria* [henceforth, "*In De Mem.* 3"], n. 349. Cf. *De Mem.* 1, 449b9–27.

⁸⁷"The very notion of the past, which memory attends to, is counted among such [non-formal] intentions" (*et ipsa ratio praeteriti, quam attendit memoria, inter huiusmodi intentiones computatur*). ST 1.78.4.

its terms—and the terms are evidently in the imagination.” He concludes that memory’s object is likely the image in the imagination.⁸⁸ Klubertanz’s misreading is influenced by John of St. Thomas’s discussion of impressed and expressed species in the internal senses. John of St. Thomas (*né* Poinsoot) focuses on sensory forms and imagination to the point of overlooking the cogitative, as best evidenced by his non-Thomistic attribution of *collatio* to the compositive imagination rather than the cogitative.⁸⁹ Poinsoot’s use of “species” in a generic sense effaces the distinction between forms and intentions, thus causing Klubertanz to overlook the distinctive role of intentions in general, and cogitative and memorative intentions in particular.⁹⁰ Klubertanz reasons that the memorative power has no immanent object since an intention, being a relation, cannot be “experienced.”⁹¹

Klubertanz’s theory regarding memory’s lack of a proper object stems from his belief that *memoria* is used equivocally regarding the accounts of memory in Aristotle and Avicenna. On this hypothesis, while Aristotle presents memory as active, Avicenna and Aquinas present the memorative power as only passively retaining intentions.⁹² A few citations suffice to show the inaccuracy regarding Avicenna.⁹³ Although Klubertanz rightly notes that Avicenna’s account of memory is not identical to Aristotle’s, Klubertanz overstates the opposition between Aristotelian *mnemē*/*memoria* and Avicennian *vis memorativa* and then attributes this interpretation to

⁸⁸“The retention of past estimations is sufficiently explained by the retention of an impressed *species*. In those cases where we remember the estimations about absent objects, the object known is perhaps the image in the imagination.” *Philosophy of Human Nature* (New York NY: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1953), p. 140.

⁸⁹*Cursus Philosophicus Thomisticus*, pt. 4, q. 8, a. 4 (Marietti ed., vol. 3, p. 270); contrast *ST* 1.78.4. For discussion of cogitative *collatio*, see my “Experience and Experimentation: The Meaning of *Experimentum* in Aquinas,” section three, forthcoming in the *Thomist*.

⁹⁰“Many Thomists, following John of St. Thomas, *Cursus Philosophicus Thomisticus*, pt. 4, q. 8, a. 4, maintain that imagination, estimative power and memorative power each produces an immanent object. The argument for the immanent object of the imagination is demonstrative; for the [estimative and memorative] powers, the arguments are unconvincing, and the position involves great difficulty. As far as St. Thomas is concerned, it would seem that he thinks there is only one image or phantasm with which all three of the powers are concerned, each in its own way.” Klubertanz, *Philosophy of Human Nature*, pp. 139–40, n20. On this point, Poinsoot’s usage has some precedent in Aquinas, albeit in objections or replies thereto (*ST* 1.79.6 ad 1; *Commentary on First Corinthians* 13:8; *Quaestiones Quodlibetales* 3.9.1). When Aquinas refers to *species* in memory in *ST* 1.93.6 ad 4, he seems to take “memory” in a broader Augustinian sense to include imagination; Aquinas’s use of *memoria* is not always synonymous with *vis memorativa*. There are disadvantages to using “species” to cover every possible kind of mental object, especially when the term is used without any qualifier (such as “intelligible” or “imagined”). Aquinas usually avoids such vague language, and never speaks of specifically estimative, cogitative or memorative species.

⁹¹*Philosophy of Human Nature*, pp. 139–40.

⁹²Curiously, Klubertanz’s interpretation focuses almost exclusively on *ST* 1.78.4: “The verb *memorari* is evidently used in its original Latin sense, and corresponds to the Latin translations of the Aristotelian terms meaning ‘to remember.’ *Vis memorativa*, on the other hand, has in its strict technical sense no immediate reference to remembering. It is simply the power of retaining, conserving the intentions of the estimative.” *The Discursive Power*, p. 260. Cf. *Philosophy of Human Nature*, p. 139 n19 and p. 150.

⁹³E.g., “The memory by itself naturally apprehends this. . . . Memory will then proceed to the mode of movement and investigation which are characteristic of the imaginative power” (*memoria per seipsam naturaliter apprehendit hoc . . . et omnino procedet memoria ad modum motus et perquisitionis quae est in natura virtutis imaginativae*) and “This power . . . is memorative on account of the speed of its facility in recollecting.” Both refer to activities beyond mere retention. *Avicenna Latinus* DA 4.3; ed. van Riet, 2:39; *ibid.*, 4.1; ed. van Riet, 2: 9–10.

Aquinas. Avicenna developed Aristotle's account of memory by adding the new element of intentions. While Aquinas realized that Aristotle had no explicit doctrine of intentions, Aquinas interprets the Aristotelian tradition, not dialectically, but in a unified way, i.e., as the organic development of Aristotle's original insights.⁹⁴ Klubertanz's hermeneutic of discontinuity yields an erroneous account of the memorative power that attributes the "sense of time" operative in memory to the imaginative power.⁹⁵

Klubertanz's suggestion that an intention must be directly experienced as an image (i.e., as representing a given thing) to be a mental object runs counter to Aquinas's account of cogitative and memorative intentions.⁹⁶ The application of the distinction between formal and material objects to the cogitative and memorative avoids this dilemma. As I have argued, perceiving a thing entails viewing a material object under a formal aspect. Even though not a material object (*objectum quod*), the intention is a formal object (*objectum quo*). For example, a dolphin experiences the formal object "danger" by means of an estimative intention when it senses the material object "hammerhead shark." Similarly, the experience of memory relies on the memorative power's application of the intention of the past to the image.

As form actualizes matter, so action-oriented and factual intentions actualize phantasms. One can make a similar observation regarding an individual with short- or long-term memory loss. If one recognizes something from past sensation, then it is actualized in that respect, i.e., by the apprehension of the intention of the past in its regard. Just as there can be only one substantial form in a being, with other forms virtually present, so there can be only one primary focus of one's perception of an object at a given instant. Only one of the three intentions (action-oriented, individual or intention of the past) is properly formal with respect to a given phantasm, with the others being virtually formal regarding the phantasmal matter.

White finds the very notion of an intention of the past problematic and critiques Aquinas for providing no account of its origin.⁹⁷ This stems primarily from conceiving of the intention of the past as a material rather than a formal object. White seems to misrepresent intentions as having imaginary content rather than placing them in the category of a relation between two things, such as a subject and an object or an object in the past and one in the present.⁹⁸ While Aquinas provides no explanation of the *ratio praeteriti* in *Summa theologiae* 1.78.4, he explains pastness or the notion thereof (*praeteritio*) in *Summa theologiae* 1.79.6 ad 2.⁹⁹ Once again,

⁹⁴Thus, Aquinas employs "memorative" in discussing Aristotle's account of memory: *Philosophus, in libro praedicto, ponit duos modos quibus scientia per se corrumpitur, scilicet oblivionem, ex parte memorativae, et deceptionem, ex parte argumentationis falsae. ST* 1.89.5.

⁹⁵Klubertanz, *The Discursive Power*, p. 261.

⁹⁶It also runs counter to Aquinas's account of experience in its proper sense as said of a cogitative judgment or intention rather than a phantasm; cf. my "Experience and Experimentation."

⁹⁷Alfred Leo White, "The Experience of Individual Objects In Aquinas" (Dissertation at The Catholic Univ. of America, 1997; Ann Arbor: UMI, 1997), pp. 141–48.

⁹⁸White describes the mechanism by which the sheep flees the wolf in imagistic rather than properly intentional or estimative terms: "[the sheep] imagines that the wolf that it sees before it will soon chase it, pull it down, start biting it, etc." White, "Instinct and Custom," *Thomist* 66 (2002): 603.

⁹⁹"Pastness (*praeteritio*) can be referred to two things, namely, to the object which is known and to the act of knowing. And these two are joined simultaneously in the sensory part, which is able to apprehend something due to its being immuted by a present sensible. Thus, the animal simultaneously remembers that

scholarly oversight stems from focusing excessively on the foreshortened account in *Summa theologiae* 1.78.4.

In the absence of a Thomistic account of the origin of the intention of the past, one can demonstrate its nature and origin based on Aquinas's account of remembering. Aquinas states that recollection presupposes the comparison of present and past sensations and sensible objects.¹⁰⁰ Just as there can be no sensory form representing danger, usefulness, or individual identity as such, there can be none relating two similar sensibles as present and past, i.e., none representing pastness as such. As noted above, intentions are inherently relational. The intention relating past and present sensory forms or acts is rightly termed the intention of the past.

Aquinas defines remembering as "attending to (*intendere*) the phantasm of some thing insofar as it is an image of what has been previously apprehended."¹⁰¹ The intention of the past is the formal object whereby one perceives a phantasm as past. Since *intentio* is the noun form of *intendere*, one can infer that the intention of the past originates in the very comparison between a similar past and present sensation. Thus, the memorative forms the intention of the past in a connatural way that can be likened to the intellect's discovery of speculative and practical first principles. As soon as one understands the terms of a principle such as "the part is greater than the whole," the principle itself becomes evident. Similarly, the comparison between a present sensation and a similar retained phantasm immediately generates the intention of pastness. There is no need to posit a mental mechanism or process of association yielding the intention of the past.

White's view that "incidental sensible" and "intention" are strictly synonymous impedes a proper understanding of the intention of pastness since it implies that the latter ought to have some potentially or readily describable content as is the case with an individual intention such as "Diores' son." Although both Aquinas and Aristotle use the language of relations regarding memory's object, they never call pastness an incidental sensible.¹⁰² Perceiving something as past is similar but not identical to perceiving something as individual. Acknowledging the *ratio praeteriti* as a memorative intention specifically different from retained factual or action-oriented intentions resolves these difficulties.

In the texts discussed, Klubertanz reduces intentions to a pure relation that cannot be immediately experienced, while White reduces them to their imaginary referent. These two extremes result from the very nature of internal sensory intentions as, on the one hand, incapable of being directly sensed, and, on the other, indissociable from external sensation or imagination. In either case, the memorative power is left without a proper object. Such confusion is understandable given that Aquinas never

it has sensed in the past, and that it has sensed a certain past sensible." Cf. *DV* 10.2: *Cognoscere autem praeteritum ut est praeteritum, est illius cuius est cognoscere nunc ut nunc: hoc autem est sensus.*

¹⁰⁰ST 1.79.6 ad 2.

¹⁰¹*Hoc est memorari, phantasmati intendere alicuius rei, prout est imago prius apprehensi. In De Mem.* 7, n. 396.

¹⁰²*Philosophus loquitur de memoria quae est praeteriti, prout est relatam ad hoc nunc, in quantum est hoc. DV* 10.2 ad 2. *Memoria secundum propriam sui acceptionem respiciat ad id quod est praeteritum respectu huius nunc. DV* 10.2. For Aristotle, cf. *De Mem.* 1, 450a18–20 and 450b24–5.

explicitly developed a doctrine of the threefold nature of action-oriented intentions as qualitative, relational, and enabling a categorization. One can elucidate the intention of pastness in light of these three properties. By means of the intention of the past, the memorative views something as experienced in the past, relates two sensory forms, and enables one to categorize objects as previously sensed or not.

Yet one might see the imagistic account of intentions as having some justification in a comment on *De Memoria* 3. After explaining that the soul can turn to a phantasm by either an act of imagination or an act of intellect, Aquinas writes:

If, however, the soul turns toward [the phantasm] insofar as it is an image of what we have previously seen or understood, this pertains to the act of remembering. And because to be an image signifies a certain intention with regards to this form, Avicenna fittingly says that memory considers the intention, but imagination considers the form apprehended by sense.¹⁰³

Based on this text, White suggests that the remembered phantasm is an intention.¹⁰⁴ Yet Aquinas explicitly recalls Avicenna's distinction between internal sensory forms and intentions so as to indicate that "a certain intention" refers to the latter. The only kind of intention that entails viewing something precisely as an image of what one previously sensed or understood is the intention of the past. Thus, "memory" (*memoria*) in this text elliptically refers to the memorative power's act of remembering as it involves the application of the intention of pastness to a sensory form localized, not in the memorative, but in the imaginative power. Sense memory requires the parallel activity of at least these two faculties.

This text also evidences Aquinas's concern for precise philosophical language. Although "image" (*imago*) seems a natural term for what is found in the imagination (*imaginatio*), Aquinas almost always avoids it, preferring to use "phantasm." Aquinas here attributes to "image" a different meaning than a mere phantasm. On this use of the term it refers to a phantasm considered under the formality of its being remembered, i.e., as actualized by the intention of the past. Aquinas attributes a technical meaning to "image" whereby, when taken as the object of memory, it unites the Avicennian notion of intention with the Aristotelian notion of a sensory form.

In conclusion, the memorative's proper, immanent and immediate object is the intention of pastness. The memorative's extrinsic, mediate (or indirect) object is the phantasm in imagination.¹⁰⁵ Two texts in the *Summa theologiae* support this interpretation of Aquinas on memory's proper object.¹⁰⁶ Since the intentions stored

¹⁰³*Si autem anima convertit ad ipsum in quantum est imago eius quod prius vidimus aut intelleximus, hoc pertinet ad actum memorandi. Et quia esse imaginem significat intentionem quandam circa hanc formam, ideo convenienter dicit Avicenna quod memoria respicit intentionem, imaginatio vero formam per sensum apprehensam. In De Mem. 3, n. 343.*

¹⁰⁴White, "Instinct and Custom," p. 107. White mistranslates *esse imaginem significat intentionem quandam circa hanc formam* as "an image is a certain intention directed toward a form" (*ibid.*, p. 110).

¹⁰⁵Cf. "the memorative power . . . does not remember a thing absolutely, but insofar as it has been apprehended in the past by sense or intellect" (*vis autem memorativa . . . cuius est memorari rem non absolute, sed prout est in praeterito apprehensa a sensu vel intellectu*). In *De Mem.* 2, n. 321.

¹⁰⁶"The delightful good is not the object of concupiscence absolutely considered, but rather considered as being absent, just as that which is sensed, when considered under the notion of the past, is the object

passively in the memorative are also the object of the estimative or cogitative, one can consider them the memorative's immanent generic object.

Furthermore, one may explicitly distinguish two functions of the memorative power implicit in Aquinas's various accounts. First is its retentive role, by which it stores action-oriented and factual intentions. The estimative or cogitative may then apply these intentions in judgments on external objects or sensibles. Second is the memorative's perceptual or judicative role, by which it actively applies the intention of pastness to the phantasm in order to perceive it as past, thus considering it as an image. Aquinas explicitly teaches that the memorative's third function, reminiscence, is found only in humans. Reminiscence is the ability to search through memory in an effort to recall something.¹⁰⁷ While human memory is not a different power from that of animals, continuity with intellect enables it to perform an act that animals are incapable of.¹⁰⁸

In everyday usage, "memory" is used to refer indistinctly to sensory memory and to the properly intellectual retention of intelligible species (as in "I remember that $2 + 2 = 4$ "). Yet for Aquinas there is no memory, properly speaking, in the potential intellect.¹⁰⁹ The potential intellect retains the intelligible content of abstract notions such as numbers and arithmetical operations, while the imagination stores the corresponding phantasms (e.g., "2," "plus," "4"). While images can be remembered *per se*, intellectual judgments are an incidental object of memory insofar as they took place at some past time.¹¹⁰ "Memory" is taken even more improperly regarding intellectual objects that transcend time, although they too are incidental objects of memory insofar as they involve past imaginative activity.¹¹¹ According to the

of memory. For such particular conditions diversify the species of emotions, or even the species of the powers of the sensitive part, which deals with particulars" (*bonum delectabile non est absolute obiectum concupiscentiae, sed sub ratione absentis, sicut et sensibile sub ratione praeteriti, est obiectum memoriae. Huiusmodi enim particulares conditiones diversificant speciem passionum, vel etiam potentiarum sensitivae partis, quae respicit particularia*). *ST* 1-2.30.2 ad 1. "For something becomes the object of memory insofar as it is understood under the notion of the past, as is said in the *De Memoria*" (*sic enim fit aliquid obiectum memoriae, in quantum accipitur sub ratione praeteriti, sicut dicitur in libro De Memoria*). *ST* 3.83.6 ad 5.

¹⁰⁷*In De Mem.* 5, n. 366: "This is reminiscence, properly speaking, when someone intentionally seeks to recollect something" (*et hoc proprie est reminisci, quando scilicet aliquis ex intentione inquit alicuius rei memoriam*). *In De Mem.* 8, n. 399: *reminiscentia est quasi quaedam inquisitio, quia non a casu reminiscens ab uno in aliud, sed cum intentione deveniendi in memoriam alicuius procedit*. Cf. *ST* 1.78.4.

¹⁰⁸"Reminiscence is a passion of the body, and it is not an act of the intellective part, but of the sensitive, which in man is nobler and more powerful than in other animals on account of its conjunction with the intellect" (*sic ergo patet quod reminiscentia est corporalis passio, nec est actus partis intellectivae, sed sensitivae, quae etiam in homine est nobilior et virtuosior quam in aliis animalibus propter coniunctionem ad intellectum*). *In De Mem.* 8, n. 408. Cf. *ST* 1.78.4 ad 5.

¹⁰⁹The intellect does not know an object *ut in praeteritione* as memory does (*DV* 10.2). Cf. *ST* 1.79.6 and *Contra Gentiles* 2.74. Aquinas contrasts his Aristotelian terminology with that of others: "memory is placed by some in the intellectual part, insofar as here is understood by 'memory' every habitual preservation of what pertains to the soul's intellectual part." *In De Mem.* 2, n. 326.

¹¹⁰"Memory pertains *per se* to the appearance of phantasms, but memory only incidentally pertains to intellectual judgment" (*unde per se memoria pertinet ad apparitionem phantasmatum, per accidens autem ad iudicium intellectus*). *In De Mem.* 2, n. 320. Cf. *DV* 10.2 and *ST* 1.79.6.

¹¹¹"Objects of intellect are incidentally able to be remembered, since humans cannot apprehend them without imagination" (*per accidens autem memorabilia sunt intelligibilia, quae sine phantasia non apprehenduntur ab homine*). *In De Mem.* 2, n. 326. This distinction is from Aristotle: "If asked, of which

Aristotelian axiom that “there is no understanding without a phantasm,” all thought involves some use of imagination. Aquinas even holds that remembering that one understood “is not without a phantasm.”¹¹² Although the memorative power, being sensory, has no direct access to conceptual thought, it has thoughts as its incidental object since they require some use of an image.

Humans can never directly experience what pure sensory memory is like, due to the constant reflection of the intellect on the lower powers. Just as there is no thought without an image, mature, mentally sound humans have no intentional awareness of the past that is completely divorced from the intellectual apprehension of pastness. In contrast, animals must rely on a pure intention of the past without any overflow of the intellect’s light. While the animal memorative can compare present and past images or sensations, animals cannot grasp pastness itself.¹¹³

VI. THE ROLE OF THE *INTENTIO SENSUS* IN THE AWARENESS OF EXTERNAL SENSATION

Aquinas mentions the fourth internal sensory intention when discussing the common sense’s perception of external sensory activity. Thus, the intention of sensation (*intentio sensus*) appears to be another precise technical usage of “intention.” In *Summa theologiae* 1.78.4 Aquinas denies that the proper senses can perceive their own action; rather, “by [the common sense], the intentions of the senses are perceived: as when someone sees that he sees.”¹¹⁴ Given that the unique occurrence of this term is in Aquinas’s only *ex professo* presentation of the internal senses, the term’s meaning must be investigated.¹¹⁵ At least one medieval philosopher subsequently adopted the term in Aquinas’s precise sense.¹¹⁶

The common sense’s function is to receive and unite sensory forms. It also performs a reflexive function by which it provides consciousness of actual sensation. This sensory awareness operates by means of a non-imaginary intention that is of a higher order than external sensation itself. The common sense applies the intention of sensation to the activity of the external senses. Aquinas states that the intention is also referred to the sentient subject itself; one thus views oneself *as* currently sensing.

among the parts of the soul memory is a function, we reply: manifestly of that part to which imagination also appertains; and all objects of which there is imagination are *per se* objects of memory, while those that do not exist without imagination are incidental objects of memory.” *De Mem.* 1, 450a23–5, trans. Beare, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1984), vol. 1, p. 715, slightly modified.

¹¹²“For memory is not just of sensible things . . . but also of intelligible ones, as when someone remembers that he understood. For [remembering] does not take place without a phantasm” (*memoria autem non solum est sensibilium . . . sed etiam intelligibilium, ut cum aliquis memoratur se intellexisse. Non autem est sine phantasmate*). In *De Mem.* 2, n. 320.

¹¹³ST 1.79.6 ad 2.

¹¹⁴ST 1.78.4 ad 2: *a quo etiam percipiuntur intentiones sensuum, sicut cum aliquis videt se videre.*

¹¹⁵Given the lack of detail in Aquinas’s doctrine of internal sensory intentions, one cannot expect the same frequency of usage as with terms such as *phantasma* or *species*.

¹¹⁶John Buridan, *Treatise on the Soul*, q. 27, in *Le Traité de l’âme de Jean Buridan [De prima lectura]*, ed. Benoît Patar (Louvain, Belgium: Éditions de l’Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, 1991), pp. 647, 649, 652–53.

Positing this technical use of *intentio sensus* helps resolve the interpretive dilemma as to how the common sense can simultaneously perform two actions (judgments of distinction and perceiving acts of sensation) without violating the principle that a power can perform only one operation at a given time.¹¹⁷ While the discriminating judgment has two or more heterogeneous forms as its object, the intention of sense provides a concurrent awareness of the sensations themselves. In this respect, the activity of sensation is material, while the intention of sensation by which one is aware of their activity is formal; the former is in potency to being actualized by the latter.

The intellect knows its own act by reflecting on itself and thereby renders one aware that one is thinking. Aquinas calls this “perfect reflexivity” (*reditio completa*). In contrast, the common sense, being a higher power than the external senses, provides a concomitant awareness of their activity by an imperfect reflexivity (*reditio incompleta*). This awareness is one characteristic that distinguishes actual external sensation from the activity of imagination in dreams. Thus, no intentions of sensation are operative in dreams, though they begin to be operative as soon as one begins to awaken and thus become aware of external sensation. While Aristotle taught that sleep is properly the cessation of the common sense’s activity, one can qualify that, in certain cases, only the reflexive function ceases. In a sleep-acting (i.e., sleep-walking, sleep-talking, etc.) individual, the common sense’s judicative act is functioning, but not its reflexive act whereby one is aware of external sensation.

Although it is difficult to imagine oneself seeing without being aware that one is doing so, a neuropathological phenomenon provides evidence of the distinction between the two activities. In blindsight, an individual is unaware of seeing; yet the individual sees, as evidenced by the proper identification of objects if he is forced to guess their identity, and by the avoidance of obstacles when walking. According to a Thomistic analysis, the sense of sight is functioning, even though the common sense is not providing conscious awareness (i.e., imperfect reflection) thereof due to a flaw in the common sense’s co-principal matter (i.e., the brain). This supports Aquinas’s view that seeing red and knowing that one is seeing red are irreducible, and that, therefore, an intention, a viewing of something *as* something, is called for.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷Cf. *Commentary on De Sensu, lectio 17*, n. 265.

¹¹⁸John of St. Thomas seems to give a different account of common sensory awareness of external sensation by suggesting that there is a “form (*species*) representing the act of the external sense” that is not distinct from the form the external sense perceives: *ad confirmationem respondetur requiri speciem repraesentantem actum sensus externi, sed non requiri, quod sit distincta a specie repraesentante suum objectum. Cursus Philosophicus*, pt. 4, q. 8, a. 1 (Marietti ed., vol. 3, p. 249). If *species* means “form” in both instances, Poinso’s assertion contradicts Aquinas, who avoids a plurality of sensory forms somehow present within one form by positing sensory intentions. Alternatively, if the second use of *species* refers to the intention of sense, Poinso’s account coincides with mine. Given Poinso’s almost total focus on sensory forms, the latter seems unlikely; if it is the case, Poinso’s usage contradicts Aquinas’s terminology in *ST* 1.78.4 and elsewhere, where Aquinas specifically uses *species* regarding external sensory and imaginary forms as opposed to intentions: *oportet ergo quod animal per animam sensitivam non solum recipiat species sensibilium cum praesentialiter immutatur ab eis. . . perceptio formarum sensibilium [est] ex immutatione sensibili, non autem perceptio intentionum*. Poinso’s use of *species* insufficiently distinguishes forms from intentions, as evidenced by the fact that one is left guessing as to his meaning.

In contrast, no difficulty arises in separating out one's perception of a factual intention from the sensation of an individual object. Even though the two tend to take place simultaneously in the recognition of objects, one sometimes sees a distant figure without knowing who it is. The underlying reason for the greater ease in the latter case is a significant difference between the intention of sense and the incidental sensible: the intention of sense is generated by an automatic reflexive activity, whereas the perception of an individual as such requires the joint activity of two internal senses: the common sense and the cogitative. In this respect, the intention of sense is qualitatively different from the intentions in the cogitative and memory. It seems to be a by-product of the common sense's activity rather than its proper object.¹¹⁹

CONCLUSION

Thomistic scholars, both scholastic and contemporary, have not yet given sufficient attention to those internal senses that perceive intentions rather than forms. By failing to differentiate sensory forms from intentions, previous thinkers have under-described Aquinas's account of the internal senses. Consistently applying the distinction between material and formal objects to the internal senses renders Aquinas's rather desultory account more coherent. The formal object of a lower power provides the material object for a higher power, as when one apprehends an intention in connection with a phantasm. Such apprehensions are ubiquitous in the life of the mind in both humans and higher animals. Furthermore, one can better distinguish the remotion from matter in sensory intentionality by considering the latter co-principally material rather than "somewhat immaterial." This paper has sought not only to retrieve Aquinas's account of internal sensory intentionality, but to revitalize it in light of fundamental hylemorphic principles.

¹¹⁹I am not yet entirely convinced regarding the need to posit an *intentio sensus*. While the intention of sense is clearly relational (regarding the subject) and qualitative (as an aspect under which, *qua*), it is difficult to see how it could be used to categorize a sensation. It may be preferable to speak of the common sense's awareness of sensation without invoking an intention as Aquinas does in texts other than *ST* 1.78.4.