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Henry of Ghent on whether a
Human Being Can Know Anything*Summa Quaestionum Ordinariarum a.1 q.1*

I. Arguments that a Human Being Cannot Know Anything

1. Based on the mode of knowing, it is argued as follows. Whatever a human being knows he knows from something prior and better known to him (*Posterior Analytics* I [71b20–23]; *Physics* I [184a10–20]). But a human being can know something in this way only by knowing it through something prior and better known than it, and (for the same reason) by knowing this through something else that is prior and better known than it, and so on to infinity. But one can know nothing at all by approaching knowledge in this way, according to the Philosopher in *Metaphysics* II [994a1–b30]. Therefore, etc.

2. Based on the means by which a thing is known, it is argued as follows. All human intellectual cognition has its origin in the senses (*Metaphysics* I [980a26]; *Posterior Analytics* II [100a11]). But “pure (*sincera*) truth shouldn’t be sought from the bodily senses,” according to Augustine (*Book of 83 Questions*, Q9). Therefore a human being cannot know pure truth through intellectual cognition. But one can know only by knowing pure truth, since nothing is known but what is true (*Posterior Analytics* [71b25]) and according to Augustine (*Book of 83 Questions*, Q1) it is not the truth unless it is pure – that is, clear (*pura*) of falseness. Therefore, etc.

3. From the same premise, those who denied knowledge argued as follows (as is said in *Metaphysics* IV [1009b1–10]). The senses apprehend nothing of what is certain concerning a thing. For if something appears to one person concerning some thing, its contrary appears to another concerning that same thing. And when something appears to a given person at a given time and in a given condition, its contrary appears to the same person at a different time and in a different condition. Therefore, since the intellect apprehends nothing if not through the senses, it can apprehend nothing of what is certain concerning anything at all. But there can be knowledge only by apprehending something certain and determinate, according to the Philosopher in *Metaphysics* VI. Therefore, etc.

4. Based on the knowable, according to *Metaphysics* IV [1010a7–14], they have a similar argument, as follows. There is knowledge only of what is fixed and stable, according to Boethius in *Arithmetic* I [ch. 1]. But there is nothing fixed or stable in the sensible things from which, by means of the senses, all human cognition is drawn. This is so according to Augustine,

who says in his *Book of 83 Questions* Q9 that “what is called the sensible changes without any intervening time.” Therefore, etc.

5. Based on the knower, there is the argument of the *Meno*, at the beginning of the *Posterior Analytics* [71a29], by which he denied that there is knowledge. As the Commentator says on *Metaphysics* IX [5], no one learns unless he knows something. This accords with Augustine, in *Contra academicos* III [iii.5], and with the Philosopher, in *Metaphysics* IX [1046b35]. But someone who knows something isn’t learning, because learning is a movement toward knowing. Therefore there is no one who learns anything. But no one who has not learned anything can have learning, according to Augustine in the same passage. Therefore, etc.

6. From the same premise, by forming the argument in another way, it is argued as follows. Someone who knows nothing learns nothing; but someone who learns nothing cannot have learning; therefore someone who knows nothing cannot have learning. Every human being at first knows nothing, because the human intellect, before it receives species, is like a blank slate on which nothing has been drawn, as is said in *De anima* III [430a1]. Therefore, etc.

7. Based on the object, it is argued as follows. One who doesn’t perceive the essence and quiddity of a thing, but only its image, can’t know (*scire*) the thing. For one who has seen only a picture of Hercules doesn’t know (*novit*) Hercules. But a human being perceives nothing of a thing, except only its image – that is, a species received through the senses, which is an image of the thing and not the thing itself. For “it is not the stone but a species of the stone that is in the soul.”¹ Therefore, etc.

II. Arguments to the Contrary

1. The Commentator’s argument on the beginning of *Metaphysics* II [1] goes as follows. A natural desire is not pointless. But according to the Philosopher in *Metaphysics* I [980a21], a human being desires by nature to know. Therefore a human being’s desire to know is not pointless. But it would be pointless if he were unable to know. Therefore, etc.

2. From the same premise, by forming the argument in another way, it is argued as follows. It is possible for what a person naturally desires to come to him, according to what Augustine says in *Contra Julianum* IV [PL 44, 747]: “Nor would all human beings wish by natural impulse to be blessed unless they could be.” A human being naturally desires to know. Therefore, etc.

3. From basically the same premise, there is this further argument. Anyone can attain the perfection to which he is naturally ordered, because [his being so ordered] would otherwise be pointless. Knowing is the perfection of a human being to which he is naturally ordered, because according to the Philosopher, in *Ethics* X [1177a17], one’s happiness consists in speculative knowledge. Therefore, etc.

4. The Philosopher says in *Metaphysics* III [999b9–12] and IV and in *De caelo* II [292b17–21] that it is impossible for what cannot be completed to be begun by an agent through nature or reason, because every movement has an end and a completion on account of which it exists. But according to the Philosopher, in *Metaphysics* I [982b20–27], human beings philosophized and first began to investigate prudence for the sake of knowing and understanding and escaping ignorance. Therefore, it is possible for a human being to know and to understand.

1 Aristotle, *De anima* III 8, 431b29.

5. According to Augustine, in *De vera religione* [xxxix.73], anyone who doubts whether someone can know something doesn't doubt whether he is doubting – he is certain of that. But he is certain only of something true that he knows. Therefore anyone who doubts whether he knows must necessarily concede that he knows something. But this wouldn't be so unless he happened to know something when he happens to doubt. Therefore, etc.

6. Along basically the same lines, the Philosopher and his Commentator argue as follows in *Metaphysics* IV [1008a7–b31, 1012b14–22]. Anyone who denies that there is knowledge says by this that he is certain there is no knowledge. But he is certain only of something that he knows. Therefore anyone who denies that there is knowledge and that a human being can know must necessarily concede that there is knowledge and that a human being can know something. And this argument is similar to the argument by which the Philosopher concludes in *Metaphysics* IV that anyone who denies that there is speech must necessarily concede that there is speech.

[III. Reply]

If 'to know' is taken broadly for every certain cognition (*notitiam*) by which a thing is cognized as it is, without any mistake or deception, and if the question is understood and proposed in this way, then it is manifest and clear – contrary to those who deny knowledge and every perception of truth – that a human being can know something and can do so in every mode of knowing and cognizing. For someone can know something in two ways: either through another's external testimony or through one's own internal testimony.

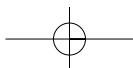
That one can know something in the first way Augustine says in the *Contra academicos* and in *De trinitate* XV.xii [21]:

Let it be far from us to deny that we know what we have learned from the testimony of others. Otherwise we do not know of the ocean, nor do we know there to be the lands and cities that famous reports describe. We know of the existence neither of the people nor of the deeds of those people which we have learned about through historical reading. Finally, we don't know from what place or what people we came, since we have learned all these things through the testimony of others.

But that in the second way one can know something and perceive a thing as it is clear from things we experience within ourselves and around ourselves, through both sensory and intellectual cognition. For in sensory cognition a thing is truly perceived as it is, without any deception or mistake, by a sense that during its own action of sensing its proper object is not contradicted by a truer sense or by an intellection received from a different truer sense, whether in the same or in another [person].² Nor concerning something that we perceive in this way should one be in doubt whether we perceive it as it is. Nor need one search in this matter for any further cause of certainty. For as the Philosopher says,³ it is a weakness of intellect to search for reason in cases where we have sensation, since one should not search for a reason for the thing we possess that is more valuable (*dignius*) than reason. For the test of true words is that they agree with what is sensed. Hence Augustine says, in the same place:

2 Compare Aristotle, *De somno* 3, 461b3.

3 Perhaps the reference is to *Physics* II 1, 193a2–9.



Let it be far from us that we doubt to be true those things that we have learned through the bodily senses. For through them we have learned of the sky and earth, and the things in them that are known by us.

Hence also Cicero, in his *Academics* [II.vii.19], wanting to prove against the Academics that one can know something with certainty, says the following:

Let us begin with the senses, from which judgments are so clear and certain that, if one were allowed to choose one's own nature, I do not see what more would be sought. In my judgment truth exists in the senses above all. And if they are healthy and in good condition and all the things are removed that oppose and impede them, then a glance itself engenders faith in their judgment.

Concerning faith in intellectual cognition, however, since through it one can in this way truly know something as it is, he immediately continues the same passage [vii.21]:

These things that we say are perceived by the senses are such that others follow that are not said to be perceived by the senses – for example, *This one is white*, [therefore] *This one is old*. Then greater claims follow, for example, *If something is a human being then it is an animal*. On the basis of claims of this sort the cognition of things is given to us.

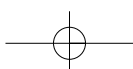
So through intellectual cognition, as has already been said about sensory cognition, a thing is truly perceived as it is, without any deception or falseness, by an intellection that in its proper action of intellectual cognition is not contradicted by a truer intellection, or by one received from a truer sense. Nor should there be any more doubt regarding such an intellection than there is regarding the senses. Thus Augustine, in the same passage as before [*De trinitate* XV.xii.21]:

Since there are two genera of things that are known, one of which the mind perceives through the bodily senses, the other through itself, those philosophers (i.e., the Academics) raised many complaints against the bodily senses, since they were utterly unable to call into doubt certain perceptions of true things that in themselves are most firm. Of this sort is 'I know that I live.'

With respect to this we don't need to worry that we are deceived by some likeness of what is true. For it is certain that anyone who is deceived is alive. Thus nor can an Academic say that perhaps you are asleep and do not know it, and are seeing in your dreams. For no one can be mistaken in that knowledge through dreams, since sleeping and seeing in dreams both belong to the living. Nor can that Academic say that perhaps you are crazy and don't know it, because the visions even of the crazy are like those of the sane. For anyone who is crazy is alive, nor does the Academic dispute this. Therefore someone who said that he knows he is alive is not deceived, nor can he be lying.

Nor concerning this should another proof be required beyond that which is used for training the intellect, and through evident *a posteriori* signs, of the sort that will be set out later.

Seven errors have endured from ancient times against this view, based on both the senses and intellect. The Philosopher refutes five of these in *Metaphysics* IV, in particular the error of those who deny knowledge by denying this principle of knowledge: For any thing, either its affirmation or negation is true, and not both at the same time in the same respect.



The sixth error, from the *Meno*, denies that a human being can learn. Aristotle refutes this at the start of the *Posterior Analytics* [71a25–b9]. The seventh belonged to the Academics who denied perception of the true. Augustine and Cicero refute this in their books on the Academics.

But as for those whose errors the Philosopher argues against in *Metaphysics* IV, some said that all things are false, whereas others said that all things are true. Still others said that all things are true and false at the same time. Of those who said that all things are false, some based their view on the things themselves, as for example Anaxagoras and Xenocrates,⁴ who said that everything is mixed with everything, since they saw that everything is made from everything. They said that that mixture is neither being nor nonbeing and, in a way, neither of the extremes, but rather, by cancellation, a medium between them. Hence they said that it is impossible to judge something truly; rather, all judgments are false. And for this reason they said that there is no knowledge of anything, since knowledge is only of things that are true (as is said in *Posterior Analytics* I [71b25]). These men erred by not distinguishing potential from actual being. For contraries and contradictories exist at the same time potentially, but not actually. This is because the distinction among contraries and contradictories holds only for beings in actuality. Only here, in other words, is something determinately this and not that. Through this, there is determinate truth and knowledge that a thing is what it is and not something else.

But others said that all things are false, taking their argument from the senses. Democritus and Leucippus, for example, said that the same thing is sensed by some people as sweet, and by others as bitter, and that these groups differ only in that the one is larger, the other smaller, since there are many healthy people to whom it seems sweet, and a few sick people to whom it seems bitter. Therefore nothing, as they said, is in actual truth determinately this or that. Rather, each thing is neither this nor that, and for that reason nothing is true; instead, all things are false, and there is no knowledge at all. The reason for their error was their judging that the intellect and the senses are the same, and that knowledge is grasped by the senses. So when they saw that sensible things have different conditions within the senses, and that nothing of what is certain is sensed, they believed that nothing is known with certainty.

Associated with their views was the view of the Academy. Augustine says that they affirmed that human beings can perceive nothing true or certain, but not that human beings ought to stop inquiring into the truth. They did say, however, that either God alone knows the truth, or perhaps also the disembodied soul of a human being. They directed these remarks only to things pertaining to philosophy, not caring about other things. Their reasoning, according to what Augustine recounts [in *Contra academicos*], was this: They said that what is true can be recognized only by signs that cannot have the character (*rationem*) of what is false [II.v.11], so that “the true is discerned from the false by distinct marks” [II.vi.14] and “does not have signs in common with what is false” [III.ix.18]. Thus what is true “cannot appear false” [III.ix.21]. But they believed it impossible that such signs could be found [III.ix.19, 21], and so they concluded that, “because of a certain darkness on the part of nature,” the truth either does not exist or, “obscured and confused” [II.v.12], is hidden from us. Thus Democritus, as *Metaphysics* IV [1009b12] recounts, said that either nothing is entirely true or else it is not shown to us.

4 Though this is the manuscript reading, and though Aristotle occasionally discusses Xenocrates, his contemporary, the correct reference is to the pre-Socratic Xenophanes (cf. *Met* IV 5. 1010a6).

Others, such as Protagoras and his followers, said that everything true and false exists simultaneously. They said that there is no truth outside the soul, and that what appears outside is not something that exists in the thing itself at the time at which it appears; instead, it exists in the one apprehending. Thus they completely denied that things have existence outside the soul, and so they had to say that two contraries are true at the same time: not only relative to different people apprehending through the same sense but also relative to the same person through different senses and through a [single] sense in different conditions. For what appears sweet to one person through taste will appear not sweet to another through taste; what appears sweet to someone through sight will appear not sweet to that same person through taste; what appears to be a single thing to the eyes will appear to be two things when the position of the eyes is changed. From this they concluded that nothing appears determinate, that nothing is determinately true, and that therefore there is absolutely no knowledge.

Still others, such as Heraclitus and his followers, said that all things are true and false at the same time, since they supposed that only sensible things are beings and that they are not determinate in their existence, but constantly changed. For this reason they said that nothing about them remains the same in actual fact; rather, being and nonbeing belong to them at the same time and in the same respect. For motion is composed of being and nonbeing, and every change goes between being and nonbeing. Accordingly, they further said that one needn't reply yes or no to a question. And thus Heraclitus⁵ at the end of his life believed that he needn't say anything, and he moved only his finger. From this they were led to say that there is nothing a human being can acquire knowledge of.

The view of the *Meno* and of certain of the Platonists was that no one can learn anything, and that therefore no one can know anything, as was said above in the fifth and sixth arguments [I.5–6]. The defect in the reasoning of these views will be clear at once when we solve the arguments.

To deny knowledge is to destroy all faith and the whole of philosophy, as the Philosopher says in *Metaphysics* IV. For this reason it is impossible to dispute their main view by demonstrating that there is knowledge and that something can be known, because they deny all the principles of knowing. The only thing that should be used against them in defense of knowledge is true and extremely well established (*probabilibus*) assertions that they cannot deny. So it was by means of such assertions that Cicero refutes them in his *Academics* through three obvious absurdities that follow from their claim. The first of these is taken from craft-based knowledge, the second from acts of virtue, the third from the conduct of human affairs. Cicero explains the first in this way:

Every craft is based on many perceptions. If you were to take these perceptions away, how would you distinguish a craftsman from someone who is ignorant? For what is it that can be accomplished through craft if the one who is to practice the craft has not perceived many things? [II.vii.22]

Thus Augustine says in *De vera religione* [xxx.54] that “common craft is nothing other than the memory of things experienced.” Cicero explains the second in this way:

How can that good man who has decided to endure every torture rather than neglect his duty or faith, how can it happen that he accepts every suffering unless he has assented to things that cannot be false? [II.viii.23]

5 In fact, the reference should be to Cratylus; see *Metaphysics* IV, 1010a12.

He explains the third in this way:

How will someone dare to undertake anything or to act with assurance, if nothing of what follows is certain to him, and he is ignorant of the ultimate good by which all things are reckoned? [II.viii.24]

The Philosopher gives a good example of this in *Metaphysics* IV [1008b15–19]: Someone who is walking walks and does not stop, because he believes that he should be walking. And along the way he does not fall into a well that stands in his path, but he avoids it. For he knows that falling into a well is bad.

[IV. Reply to the Initial Arguments]

So the arguments proving that someone can know something [II.1–6] should be granted. But we should reply individually to the arguments for the other side [I.1–7].

To the first – that all knowledge comes from something prior and better known, etc. – one ought to say that that mode of acquiring knowledge should be understood to apply only to the knowledge of conclusions. For principles are cognized first, immediately, and through themselves, not through other things, because they don't have anything else better known than themselves. Therefore, the infinite regress and nothing's being known is an issue for no one other than those who don't distinguish what is known through itself from what is known through another.

To the second – that pure truth shouldn't be sought from the bodily senses – one ought to say that this is true everywhere and in all things, when one follows the senses' judgment. This is because of two claims based on which Augustine argues that certain judgment is not established in the senses: first, the changeability of sensible things; second, the fallibility of the senses themselves. But from an apprehension made through the senses, by turning away from the senses so that a judgment is made in reason (which Augustine urges us to do especially when inquiring into the truth), pure truth should indeed be sought from the senses. This is so to the extent that it can be discerned either by purely natural means through the judgment of reason in a pure, natural light, or else absolutely through the judgment of intellect in the clarity of the eternal light. Augustine speaks in these very terms of this purity in the judgment of reason following the senses, as we will see below with regard to the two ways of examining the truth.

So pure truth certainly should be sought from the senses in a certain way, as the origin of truth. For a proper sense has the most certain cognition of its proper object, unless it is impeded either in itself, by the medium, or by something else. But when every impediment is lifted, there is no chance (*nec contingit*) that it will err or apprehend its proper object otherwise than as it is – though such a cognition is not stable, because of changeability on the part of either the object or the sense itself. Hence truth that is certain can't be grasped for long by depending entirely on the judgment of the senses. Nevertheless, truth that is entirely certain is grasped through the senses, by abstracting that which was apprehended by an undeceived sense and forming a judgment in intellect where what was apprehended remains as if unchanged, unable to be obscured by truthlike species of phantasms. And for us the most certain knowledge is that of sensible things, when we can trace it back to sensory experience.

Hence those letting go of the senses and thoroughly denying their judgment, deceived by sophisticated arguments, frequently fell into the most absurd errors of intellect. Take Zeno, for example, who said that nothing can move, and all those who said that all things are moved by a single motion. Thus one should always believe a particular sense when it is not impeded, unless it is contradicted by some other worthier sense (either in the same person at a different time or in a different person at the same time) or by a higher power perceiving that the sense is impeded. For the senses are not in equal good condition in everyone or in the same person at different times, and so one should not believe their judgments equally – as is clear with the healthy and the sick. For we should believe the taste of someone healthy more than the taste of someone sick, and someone who sees something up close more than someone who sees it from a distance, and someone who sees a thing through a uniform medium more than someone who sees it through a varying medium, and so on for other conditions of this sort.

To the third – that the same thing often appears in different ways to the same person or to different people – one ought to say that it doesn't follow from this that no sense should be believed. For, as was said, in a case in which one [sense] is deceived, another frequently indicates what is true; or in a case in which [a sense] is deceived in one condition, in another condition it indicates what is true. It's clear in this way how the reasoning of Democritus was deficient. For though sensible things have different conditions within the senses, a thing is still determinately perceived through an undeceived sense, at the time at which it is not deceived. And sensations differ not only as there are fewer and more who sense it [that way], but also according to the greater and lesser worth of the senses when it comes to sensing.

The defect in the reasoning of the Academics is similarly clear. For their claim is not true, that nothing is determinately perceived through signs and that signs do not show what is true in things. Instead, those signs that are the proper sensibles of a given sense display that which they are to their proper sense, assuming that sense is neither deceived nor impeded, and can bring intellect to a determinate cognition of a thing's truth. And hence the Academics themselves, more than others, were devoted to inquiring into the truth through signs of this sort, although their view was that they could never find the truth. In this respect their view was like that of someone who runs to grasp a thing he never will grasp – this is how the Philosopher reproves them in *Metaphysics* IV. Other issues concerning their view will be spelled out further in the next question.

It's clear for the same reason that the assumption of Protagoras – that things follow the appearances of the senses – is false, because sensations, whether true or deceived, can be derived only from things, since a sense is a passive power. So even though the same thing appears in different ways to the same or different [senses], this happens only on account of a sense's being deceived or impeded. In this case one needn't believe that sense. But one should not, on this account, say that no sense is to be believed, because an undeceived sense ought to be believed completely. As for which sense is such, the intellect above all else has to judge this on the basis of many prior experiences concerning what the senses can be deceived or impeded by.

To the fourth – that all sensible things are in constant change – one ought to say that the Heracliteans, whose argument this was, believed that only sensible things are existent. And this was the error of all the philosophers up to the time of the Italians: They unanimously denied that there is knowledge, on account of the changeability of natural sensible things. Perceiving their error, later philosophers asserted that there is knowledge and that something can be known of natural sensible things. But they were divided as to how one knows

and acquires knowledge. Pythagoras, the first of the Italians, believed with his predecessors that one can't have knowledge of natural things through the things themselves, because of their changing. But to preserve in some way the knowledge of natural things, he brought mathematical facts into nature, proposing them as the principles and causes of natural things both in existence and in cognition. For mathematical facts are in a certain way unchangeable, through their abstraction from sensible and changeable matter.

But Plato, coming after Pythagoras, saw that in reality mathematical facts inhere in natural things. So however much they are abstracted from natural things, mathematical facts are really changed along with them, and no fixed knowledge of natural things can be had through them. Plato proposed ideal Forms as the causes and principles of natural things, both in existence and in cognition, entirely separate from natural things and without any change. In this way, through them, there can be unchangeable knowledge of what is changeable.

Aristotle, however, saw that a thing has existence and can be cognized only through something that exists within it (*in re*). And he saw that, due to their changing, there cannot be knowledge of singulars through themselves. So he claimed that universals – that is, genera and species – are abstracted by intellect from the singulars where they have true existence. For a universal is one in many and of many. And though they are changeable as they exist in singulars, they are unchangeable as they exist in intellect. Accordingly, he claimed that we do have fixed knowledge of changeable, particular, sensible, natural things, through their universals existing within intellect.

Augustine was imbued with the philosophy of Plato. If he found in it things suitable to the faith, he took them into his own writing. The things he found that were adverse to the faith he interpreted in a better light to the extent that he could. Now as Augustine says in his *Book of 83 Questions*, Q46, it seemed to be “sacrilege” to believe that the ideas of things are located outside the divine mind – ideas that the divine mind contemplates so as to establish what it establishes. So for this reason, even though Aristotle attributed this view to Plato, Augustine said that Plato located these ideas in the divine intelligence and that they subsist there. As he says in *City of God* VIII.iv,

What Plato thought about these matters – that is, where he thought or believed that the end of all actions, the cause of all natures, and the light of all reasons exist – I don't believe should be rashly decided. For it may be that those celebrated by fame who praise Plato above all others perceive something about God so as to find in God the cause of subsisting, the reason for understanding and the direction for living.

Thus Augustine, interpreting Plato's pronouncements more soundly than Aristotle did, claims that the principles of certain knowledge and of cognizing the truth consist in eternal, unchangeable rules or reasons existing in God. It is by participating in them, through intellectual cognition, that one cognizes whatever pure truth is cognized in creatures. Consequently, just as by his being he is the cause of the existence of all things insofar as they exist, so too by his truth he is the cause of the cognition of all things insofar as they are true. In this way there can be certain and fixed knowledge of changeable things no matter how changeable they are. Accordingly, Augustine says in *De trinitate* XII [xiv.23]:

It is not only for sensible things located in space that intelligible and incorporeal reasons endure, apart from local space. Those same intelligible, nonsensible reasons stand, apart from any

passing of time, for the motions that pass by in time. Few attain these through keenness of mind, and when they are attained insofar as they can be, the one who has attained them does not endure there. Hence a transitory thought is formed of a thing that is not transitory. Nevertheless this transitory thought is committed to memory through the training by which the mind is educated, so that there is someplace to where a thought can return after it is forced to pass away. For if the thought were not to return to memory and find what it had placed there, then as if never educated it would once again be led just as it once had been, and would find it where it had first found it, in the incorporeal truth. And from there it would again, as if written down, be formed in memory.

[. . .]

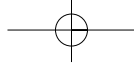
To the fifth and sixth – that one can't know because one can't learn – one ought to say that the assumption is false. For one can indeed learn, as will be clear below.⁶ But it should be realized that 'to learn' can be taken in two ways. In one way, generally, learning extends to every new acquisition of knowledge. In this way it needn't be the case that every learner knows something. For someone learning to cognize first principles acquires this through no preceding cognition. In another way, strictly, learning extends to a cognition only of conclusions, which one acquires in actuality from a prior cognition of principles in which the conclusion lies hidden, in potentiality (as will be clear below). In this way, someone who is learning knows something.

To the seventh – that a human being perceives nothing of the thing to be cognized except the image alone – it should be replied that one can perceive a thing's image in two ways. In one way, it can be perceived as the object of cognition. In this way it is true that someone perceiving only the thing's image does not cognize the thing: For example, someone seeing an image of Hercules painted on a wall does not thereby either see or cognize Hercules. In another way, it can be perceived as the basis (*ratio*) of cognizing, and in this way the claim is not true. For a thing is truly cognized through just a perceived species of it – as a stone is truly seen through its sensible species alone, received in the eye, and is truly understood through its intelligible species alone, received in intellect.

But perhaps you will say that that species is something sensible received by a sense and that therefore, because it is an accident and the likeness of only an accident, it doesn't lead to a cognition of the thing's quiddity and substance. To this one should reply that even if the intellect first receives intelligible species of sensible and corporeal things as they are sensible, and first understands them through those species, nevertheless secondarily, out of those species of sensible things, by means of the investigation of natural reason, it conceives cognitions of nonsensible things through itself. These are the quiddities of substances, for instance, and others of the same sort that don't have their own species in intellect. And this is what Augustine says, in *De trinitate* IX.iii [3]:

That power by which we discern through the eyes, whether it is rays or something else, we are not able to discern with the eyes, but we seek with the mind, and (if possible) we comprehend with the mind. The mind itself, then, just as it collects cognitions of corporeal things through the bodily senses, so it collects cognitions of incorporeal things through itself.

⁶ See *Summa* 1.6: "Can one human being acquire knowledge through the teaching of another human being?"



He calls things corporeal inasmuch as they are sensible, and calls incorporeal whatever is not sensible, whatever it is – such as mathematical things, the quiddities of substances, [composed of] matter and form, and others of this sort. The mind, through the efforts of natural reason, puts together a cognition of such things from out of the species of sensible things, on the basis of a natural connection between the sensible and the nonsensible – as if by digging under the species something sensible presents to it. It's in this way that a sheep by natural instinct makes an estimation through a sensed species about something not sensed – as when through the sensible species of a wolf, imagined or seen, it makes an estimation that the wolf is harmful and hostile. And so one speaks of understanding (*intelligere*), as if it were reading from within (*ab intus legere*).

