# Thomas Aquinas on Knowledge of other Minds

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**Abstract**

This paper investigates how Thomas Aquinas, who is regarded to be the top representative/proponent of the mediavel Christian thought, understands and solves the problem of 'knowledge of other minds', which is accepted to be an important problem of contemporary philosopy of mind. Accordingly, Thomas, who is an Aristotelian realist at the same time, thinks that our knowledge of other minds is acquired by way of an analogical inference based on our sensory knowledge. Thomas, who includes God and angelic intellects in addition to the human intellects into the category of other minds – which is a concept different from the modern one-, points out that we can obtain some knowledge of these additonal intellects by way of revelation and grace.

**Key Words**: Thomas Aquinas, mind, philosophy of mind, other minds, knowledge, analogy

History of philosophy teaches us that knowledge of other minds has been a problem for empiricists—in the strict sense of the term—or materialists rather than idealists or spiritualists throughout the ages. This is so due to the nature of empiricism or materialism. For the term "mind" is itself a problematic concept for an empiricist or materialist because of his avoidance or denial of immateriality. Whereas, since the world of immaterial Ideas or Forms is the real world for an idealist—for instance, for a Platonist, he does not have so much difficulty as the empiricist or the materialist does in accepting what is meant by the terms "mind", "intellect", "other minds" etc. However, each discipline has its own difficulties about the issue and, therefore, its own attempt for the solution of it. As for realism, it also has an approach to knowledge of other minds. In this paper, I will examine Thomas Aquinas' approach, which is a realistic attempt to solve the problem in question. But first a short statement of the problem and a general consideration of the solutions suggested for it are in order.

It is proper to begin our study with the meaning of the term "other minds". In contemporary philosophy, the term "other minds" is used in order to refer to the mind and mental states of other human beings. As it will be understood later, this usage is narrower than Aquinas' usage. The problem meant by the expression "knowledge of other minds" in this modern usage may be stated in the following manner: None of us has any doubt about the fact that he is not the only person in the universe, who thinks, feels, has reason and sensations, and believes etc. We are sure, in some sense, that there are beings—at least human beings—other than ourselves, who do these activities and have these dispositions. Now, we are sure that they have arms, hands, eyes, feet, head, and so on because we see and touch them, namely, we can sense them. But how do we know, or indeed do we know, that these beings have mind, feelings, beliefs, and so on? For neither mind itself nor mental states can be seen, touched, heard or tasted, namely sensed. For example, how can we know that another person is in pain or peaceful and comfortable? Although we cannot observe feelings and thoughts of another person, we assert that he is thinking, worrying, wondering, or has a pain, etc. However, although we sometimes ascribe a mental state to another person, this might as well be an illusion. So, how do we come to know that the case is a real one, not an illusion? Namely, how do we reach the knowledge of others' mind and mental states? What is my evidence for believing in the existence of another "self?[1]

One of the suggested solutions for this problem is the behaviorist approach. Logical behaviorism is the theory reducing what is mental to what is behavioral. Accordingly, for someone to be in a certain mental state means to be disposing a certain behavior or behaving in a certain way. Thus, since mental states like "thinking, hoping, perceiving, remembering and so on are all to be understood as either behaving or else possessing a complex disposition or propensity to behave"[2], when I ascribe a mental state to someone, indeed, I ascribe nothing else than a behavioral state. Furthermore, since what is meant

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[1] For an interesting analysis and some implications of puting the problem in different linguistic expressions like 'do we know ...?', 'how do we know ...?' or 'why do we believe ...?' and etc., see J.L. Austin, "Other Minds", in his *Philosophical Papers*, Oxford, 1970, pp. 76-79; for the specific difficulties of epistemic jargon like 'knowing other minds', see pp. 111-113. Austin suggests here, as a solution for the problem of other minds, that believing other minds "is an essential part of the act of communicating, an act which we all constantly perform. It is as much an irreducible part of our experience as, say, giving promises, or playing competitive games, or even sensing colored patches. We can state certain advantages of such performances, and we can elaborate rules of a kind for their 'rational' conduct ... But there is no 'justification' for our doing them as such." See Austin, p. 115.

[2] Priest, S., *Theories of the Mind*, New York, 1991, p. 35.

by "behavior" is a publicly observable bodily behavior, there is nothing, over and above behavior, to be ascribed to another self. This view is expressed sometimes in a linguistic jargon like this: Any statement or set of statements about other minds/mental states may be translated, without loosing anything from its meaning, into a statement or set of statements about his/her publicly observable behaviors[3]; i.e., "every mental-state-ascribing proposition is logically equivalent to some proposition about behavior and circumstances"[4]. That is to say, every proposition dealing with someone's mental states corresponds to a proposition talking about some behavior of that person. To state shortly, the behaviorist justifies the existence of another person as a self in terms of the behaviors that person performs. Most of the strict empiricists as well as behaviorists also hold this view. For instance, a logical positivist, embracing this solution, states his position on the issue as follows:

> And just as I must define material things and my own self in terms of their empirical manifestations, so I must define other people in terms of their empirical manifestations—that is, in terms of the behavior of their bodies, and ultimately in terms of sense-contents. (...) And thus I find that I have as good a reason to believe in existence of other people as I have to believe in the existence of material things.[5]

Another suggestion for the solution of the question is the way of "direct access" to the mind of another person just as a person knows his own mind directly.[6] But I doubt that this solution is a reasonable—even a possible—one. That is, I have difficulty in believing that one can have a direct access to the mind of another person just like one has one to his own mind.

A third and important solution to the problem of knowing other minds comes from the analogical position. According to this position, although one cannot observe the existence of other minds, one can inductively argue and find evidence in a high degree of probability for the existence of them by way of analogy from one's own experiences—including one's mental life, behaviors and circumstances. For instance, one can say that my observation of another body whose situations resemble and remind me my own situations makes me think that this body also should be related to a self or mind—his own self; otherwise it should be the case that he could not do the same things I do, namely, perform the intellectual and cognitive acts I perform. [7]

Now, these are the solutions suggested for our problem. Let us turn now to Aquinas and see how he understands and solves the problem. First of all, let me point out that there is a terminological difference between modern philosophy and Aquinas'. Instead of the term "mind" used in modern philosophy, Aquinas uses the term "intellect". It seems to me that modern philosophy's usage of the term "mind" begins with Descartes' dualistic view of human being as body and mind. Secondly, the term "mind" is used for and limited to the minds of other human beings, whereas Aquinas' term "intellect" includes, besides other human intellects, the angelic intellects and God. That is why Aquinas' term "other intellects" is wider than the term "other minds" as it is used in contemporary philosophy.[8] Before passing on to Aquinas' explanations, it will be proper and useful to note some of his fundamental epistemological principles concerning our issue.

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Plantinga, A., *God and Other Minds: A Study of the Rational Justification of Belief in God*, Ithaca, 1990, p. 191.

[5] Ayer, Alfred J., *Language, Truth and Logic*, New York, 1952, p. 130. Against the behaviourist approach there is the pure phenomenological theory claiming that from some phenomenological dispositions we can not reach a solid knowledge about mental states of another self. For it is possible that a state may have all the behavioural associations of pain, for instance, and yet not be a pain. All we have here to talk about are behaviours; we can not be sure that there is a mental state behind these behavioural dispositions. Therefore, we do not have any solid ground to believe in the existence of other minds/mental states. For more information about and a fine discussion of this theory, see P. Smith & O.R. Jones, *The Philosophy of Mind: An Introduction*, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 198-202.

[6] Plantinga, p. 190. Another form of direct access is suggested by St. Augustine. According to him, essences of all creatures, including other minds, are gathered together in God's thought. All things in the universe are created in accordance with these prototypes and through them we achieve the knowledge of all things. See E. Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, tr. by L.K. Shook, Notre Dame, 1994, p. 214.

[7] The analogical position as an argument for the knowledge of other minds is suggested in modern philosophy by R. Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, tr. by L.J. Lafleur, New York, 1960, Pt. V, pp. 31-44; J. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. by P.H. Nidditch, Oxford, 1975, Bk. IV, ch. iii, par. 27; D. Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. by L.A. Selby-Bigge, Oxford, 1981, Bk. I, Pt. III, sec. xvi, pp. 176-179; in contemporary philosophy by C. I. Lewis, *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation*, La Salle, ILL., 1946, p. 143; C. D. Broad, *Mind and Its Place in Nature*, London, 1925, pp. 335-347; S. Hampshire, "Analogy of Feeling", *Mind*, LXI [1952], pp. 1-12; H. H. Price, "Our Evidence for Other Minds", *Philosophy*, XIII [1938], pp. 425-436; B. Russel, *Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits*, New York, 1948, pp. 483-486 and A. J. Ayer, "One's Knowledge of Other Minds", in his *Philosophical Essays*, London, 1963, pp. 191-214.

[8] For more information about the nature of intellect according to Aquinas, see A. Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind*, London, 1994, pp. 41-57; for a comparison of Aquinas' concept of intellect with that of Cartesian one from another perspective, see Kenny, pp. 16-19.

First, as a consequence of the wide understanding of intellect, the term "other intellects" involves all three degrees of intellect: other human intellects, angelic intellects and God. Accordingly, the knowledge of each degree will be different from others because the nature of each intellect is different from others. Secondly, only actual things are knowable. Put differently, "nothing is known except so far as it is actual (*nihil cognescitur nisi secundum quod est actu*)"[9]. Aquinas states both this principle and its reason as follows: "Anything knowable is such insofar as it is actual and not as it is potential; for a thing has being and truth, which is what falls under knowledge, insofar as it is actual."[10] Thirdly, the primary object of our intellect through our senses in the present life is external, material things. Therefore, the primary object of our knowledge is "not just any ordinary actualization of being or truth, but the actualization of being and truth in material things"; and our intellect comes to a knowledge of everything else from these things.[11] Fourthly, Aquinas embraces Aristotle's famous principle that it is necessary to know what a faculty does in order to know what it is; but it is also required to know what makes this act possible—namely, the object—in order to know this act.[12] So, according to this principle, object is known before the act of faculty and the act before the faculty.[13] Fifthly, "things are received in a subject according to the nature of the subject".[14] Thus, our intellect knows everything according to its own nature. Sixthly, "a lower power does not extend as far as a higher, but a greater power can do what belongs to a lesser—do it better".[15]

Let us begin now to examine the issue in the light of these principles. As a consequence of wide understanding of intellect, the term "knowledge of other intellects" in Aquinas' sense involves something more than the modern understanding of it. In contemporary usage, the only issue meant by the term is the knowledge of human beings about the mind of each other whereas, in Aquinas' understanding, the term includes— besides our knowledge of other human beings—both our knowledge of angelic beings and God, and divine and angelic knowledge of other existents. However, since each of these modes of knowledge requires an independent study, we will deal with the issue only from the human perspective; that is, we will limit the scope of our investigation only to our knowledge of other intellects as a general frame work and try to concentrate specifically on our knowledge of other human intellects.

All our knowledge of other intellects may be classified under two main categories: Our knowledge of their existence and of their intellectual activities; i.e., how we know that there are other intellects and how we obtain the knowledge of their intellectual acts. So, if we are to begin with our knowledge of God, the first question is "how do we know that God is (or exists)?". This issue, indeed, requires another extensive study. That is why we are content, here, with referring to the first eight questions of the *Summa Theologiae* about this issue. As for the question how God is known by us, we will briefly deal with it.

According to Aquinas, God is known by us in two ways. First, He is known by the natural power of our reason from creatures by way of causality, of negation and remotion, and of eminence and excellence.[16] Secondly, God is known by way of grace, as the blessed know Him.[17] Now let us dive a little bit more into these two modes of knowledge. In the first way, we know God from creatures because they are His effects and depend on their cause. We know Him from His relationship with His effects "as the first cause of all things, exceeding all things caused by Him". Here, we know Him so far as creatures differ from Him in order that "He is not in any way part of what is caused by Him"; we know Him by way of remotion and negation not because creatures are removed from Him because of any defect in Him, but because He superexceeds them all. However, since our natural knowledge of God is derived from creatures, we can know Him as far as they can represent Him. Now, since the natural object of our intellect is material sensible things, the natural object of our natural knowledge of God will be the sensible creatures among others. Consequently, we can know God as far as sensible creatures represent Him. But, since neither sensible nor any other kind of creatures can fully and entirely represent God, we

[9] Kenny, p. 120.
[10] Aquinas, T., *Summa Theologiae* (Latin Text and English Translation), Blackfriars, 1964,1, q. 87, a. 1; for a similar statement see also q. 84, a. 2. Hereafter this work will be referred to as "*Summa*".
[11] *Summa*, I, q. 87, a. 3.
[12] Aristotle, *De Anima*, in *Introduction to Aristotle*, ed. R. McKeon, New York, 1947, Bk. II, 4. 415a.
[13] *Summa*, I, q. 87, a. 3.
[14] *Summa*, I, q. 84, a. 2; see also q. 12, a. 11.
[15] Ibid.
[16] *Summa*, I, q. 13, aa. 1 and 9; see also Gilson, pp. 96-103.
[17] *Summa*, I, q. 12, a. 13.

cannot know Him in this life as He really is in Himself.[18] Thus, our positive knowledge of God from creatures by way of analogy is limited to their capability in representing God.[19] The least we can know through this kind of knowledge is to know that God exists as the first uncaused Cause. So, the knowledge by our natural intellect of God, be it affirmative or negative, is obtained from creatures either by way of analogy and excellence or by way of remotion and negation.[20] Let me conclude this mode of our knowledge of God with Maritain's wonderful description of it:

> The Divine Esence, constituted as object for us not in itself but by means of the objectification of created subjects… is attained and known in things which at the same time resemble and infinitely differ from it. Even as they make the Divine Esence known to us, our concepts, while remaining themselves in it, are absorbed in its abyss. In God, what they signify escapes, without our being able to know how, our mode of conceiving. The Divine Esence is, therefore, really attained by our metaphysical knowledge, but without delivering itself; it is known, but its mystery remains intact, unpenetrated. To the very degree that we know it, it escapes our grasp, infinitely surpases our knowledge.[21]

As to our knowledge of God by way of grace, it is necessary as a further and more perfect step in human knowledge of God because of the following reasons: It should be accepted, according to Aquinas, that no created intellect can see the essence of God by its own natural power.[22] But this view seems to be incompatible with the ultimate perfection of human being. For, this perfection comes true only by attaining to beatitude which consists in seeing God; for a thing is perfect so far as it attains to its principle. On the other hand, the natural desire residing in every human being to know the cause of any seen effect seeks the first cause of all things. Now, if anyone among human beings could not reach it, this desire would be meaningless and void.[23] So, there must be another way to obtain the knowledge of God apart from the way of natural reason. Here, since the human intellect wants to be raised up to what exceeds its nature in order to obtain this knowledge, it needs a preparation by a supernatural disposition which is added to the natural power of human intellect because of its insufficiency for this purpose. Now, this additional power added by divine grace is called the illumination of human intellect. This illumination occurs in two ways. In the first way, our intellect is illuminated by means of *faith*. Theology deals with this way of knowing God. Although this way proceeds according to rational methods and sequences, it is rooted in faith—i.e., it gets its principles from faith. Therefore, what is known here is not God represented by His effects, rather "God considered in His proper esence and iner life"[24]. This way also includes, in addition to the theological knowledge of God, both the knowledge attained by pious ordinary faith and the knowledge attained by mystical experience. In the second way, our intellect is illuminated by means of Beatific Vision. Here God is seen face to face and the Divine Selfhood is grasped just as it is by the blessed.[25] Thus, in Aquinas' own words, "by this light the blessed are made deiform"; i.e., God by His grace unites Himself to the created intellect.[26] Let this suffice about our knowledge of God as we pass on to our knowledge of another kind of intellect, namely, angelic intellects.

Generally, to know something comes true in two ways: First, to know it directly, that is, to know it by experiencing it in itself; and secondly, to know it indirectly, i.e., to acquire its knowledge by means of something else. According to Aquinas, since the primary object of human knowledge in this life is the actualization of being in material things, in other words, since immaterial substances are disproportionate to our intellect in its present state, the human intellect cannot know the immaterial substances called angels in the first way above, in the mode of knowing that we directly experience angels. For our intellect cannot know or understand anything except by turning to sense images. Whereas angelic intellects are

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[18] *Summa*, I, q. 12, a. 12 and q. 13, aa. 2 and 9. A modern Thomist, Jack Maritain, calls this ontological transcendance of God '*metaphysical transintelligible*' and explains its reason as follows: "This universe on which metaphysics opens out, and the knowledge of which requires that it has recourse to a whole art of deciphering the invisible in the visible, we are calling *transintelligible*. We do so not, certainly, because it is unintelligible in itself (on the contrary, it is the domain of absolute intelligibility), nor because it is unintelligible for us, but because it is disproportionate to our human intellect. … In other words, it is not connatural to our power of knowing. It is intelligible to us only by analogy". J. Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, tr. by G. B. Phelan, Notre Dame, 1995, p. 233.

[19] For a good and concise interpretation of Aquinas on our knowledge of God by way of analogy, see Gilson, pp. 103-110.

[20] See Kenny, p. 98. Referring to its procession on the basis of (an uncircumcriptive) analogy, Maritain calls this mode of intellection '*ananoetic intellection*'; see Maritain, pp. 240 and 264.

[21] Maritain, p. 243.

[22] *Summa*, I, q. 12, a. 4.

[23] *Summa*, I, q. 12, a. 1.

[24] Maritain, p. 265.

[25] For more information, see Maritain, pp. 269-282.

[26] *Summa*, I, q. 12, aa. 4 and 5.

subject neither to our senses nor to our imagination.[27] Our indirect knowledge, in the second way above, about angels may be obtained either by means of our soul's knowing itself or by means of our knowing material things. We will deal with our knowledge of immaterial substances through our self-consciousness later when we are examining our knowledge of other human intellects. Let us take a look now at how we know angels indirectly through material things.

Here again the first question is how we know that there are entirely spiritual creatures called angels. Our indirect knowledge about the existence of angels through material things is attained in two steps: First, we reach the knowledge of the existence of God from His material effects in the world; and secondly, we base the existence of angels on this knowledge of God. Granted that the first step was taken earlier, the second step is grounded on it as follows: It is known that God's main intention in His act of creation is to create a likeness of Himself, a likeness having His goodness as a basis for itself. But an effect resembles its cause as far as it represents the property of its cause during the act of causation. Since God causes by His intellect which is simple and not mixed with any material thing or body, there must be some kind of intellect above the human intellect in order that the universe be a complete effect resembling its cause, a kind of intellect that is entirely spiritual and not mixed with any material thing.[28]

As to our indirect knowledge about the nature and other properties of angels, this may be either negative or positive. We may gain some knowledge of angels from material things by way of negation and remotion. Aquinas points out this situation by the following statement: "... treatises on them (i.e., angels) are given to us in the theological and philosophical sciences in negative terms of what they are not".[29] For example, we can say that angels do not have material bodies and that they are not corporeal and temporal beings, by way of negation. On the other hand, we can get some positive knowledge about angels by way of their likenesses and similarities with material realities, with human beings, for instance. But, this kind of knowledge is very limited and general because the likenesses between them are very limited.[30]

Up to now, human knowledge of two other kinds of intellects, namely, God and angels, has been considered in general terms. Now, let us turn to our knowledge of the third kind—other human intellects—and try to examine how it occurs in Aquinas' system. Let me say at the beginning that Aquinas establishes the knowledge of other human intellects on the ground of self-consciousness by way of analogy. While he is replying the first objection in the first article of question 88 of the *Summa Theologiae*, he says, relying on Augustine's authority, this:

> ... whatever knowledge of incorporeal realities our mind can receive, it can gain by itself. This is so true that, even among philosophers, it is said that knowledge of the soul is a kind of principle for knowing [other][31] immaterial substances. By the very fact that our soul knows itself, it comes to have a limited knowledge of incorporeal substances.

So, since we achieve the knowledge of other human intellects in the similar way we know our own "self" because both are immaterial substances, the examination of our self-consciousness will be—in some sense—the investigation of our knowledge of other human intellects. But this requires us to inquire first what the nature of our intellect is just because, according to Aquinas' Aristotelian principle, the knowledge of object comes before both the knowledge of faculty and that of its act. For, in the case of self-consciousness, the object is our intellect itself.

According to Aquinas, human intellect is "either entirely potential with respect to intelligible objects—this is called 'the possible intellect'—or the actualization of intelligible objects abstracted from sense images"—this is called 'the agent intellect'.[32] In the first case, it is in the class of intelligible things as a potential being just like primary matter in Aristotelian system is in the class of sensible things.[33] Therefore, since the possible intellect, considered in its essence, is potentially intelligible, although it has the power to understand it is unknowable except insofar as it is actualized. For, according to Aquinas' main epistemological principle mentioned earlier, anything knowable is such insofar as it is actual. Thus,

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[27] *Summa*, I, q. 88, a. 1; Kenny, pp. 94-95 and 105.
[28] *Summa*, I, q. 50, a. 1.
[29] *Summa*, I, q. 88, a. 3.
[30] Ibid; see also q. 84, a. 7.
[31] This addition belongs to me.
[32] *Summa*, I, q. 87, a. 1; see especially the reply to the second objection.
[33] Gilson suggests that our intellect in this position is a passive power. The passivity here signifies, according to him, not a "loss or deprivation of one quality in order to receive another, but merely the actualizing of a potency", i.e., being a source of riches though it is naturally deprived of them; see Gilson, pp. 207-208.

the possible intellect would not be known if it remained unactualized. Now, at this point human intellect differs from angelic intellect. Since angelic essence is in the class of actual intelligibles, angels can know themselves by their own essence but human intellects cannot. In other words, in order to know themselves the mere presence of human intellects is not sufficient—because they need to be actualized— whereas that of angels is sufficient.[34] So, the only human intellect which may be taken as knowable is the agent intellect, which is actual. But a problem arises here. How do I know that I have a power to understand if the possible intellect as such is unknowable? In other words, how do I know the possible intellect as possible intellect, not as agent intellect? Aquinas' answer is 'by means of the actualization of that power'. But one may object to this view by saying that 'in this case what is known is not possible intellect, but agent intellect'. Presumably, Aquinas' answer to the objection would be that we can know the possible intellect only after its actualization by way of inference and imagination from the agent intellect just like we know primary matter after its actualization. Thus, our main question becomes how our intellect knows itself if not by its own essence. The answer is "by means of its activity"[35], that is, by way of its acts. When our intellect acts in any way, it becomes an actual being. To put it another way, by performing any act it makes its own actualization come true. Hence, by the very same act by which it is actualized we know our intellect. For, as it is known, according to the famous principle mentioned earlier, the faculties are known by way of their acts; so is our intellect.

If this is the case, then, the next step in our investigation is how this act is performed. That is, at this point we need to answer the question 'how does the actualization of our intellect come about?', or the question 'how does it pass from being possible intellect to being agent intellect?'. Shortly, we need to find out what makes it actual. The following passage quoted from Aquinas gives the answer to these questions:

> Since it is connatural for our intellect in the present life to look to material, sensible things, as said before, it follows that our intellect understands itself according as it is made actual by species abstracted from sensible realities by the light of the agent intellect, which is the actuality of intelligible objects and by means of them, also of the possible intellect.[36]

Thus, if we analyze the passage, it is understood that for the actualization of our intellect an abstracted object, and for this abstraction a sensible object or image is necessary. However, another question jumps into the mind here: Is it not possible to think without any object? Can our intellect not not perform any act of thinking without thinking (or using in its thinking) any object? Or, at least, can it not understand itself using itself as its object just like in the case of Descartes' *cogito*? For if it can, then, the mere presence of our intellect will be sufficient and it will not need anything like a sensible object or image outside itself for the purpose.

With regard to the first part of the question, the answer seems to be negative, i.e., an act of thinking without any object seems to be impossible. For whenever we think, we think something; and it seems that the subject-object duality is essential, even may be said to be inevitable, for human thinking. This is what is meant by the term 'intentionality' of human thinking.[37] As for the second part of the question—the question of our intellect's using itself as its object, this situation is also incompatible with Aquinas' principles and system. For, on the one hand, the primary object of human intellect in this life is sensible, material things[38] whereas our intellect itself is in the class of immaterial and intangible things. On the other hand, if it were possible to use our intellect as its direct object, —since it is in the class of immaterial substances—it would be possible to use other immaterial substances as the direct objects of our intellect and, therefore, to know them without any medium; that is to say, the human intellect would be actualized by participation in immaterial intelligible forms, as Platonists hold. But Aquinas criticizes this view in many passages of the *Summa*. Therefore, the actualization of our intellect, according to Aquinas, begins with our thinking of a sensible, material object.[39] However, there are some statements

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[34] *Summa*, I, q. 87, a. 1.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] For more information about intentionality, see E. Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, tr. by W.R.B. Gibson, London, 1969, pp. 107-111, 222-230 and 235-259; A. Gurwitsch, "On the Intentionality of Consciousness", in *Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Its Interpretation*, ed. by J.J. Kockelmans, New York, 1967, pp. 118-137; J.J. Kockelmans, "Intentional and Constitutive Analyses", in *Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Its Interpretation*, pp. 137-146.
[38] Gilson, pp. 215 and 218.
[39] That is to say, *principium nostrae cognitionis est a sensu*; see Gilson, p. 216.

which may be interpreted and understood in the contrary way in the *Summa*, in the way claiming that the human intellect may understand itself without requiring anything other than itself. In other words, some statements of Aquinas may be interpreted as saying that self-reflection is sufficient in order that our intellect be actualized. For instance, when he explains the difference between two modes of knowledge by which our intellect is known, he says that when I perceive myself to have an intellectual soul from the fact that I perceive myself to be intellectually acting, the very presence of my mind is sufficient to have the knowledge of it. For my mind is itself the principle of the act by means of which it perceives itself. "Thus," he concludes, "it is said to know itself by being present to itself".[40] Let us analyze these statements a little bit more and point out what may be said here.

Now, the expression 'intellectually acting' in the statement above may be taken, depending on the term 'my mind', either as 'acting on itself' or as 'acting on something other than itself'. If the term 'my mind' in the passage 'the very presence of my mind is sufficient...' is understood as 'my agent intellect', it is proper and necessary to take the expression 'intellectually acting' in the second sense mentioned above. But if the term 'my mind' is understood as 'my possible intellect', then, the expression must be taken as stating 'an act of intellect on itself' and thus, the passage may be understood in the Cartesian direction. However, it may be said, after all, that Aquinas' system and main epistemological principles, as a whole, require to take it as 'agent intellect' and, therefore, to start our knowledge with the external things.

One thing is clear, from our investigation up to the point, that our intellect knows itself by means of its activity abstracting the intelligible forms from sensible things.[41] The next step in our investigation is the question how this activity is known. How do we know our intellectual activity? Aquinas would answer this question by saying 'by way of its object'. For, according to the principle adopted from Aristotle, in order to know the act of a faculty one must know what makes this act possible. Accordingly, we know our intellectual act by way of the intelligible object which makes this act possible. Then, what is this intelligible object? The answer is ready: Intelligible species abstracted from sensible things, which are also the proper form of our intellect.[42] This way of understanding the issue explains, at the same time, Aristotle's famous statement claiming the identity of knower and known. But, let me say it again, it holds in the case of actual understanding or knowing. Aquinas beautifully recapitulates these two cases in the following manner: "Actual understanding is identical with the actually understood by reason of likeness of a thing understood which is the form of actualized intellect. Consequently, the human intellect, which is actualized by a species of the thing understood, is itself understood through this same species as through its proper form".[43]

It is obvious, after all these explanations, that our self-consciousness begins, in the last analysis, with our sense cognition. First, we understand the sensible object, i.e., our intellect performs an act on a sensible object; secondly, we understand that we understand the object, i.e., we understand the act of our intellect; and thirdly, we understand, by way of an inference from the act, that there is a faculty responsible for this operation, namely, our intellect.[44] Here, it is interesting that the order of knowledge, as understood from the above statements, works in a different direction from the order of existence. For, in the order of existence, first, there must be an intellect which will act; secondly, there must be an object on which the act will be performed; and finally, there must be an act, i.e., the act of intellect to understand the object.

After the examination of how we reach the knowledge of our intellect, we are coming closer to the last stop of our journey. The question at this level of our investigation is how we fill the gap between our own intellect and the intellects of other human beings. To put it in the form of question, how do we pass on to the knowledge of another human intellect from that of our own intellect? In order to answer this question, let us recall the previous expositions about our knowledge of angelic intellects and of God. It was said that one way of obtaining knowledge about these intellects is analogy. That is to say, we can gain some positive knowledge about them in terms of the similarity and likeness between the material universe and them. Now, the similarity and likeness between me and other human beings is much more

[40] *Summa*, I, q. 87, a. 1.
[41] Gilson explains this process of abstraction as follows: "It is easy to discern in the objects of human knowledge a universal and intelligible element which is associated with a particular and material element. The proper operation of the agent intellect is to dissociate these two elements in order to furnish the possible intellect with the intelligible and universal which lay implied in the sensible. This operation is abstraction." See Gilson, p. 218.
[42] See the passage quoted from Aquinas just before the footnote 36 in the text above; see also Gilson, p. 221.
[43] *Summa*, I, q. 87, a. 1.
[44] *Summa*, I, q. 87, a. 3; Gilson, p. 221; Kenny, pp. 120-122.

than the similarity between the material universe and other intellects. In other words, human beings are more analogous to each other than that angels are analogous to the material universe. Therefore, the way of analogy may, by fortiori, be used to achieve the knowledge of other human intellects from that of my own intellect. That is why Aquinas says, on Augustine's authority, that the knowledge of our soul is a kind of principle for knowing immaterial substances and "by the very fact our soul knows itself, it comes to have a limited knowledge (the only kind it is able to have) of incorporeal substances".[45] Here, the assertion "the only kind it is able to have" is interesting and important. For, according to this statement, Aquinas does not see any other way of knowing them. Let us turn now to how we fill the gap between ourselves and other human intellects in the order of knowledge by way of analogy. Presumably, this filling process occurs as follows: When I perceive that a person is acting intellectually, I infer from this act that he or she has an intellect. But, in order to achieve such an inference, two conditions preceding it need to be met. First, I must perceive an act executed by that person; secondly, there must be a basis on which the inference is grounded. Now, since the only way by which I perceive the act of another person is the way in which I use my sensual powers, my sensory cognition functions as the first condition above. After I perceive his or her act, I use the analogy in order to fill the gap between this act and his or her intellect. That is, I use the analogy as a basis for my inference about the existence of his or her intellect from his or her act, and I argue this as follows: I perform this and that intellectual act because I have an intellect. Right now I see or hear that this person is performing the same act I do; therefore, he or she must also have an intellect; otherwise he could not do it. Here, the similarity or likeness is first found between the acts not intellects because this is the order of knowing, not of existing. When we look at the issue from the perspective considering the order of existence as the essential one, we come from the opposite direction and say that if he or she did not have an intellect just like mine, he would not be able to perform the same act I do. Here, the first analogy is found between the intellects.

Now, we can say that we establish our knowledge of other human intellects on two things: our self-consciousness and our sense-cognition of the acts of other human beings. But, since our self-consciousness is also established on our sense-cognition about the sensible-material things, it can be said that our knowledge of other human intellects is established, in the final analysis, on our sense-cognition.

As for the question of how we know that another human intellect is acting at the moment, i.e., the question of how we gain the knowledge of the actual operation of his or her intellect at the moment, it seems that there is no direct way providing such a knowledge. For mental states or acts of intellect cannot be a direct object of our cognitive faculties because these acts are immaterial, inner situations. But we can indirectly know these operations by way of bodily behaviors performed or exhibited by that person at that moment, that is, by way of our sensory cognition about bodily acts of that person. This may, for instance, be in terms of a direct communication with him or her, or in terms of seeing a situation on his or her face indicating that he or she is in pain, comfortable or is daydreaming, and etc. Here, again, the situation is similar to the way we obtain the knowledge of the existence of his or her intellect. That is to say, the argument here is also an inductive one based on our sense contents concerning the bodily acts of that person, and again it is by way of analogy and inference.

There is one last point left. We have said that we use the way of analogy in order to acquire the knowledge of other intellects. One may wonder what we mean by the term 'analogy'. What is Aquinas' understanding of analogy which allows him to talk about other intellects?

In order to answer this question, Aquinas explains three different usages of words or concepts: *Univocal* usage, *equivocal* usage and *analogical* usage. We use concepts univocally when we designate things possessing a common characteristic. Here the univocal term means exactly the same thing though it is predicated of different things. For example, in the following two statements the signification of the term 'tree' is in a *univocal* usage: 'oak is a tree' and 'palm is a tree'. On the other hand, we use words *equivocally* when we designate different things by the terms which are identical in sound or in their written form. Here each signification of the term is totally different from the other. For instance, the signification of the term 'pen' is equivocal when it is used both for an instrument for writing and for a small land enclosed by a fence for keeping animals. And lastly, we use a word *analogically* when the meaning or signification of the term is neither entirely same nor entirely different though it is predicated various things. For example, when we say 'this car is good' and 'the film was good', although the term

[45] *Summa*, I. q. 88, a. 1; Gilson, p. 221.

'good' signifies what a car and a film ought to be, the goodness of the car and the goodness of the film are neither entirely same nor entirely different.[46]

But analogical usage also may be in tree different ways. In the first way, "the common character or ratio belongs really and truly to each and all of the participants, in the same way but in unequal degrees of intensity or under conditions of existence which are not identical. Men and dogs, for example, are equally animals but they are not equal animals".[47] In the second way, although the common characteristic properly belongs to only one of the participants, our mind ascribes it to the others, too. For instance, the term 'healthy' properly belongs, in fact, to only an organism, but we use it for diet, food, medicine, and etc.[48] Thirdly, "the common characteristic or ratio belongs really and truly to each and all of the participants but to each and all in proportion to their respective being".[49] For example, we use the term 'knower' for both human beings and God; but, the participation of each in this common characteristic is in proportion to its respective being. Therefore,—although both are knower—human beings are knower in the ordinary sense while God is omniscient or all-knowing.

In conclusion, let me recapitulate Aquinas' notion of our knowledge of other intellects. All our knowledge—both our knowledge of their existence and of their operations—about all other intellects—may it be God, an angel or another human being—is grounded on our sense contents by way of analogy and inference from either sensible-material things or bodily behaviors of other persons. The only exception from this is our knowledge of other intellects obtained by way of revelation and grace.

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[46] Phelan, G. B., *St. Thomas and Analogy*, Milwaukee, 1941, pp. 14-15; Gilson, pp. 104-106.
[47] Phelan, p. 19.
[48] Ibid; *Summa*, I, q. 13, a. 6.
[49] Ibid.