

How Agent Intellect Enables a Syntactic Interior Word: Aquinas's Contribution within Neoplatonism

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Wayne Hankey observes, “Thomas writes the history of philosophy by drawing the Platonists and the Aristotelians into a single argument in which they complement and correct each other. The principle of this correction is the Christian faith, which philosophy ultimately serves.”¹ Even so, Hankey resists the attempt by Radical Orthodoxy authors to “remove the distance between philosophy and theology by absorbing philosophy within *sacra doctrina*, and nature within grace,” as when Milbank and Pickstock try to “move Aquinas’ Aristotelian abstractionism into intellectual intuition and Augustinian illumination.”² Instead, Hankey defends Thomas’s abstractionism, for example, from their “form-propagation interpretation,” a misunderstanding that has been refuted in detail by Houston Smit.³ Hankey thereby stays true to Thomas’s own understanding of the relation between theology and philosophy and their relative autonomy.⁴ Because of this *relative* autonomy, for Thomas it would be wrong if we were to take philosophy as untrue to itself whenever it is in service to the Christian faith, as if reason is meant only to serve itself and its own *absolutely* autonomous constructions about what is real. Service to faith, by means of trying rigorously to understand the things of faith, is no betrayal of reason by reason. Conversely, a theological truth can stimulate reason to be more rational.

¹ W. J. Hankey, “Aquinas, Plato, and Neo-Platonism,” in *Oxford Handbook to Aquinas*, ed. B. Davies and E. Stump, Oxford Handbooks in Philosophy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Accessed at <http://classics.dal.ca/Files/Aquinas_Plato_and_Neo-Platonism_for_Oxford.pdf>.

² W. J. Hankey, “*Participatio divini luminis*, Aquinas’ doctrine of the Agent Intellect: Our Capacity for Contemplation,” *Dionysius* 22 (2004): 149–78.

³ H. Smit, “Aquinas’s Abstractionism,” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 10 (2001): 85–118.

⁴ W. J. Hankey, “Aquinas at the Origins of Secular Humanism? Sources and innovation in *Summa Theologiae* 1.1.1,” *Nova et Vetera* 5:1 (2007): 17–40.

While Hankey is right to appeal to this better way of Thomas, in order to resist “radical” contemporary attempts to collapse philosophy into theology, there is the other extreme to be resisted: that of the absolute separation of theology and philosophy.⁵ In this communication I would like to begin by discussing one way in which Thomas’s abstractionism is misconstrued by this opposite extreme. In doing so, I will highlight to what extent abstraction in Thomas is best appreciated in line with a uniquely Aristotelian empiricism that would deny all innate or entitative “ideas.” My intent is to suggest how, in spite of Hankey’s excellent delineation of Thomas’s great debts to his Latin and Arabic sources and Neoplatonic influences,⁶ there is an element which Thomas contributes to the discussion of the active intellect that is irreducible to the discussion found in Neoplatonic authors like Proclus (for example, as highlighted in Carlos Steel, whom Hankey draws upon) of what is “innate” to the mind.⁷ There is something unique in Thomas’s discussion of the active intellect, which we may provisionally designate as “Aristotelian” in order to contrast it with Steel’s understanding of the Neoplatonic tradition of an innate *a priori* content.⁸ This unique something—the active intellect’s enabling of a syntactic modeling action⁹—has perhaps been

⁵ Perhaps the most influential contemporary version of this Lutheran thesis was formulated by Heidegger. Cf. S. McGrath, *The Early Heidegger and Medieval Philosophy: Phenomenology for the Godforsaken* (Catholic University of America Press, 2006). See also W. J. Hankey, “Why Heidegger’s ‘History’ of Metaphysics is Dead,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 78:3 (2004): 425–443.

⁶ Cf. the third and fourth sections of Hankey, “*Participatio divini luminis*.”

⁷ C. Steel, “Breathing Thought: Proclus on the Innate Knowledge of the Soul,” *The Perennial Tradition of Neoplatonism*, ed. J. J. O’Cleary, Ancient and Medieval Philosophy, De Wulf–Mansion Centre, I.XXIV (Leuven/Paris: Leuven University Press/Les Belles Lettres, 1997), 293–309.

⁸ Hankey rightly corrects Neothomist distortions of Thomas that much too polemically pit Aristotelian “realism” against Platonic “idealism.” My own rhetorical sins in this regard may be found in “The Analogy of Being: Three Misunderstandings, Three Clarifications,” *Fideles: A Journal of Redeemer Pacific College* 2 (2007): 103–129. My fundamental philosophical orientation, however, may be discerned in my debt to the semiotic approach that transcends the sterility of the Neothomist realism/idealism debates; cf. J. Deely, “The Role of Thomas Aquinas in the Development of Semiotic Consciousness,” *Semiotica* 152–1/4 (2004): 75–139. Thus any insistence of mine on “Aristotelian” elements in Thomas is meant to highlight his unique contributions to the development of semiotic consciousness. On “semiotic Thomism,” see B. Ashley, *The Way toward Wisdom: An Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Introduction to Metaphysics* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 51–54.

⁹ My thesis is inspired by the research of J. Deely, *Intentionality and Semiotics: A Story of Mutual Fecundation* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 2007), esp. 83–84.

overlooked by those with a programmatic zeal for overcoming the excesses of "Aristotelian" Neothomism,¹⁰ even if such zeal has nonetheless borne much fruit in incredibly valuable, path-breaking appreciations of the historical orientation of Thomas's project within Neoplatonism.¹¹

Translating Thomas: On the Inner Word as Enabled by the Active Intellect

Just as the attempt to collapse philosophy into theology misunderstands Thomas's abstractionism,¹² so too does an opposite insistence on their strict separation. My case in point here regarding the latter extreme arises with the problem of the *verbum mentis*, the inner word of the mind. John O'Callaghan has recently argued the *verbum mentis* is a theological doctrine and not a philosophical doctrine in Aquinas.¹³ I am convinced that John Deely is right when he says that O'Callaghan's "attempts to banish *verbum mentis* from the vocabulary of Thomistic philosophy" amount to "nominalism."¹⁴ In order to distinguish mind-dependent being from mind-independent being (i.e., to distinguish the "notion" or "concept" which you apprehend in your mind, from the word spoken or the word on the page), philosophy can offer some clarifications, clarifications that ought not to be classified as "theological" but rather as "anti-nominalist" (which is what Jacques Maritain teaches so well).¹⁵

¹⁰ Cf. W. J. Hankey, "Pope Leo's Purposes and St. Thomas' Platonism," for VIII Congresso Tomistico Internazionale nel centenario dell' Enciclica "Aeterni Patris" di Leone XIII held in Rome, September, 1980; published in *S. Tommaso nella storia del pensiero, Atti dell' VIII Congresso Tomistico Internazionale*, 8 vol., ed. A. Piolanti, viii, Studi Tomistici 17 (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1982), 39–52. See also Hankey, "From Metaphysics to History, from Exodus to Neoplatonism, from Scholasticism to Pluralism: the fate of Gilsonian Thomism in English-speaking North America," a communication delivered to a colloque at the Collège de France, October 12, 1992: *La Réception de la pensée d'Étienne Gilson dans la philosophie contemporaine en France*, published in *Dionysius*, 16 (1998): 157–188.

¹¹ W. J. Hankey, *God in Himself, Aquinas' Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). Reprinted 2000 in the series Oxford Scholarly Classics.

¹² Cf. the second section of Hankey, "*Participatio divini luminis*."

¹³ J. P. O'Callaghan, "*Verbum Mentis*: Theological or Philosophical Doctrine?" *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 74 (2000): 103–119.

¹⁴ J. Deely, "How to Go Nowhere With Language," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 82.2 (2008): 354 n.37.

¹⁵ Cf. J. Deely, *Intentionality and Semiotics*, xxvi; John Deely, *Augustine and Poinot: The Protosemiotic Development*. Volume 1 in the "Postmodernity in Philosophy" Poinot Trilogy: *Determining the Standpoint for a Doctrine of Signs* (Scranton, PA: University of

The *intelligibility* of beings and of Be-ing¹⁶ that we aim to articulate philosophically is not opposed to theology, simply because both theology and philosophy aim at what is *more real* than what is spoken of in usual speech. We want to make our words more adequate to the fullness of actuality, whatever and however that may be. How then to clarify what *verbum mentis* names in philosophical conversation?

A striking example of the way philosophical speech pursues a path more rigorous than, *pace* O’Callaghan, illicitly borrowing metaphors from other speech (theological or otherwise) is found in Thomas’ account of how the active intellect enables the distinctively human grasp of “being as first known” (*ens ut primum cognitum*). This is the uniquely human grasp that the world exists *apart from* our awareness of it (it is full of *things*) and is more than *our awareness* of it (as full of *objects* in our awareness).¹⁷ Let me suggest first, for anti-nominalist purposes, some further terminological distinctions,¹⁸ and then observe how the *verbum mentis* may be understood in relation to illumination and abstraction. This will be followed by my response to a common Neoplatonic reading of Thomas’s abstractionism, after which I will conclude by offering a text from Aquinas to be read with fresh eyes.

Despite Radical Orthodoxy’s suggestion of the unqualified subordination of philosophy to theology in Aquinas, I want to emphasize (with Wayne Hankey) the relative autonomy for both theology and philosophy, and my terminological distinctions will allow me to illustrate what philosophy can properly contribute. Despite the Neoplatonic debts of which Hankey speaks concerning Aquinas’s abstractionism, Aquinas is articulating something about the active intellect (namely, that it permits us to distinguish things

Scranton Press, 2009), 64; and J. Deely, *The Impact on Philosophy of Semiotics: The Quasi-Error of the External World with a Dialogue between a ‘Semiotist’ and a ‘Realist’* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2003), 57.

¹⁶ “Be-ing” is my preferred English rendition of the Latin *esse*. The hyphen highlights the verbal action of the participial expression “be-ing”, thus emphasizing the dynamic *act* of existence; whereas the capitalization of the “b” to yield “Be-ing” is a sop to the lamentable convention of rendering the Latin *esse* or German *Sein* as “Being.” It is too late to reverse this widespread lexical crime, which has sown confusion of Being with God (since the capital “B” falsely makes it seem otiose to introduce qualifiers like *ipse* and *subsistens* when discussing *esse* in relation to *Deus*). But it is not too late to insert a hyphen into this wretched word in protest, and thus to encourage the reader to think of *esse* as dynamic act rather than as a subsistent static identity.

¹⁷ On the scholastic distinction between objects and things, see J. Deely, “The Thomistic Import of the Neo-Kantian Concept of Umwelt in Jakob von Uexküll,” *Angelicum* 81.4 (2005): 711–732. See also J. Deely, *Purely Objective Reality*, Semiotics, Communication and Cognition 4 (Berlin/ New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2009).

¹⁸ Those with a sense of humor will savor the irony in this.

from objects)¹⁹ which we may provisionally label as “Aristotelian,” if only to contrast it with the more usual Neoplatonic understandings of exactly what the active intellect’s “participation in the divine light” means philosophically, in terms of what it enables in human cognition.

First, I like very much Deely’s translation of *quidditas* as “definable structure” (it is a much needed intelligible English equivalent); second, his translation of *phantasmata* as “models in the imagination” is superbly clarifying.²⁰ Third, Robert Sokolowski’s “thinkable look”²¹ for *species intelligibilis*—a phrase that has nothing equivalent in modern philosophy, as John Deely observes²²—is a very rich and very accurate rendering. Finally, I want to add my own preferred rendering of *ratio* to this refined mix: “formal aspect.”²³ I have never liked “notion” or “concept” as a translation. Even worse, Deely’s habitual term—“rationale”—for *ratio* in his translations of John of St. Thomas is thoroughly opaque.²⁴ It is as opaque in our native tongue as “quiddity” is for *quidditas*, because we are transliterating more than we are translating. To be precise, “aspect” works best, in my experience, in the widest number of contexts; whereas “formal” may be placed in front (“formal aspect”) simply to explain in which twisted sense of “transcendentalese” we are philosophically and analogically employing the word, “aspect.”²⁵

“Aspect” etymologically suggests a “looking towards,” but of course “formal” clarifies that the analogical sense of the word “aspect” means a “turning towards,” i.e., a turning towards of the mind. What is the mind turning towards? The quiddity of the phantasms, of course. Or rather, to be

¹⁹ Cf. J. Deely, *What Distinguishes Human Understanding?* (South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 2002).

²⁰ J. Deely, *Intentionality and Semiotics*, 196.

²¹ R. Sokolowski, *Phenomenology of the Human Person* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 287, 288, 300, 302, 317.

²² J. Deely, “Specifying Forms, Impressed and Expressed: Terms Without Equivalence in Modern Philosophy,” chap. 4 in *Intentionality and Semiotics*, 23–32.

²³ Of course, this will not work in every context: for example, when naming the unique “faculty of human intelligence” called *ratio* (cf. “reason, *ratio*” in the Glossary at page 200 in vol. 14 of the 1970 Cambridge University Press edition, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia. 103–109); but when it names the *object model* created by this faculty, then “aspect” accurately names the intellect’s eidetic orientation (cf. in the aforementioned Glossary: a thing’s “meaning,” i.e., its “very form,” the “distinctive element of what is being considered”). To tie together all the meanings of *ratio* in that Glossary entry, I would note that the “essential note” of the human faculty of intellect is that it seeks out the “essential notes” of every object (i.e., inquiring into them as *things*).

²⁴ Cf. *Tractatus de Signis: The Semiotic of John Poinsot*, corrected second edition (South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 2011).

²⁵ On “transcendentalese” as the unique analogical use of language by philosophy, see R. Sokolowski, *Phenomenology of the Human Person*, 182 n.4.

more precise, to the definable structure of the models in the imagination. That is what the intellect is “looking at” with its “thinkable looks”—whatever *those* things may be.

To wit: are they really “things”? Here I believe O’Callaghan’s intuition is in a way quite correct—even though he goes about pursuing it in the wrong way, by trying to exclude the *verbum mentis* as an unphilosophical doctrine. It is quite correct to want to exclude postulating mental representations inside the head. That is a highly problematic notion that Robert Sokolowski has brilliantly assailed in many places, but I will remind you of one of his best-titled articles: “Exorcising Concepts.”²⁶ O’Callaghan is quite correct, if, with Sokolowski, he wants to exorcise mental representations from philosophy as problematic.²⁷ But the trick is that, as Sokolowski has shown, we can’t label some words (because they are by convention “theological” or “metaphorical”) as somehow inadmissible to philosophical discourse (and thus not to be deployed in Sokolowski’s “transcendentalese”).²⁸ Rather, we just need to remain conscious that our words about “words”—when we speak, for example, about “inner words”—are not to be reified into things, as if there are entitative mental copies, possessing the external word’s sense-perceptible thingy-ness, lodged inside our heads. In this sense, then, the *verbum mentis* is to be considered, by any sagacious philosopher, as indeed not really an “inner word”; because what does it mean to be an entity “inside” the mind here?

The absence of *verbum mentis* from so many discussions in Aquinas,²⁹ I think, can be explained by Thomas’ wish to avoid such “representational” language wherever he senses that kind of “transcendentalese” may be more of a barrier, rather than suggestive, when it comes to understanding how words are implicated in signification. The few occasions where Aquinas does employ such language, however, are more suggestive than misleading, I would argue. In sum, I would say this to be the principle that governs his use of such language: We want to avoid any multiplication of “words” as entities “inside” the mind; we only wish to deploy this metaphor whenever it is clear we are speaking in “transcendentalese.”

²⁶ R. Sokolowski, “Exorcising Concepts,” *Review of Metaphysics* 40 (1987): 451–63.

²⁷ The exorcism would in that case exorcise the demon plaguing modern philosophy: viz., the collapse of signification into representation; cf. J. Deely, *Four Ages of Philosophy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 411–539.

²⁸ R. Sokolowski, *Phenomenology of the Human Person*, 182–3, 216, 222, 273, 282, 312, 317, 318.

²⁹ I would say this constitutes O’Callaghan’s “best” argument for his thesis: i.e., a purely philological argument from silence: cf. J. P. O’Callaghan, “*Verbum Mentis*: Theological or Philosophical Doctrine?”

For this reason, I propose translating *ratio* as “formal aspect”; I think it is the best way to keep on track with Thomas’ thought with regard to the contribution of the active intellect to cognition. Thus, man is the “formally aspectual” animal—because we go looking with our minds for essentials (“*formal aspects*”).³⁰ Again, we go looking for the definable structures “within” and “between” the mental models in our imagination. That is, we seek to highlight the non-perceptible, supra-subjective relations between things, relations imperceptible save to intellect.

Human *Intellectus*: Illumination, Abstraction, and Intellectual Operations

Having now made these anti-nominalist distinctions, let us consider the *verbum mentis* in this light. John Deely has recently pointed out that intellectual “abstraction” for Thomas does not “leave out” or “take away” existing individuals of the sensible world but rather sees “in them and beyond them” the *being* of what exists independently of our awareness of it. For Thomas, cognitional “abstraction” adds actual intelligibility to the phantasms by, in Deely’s exposition, adding “to the objective world a self-referentiality—in itself an *ens rationis*—by which the objects of experience are detached from exclusive reference to the animal organism knowing.”³¹

Abstraction proper is thus an *illuminatio* in which the active intellect adds “to the phantasms by its own activity mind-dependent relations of self-identity for the objects in the world of animal sense-perception”; whereas *abstractio* in the broader sense is a kind of general illumination whereby “the possible intellect under the stimulus of the phantasm” distinguishes between the objects of sense-perception and the being of things.³² Thomas’ brilliant articulation of the former (*illuminatio*) is what I argue allows him to be seen to rise above all historical streams of Neoplatonist influences and, if only to make a rhetorical contrast, to be declared “Aristotelian” (although what we really mean is “uniquely Thomistic”) in his understanding of the active intellect.³³ The latter (*abstractio*), when it reaches its most cognitively acute form, is not a matter of “abstractions” but rather takes the form of what Jacques

³⁰ Cf. R. Sokolowski, “Knowing Essentials,” *Review of Metaphysics* 47 (1994): 691–709.

³¹ J. Deely, *Intentionality and Semiotics*, 98.

³² J. Deely, *Intentionality and Semiotics*, 113–114.

³³ It is better to characterize Thomas’s understanding of the active intellect, perhaps, as proto-“semiotic” (in the sense discovered by Deely, *Intentionality and Semiotics*, 81–114), rather than as “Aristotelian,” if only to avoid the sterile opposition of “Neoplatonic” idealism to “Aristotelian” realism in the Neothomistic understanding

Maritain has described as the “intuition of being,” something grasped only through intellectual visualization across multiple existential judgments. “Being is said in many ways”: Aristotle’s saying is perhaps the most famous, if rather mysterious, expression of this trans-judgmental “intuition of being,” which, again, is nothing “abstract” in relation to what it gathers from all judgments, but rather multifariously and most richly concrete in what it sees in them as common across the entire range of their predications.

To repeat, first there is *illuminatio* from the active intellect (a formal relation of self-identity is established: the *object* is perceived by intellectual insight as a *thing*); second, there is *abstractio* by the passive intellect (in which the *look* brought to light by the active intellect is now expressly *thinkable* in terms of the definable structure of the models in the imagination).

With these clarifications, we can see why it is nominalistic to consider the *verbum mentis* as an unphilosophical doctrine. Philosophically, although my distinctions speak in transcendentalese, they are much more rigorous than simply deploying mere metaphors borrowed from theology about the “word.” Philosophically, these distinctions allow us to see what makes possible the use of words in definition and predication, in the first and second acts of the intellect, acts which are not to be confused with the just-mentioned “illumination” and “abstraction.”

Let me explain the difference as I see it:³⁴ Illumination (from the active intellect) achieves the first actuality of the *species impressae intellectae*: knowledge of essence without expression—what “transcendentalese” usually highlights with “visual” language. Abstraction (in the passive intellect) then achieves the second actuality of the *species expressae intellectae*: what “transcendentalese” usually highlights with “auditory” language—the internal word, the *verbum mentis*, *verbum interius*, *verbum cordis*; that is, the “concept.”

But concepts are not entities. They are not things “in the head.” We can realize this only if we are philosophically clear on what a “concept” is (i.e., on what that which is usually translated as “concept”—*ratio*—really is). Hence my anti-nominalist suggestion: that we translate *ratio*, not as “concept” or “nature” (as if it flips, nominalistically, back and forth:³⁵ between

that had not yet fully achieved semiotic consciousness; cf. J. Deely, “The Role of Thomas Aquinas in the Development of Semiotic Consciousness,” 89–91, 108–109.

³⁴ Cf. R. Sokolowski, *Phenomenology of the Human Person*, 288, for the visual/auditory contrast.

³⁵ That is, flipping between subjects instead of focusing on the relation itself between subjects, because nominalism denies the reality of supra-subjective relations: as if only entitative things (e.g., “concepts” or “natures”) are real (i.e., only “subjects” and “subjective characteristics” are real, not “supra-subjective” relations). Cf. J. Deely, “The Protosemiotic Challenge Forward,” chap. 12 in *Augustine and Poincaré: The Protosemiotic Development*, 133–178.

now being an entity inside the mind, a mind-dependent *concept* underwritten by the soul; and now being an entity outside the mind, the mind-independent *nature* of a thing), but that we instead translate *ratio* instead as “formal aspect.” “Formal aspect” is what the active intellect alone can illuminate—the intelligibility of things in terms of their definable structures (what the soul formally becomes)—and what the passive intellect articulates in its first and second operations, involving the articulation of simple apprehension (as mute syntactic definition) and the articulation of judgments (as mute syntactic predications). The “illumination” from the active intellect first makes these two “abstractive” operations (“acts”) *possible*, but then the passive intellect actually *expresses* them.

Heidegger's dogged pursuit of how the latter *abstractio* really works (in Thomistic “transcendentalese” I am saying it becomes manifest in the *species expressae intellectae* proper to the passive intellect) culminates in his emphasis on language's historicity as a function of its *Be-ing*.³⁶ The *ratio* is not possible in inter-comparisons (between things) unless we first know *the being Be-ing*: i.e., language articulates that the object (the being of which we are aware) is a thing (marked by Be-ing, i.e., existing in an act which we recognize as essentially independent of our awareness of it). The “being Be-ing” is what is first-known (*ens ut primum cognitum*). It is the “ontological difference” that makes our intellectual cognition possible with its species-specific use of language. “Language,” properly understood, is therefore just another name for what is at the root of species-specifically human cognition: the active intellect, *nous*, *intellectus*, understanding, insight, or what has been called our participation in the divine light.³⁷

As Heidegger learned from Husserl's categorial intuition, the object of phenomenology is lingual—what I am calling *syntactic*—and not a wordless representational “something.” In this sense (i.e., in the intellect's root formations of “mute syntax”), *the interior word is a word*. The *verbum interius*, the *verbum mentis*, is indeed that which Heidegger sought in his pursuit of the pre-conditions “lighting” up propositional truth,³⁸ but it is what I prefer to call, with Sokolowski, the catching sight of the “thinkable look,” the “formal aspect” that will come to light in the *naming* of things. Such lighting is what the first act of the intellect does with its non-judgmental *verbum mentis* that syntactically disengages objects from the world as “things” for the passive intellect: e.g., “zebra” or “unicorn.” The object becomes a “thing;” that is, it can be named. Only in the second act of the mind do we judge whether zebras or unicorns in fact exist, and how they exist, with what properties, etc.

³⁶ Cf. J. Deely, *The Impact on Philosophy of Semiotics*, 60–62.

³⁷ Cf. J. Deely, “The Thomistic Import,” 724.

³⁸ Cf. J. Deely, “The Thomistic Import,” 725 n.22.

Naming is made possible because the active intellect makes the grasp of quiddities possible. The active intellect adds mind-dependent relations of self-identity to the mental models of the imagination. But Thomas describes the emergence of the *verbum* (in its formal aspect, as a definable structure) as a “procession from act to act” by an analogy to Trinitarian procession. Yet the point is a philosophical one: the “procession from act to act” is a “lighting” of the phantasm. In the light of *Be-ing*, the models in the imagination are lit up such that intelligibility makes its first impression. In principle, this “procession from act to act,” enabled by the active intellect, releases the self-identical object from exclusive reference to perception, making it ready for syntactic articulation. The object now becomes a word in principle (thanks to the active intellect detaching it from its surroundings and bringing it to light as a *thing*); and then, in simple apprehension, the passive intellect expresses this word-in-principle (*species impressa*) as a *verbum mentis* (*species expressa*). And this inner word, the external word directly signifies.

In this way, Thomas (in a unique way that is irreducible to his debts to Neoplatonism) describes the active intellect as fundamentally *and syntactically* enabling the rational animal’s wordless confrontation with *Be-ing*, i.e., “wordless” insofar as the inner word has not yet been articulated with the outer word. The “wordless confrontation with *Be-ing*” is the “mute syntax” characteristic of human cognition—the initial, unreflective intuitive modeling of *Be-ing* across an analogical amplitude of like judgments about phantasms seen by the imagination: “Ostriches *are*”; “robins *are*”; etc.; therefore, “birds *exist* in many ways.” I say that words catch sight of the wordless actuality of *Be-ing* “syntactically,” because this is what a *ratio* is: the setting-off of an *object* over against itself as a *thing*. You can even think of it as a “ratio”: *object/thing*. “Thing” is simply the common denominator (proper to intellect) of something larger than an “object” in sense-perception. “Thing” is something larger exceeding every “object” (every tip of the iceberg) grasped. Once we become familiar with a wide range of things—icebergs, ostriches, zebras—along with their many initially ungrasped and perhaps most surprising aspects, we may then conceive of *Be-ing* in a properly philosophical (i.e., reflectively metaphysical) “intuition of *Be-ing*” that analogically thinks of *Be-ing* as something that always surprisingly exceeds every conceptual grasp we have of *beings*.

The formal relation of self-identity establishes the first-known *ratio*—“The *object* is a *thing*.” This is the original syntactic insight available to the “formally aspectual” animal (i.e., the human being whose formal object of the active intellect enables the sort of unique discernment made possible by *ens ut primum cognitum*). And this establishing of a formal relation of self-identity in all mental models—which the active intellect makes possible—allows similarly patterned judgments to be articulated through predications

and definitions. “Abstractive” judgment is nothing other than the object being considered as “taken away from”³⁹ the thing’s existence as a mind-independent common denominator—but common in the sense of *ens commune*, i.e., an analogically common existence: “The turkey *is* a bird.” “Bird” is a kind of thing rich in intelligibility (it encompasses the intelligibilities of stellar jays and ostriches, for example), whereas “turkey” is a much more limited object. You can be an expert in turkeys and yet still relatively clueless as an ornithologist.

“Language” (or “Active Intellect”) in the Primary Modeling System of Humans

Because of this key role that the active intellect plays in the human modeling process, by everywhere making *Be-ing* thematic for every object (i.e., considering it as a *thing*), we simply cannot deny the *verbum mentis* without becoming nominalists. Common to all modern philosophers is this “disaster of *nominalism*, that infection of speculative thought which blinds the mind to the dependence in understanding of everything the senses yield upon general modes of being insensible as such, yet as independent or more independent of human whim as anything on the order of rocks or stars.”⁴⁰ All modern philosophy, from Descartes on, regards sense impressions or ideas as self-representing objects, rather than as other-representing (by virtue of being part of the action of signs that in *their* mode of being *transcend* subjectivities).⁴¹ The first comprehensive treatment of this nominalism running through modern philosophy seems to be found in Weinberg,⁴² but Peirce certainly propounded the thesis,⁴³ and Deely has recently and definitively established it.⁴⁴

For the purposes of this communication, I may sum up a basic principle for understanding the *verbum mentis* in order to avoid such nominalism: *There are no representations in the mind that are copies of things in the external world.*

³⁹ Or better: set in comparison with, i.e., “on top of” (as in the ratio: *object/thing*).

⁴⁰ J. Deely, *The Impact on Philosophy of Semiotics*, 70.

⁴¹ J. Deely, *Descartes and Poinot: The Crossroad of Signs and Ideas*. Volume 2 in the “Postmodernity in Philosophy” Poinot Trilogy: *Contrasting the Way of Signs to the Way of Ideas, Semiotics to Epistemology* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 2007).

⁴² J. R. Weinberg, *Abstraction, Relation, and Induction: Three Essays in the History of Thought* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), 3–60.

⁴³ C. S. Peirce, *CP* 1.19; see Deely, *Intentionality and Semiotics*, xxvi.

⁴⁴ For a brief summary, see J. Deely, “The Protosemiotic Challenge Forward,” chap. 12 in *Augustine and Poinot: The Protosemiotic Development*, 133–178. For more detail, see J. Deely, *Four Ages of Understanding*, 411–539.

Conversely, there are not *words* or *concepts* in the realm of intellect and then *things* in the realm of the sensible. This latter error is the opposite of the nominalist error that sunders theology from philosophy, as also the mind from external things. But it is likewise an extreme that threatens to prematurely collapse into theology what philosophy properly can know about human cognition. In its Neoplatonic mode, it asserts, as Hankey states it, a “fundamental argument against a purely empiricist Aristotelianism”: namely, that “if there are no *a priori* reasons in our mind the formation of universals by reasoning from sense-perception is not even possible. For how can one explain that only humans are capable of this abstraction-process?”⁴⁵

This is an excellent question, to which the correct answer is not the old Platonist postulation of innate “ideas” in order to explain the mysterious co-operation of body and soul. The correct answer instead recognizes that each species brings something species-specific to its generic animal modeling system.⁴⁶ Petrilli and Ponzio explain the unique syntactic role of the primary modeling system within humans, as it has been carefully distinguished in recent decades by biosemiotics:⁴⁷

The study of modeling behavior in and across all life forms requires a methodological framework that has been developed in the field of biosemiotics. This methodological framework is *modeling systems theory* as proposed by Sebeok in his research on the interface between semiotics and biology. Modeling systems theory analyzes semiotic phenomena in terms of modeling processes (cf. Sebeok and Danesi 2000: 1–43).⁴⁸

In the light of semiotics viewed as a modeling systems theory, semiosis—a capacity pertaining to all life forms—may be defined as “the capacity of a species to produce and comprehend the

⁴⁵ W. J. Hankey, “*Participatio divini luminis*,” n.102, quoting Steel. The quote continues: “[Human souls] are called ‘rational’ (*logikoi*), which does not mean only that they can dispose of a formal faculty of reasoning, but that they have an *a priori* content of thought. The souls are *logikoi* because they are in their being the *pleroma* of *logoi*. Without these *a priori* reasons in the soul, no sensible information could ever be transformed into true universal knowledge.”

⁴⁶ Cf. J. Deely, “Semiotics and Jakob von Uexküll’s Concept of Umwelt,” *Sign System Studies* 32.1/2 (2004): 11–34.

⁴⁷ S. Petrilli and A. Ponzio, “A Tribute to Thomas Sebeok,” *Biosemiotics* 1.1 (2008), 25–39. I quote below a pre-publication PDF version found on Ponzio’s web site, which I prefer for its clarity. My footnotes in square brackets reproduce its citations.

⁴⁸ [Thomas A. Sebeok and Marcel Danesi, *The Forms of Meaning: Modeling Systems Theory and Semiotic Analysis* (Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2000).]

specific types of models it requires for processing and codifying perceptual input in its own way" (*Ibidem*: 5).

Petrilli and Ponzio thus outline the role of what has been traditionally called the "active intellect" or "agent intellect," by treating it as what biosemiotics has now distinguished as "language" in the root sense:

The applied study of modeling systems theory is called *systems analysis*, which distinguishes between primary, secondary and tertiary modeling systems.

The primary modeling system is the innate capacity for *simulative* modeling—in other words, it is a system that allows organisms to simulate something in species-specific ways (cf. *Ibidem*: 44–45). Sebeok calls "language" the species-specific primary modeling system of the species called *Homo*.

The secondary modeling system subtends both "indicational" and "extensional" modeling processes. The nonverbal form of indicational modeling has been documented in various species. Extensional modeling, on the other hand, is a uniquely human capacity because it presupposes *language* (primary modeling system), which Sebeok distinguishes from *speech* (human secondary modeling system; cf. *Ibidem*: 82–95).

The tertiary modeling system subtends highly abstract, symbol-based modeling processes. Tertiary modeling systems are the human cultural systems which the Moscow-Tartu school had mistakenly dubbed "secondary" as a result of conflating "speech" and "language" (cf. *Ibidem*: 120–129).

Later on, Petrilli and Ponzio describe the import of this crucial distinction between "language" (what Thomas discusses as the "interior word") and "speech" (what Thomas discusses as the "exterior word"):

Specifically human semiosis, anthroposemiosis, is represented as "semiotics" thanks to a species-specific 'modeling device' that Sebeok calls "language." Such an observation is based on the fact that it is virtually certain that *Homo habilis* was endowed with language, but not speech. (cf. Sebeok in Posner, Robering, and Sebeok 1997–98, I: 443).⁴⁹

⁴⁹ [Posner, Roland.; Klaus Robering; and Thomas A. Sebeok, eds. (1997–98). *Semiotik Semiotics. A Handbook on the Sign-Theoretic Foundations of Nature and Culture*, 3 vols. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1998 (Vol. 3 is forthcoming). Note that the text cited here in Posner, Robering, and Sebeok is a reprint of Thomas A. Sebeok, "Language

Sebeok claimed that human verbal language is species-specific. On this basis and often with cutting irony he debated against the enthusiastic supporters of projects which had been developed to teach verbal language to captive primates. Such behavior was based on the false assumption that animals might be able to talk, or even more scandalously, that they are endowed with the capacity for language. The distinction established by Sebeok between *language* and *speech* (1986, chp. 2)⁵⁰ is not only a response to wrong conclusions regarding animal communication, but it also constitutes a general critique of phonocentrism and the general tendency to base scientific investigation on anthropocentric principles.

The “mute syntax” of “language”—what I have been discussing above in terms of what the active intellect enables as an “inner word”—thus becomes a scientific marker of the emergence of a distinctively human animal species:

According to Sebeok, language appeared and evolved as an *adaptation* much earlier than speech in the evolution of the human species through to *Homo sapiens*. Language is not a communicative device (a point on which Sebeok is in accord with Noam Chomsky, though the latter does not make the same distinction between *language* and *speech*); in other words, the specific function of language is not to transmit messages or to give information.

Instead, Sebeok described language as *a primary modeling device*. Every species is endowed with a model that “produces” its own world, and “language” is the name of the model that belongs to human beings. However, as a modeling device, human language is completely different from the modeling devices of other life forms. Its distinctive feature is what the linguists call *syntax*, that is, the capacity to order single elements on the basis of operational rules. But, while for linguists these elements are the words, phrases, and sentences, etc. of historical-natural languages, Sebeok’s reference was to a mute syntax. Thanks to syntax, human language, understood not as a historical-natural language but as a modeling device, is similar to Lego building blocks. It can reassemble a limited number of construction pieces in an infinite number of different ways. As a modeling device, language can produce an indefinite number of models; in other words, the

as a Primary Modeling System?” in Hilmar M. Pabel, ed., *Signs: An Introduction to Semiotics*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 139–149.]

⁵⁰ [T. Sebeok, *I Think I Am a Verb* (New York and London: Plenum Press, 1986).]

same pieces can be taken apart and put together to construct an infinite number of different models.

Therefore, in response to Steel's unanswered objection, which leads him and many others down the path of innate "ideas," we can see how biosemiotics discerns what is unique to the modeling system of each species (for humans, it is "language," or "active intellect" as Thomas, with Aristotle, terms it) while still appreciating the modeling process as a phenomenon common to all living things. The correct response to Steel's objection, then, is to observe that adaptation to the environment is common to all the diverse species, generating what is hylomorphically "innate" to the biological heritage of each species (e.g., their diverse and peculiar anatomies, which in turn condition their diverse modeling systems). The exaptation of "language" in the human species, however, has brought forth a species-specific unique manifestation that can be accounted for empirically without any recourse to innate "ideas" in our biological modeling system. This is because species-specific "exaptation"—not to be confused with the "adaptation" functions of the specific modeling systems—empirically explains that for which Platonisms have wrongly postulated the presence of innate "ideas" in our uniquely human cognition:

And thanks to language thus described, not only do human animals produce worlds similarly to other species, but they may also produce an infinite number of possible worlds

Similarly to language, speech too made its appearance as an adaptation, but *for the sake of communication*, and much later than language, precisely with *Homo sapiens*. Speech organizes and externalizes language. Subsequently, language also ended up becoming a communication device through processes of *exaptation* (cf. Gould and Vrba 1982: 4-15)⁵¹ in the language of evolutionary biologists, enhancing nonverbal capabilities already possessed by human beings; and speech in turn was exapted for (secondary) modeling.

To be precise, then, the exaptation of the biologically underdetermined portion of the primary modeling system—that exapted portion which Sebeok calls "language"—is what at root distinguishes our species across all three modeling systems.⁵² The *fact* that it *is* biologically underdetermined (whence

⁵¹ [Stephen Jay Gould and E.S. Vrba, "Exaptation: A Missing Term in the Science of Form", *Paleobiology* 8 (1982): 4-15.]

⁵² J. Deely, "The Primary Modeling System in Animals," in *La filosofia del linguaggio come arte dell'ascolto: sulla ricerca scientifica di Augusto Ponzio / Philosophy of language as the art of listening: on Augusto Ponzio's scientific research*, ed. S. Petrilli (Bari: Edizione dal Sud, 2007), 161-179.

its exaptation) is the empiricist answer to Steel's objection. And this empirical fact demands that all good Neoplatonists must now become more "Aristotelian" about their innate "ideas"—and to jettison them as inadequate metaphors for the human modeling system.⁵³

Conclusion: *Ratio* as Formal Aspect

As I have discussed in this communication, Be-ing is what comes to light thanks to the active intellect's enablement of syntactic modeling, i.e., the type of modeling in which Be-ing itself can be articulated (concretely, in "an infinite number of possible worlds") as an issue for human reflection (because the syntactic action of "abstraction" permits humans alone to reflect how objects, when considered as *things*, can *be* otherwise). There are not simply "concepts" on one side and "things" on the other. There is no "representation"; instead, there is a biosemiotic modeling that enfolds sensations into elaborate perceptual and intellectual interpretations. Some interpretations of the world, thanks to innate adaptive biological heritage, are shared across the species; other interpretations are so biologically underdetermined that they cannot be shared, unless exapted communication establishes a way for them to be adopted by others, as deliberately chosen models.

⁵³ Cf. J. Deely, "Umwelt," *Semiotica* 134.1–4 (2001), 125–135: "But the human modeling system, the Innenwelt underlying and correlate with our Umwelt, is, strangely, not wholly tied to our biology. The first effectively to notice this anomaly in the context of semiotics was again Sebeok (e.g., 1984, 1988). When we are born, or, indeed, when our genotype is fixed at fertilization in the zygote from which we develop, what we can see or sense in any direct modality is established and determined, just as is the case with any animal life form. But what language we will speak or what we will say in that language is far from so fixed and determined. Sebeok was the first effectively to point out that failure to grasp the implications of this fact result largely if not entirely from the widespread and long-standing confusion, in learned circles no less than in popular culture, between language, which is a matter of an Innenwelt or modeling system that is not wholly tied to biological constitution, and communication, which is a universal phenomenon that in and of itself has nothing whatever to do with language. Thus zoösemiotics studies the communication systems of animals, both those that are species-specific to each animal form and those that overlap two or more forms, including communicative modalities shared between human animals and other animal species. But language is not first of all a communication system. Language is first of all a way of modeling the world according to possibilities envisioned as alternative to what is given in sensation or experienced in perception. When such a modeling system is exapted for the purpose of communicating it to another, the attempt succeeds, if at all, only when the other to whom one attempts to communicate such a praeter-biological content is a conspecific (that is, only when the prospective receiver

The syntactic articulation that uniquely belongs to the human modeling system (and which shines forth in all our species-specific communications) is enabled by the active intellect—which I have discussed here as a synonym for “language,” as the species-specific primary modeling system.⁵⁴ According to Sebeok’s hypothesis, to understand language in this root sense, as part of a “primary modeling system” (the biologically underdetermined part), connects the human animal generically considered (i.e., as living and perceiving) with its species-specific modeling system (i.e., as living and perceiving in a highly specific way).⁵⁵ What this means is that for Aquinas, rightly understood, the intellect (when contrasted with organism’s biological heritage) *does not bring anything innate to experience* other than the “light” of syntax itself, which in its root form, found in our species’ primary modeling process, first predicates Be-ing of a being, in order to construct an *intelligible* world.

This requires nothing “innate” other than the analogical unity in which the individual soul (as individual) participates *spiritually*, i.e., intellectually. This light, of our being individually and hylomorphically “one” *in a biologically underdetermined way*, permits the formal relation of self-identity to be woven into our syntactic mental models of things in the world. That is, we see syntactically how other things are (hylomorphically) being “one” in light of how we recognize ourselves as (hylomorphically) being “one.” This insight arises out of the process of syntactic articulation of what we encounter in the senses. There is no innate *a priori* content that the active intellect brings, other than “language” (in the root sense, as the biologically underdetermined—and hence “spiritual”—“mute syntax” of the inner word). This is something unique to our species that comes to light when we make syntactic

likewise has an *Innenwelt* which is not wholly tied *omni ex parte* to biological constitution); and the result of the communication (when and to the extent it succeeds) is the establishment precisely of a *linguistic code*, which will correlate with but in no way reduce to elements accessible through one or another sensory modality of the organism, which is the establishment of a new, species-specific channel of communication, to wit, *linguistic communication*, commonly miscalled and thoroughly confused with language itself. That is why, for communication to be linguistic, it matters not a whit whether it be spoken, written, or gestured: all that matters is the type of *Innenwelt* underlying the communication which makes immediate, non-reductive interpretation of the linguistic code possible in the first place. That is why the ‘meaningful world’ in which the human animal lives involves postlinguistic structures (Deely 1980) accessible in what is proper to them only by a linguistic animal, whereas all the other animals, even when they employ (as is in fact fairly common) symbolic means of communication, are restricted to the order of prelinguistic, sense-perceptible object domains (including postlinguistic structures in their sense-perceptible aspects of embodiment).”

⁵⁴ Cf. Deely, *The Impact on Philosophy of Semiotics*, 76.

⁵⁵ Sebeok, “Language as a Primary Modeling System?,” 139–149.

articulations (with outer words) and then reflect on our ability to do so. We discover that it is a divine gift, unique within creation, to our species.⁵⁶

I conclude with a text from Thomas to buttress my suggestion that with Thomas' reading of Aristotle (albeit made within Thomas's programmatic harmonization of wisdom, Neoplatonic and otherwise) an important truth is finally articulated about how this divine gift of the "active intellect" operates in the "language" distinguishing our primary modeling system. Review of all pertinent texts is beyond the scope of my purpose here, for which I am content to summarize the important truth. I summarize it this way, in my interpretation of some very difficult words in Thomas: namely, that quiddities are aspects, *looks* in the things themselves now made *thinkable*. For a *quidditas* is neither an external nature nor is it a concept in the mind. And neither is the *ratio* an external nature nor is it an internal concept. Rather, these difficult Latin philosophical terms in Thomas refer us to the *formal aspect* of things, which the active intellect always illuminates, and yet which we only potentially articulate—until we actually do so, by "abstraction." This is a uniquely human task, to find the words for our inner words. For we carry the biologically underdetermined—spiritual—light within, which makes objects actually intelligible to us in their Be-ing, as things. Of the root syntactic action that the active intellect enables with its impressed syntactic distinction of "being/Be-ing," Thomas says:

There are two operations in the sensitive part [i.e., sensation and perception, as both distinguished from intellection]. One, in regard of impression only, and thus the operation of the senses takes place by the senses being [directly] impressed by the sensible [i.e., in the physical icon of a *species impressa*]. The other is formation, inasmuch as the imagination forms for itself some icon [i.e., the mental icon of a *species expressa*] of an absent thing, or even of something never seen. Both of these operations are [also] found [in an analogical way] in the [active and passive] intellect [which properly manipulate the imperceptible relations not available to sensation or perception]. For in the first place there is the passion of the passive intellect as informed by the [active intellect's] intelligible species [i.e., the formal relation of a *species impressa intellecta*]; and then the passive intellect, thus [impressively] informed, [expressly] forms a definition, or a division or a composition, which [i.e., as an aspectually articulated *species expressa*

⁵⁶ And if this intellectual ability "innate" to our species arose in evolution by chance in exaptation, then that is still no argument against its providential design, for Divine Providence still governs the world even where there is chance, as the pre-ordaining cause of what happens by accident; cf. *Summa Theologiae* I, 16, 1.

intellecta] is signified vocally. Wherefore **the formal aspect** that **a name** signifies is its definition [of a relational aspect], and a proposition conveys the intellect's division or composition [of a multiplicity of such formal aspects]. Vocal expressions do not therefore signify the [syntactic intellectual impressions of the] intelligible species themselves, but rather that [syntactic intellectual expression of aspects] which the intellect forms for itself for the purpose of judging of external things.⁵⁷

Alfred J. Freddoso would translate a key sentence in this passage as: "Hence, the **concept** (*ratio*) that **the spoken name** (*nomen*) signifies is the definition. And the proposition (*enunciatio*) signifies the intellect's composition or division."⁵⁸ Likewise, the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (1920, 2nd ed.) render it: "Wherefore the **concept** (*ratio*) conveyed by **a word** (*nomen*) is its definition; and a proposition conveys the intellect's division or composition."⁵⁹ But I am arguing that an "aspect" (*ratio*) is *already at root syntactic*, thanks to the active intellect formally detaching an *object* from purely estimative perception: i.e., making it (beyond estimation as desirable, undesirable, or neutral) to be intellectually perceived as a *thing*. Therefore, "concepts" are *never* simply simple "ideas," which only later are to be combined in composite judgments. Rather, the stamp of the active intellect is that, when any being is cognized as such (i.e., in its Be-ing), any intelligible "formal aspect" (for which "concept" is a mistranslation)—e.g., "bird"—is always already a syntactic relation (setting in relation: *object/thing*)—e.g., "wings"/"bird"—and this enables yet further comparisons (i.e., those between aspect and aspect) in judgments—e.g., "red"/"robin" vs. "blue"/"jay."⁶⁰

⁵⁷ *Summa Theologiae* I, 85, 2, ad 3: "Whether the intelligible species abstracted from the phantasm is related to our intellect as that which is understood?" (The question's "Aristotelian" answer to the question is in the negative.) "... *in parte sensitiva invenitur duplex operatio. Una secundum solam immutationem, et sic perficitur operatio sensus per hoc quod immutatur a sensibili. Alia operatio est formatio, secundum quod vis imaginativa format sibi aliquod idolum rei absentis, vel etiam nunquam visae. Et utraque haec operatio coniungitur in intellectu. Nam primo quidem consideratur passio intellectus possibilis secundum quod informatur specie intelligibili. Qua quidem formatus, format secundo vel definitionem vel divisionem vel compositionem, quae per vocem significatur. Unde ratio quam significat nomen, est definitio, et enuntiatio significat compositionem et divisionem intellectus. Non ergo voces significant ipsas species intelligibiles, sed ea quae intellectus sibi format ad indicandum de rebus exterioribus.*" My translation, modifying the Dominican Fathers.

⁵⁸ A. J. Freddoso, University of Notre Dame, New English Translation of St. Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*, accessed at <<http://www.nd.edu/%7Eafreddoso/summa-translation/TOC-part1.htm>>. Bold face is my addition.

⁵⁹ Bold face and Latin text is my addition.

⁶⁰ That is, this further aspectual comparison in judgment is necessarily built on the aspectual relation of both ratios ("red"/"robin" vs. "blue"/"jay") to the intel-

Therefore “formal aspect” is a better rendering of *ratio* because it better expresses how syntactic articulation truly operates in our species when the active intellect impressively enables formal, syntactic relations of self-identity in relation to the *objects* of animal perception (and thereby allows us to expressly cognize *things* as such). Against recent attempts to overly Neoplatonize Thomas’s understanding of abstractionism, then, I would conclude by suggesting that John Deely has equipped us with a detailed account of what distinguishes Thomas’s understanding of the active intellect from all others. Rather than taking anything away from perception, the active intellect instead *adds* an imperceptible intellectual relation, by syntactically articulating formal self-identity (understanding “object as thing”⁶¹). For this reason, what Thomas’s word “abstraction” indicates is something that we may perhaps better understand with a neologism: I say the “abstraction” enabled in our modeling system is better termed “syntaction.”⁶²

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lect’s first definitional ratio (“wings”/“bird”). Note that my use of *visual* “ratios” on the page here is merely a *perceptible* analogy about the intellect’s manipulation of *imperceptible* relations in what is perceived. That is, my analogy is suggestively deployed to contrast the inner word’s syntactic modeling (intellectual “language” in its root sense) with the outer word expressions articulated later (in “speech”): e.g., the definition (“wings”/“bird”), which is spoken as “Winged things are birds”, is the intellectual basis for the judgments (“red”/“robin” vs. “blue”/“jay”), which are spoken as “Red winged birds are robins” and “Blue winged birds are bluejays”.

⁶¹ Cf. J. Deely, “The Thomistic Import,” 726–728.

⁶² I intend this neologism to resonate with Sokolowski’s attempts to bring to light the unique action of syntax in the human person. Cf. Deely, *Intentionality and Semiotics*, 81–100.