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KNOWLEDGE AND THE SPECIES

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THE HEART of the problem of knowledge is the manner of the union of the knower with the known. St. Thomas has his explanation of the manner of this union, not original with him, but founded on Aristotle and fitting in compactly with the rest of his philosophy.

And first of all in regard to the knower. "Intelligent beings," he says, "are distinguished from non-intelligent beings in that the latter possess only their own form; whereas the intelligent being is naturally adapted to have also the form of some other thing; for the idea of the thing known is in the knower. Hence it is manifest that the nature of a non-intelligent being is more contracted and limited; whereas the nature of intelligent beings has a greater amplitude and extension; therefore the Philosopher says that the soul is in a sense all things. Now the contraction of the form comes from the matter. Hence, as we have said above, forms according as they are the more immaterial, approach nearly to a kind of infinity. Therefore, it is clear that the immateriality of a thing is the reason why it is cognitive; and according to the

mode of immateriality is the mode of knowledge. Hence, it is said in *De Anima* that plants do not know because they are wholly material. But sense is cognitive because it can receive images free from matter, and the intellect is still further cognitive, because it is more separated from matter and unmixed, as is said in *De Anima III*."

And then in regard to the knowledge itself: "Knowledge is according to the mode of the one who knows; for the thing known is in the knower according to the mode of the knower."

And again in regard to the manner in which the union of the knower and the known takes place: "All knowledge is by way of some form which is the principle of knowledge in the knower. Such a form may be considered either according to the existence which it has in the knower, or according to its relation to the thing of which it is a likeness. In the former sense, it causes the knower actually to know; in the latter sense, it determines knowledge to some particular knowable object. For, in the mind acquiring knowledge from things, the forms exist in virtue of some action of these things