

## CONSCIOUS ACTS.

MUCH has been written, in recent years, on the subject of consciousness. Conflicting theories are proposed for explaining this action of man's intellect, some of them more or less materialistic, some based on peculiar principles of false mental philosophy, and not a few of such speculations helping to render its nature quite obscure to many minds. Without here stating or discussing the various opinions that have been defended, the attempt will be made in this article to define and describe the intellectual action styled consciousness, just as it is made known to us on the testimony of that consciousness itself. This may be of some use, since no one who fails rightly to understand this intellectual operation, can attain to any full and precise knowledge of psychology. There is some repetition in what follows, because of the same matter being proposed under different aspects, in order to render the subject of consciousness, which of its nature is difficult, more clear and intelligible to the general reader.

Consciousness is that knowledge which the intellect has of itself; and which consists in the intellect knowing itself, knowing its own acts as its own, and knowing that it knows. The intellect as capable of thus knowing itself and its acts as its own, is often styled, in popular language, the power or faculty of consciousness; yet, consciousness is not a faculty distinct from the intellect itself.

The intellect is distinguished as directly conscious, and reflexly conscious; and it is necessary to understand the two operations clearly in order to comprehend the nature of consciousness, as well as the intellect's natural manner of knowing any of its objects.

The intellect as directly conscious, has knowledge of itself jointly with its knowledge of an object, of what affects itself or is in itself. Hence the name given to this accompanying self-knowledge in the intellect, *consciousness*,<sup>1</sup> derived from *conscire*, which signifies to know along with, together with, jointly with. The human intellect cannot know itself directly, except along with something else which is perceived by means of an actual idea; but the intellect thus directly conscious of itself does not then form any separate idea of itself.

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<sup>1</sup> "Conscientia," is defined in the dictionaries, "joint knowledge;" see Andrews, the *Century Dictionary*, Oxford translation of Aristotle. St. Thomas, p. I qu. 79, a. 13, in C, says, "conscientia dicitur *cum alio* scientia;" and in another place, "conscire dicitur quasi simul scire," consciousness is essential to intellectual knowledge; it is an intrinsic constituent of such knowledge.

In knowing self as an object, reflexly or by introspection, the intellect forms its idea of self just as it forms its idea in knowing any other object.<sup>1</sup> Along with this act of knowing itself reflexly by means of an idea of self formed for that end, the intellect has, at the same time, its accompanying *direct* consciousness of self. Indeed, it is only by direct consciousness that it knows itself as present, and as acting or knowing, and reflex knowledge of self as an object, is not possible, unless accompanied with direct consciousness.

The mind knows itself directly, then ; not, however, by distinguishing<sup>2</sup> or thinking in particular about itself, but as present to itself, and it cannot know any object whatever, except jointly with knowing self through direct consciousness. By this direct consciousness the intellect has knowledge of itself which is absolutely intuitive. Without this intuition of self as present, we could not have the evidence that our reflex knowledge of self is objectively real, or is anything more than ideal. The ideas which the intellect forms of itself as an object, are derived from images pictured in the fancy ; for, as psychology teaches, all our ideas of any objects whatever, are formed dependently on the ministry of some or other representations in the fancy. Thus it happens that the intellect knows itself reflexly by means of ideas, just as it knows any object different from itself. The intellect's reflex knowledge of itself as an object is intuitive, though such intuition is not so immediate as is direct consciousness. Reflex knowledge is not necessarily opposed to intuition ; it is opposed to direct knowledge.

What is the first *object* known by man's intellect? Does it first know itself, its own act, or first know another object distinct from self?

The first object actually known by man's intellect, or known by means of an idea expressing that object, is not the intellect's own act of knowing, as "I think, cogito." It is true that the intellect must have direct though confused consciousness even of its first act of knowing an object by means of an idea ; and thus it is able to rethink such idea reflexly. The intellect cannot rethink and *recognize* an idea not previously *cognized as its own*, at least in a confused manner. Man's intellect knows itself or its act, "I think, cogito," as an object, only by a reflex and secondary act ; nor can the intellect by means of a mental word or idea expressly know itself to exist, except by the reflex operation of seeing itself act or

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas says, p. 1, qu. 14, a 2, ad. 3, "intellectus sic intelligit seipsum per speciem intelligibilem sicut et alia ;" with Aristotle in 3 de Anima, καὶ ἄλλοις δὲ νοητοῖς ὡς νοητῶν : The intellect knows itself by means of an idea just as it knows other objects.

<sup>2</sup> "Anima semper intelligit se non discernendo vel cogitando aliquid de se sed in quantum præsens est sibi," St. Thomas in 2 sent disp. 39, qu. 1, a. 1.

think, and then inferring its existence therefrom. Hence, the question as with Descartes, may be thus stated: is man's first cognition "cogito, I think?" Does man know only by inference, or only as a logical conclusion, "*ergo, existo*, therefore I exist?"

While it is true that the intellect's own act is not the first thing which the intellect knows, or of which it forms its first idea, sensible things being the first objects thus known; yet, the intellect has, at least confusedly, direct consciousness of its act and its own existence when it does first know its connatural object. As before said, the intellect first directly knows its act of knowing another object jointly with knowing that object; it is only then it can first reflexly know that act or itself, by forming for itself an idea of that act or of itself.

Descartes makes the *primum cognitum* for man's intellect, or the first object known to it, *cogito*, I think. But this act cannot be known as an object, till after the act of thinking something else; the first object known is the thing which is thought, not the mere act by which it is thought. The primary object of man's intellect is the sensible thing;<sup>1</sup> yet, his intellect, in itself, would be capable of knowing any being whatever, provided it were duly presented to it. "I think" is not the first thing known; for direct knowledge is prior to reflex knowledge, and to know as an object that "I think," is reflex cognition.

Descartes assumed that the "primum cognitum" is also the "primum philosophicum," and that "cogito," I think, is the *primum cognitum*. Both these hypotheses are untrue in fact; "cogito," I think, is not the first object known to the human mind. Besides, philosophy, or philosophical reasoning, must start from general principles of metaphysics or axioms, because they are the absolute criteria of philosophical truth. In describing the origin of ideas and of man's knowledge, it will be pertinent to that special aim to ascertain what is naturally first known to the human mind. When man's knowledge is thus considered in the order of its first origin, it must be said that objects are known prior to acts, and acts are known prior to the power of eliciting those acts.<sup>2</sup>

Reflection is mental work which the intellect is carrying on daily; it is an exercise of attention by which the mind either contemplates its own acts as its own acts, or considers the objects ex-

<sup>1</sup> "Intellectus humani, qui est conjunctus corpori, proprium objectum est quidditas, sive natura in materia corporali existens, et per hujusmodi naturas rerum visibilibus, etiam in invisibilibus rerum aliquam cognitionem ascendit." (Div. Thom., 1 p., qu. 84, art. 7 in C.). The object of the human intellect which is conjoined to the body, is the essence or nature existing in corporeal matter; and by means of such *natures* of visible things, it also ascends to some knowledge of invisible things.

<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas, p. 1, qu. 87, a. 3 in C., with Aristotle, "Objecta præcognoscuntur actibus, et actus potentiis."

pressed in its ideas. When one returns to the idea in his mind, and contemplates it as an idea in his own mind, or as a modification of himself as its subject, then his reflection is styled by some authors psychological. But when one returns to the idea in his mind, in order to consider the object represented by that idea, not thinking of the idea itself as an idea, or of himself as having that idea, then the reflection is ontological. For example, we may think of a *triangle*, in order to consider the nature and properties of that figure, but without thinking at all of the idea that is representing the triangle in the mind; this reflection would be ontological. Or we may think of our idea which represents the triangle, in order to consider the idea, or how our mind acts when it thinks this idea; our reflection is then psychological. In both kinds of reflection the mind, in some manner, rethinks its ideas, since it recalls or returns to those ideas in order to consider them again.

The intellect, by its direct consciousness, is proximately disposed, and ready actually to reflect on itself and see its own acts objectively as its own; hence direct consciousness is often styled habitual consciousness. In this direct consciousness the intellect has undistinguished and confused knowledge of itself and its act conjointly with knowing objects by means of those acts, and such knowledge of itself in direct consciousness is immediate knowledge. The medium or principle by which it knows itself directly is not an idea of itself, nor does it see its own essence; but it knows its own presence intimately, immediately, directly. The intellect is thus directly and immediately knowable to self by means of its act, because besides being present to self, it is an immaterial or spiritual faculty. This direct consciousness is by some aptly styled "inner consciousness," it being the soul's inmost self-knowledge; by others this power of knowing self is less happily called "sensus intimus," or the inmost sense. In thus knowing itself, the intellect's presence to itself—or, more strictly, the intellect as present to itself—concur, as before observed, by way of a principle, somewhat as the idea concurs, by way of a principle, with the intellect in knowing objects extrinsic to itself.

When the intellect knows itself as an object, its action is then reflex or introspective. In this reflex operation the intellect forms an idea in which it expresses itself as an object, using representations in the fancy, as it does in forming ideas of other objects. Hence the idea of itself thus formed presupposes direct consciousness, back on which the intellect returns by this operation of reflex consciousness.

Such reflex knowledge of self is peculiar only to intellectual or spiritual natures, for no organic faculty is capable of this self-introspection, or, as it is expressed, of returning on itself with a com-

plete return.<sup>1</sup> A nature that is capable of reflex action, by which it knows itself and its own acts as its own, or perceives them as in itself, must be *simply* and *totally* present to itself, and, consequently, it cannot consist of extended parts joined to parts. In other words, such a nature cannot consist of parts outside of parts or of parts occupying different divisions of space; but it must be one simple, indivisible unity, completely present to self or compenetrating self.

It may be easily conceived how an intelligent being thus simply and totally present to itself can perceive and know itself, because the act, the power of perceiving and the object perceived by it are present to each other, and they are duly proportioned to each other; the faculty, the object and the act are all compenetratively present to each other, which is impossible when the faculty is an organic one, as will be shown further on. This direct and reflex operation of the soul, by which it knows itself, and its acts as its own, furnishes one of the most conclusive proofs of the soul's simplicity and spirituality, since none but an unextended, indivisible and completely simple nature could have such action.

Since the intellect's knowledge of its own existence by direct consciousness is so immediately intuitive, we should say that the intellect knows its own existence *in* its acts rather than *by means* of its acts; for the acts of the intellect, in direct consciousness, do not serve as a logical medium from which its existence is inferred. They serve rather as a medium *in quo*, as the mirror does when it expresses one's countenance visibly to him.

Direct consciousness of self seems to be the nearest approach which the human intellect makes, in our present state of existence, towards immediately apprehending the concrete *singular*. It is believed that the separate or disembodied soul perceives itself directly and perfectly as *singular*. The intellect perceives its own act immediately in direct consciousness then, because it is present and it is duly proportioned as an object to the intellect's natural power of knowing; it is, indeed, both medium and object known. God is also most intimately present to the soul and its faculties; He is present as conserving them in existence and action. But though God is thus present to the intellect, yet His essence is not an object proportioned to man's intellect, so as to be immediately apprehensible or visible, even in a confused manner, through the natural light of reason. The light or medium required for the human intellect to see God's essence intuitively is a supernatural principle, is the "lumen gloriæ."

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<sup>1</sup> "Substantiæ intellectuales redeunt ad essentiam suam reditione completa."—P. I, qu. 14, a. 2, ad. 1.

An organic faculty is incapable of either direct or reflex consciousness. As a fact, for example, the eye, which is admitted to be the most perfect of our external senses, sees, but it does not see that it sees; it gives no testimony of what happens in itself when seeing, it gives testimony only of the visible object *external* to itself. No wonder, then, that mankind did not know till Kepler proved the fact, at the beginning of the 17th century, that the eye sees by means of an image of the visible object projected by the lens of the eye on the retina. Hence the eye does not see itself seeing; the object perceived by a sense must be extrinsic to it. As St. Thomas says, "The external sense never perceives its own act, and, therefore, the act of that sense is perceived by the common sensory."<sup>1</sup> We have no evidence whatever that even the fancy, which is the brightest internal sense, knows its own act of imagining or picturing objects, which it always does by clothing those objects with corporeal properties. Even the brute must have a power answering to the common sensory; for no animal can direct its own actions in relation to the objects of its external senses, or practically co-ordinate and unify its movements in respect to those objects, unless it knows them as one complete sentient nature knows. Consequently, even the brute animal necessarily requires some *one* faculty which can distinguish all the external sensations; that is, even the irrational animal requires the power hereby attributed to the common sensory. Yet brutes have no intellect, because they cannot know what is wholly abstract, as is the universal; nor can they know the subject and predicate of a judgment separately, and then conjoin them with the copula. The action of the fancy, as well as that of the common sensory, is always direct; it is never reflex, nor can either one of those internal senses know itself or be cognizant of itself jointly with knowing an object, as the intellect is in its direct consciousness when it apprehends or thinks of any object.

According to a theory long taught in all the schools and not yet replaced by an equally satisfactory one, the common sensory<sup>2</sup> is an organ in the brain, in which as in a centre, the nerves from all the external senses meet, or rather, from which as a radix or centre, nerves extend to the external senses. While this internal sense perceives what reaches it from the external senses, and transmits it to the fancy, yet neither it nor the fancy can perceive itself or its own act, any more than the eye can. This is because organic powers cannot retroact, are not capable of self-introspec-

<sup>1</sup> "Sensus proprius non sentit actum suum, et ideo actus sensus proprii percipitur per sensum communem."—P. 1, qu. 87, a. 3, ad. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Many physiologists now give a more extended meaning to the phrase "common sensory," making it signify the entire nervous system as capable of sensation.

tion and thereby of contemplating their own internal actions. Not being simple agents, they are present to themselves only quantitatively, or as extended matter, having parts adjoined to each other by extraposition. A sense cannot perceive any object, unless that object be extrinsic to the sense. Hence, if we suppose a sense to perceive itself or its act as its own act, we must conceive that sense to be, at the same time, the external object perceived, and the power perceiving it; or it must be extrinsically presented as an object before itself, and thus be in two separate places at one and the same time, a supposition which is absurd. An organic power does not know the external object's representative likeness which is in itself; it perceives only the object producing such likeness in it: the eye does not see the image on the retina, it sees only the object producing that image. But it is easy to conceive the intellect's act of knowing its own act immediately and directly; for the object seen and the power seeing it are, in this case, simple and one, they have no quantity, no parts outside of parts, but are completely and absolutely present one to the other. This fact that the intellect does know its own act, furnishes the most conclusive proof, as said, of the soul's simplicity.

Here it may be asked, does the intellect, then, in its consciousness, apprehend only its own acts, or does it distinctly apprehend also itself as the subject of those acts? Does the intellect by means of its consciousness perceive the soul's essence or the nature of the soul? St. Augustine says,<sup>1</sup> pertinently to these questions, "the human soul is so made that it is never unmindful of self, never fails to know itself, never fails to love itself." St. Bonaventure teaches that man's intellect knows itself, "*scientia notitiae, non scientia discretionis*"; that is, the intellect knows itself with knowledge that notices or sees, not, however, with knowledge which discerns, or distinguishes. St. Thomas says that the intellect knows itself and knows also its act of knowing.<sup>2</sup>

In direct consciousness, the intellect implicitly knows or apprehends itself as the subject of its own acts, though it does not know itself explicitly as an object; it knows itself jointly with its idea of any object, but not, as before said, by a separate idea of itself, and this is to know itself implicitly as the subject of such idea. While the intellect can thus directly think itself, it can also rethink itself, "*mens se cogitat, et se recogitat*;" and in rethinking self, it does so by forming an idea expressing itself explicitly. In thus rethinking self, by returning on itself, we again see how the intellect is the faculty knowing, the object known,

<sup>1</sup> "*Sic condita est mens humana, ut nunquam sui non meminerit, nunquam se non intelligat, nunquam se non diligat.*"—*De Trinit.*, lib. 14, c. 14, No. 18.

<sup>2</sup> "*Intellectus cognoscit seipsum, et suum intelligere.*"—*Contr. gent.*, lib. 2, c. 66.

and the subject of the 'knowledge, "sciens et scitum sunt una res." St. Thomas thus states the order in which the acts of consciousness succeed each other, "what is first known by the human intellect, is the essence of a material thing; and secondarily is known the act by which the object is known; and by means of the act the intellect itself is known, whose perfection it is to understand.<sup>1</sup>

We may here consider the soul as knowing itself under two respects; and first, to borrow the terminology of the old schools, by way of answer to the question, "an sit;" that is, does knowledge of the soul's existence fall under consciousness? Secondly, as to the question "quid sit," does the essence or the nature of the soul fall under consciousness? The soul knows its own existence immediately and intuitively through its direct consciousness, by the simple and indivisible presence of the soul to itself; but it does not know its existence by way of an object, except reflexly, and as expressed by means of an universal idea, just as it knows any other object.

The intellect does not know immediately and intuitively its own nature nor its essential properties as a spiritual substance. The soul comes to the knowledge of its own nature and properties, only by reasoning to them from its acts manifested in direct consciousness. Hence, the soul's knowledge of its own nature as a spiritual substance, is abstract knowledge, not immediate or intuitive knowledge. If the intellect directly and immediately apprehended its own essence and that of the soul, then all minds would know evidently the nature of the soul and think alike both of it and its essential properties. While consciousness gives intuitive knowledge of the soul as existing, yet knowledge of the soul's *nature* is abstract; and on this account many minds are ignorant of the soul's nature, since ignorance or error more easily occurs in regard to truth which requires abstract and difficult demonstration. As St. Thomas says,<sup>2</sup> "For acquiring knowledge of the mind, its presence does not suffice, but diligent and subtle inquiry is required. Hence it comes that many are ignorant of the soul's nature, and also that many have erred concerning the soul's nature."

Since reflex consciousness of self is always accompanied with direct consciousness, for the mind does not think rationally of any object without direct consciousness in some degree, at least, it

<sup>1</sup> "Id quod primo cognoscitur ab intellectu humano est natura rei materialis; et secundo cognoscitur ipse actus quo cognoscitur objectum; et per actum cognoscitur ipse intellectus, cujus est perfectio ipsum intelligere."—P. I, qu. 87, a. 3.

<sup>2</sup> "Ad cognitionem de mente habendam non sufficit ejus praesentia sed requiritur diligens et subtilis inquisitio, unde et multi naturam animæ ignorant, et multi etiam circa naturam animæ erraverunt."—P. I, qu. 87, a. 1, in C.



follows that no mind can positively doubt of its own existence or of its own conscious acts.

Through self-consciousness, the intellect has a perception not only of its own act, but also of the will's acts. The explanation of this truth is made more evident and the fact is more easily comprehended, if it be borne in mind that the will is intrinsically and radically of the reason, and since the reason is conceived to be its subject, it is usually defined to be "the rational appetite."<sup>1</sup> As St. Thomas says, the act of the will is seen by the intellect, for it is in the intellect as in its first principle and in its proper subject; Aristotle uses similar language, "the will is in the reason." Experience attests the fact, however, that acts of the will are less evident to us than are acts of the intellect itself. The intellect has habitual knowledge also of the body, dependently on the senses; and it can readily have actual or reflex conscious knowledge of what sensibly affects the body.

Consciousness is essential to responsibility; but in insane mental action, in dreaming, and in total absent-mindedness the intellect does not know itself, or its acts, or the objective order of things, in their true and real relations; and hence the will, in these abnormal states of the intellect, is not capable of rational choice.

Dr. Reid says truly that "consciousness is always employed about the present." But his language is less accurate when he asserts, with Locke, that "consciousness is an internal sense"; for it is, under different respects, an act of the intellect, and the faculty itself of intellect. It is true that "consciousness is always employed about the present;" but it can give present testimony also of its own past operations.

When the soul is separated from the body, it has no fancy to mirror representations before it, and the intellect cannot naturally form an idea or mental word expressing any object without the concurrence of an image in the fancy. Will the intellect, when the soul is in such a condition, be unable to know itself or its acts reflexly?

It is reasonable to suppose that the soul when it is separated from the body should have all the action befitting its disembodied state of existence, and, therefore, being of a simple and spiritual nature, that it should have consciousness both direct and reflex, more perfectly than it now has. The soul's direct consciousness, it may be consistently inferred, should consist in the immediate and evident intuition of its own essence as present, with a fulness of

<sup>1</sup> "Inclinatio intelligibilis, quæ est actus voluntatis, est intelligibiliter in intelligente sicut in primo principio, et in proprio subjecto, unde philosophus dicit (*De Anima*, lib. 3, text 42) voluntas in ratione est."—P. I, qu. 87, a. 4, see also ad. 3, of the same article.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. ii., essay vi., ch. i.

self-perception. The intellect's act of reflexly viewing itself with its retained past acts, could not be by means of ideas abstracted from representations in the fancy; it would immediately perceive the soul's essence, that essence being immaterial, present to the intellect, and as an object proportioned to it.<sup>1</sup>

There seems no reason to doubt that the human intellect, in that state of the soul's existence, could recall and reflexly know itself with its past acts. Since the intellect's ideas acquired while the soul is in union with the body are its own acts, it is legitimately inferred that they will be retained and recognized by the intellectual memory, when the soul is separated from the body. After the soul and body shall have been reunited in a perfect state of existence, the soul, it may reasonably be conjectured, will then have greater supremacy over the body than it now has; at least, as to its faculties and their virtues. The soul's specific method of knowing by reason, will then be perfected by the body, not impeded by it, as in our present state. The soul will then see intuitively and distinctly its own essence, the nature of the union between soul and body, and all intrinsic properties of the composite thereby formed.

Strictly speaking, the intellect cannot be said to have knowledge at all of any object, unless it know, at least, confusedly, its own act as its own, and itself as the subject of its own act, jointly with knowing the object. As observed by an acute thinker, "an act of the intellect, when it exists, certifies its own existence by means of itself;<sup>2</sup> that is, is certified by direct consciousness. A self-evident thing certifies itself objectively; the intellect consciously perceiving, certifies its act, and itself as perceiving by that act.

Reid regards the intellect's necessary assent to what is thus self-evident to it, as instinctive; Mill usually calls such assent, the mind's "belief"; Sir Wm. Hamilton asserts, with Luther whom he cites, that "the certainty of all our knowledge is ultimately resolvable into a certainty of belief."<sup>3</sup> They all suppose that no

<sup>1</sup> The following citation will indicate the manner in which the scholastic authors reason on this subject: "Non opus est specie intelligibili quando objectum est per se præsens intellectui, et immateriale . . . species impressa solum ponitur ut suppleat absentiam et efficacitatem objecti. . . . Duo sunt officia speciei, nempe, objectum repræsentare intellectui, et cum intellectu active concurrere ad elicendam visionem."—(Becanus, Tract. 1, c. 9, qu. 2.) That is, "There is no need of an intelligible species (idea), when the object itself is immediately present to the intellect, and is immaterial. The impressed species is intended to supply the absence and the efficacy of the object. There are two offices of the species, namely, to represent the object to the intellect, and actively to concur with the intellect in eliciting vision," or perception.

<sup>2</sup> "Actus intellectus cum existit, per seipsam certificat de sua existentia."—Mauro, tom. i., qu. 12, ad 2.

<sup>3</sup> Logic, sect. 17. It favors the views of skepticism thus to distort the term "belief

degree of self-evidence fully accounts as cause and sufficient reason for the intellect's assent to any truth. To resolve all certainty of our knowledge, however, into a "certainty of belief," is to reduce all our certainty to a blind assent of the intellect to what it accepts on trust, as true; but this would not be genuine certainty at all. For evident truth produces certainty, not because believed in, but because it is seen as evident truth. Assent to truth clearly seen through its own evidence, is not belief. Belief is assent of the intellect to evident truth, on account of credible testimony. Belief is not even rational assent at all, if it never has presupposed to it perfect evidence of credibility as its ultimate motive. If all our certainty is belief, we cannot be strictly said to have knowledge at all.

As already observed, the nearest approach which the human intellect makes, in our present life on earth, to knowing the concrete singular object directly, is in the act of direct consciousness by which the intellect knows itself *praesentialiter*, or knows itself immediately, as present to itself. Yet this immediate knowledge which the intellect has of itself in direct consciousness is not perfect, because its perception of itself is not distinctly expressed in a mental word or idea. St. Thomas states and answers an objection<sup>1</sup> which will help to render the explanation of this subject more intelligible: "Our intellect perceives itself; but the intellect is a singular object, otherwise it could not have an act, since acts are of singular things; therefore, our intellect knows the singular." Answer, "The singular is not repugnant to intellectual power, as singular, but as being material; because nothing is understood, except in an immaterial manner. Therefore, if there be something both singular and immaterial, as the intellect is, that is not repugnant to intellectual power."

The objection is based on the assumption that the human intellect does not know any singular concrete object, except in a secondary manner and reflexly; namely, by applying to that object an idea or mental word previously formed for expressing what is conceived to be the object's essence, and in fact this is always the intellect's action in knowing a singular object which is material. For instance, when an object is presented through the senses, the intellect, at least, implicitly asks the question, "quid est; what is it?" After duly observing and reflecting, the intellect forms its idea or word which expresses the answering *quiddity*, or essence of the object as understood by it, and it can then by a second action apply its idea to that singular object proposed by the senses.

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from its original and proper signification. Locke, bk. iv., ch. 15, § 3, attributes to the word "belief" its received meaning.

<sup>1</sup> P. 1, qu. 86, a. 1, objection 3.

The intellect must needs know what the nature of an object is before it can *say*, so to speak, what that object is ; or the intellect's first operation in knowing is to form its idea of the object proposed to it, and its next act is to apply that idea directly to the object, and this is its act of knowing that object.

The idea formed by the intellect to express the *quiddity* or essence of a proposed concrete and actual thing is, of its nature, a universal, since every ideal essence is universal or general. Yet, the intellect may not, at first forming such idea, reflexly attend to its character as universal ; the idea as in this manner first formed is styled a direct universal, not a reflex one, because it is not seen explicitly as applicable to all its inferiors, in which case it would be the reflex universal. But although such idea be not reflexly generalized, nevertheless, it is, as before said, of its very nature, universal. St. Thomas thus expresses the thought, "Our intellect does not understand a thing, except by abstracting ; and by the very abstraction from material conditions, that which is abstracted is made universal."<sup>1</sup>

Attention to the action of one's own mind in knowing, when a new or unfamiliar object is presented, will enable him to see for himself that, as a fact, his intellect's action is just that which is above described ; namely, before the intellect can know the singular concrete object presented through the senses, it must form its idea or mental word expressive of what the object's nature is, and then it can with another act know the particular object by means of this previously formed idea. Hence the human intellect is said to know the universal primarily and directly, and to know the singular secondarily and reflexly.

It may be repeated, then, by way of conclusion, that consciousness is self-knowledge, and this self-knowledge is most strictly and properly direct consciousness. Reflex consciousness is self-knowledge because founded on the direct, and because it includes the direct. Indeed it is only by means of direct consciousness that the intellect immediately perceives its own acts as its own, or knows itself as the subject of those acts ; "non per essentiam suam, sed per actum suum cognoscit se intellectus," the intellect knows itself by means of its own acts, not by perceiving its own essence directly.<sup>2</sup> Direct consciousness is the intellect's immediate intuition of its own acts as its own acts ; reflex consciousness of self, is rather an act of *reason*, by which an idea or mental word is formed and made to express distinctly the intellect's act as an object.

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<sup>1</sup> P. I, qu. 57, a. 2, ad. I.

<sup>2</sup> P. I, qu. 87, a. I, in C.