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THE CONCEPT OF "WORDS OF THE HEART" IN *THE SCRIPTUM SUPER LIBROS SENTENTIARUM* OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS¹

The Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard, a classic medieval sub-handbook of theology that is an excerpt from patristic texts, is the first chronologically great work of St. Thomas Aquinas. It was written in connection with his promotion to the Master's degree at the University of Paris² and opens the stage of his great didactic work, which culminates in *the Theological Summa*. "This commentary," treated as a youthful "apprenticeship," is quite rarely studied and commented on, especially since its content is largely determined by the text of the *Sentences*. But precisely because of its early origins, it can be an opportunity to study the first settlements, which can add many new elements to the classical approaches.

It seems that such an issue is the problem of the "word of the heart" (*verbum cordis*), as the first effect, the fruit of intellectual cognition. A reading of the individual distinctions reveals a new issue, which, raised by other explanations, makes it possible to show the course of human cognition differently than before, to reformulate its understanding.

The immediate context of the "word of the heart" issue is the theory of cognition, understood as the identification of how information about being is absorbed. This identification consists in showing internal causes, principals, and is a method inherent in philosophy. Thus, it involves a philosophical analysis of the course of human cognition.

Recall that in the history of philosophy it is possible to distinguish two main currents of reflection: realism and idealism. Metaphysical realism will express itself in emphasizing the primacy of entities. In cognition, realism will consider the apprehension of what is,

¹ S. Thomae Aquinatis: *Scriptum super Libros sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi episcopi parisiensis*. Ed. nova cura R. P. Mandonnet OP, vols. 1-2, Parisiis 1929; S. Thomae Aquinatis: *Scriptum super Sententis Magistri Petri Lombardi*. Recognovit atque iterum edidit R. P. M. F. Moos OP, vol. 3, Parisiis 1933; S. Thomae Aquinatis: *Commentum in quartum librum Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi*. In *Divi Thomae Aquinas Opera Omnia*, vol. 10: studio ac labore St. E. Frette et P. Mare, Parisiis MDCCCXXXIX [1889], vol. 11: studio ac laboris St. E. Frette, Parisiis MDCCCLXXXII [1882]. The Roman numeral denotes a book, while the Arabic numeral denotes a distinction, issue, article, and sometimes a question.

² E. Gilson: *Thomism, an introduction to the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*. Warsaw 1960, pp. 530, 532; J. A. Weisheipl: *Thomas Aquinas*. Poznan 1985, pp. 95-112, 439-440, 468-469.

independent of our cognition. Idealism, on the other hand, will emphasize the primacy of thought as the material of all entities. In reflecting on cognition, it limits itself only to the study of how knowledge is created, independently of reality. Although Thomas does not explicitly use the realism-idealism distinction, he gives evidence of treating realism as his position many times in the pages of *the Commentary*. This is clear especially when, in considering various definitions of truth, he distinguishes between truth as a manifestation of being, and truth resulting from the apprehension of it by the intellect. While the former understanding of truth is related to the existence of being as its manifestation, the latter consists in some kind of conformation to being, in which the conformity of apprehension is expressed³. St. Thomas further states that cognition is a certain passive activity of man, it is some kind of reception⁴.

In order to correctly present Aquinas' explanation of cognition, it is still necessary to refer to his understanding of man in order to point out in his structure the rationale that makes cognition possible. St. Thomas states that the human soul is the form of the body, it is related to it⁵ and therefore such spiritual-material structure of man also determines the way of his cognition. Man's cognition is therefore multi-stage, and consisting of several stages. St. Thomas' formula is succinct: *cognition* is the transition from sensory to mental information (*cognitio a sensibilibus in intelligibilia*)⁶.

Thus, the first contact with reality, the reception of impressions - belongs to the senses. The result of their registration of stimuli coming from being, is the likeness (*smilitudo*) of being, also called the cognitive form (*species*). Since it is dominated primarily by information about the material side of being, it is traditionally called the sensory form (*species sensibilis*).⁷ It is worth adding here that this form

³ I, 19, 5, 1, soL: "Quaedam enim veritatis definitio datur secundum hoc quod veritas completur in manifestatione intellectus; sicut dicit Augustinus, lib. *De vera religione*, cap. XXXVI, col. 151, vol. III: "Veritas est qua ostenditur id quod est"; and Hilarius, V De Trinitate, *14, col. 137, vol. II: "Verum est declarativum aut manifestativum esse". Quaedam autem datur de veritate secundum quod habet fundamentum in re, sicut illa Augustini, II *Soliloq.*, cap. V, col. 889, vol. I: "Verum est indiviso esse et eius quod est"; et alia Avicennae, tract. VIII *Metaph.*: "Veritas cuiusque rei, est proprietas sui esse quod stabilitum ei est". Quaedam autem dantur secundum commensurationem eius quod est in intellectu ad id quod est in re, sicut dicitur: Veritas est adequatio rei ad intellectum; et Augustinus, ubi supra: "Verum est quod ita se habet ut cognitori videtur si velit et cognoscere". (...) Patet etiam ex dictis, quod veritas addit supra essentiam secundum rationem, scilicet ordinem ad cognitionem vel demonstrationem alicuius."

⁴ I, 15, 5, 3, ad 4: "Sed operatio animae intellectualis in rem quam cognoscit et diligit, est operatio non activa, sed receptiva; et ideo non oportet quod coniungatur ei essentialiter, sed quod intentio illius recipiatur in ipsa anima."

⁵ II, 39, 3, 1, sol.: "Et quia rationalis anima cotpori coniuncta est, ideo cognitio debita sibi secundum suum proprium ordinem est cognitio quae a sensibilibus in intelligibilia procedit, et non pervenit in cognitionem veritatis nisi inquisitione praecedente."

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ I, 38, 1, 2, sol.: "Respondeo dicendum modus, quod in quaelibet cognitione potest considerari duplex modus: scilicet rei cognitae et modus cognoscentis. Modus quidem rei cognitae non est modus cognitionis, sed modus cognoscentis.... Quod patet ex hoc quod eiusdem rei cognitio est in sensu cum conditionibus materialibus, quia sensus est potentia in materia; in intellectu autem, quia immaterialis est, eiusdem cognitio est sine appenditiis materiae. Cuius ratio est, quia cognitio non fit nisi secundum quod cognitum est in cognostente. Unumquodque autem est in aliquo per modum ipsius, et non per modum sui.... et ideo oportet quod cognitio fiat secundum modum cognoscentis".

does not identify with the sense authorities, it remains something separate from them. St. Thomas expresses this in the formula that the stimulation of the sense takes place in the immaterial order (*in esse spirituale*)⁸, which should be understood precisely as a change that does not lead to the acquisition of a new quality and does not lead to a transformation of the structure of the power itself.

The cognitive form (*specis sensibilis*), thus apprehended, is dominated by accidental elements, subjected to matter as a possibility subjected to the influence of form and the act of existence, and is inaccessible to the intellect, which is sensitive only to the principals, to the first elements of being. Therefore, in order for the intellect to know the content of a given being, of what constitutes it, the preparation of the positional form must take place, so that it is proportional, commensurate with the intellect.

This preparation of the form suitable for the possible intellect is handled by the active intellect⁹. It performs a kind of purification of the sensory form, which Thomas calls abstraction, and as a result of this operation the mental form (*species intelligibilis*) is revealed, which is then transferred to the possible intellect. In it, it produces an effect, which is an understanding of what the entity is, an understanding of the principals that constitute it. It is also at this point that Thomas introduces the issue of the "word of the heart."

St. Thomas distinguishes in the act of intellect, in its action, as if there were two aspects or moments. Namely, he says that first is the understanding itself, the reading of the content of the principals (*intelligentia indivisibilium*) is carried out, and only after that comes the creation of knowledge (*compositio et divisio*)¹⁰.

Let us consider this first aspect. The passive intellect, a cognitive power, experiences influence from an entity, which is the mental form (*species intelligibilis*). By virtue of its structure, the intellect has certain dispositions, as if undisclosed efficiencies¹¹,

⁸ II, 19, 1, 3, ad 1: "Ad primum ergo dicendum, quod duplex est passio. Una quae sequitur actionem naturae: quando scilicet species agentis recipitur in patiente secundum esse materiale, sicut quando aqua celestis ab igne. Alia quae sequitur actionem quae est per modum animae: quando scilicet species agentis recipitur in patiente secundum esse spirituale, ut intentio quaedam, secundum quem modus res habet esse in anima, sicut species lapidis recipitur in pupilla; et talis passio semper est ad perfectionem patientis."

⁹ II, 17, 2, 1, sol.: "Intellectus autem agens dicitur qui facit intelligibilia in potentia esse in actu, sicut lumen quod fecit colores in potentia visibiles, esse actu visibiles. (...) anima virtutem habet per quam facit species sensibiles esse intelligibiles actu, quae est intellectus agens."

¹⁰ I, 19, 5, 1, ad 7: "Ad septimum dicendum, quod sit duplex operatio intellectus: una quarum dicitur a quibusdam imaginatio intellectus, quam Philosophus, III *De anima*, text. 21, nominat intelligentiam in divisibilium, quae consistit in apprehensione quidditatis simplicis, quae alio etiam nomine formatio dicitur, alia est quam dicunt fidem, quae consistit in compositione vel divisione propositionis."

¹¹ III, 23, 1, 1, sol.: "Oportet ergo ut alio modo recipiatur, scilicet per modum qualitatis inhaerentis, scilicet ut rectitudo regulae efficiatur forma potentiae regulatae.... Et haec quidem qualitas sive forma, dum adhuc imperfecta est, dispositio dicitur, cum autem iam consummata est et quasi in naturam versa, habitus nominatur.... Sed intellectus possibilis qui de se indeterminatus est, sicut materia prima, habitu in diget quo participet rectitudinem suae regulae: et naturali quantum ad ea quae ex ipso lumine intellectus agentis qui est regula eius, statim determinatur, sicut sunt prima principia; et acquisito, quantum ad ea quae ex his principiis educi possunt."

which are actualized by the interacting entity itself¹². As a result of the intellect's acquisition of *species intelligibilis*, a peculiar formation of the intellect (*formatio*)¹³ takes place, which Thomas further defines as fertilization¹⁴. Its fruit is the appearance in the intellect of an exact likeness of being, which, after all, is no longer a cognitive form (*species*). This likeness evoked in the intellect is the "word of the heart" (*verbum cordis*)¹⁵, for it reveals, manifests what the intellect has come to know and understand¹⁶. On the basis of texts from the *Commentary on the Sentences*, we can describe in more detail the path leading to the disclosure of understanding in the form of the "word of the heart."

To put it from the *species* side, it must be said that the intellect will be subject to this influence. The cognitive form will produce a proportional effect in it. This effect on the possible intellect can be called fertilization (*conceptio*). In turn, from the side of the intellect, an acquisition of the influence of the principia will take place first. This seizure, which is not yet understanding itself, Thomas calls *simple* insight (*simplex intuitus*, *simplex apprehensio*)¹⁷. Only after this simple insight is accomplished does the intellect fully grasp what has been delivered to it and express it as a manifestation of its understanding. This disclosure, the peculiar utterance of the understanding, which, though it is in the intellect, is nevertheless not identical with it, is called begetting (*nativitas*).¹⁸ It seems, moreover, that Thomas, speaking of the begetting of the "word of the heart," emphasizes,

¹² II, 20, 2, 2, ad 2: Respondeo dicendum, quod perfectio intellectus possibilis est per receptionem obiecti sui, quod est species intelligibilis in actu. Sicut autem in obiecto visus est aliquid quasi materiale, quod accipitur ex parte rei coloratae, sed complementum formale visibilis inquantum huiusmodi set ex parte lucis, quae facit visibile in potentia esse visibile in actu; ita etiam obiectum intellectus quasi materialiter administratur vel offertur a virtute imaginativa; sed in esse formali intelligibili completur ex lumine intellectus agentis, et secundum hanc formam habet quod sit perfectio in actu intellectus possibilis."

¹³ I, 38, 1, 3, sol.: "Cum in re duo sunt, quidditas rei, et esse eius, his duobus respondet duplex operatio intellectus. Una quae dicitur a philosophis formatio, qua apprehendit quidditates rerum, quae etiam a Philosopho, in III *De anima*, dicitur indivisibilium intelligentia."

¹⁴ I, 27, 2, 2, sol.: "... quia si inquiretur quid sit istud verbum quo aliquis sibi loquitur, non invenitur esse nisi conceptio intellectus. Conceptio autem intellectus est vel operatio ipsa quae est intelligere, vel species intellecta."

¹⁵ I, 27, 2, 1, sol.: "Si ergo accipiatur locutio secundum quod est in parte intellectiva tantum, sic est verbum cordis, quod etiam ab aliis dicitur verbum rei, quia est immediata similitudo ipsius rei... est ibi ordinatio illius intelligibilis ad manifestationem vel alterius, secundum quod aliquis alteri loquitur, vel sui ipsius, secundum quod contingit aliquem etiam sibi ipsi loqui, et haec primo accipit rationem verbi; unde verbum nihil aliud dicit quam quamdam emanationem ab intellectu per modum manifestantis."

¹⁶ II, 11, 2, 3, sol.: "[Species] secundum quod ordinatur ab intelligente ut manifestanda alteri, habent rationem verbi, quod dicitur verbum cordis".

¹⁷ I, 3, 4, 5, sol.: "Intelligere autem dicit nihil quam simplicem intuitum intellectus in id quod sibi est praesens intelligibile"; DI, 35, 2, sol. 3: "Respondeo dicendum quod intellectus videtur nominare simplicem apprehensionem; sed sapientia nominat quamdam plenitudinem certitudinis ad iudicium de apprehensis; et ideo intellectus videtur pertinere ad viam inventionis, sed sapientia ad viam iudicii."

III, 8, 1, ad 6: "Ad sextum dicendum quod genitum exii a generante dupliciter. Uno modo secundum quod procedit in esse distinctum a generante, clausum tamen infra terminos generantis. Et hoc proprie dicitur conceptio. Alio modo secundum quod procedit in esse distinctum et manifestum. Et quia res nominatur secundum id quod apparet, ideo modus exeundi facit nativitatem secundum communem usum loquendi, quamvis et primus etiam alii quo modo faciat nativitatem, secundum quod dicitur duplex nativitas, scilicet in utero et ex utero....

Et ideo etiam verbum secundum quod distinguitur in intellectu, dicitur concipi; secundum autem quod extra

That it is not a product of the intellect, but that it is a real effect of cognition, experienced and revealed by the intellect. This perspective deserves special attention.

Between two entities there is a boundary defined by existence. For this reason, the two entities remain separate in relation to each other. Cognition does not cause a transformation of their structure, some fusion into one. The interaction of one entity with the cognitive authorities of another, the interaction through the cognitive figure (*species*), causes the triggers in the intellect of understanding, which is the "word of the heart." It is the entity, through its likeness, the form – that is the cause of this effect. After all, the same boundary is maintained between the two entities. "The word of the heart," as a full likeness, is in the intellect as its subject, but it has its foundation in the other being¹⁹. This prompts a differentiation between cognition as reception, culminating in a real effect, which is the "word of the heart," and the creation of knowledge, for which the basis is the understanding just evoked in the intellect. At the same time, thanks to the distinction between the intellect and the "word of the heart," it can be shown that cognition causes some real enrichment that does not come from the intellect alone. Although it pertains to the intellect, it is something different from the intellect itself, which is still in possibility, which does not yet act, since it has no actualizing principle²⁰.

Let us present, in turn, the consequences of the intellect giving birth to the "word of the heart". It is the result of the influence of being on the intellect, which, thus stimulated, desires to know the cause. The consequence of the "word of the heart" is, therefore, to turn to the source of this influence, to being itself. This reference is made by means of the will, through love²¹. The lack of further explanation in the text only allows us to think that this is a reference determined primarily by the existence of being, since this is not yet the stage of knowledge formation. As a result of this referral, there is a kind of return to being. The result is that the intellect, through the mediation of the will, obtains confirmation that the "word of the heart" born in it is not a fiction or a product of it, but was caused by a real interacting entity. This confirmation of the reality of cognition, the certainty that is the state of the intellect and will, Thomas calls contemplation²². It is therefore the natural state of cognition inherent in human cognition, which can perhaps be linked without fear of error to the signaling of being directed to being by love, as signaled earlier. This marks a very

pronuntiatur, potest dici per similitudinem nasci."

¹⁹I, 2, 1, 3, sol.: "Aliquando enim hoc quod intellectus concipit, est similitudo rei existentis extra animam.... et talis conceptio intellectus habet fundamentum in re immediate, in quantum res ipsa, ex sua conformitate ad intellectum, facit quod intellectus sit verus."

²⁰II, 3, 3, 1, sol.: "Respondeo dicendum quod.... in intellectu vero humano similitudo rei intellectae est aliud a substantia intellectus, et est sicut forma eius; unde ex intellectu et similitudine rei efficitur unum completum, quod est intellectus in actu intelligens; et huius similitudo est accepta a re".

²¹I, 3, 4, 5, sol.: "Sed secundum quod intelligere nihil dicit quam intuitum, qui nihil aliud est quam praesentia intelligibilis ad intellectum quocumque modo, sic.... consequitur quidam amor indeterminatus".

²²III, 35, 2, 2, sol. 3; ad 3: "Ad tertiam quaestionem dicendum quod intellectus videtur nominare simplicem apprehensionem; sed sapientia nominat quendam plenitudinem certitudinis ad iudicium de apprehensis; et ideo intellectus videtur pertinere ad viam inventionis, sed sapientia ad viam iudicii."

"Ad tertium discendum quod in contemplatione est necessaria apprehensio quae est per intellectum et iudicium quod est per sapientiam."

interesting theme about the first connections with being, as a consequence of the real perception and understanding of the principals of being. "The word of the heart", as an expression of understanding, concerns only the principals of being; it omits the accidentals here. However, since it is from them that our cognition began, they were first registered in the sensory form (*species sensibilis*), and then separated, as a result of which the mental form (*species intelligibilis*) was revealed, it is necessary, for the sake of full apprehension, to make a new connection between them.

The stage of combining these various pieces of information by the intellect is the second aspect of the operation of this cognitive power, which Thomas calls "compositio et divisio." It is at this stage that the confirmation of the discoveries made by the intellect at the stage of intellectual cognition and expressed in the "word of the heart" will take place. The understanding of the principals as causes of the accidentals, will be linked to information about the accidentals themselves, separated by the active intellect and stored in the imagination. This linking with each other, made by the intellect through the sensory organs, Thomas calls the "image of the voice" (*imago vocis*).²³ It is the produced image of all that constitutes being, that constitutes it, and as such is the basis for making judgment²⁴. The first judgment is the one made by the intellect. It is worth noting here that the first judgment was already made at the stage of the "word of the heart," and its effect was to be directed toward being by love. Now this judgment is probably more to be associated with the action of sensual desire (affection) and with the creation of knowledge. Its different rank is due to the fact that the "word of the heart" is for St. Thomas the fruit of real cognitive contact between two entities, while the "image of the voice" is already a product that we use for our benefit. Other creations can be attached to it; certain signs by which it is possible to reveal to other people what we have come to know, what we have understood. This third and final word is what Thomas calls the "word of voice" (*verbum vocis*), and for its utterance the cooperation of other authorities is required²⁵.

St. Thomas' explanation of the problem of "word of heart" presented above, already allow us to formulate several conclusions. First of all, significantly

²³ I, 27, 2, 1, sol.: "... cum locutio nostra sit quaedam corporalis operatio, oportet quod ad ipsam concurrant ea quae ad omnem motum corporalem exiguntur. Oportet autem ad hoc quod sit motus corporalis hominis, ut hominis qui scilicet est per deliberationem, quod praecedat deliberatio et iudicium in parte intellectiva. Sed quia intellectus est universalium, et operationes singularium, ideo, ut dicitur III *De anima*, text. 46, oportet esse quamdam virtutem particularem quae apprehendit intentionem particularem rei, circa quam est operatio:.... Secundum autem quod est in imaginatione, quando scilicet quis im aginatur voces quibus intellectus conceptum proferre valeat, sic est verbum quod habet imaginem vocis, et quod ab aliis dicitur verbum speciei vocis, et a Damascendo dicitur verbum in corde enuntiatum, et ab Augustino dicitur verbum cum syllabis cogitatum."

²⁴ II, 24, 2, 2, sol.: "Hanc autem rationem convenientis et boni aliter homo percipit, aliter brutum.... homo autem per investigationem quamdam et collationem huiusmodi rationes considerat; et ideo vis illa per quam in huiusmodi rationem cognitionem venit consequenter ratio dicitur, quae investigativa est et deductiva unius ad alterum."

²⁵ I, 27, 2, 1, sol.: "... et tertio oportet quod sequatur motus in corpore per virtutes motivas affixas musculis et nervis; ut quasi videatur esse quidam syllogismus, cuius in parte intellectiva habeatur maior universalis, et in parte sensitiva habeatur minor particularis, et demum sequatur conclusio operationis particularis, per virtutem motivam imperatam.... Secundum autem quod iam est in corporali actione per motum linguae et aliorum instrumentorum corporalium dicitur verbum vocis; et a Damasceno verbum quod est angelus, scilicet nuntius, intelligentiae, et ab Augustino verbum cum syllabis pronuntiatum."

richer and more complete is the analysis of cognition presented by St. Thomas. For it shows that the influence of being on the intellect induces in it a certain state, a real enrichment of the intellect, and it is only this that is the principle of subsequent references. The reference of relations and the production of knowledge are the work of the cognitive subject, for he is the author of them. After all, the stimulus for this - is existence itself. The separateness between two entities, accentuated in realist metaphysics, is preserved, which forces one to distinguish cognition as reception from the establishment of relations and the creation of knowledge. Moreover, it becomes a way to distinguish the theory of cognition from metaphysics.

It also allows us to take a fresh look at classical topics, such as the intellectual virtues, which seem to be a grasp of the "word of the heart" from the side of its effects, already related to the construction of knowledge. It seems that only this issue of the "word of the heart" allows us to fully understand the essence of intellectual proficiencies, which are virtues. It is the very being that impregnates the intellect by revealing its reality, separateness, unity (which determine the proficiencies of first principles), what it is (the proficiency of knowledge), seen from the perspective of cause and effect (wisdom), that becomes the engine moving the intellect to create knowledge in accordance with reality, as the sum of physical signs expressing our understandings.

Finally, it is a way to correctly represent how knowledge is created. There is no direct transition from impressions to concepts. Nor is it the first reaction to being. The knowledge created by our intellect cooperating with our sense properties expresses all that is contained in a given being, and therefore not only information about the accidentals, about the material side, but also about the principals of being, which are the principles that determine the accidentals. The creation of knowledge begins with the real effect of cognition, with the "word of the heart," which is not yet a concept, knowledge. Only later is it transformed up to the level of a physical sign, revealed externally. Thus, it is necessary to distinguish in cognition the stage of unconscious cognition, not yet related to signs, and the stage of conscious cognition, related to the creation of knowledge. Our knowledge is not directly the same as being. The way of obtaining information is different, the way of expressing it is different. This, in turn, prompts us to distinguish the order of cognition from the order of being.

In addition, the issue of the "word of the heart" signals the problem of the first reactions to the cognized entity – by establishing a relationship of love. This first reference, with which is associated amazement, delight inherent in contemplation - is an opportunity to look at the origins of ethics or pedagogy in a different way.

From this brief and rather cursory overview, it can be seen that Thomas, already in his first major work, presents previously unnoticed new approaches to classical theorist themes. At the same time, however, he does not make full use of these proposals in other considerations, presenting only Aristotle's version, enriched by the approaches of the Arab philosophers. Perhaps, this is due to the fact that these considerations are taken up in theological issues, rarely examined by philosophers in terms of their philosophical understandings. After all, the presence of this issue also in other works of Thomas²⁶, mobilizes to examine and present all the explanations of the "word of the heart" in order to show a complete realistic theory of cognition.

²⁶ E.g.: *Compendium Theologiae*, cap. 37, 38, 39; *De veritate*, qu. 4, art. 1, 2; *Summa contra Gentiles*, liber IV, cap. XI; *Summa Theologica* I, qu. 27, art. 1, 2, qu. 34.