

Quidditas rei materialis.

From the treatise on Human intellect in the Pars Prima [79,84-89] one gathers that the proper [I 84 7; (85 5 3m), proportionate [84 8], connatural [85 4 c], first [85 8; 87 3; 88 3], per se [85 8] object of human intellect in the present life [85 8; 88 3] is the natura [I 84 7; 84 8; 87 2 2m; 87 3; cf 12 4] or forma [85 1 c] or quidditas [84 7; 85 3 3m; 85 8; 86 2; 88 3] of a sensible thing [84 8] or of a material thing [85 8; 86 2; 87 2 2m; 87 3; 88 3] falling under sense and imagination [85 3 3m]. In opposition to the error attributed to Plato that "forma cogniti ex necessitate sit in cognoscente eo modo quo est in cognito" 84 1 c, Aquinas distinguished between this object as in itself and as known. As in itself, the nature, form, quiddity is a concrete and singular reality: it exists individually in corporeal matter [85 1 c; cf 84 7 c] and has no existence except in corporeal matter [12 4 c]. Still it is not known by human intellect as existing in corporeal-matter individual matter [I 12 4; 85 1]. But to know what is in individual matter though not inasmuch as it is in individual matter is to abstract [85 1 c]. Hence the nature is said to be abstracted from individual matter [12 4] and, inversely, intellect is said to abstract form from the individual matter represented by phantasms [85 1 c] or, in an abbreviated phrase, to abstract quiddity from phantasms [85 8].

It is important to distinguish different uses of the term, abstraction. There is an efficient abstraction attributed to the agent intellect which illustrates phantasms, makes them intelligible in act [I 79 3 c et 3m; 4 c], causes the universal [79 5 2m], causes the immaterial in act [79 4 4m], causes the object in act [79 7 c]. There is the apprehensive abstraction which is an act of knowing [I 85 1 c] or considering [ad 1m] the nature without knowing or considering the individual matter represented by phantasms. There is the ontological abstraction which consists in the information of possible intellect by intelligible species, that is, by a similitude which represents the object of phantasm only with respect to its specific nature [I 85 1 3m]. These three aspects of abstraction are conjoined in the following statement: "Abstrahit autem intellectus agens species intelligibiles a phantasmatis, in quantum per virtutem intellectus agentis accipere possumus in nostra consideratione naturas specierum sine individualibus conditionibus, scdm quarum similitudines intellectus possibilis informatur" [I 85 1 4m]. Further, it is necessary to distinguish between apprehensive abstraction and what may be termed pure abstraction: in apprehensive abstraction man by his intellect does not know the individual matter represented by phantasm; but he does know the individual matter by his imagination; and he-knows-the-quiddity-universal-nature these two knowings not only are simultaneous but conjoined; they are conjoined not only on the subjective side by the unity of consciousness but also on the objective side; "dicendum quod intellectus noster et abstrahit species intelligibiles a phantasmatis, in quantum considerat naturas rerum in universali; et tamen intelligit eas

in phantasmatibus, quia non potest intelligere ea quorum species abstrahit, nisi convertendo se ad phantasmata, ut supra dictum est [I 85 l 5m]; thus, apprehensive abstraction is an insight in which intellect, by its conversion to phantasm, beholds the universal nature existing in singular reality [I 84 7 c]. On the other hand, pure abstraction is characterized by the fact that intellect knows, not the universal in the particular, but the "rem ut separatam a conditionibus materialibus, sine quibus in rerum natura non existit." CG I 54 §3] For pure abstraction the formation of an inner word is necessary [ibid], and such inner words are the affections of the soul signified by external words [I 85 2 3a 3m]. To complete this list, one may add formative abstraction and instrumental abstraction. The inner word is the effect of an act of understanding, something expressed by the knowledge of the mind [De Ver 4 2 c], something that arises only from intellect in act [CGent IV 14 §3], something that proceeds from the knowledge of the conceptualizer [I 34 l c]. By formative abstraction is meant the abstracting involved in the formation of the inner word: it stands to apprehensive abstraction as does dicere to intelligere; or, from another view-point one would say that in ~~the~~ apprehensive abstraction man ~~knew~~-~~the~~-~~universal~~-~~by~~-~~intellect~~ by his intellect knows indeed the universal