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(1a. 14-18)

Thomas Gornall S.J.

Excerpt

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Knowledge in God

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SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 1a. 14-18

## Prologus

POST CONSIDERATIONEM eorum quæ ad divinam substantiam pertinent, restat considerandum de his quæ pertinent ad operationem ipsius. Et quia operatio quædam est quæ manet in operante, quædam vero quæ procedit in exteriorem effectum, primo agemus de scientia et voluntate—nam intelligere in intelligente est, et velle in volente—et postmodum de potentia Dei, quæ consideratur ut principium operationis divinæ in effectum exteriorem procedentis. Quia vero intelligere quoddam vivere est, post considerationem divinæ scientiæ considerandum erit de vita divina. Et quia scientia verorum est, erit etiam considerandum de veritate et falsitate. Rursum, quia omne cognitum in cognoscente est, rationes autem rerum, secundum quod sunt in Deo cognoscente, Ideæ vocantur, cum consideratione scientiæ erit etiam adjungenda consideratio de Ideis.

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[More information](#)

## ON GOD'S KNOWLEDGE

# Foreword

WE HAVE CONSIDERED the divine substance; it remains to consider its operations. Now there are two kinds of operation, one that remains in the agent, and another that goes out to produce an external effect. We shall therefore treat in the first place of God's knowledge and will—for knowing is in the person who knows, and willing in the person who wills—and afterwards of God's power, which is envisaged as the principle of divine operation going out to produce an external effect. And since knowing is a kind of living, after considering the divine knowledge (14-17) we shall have to consider the divine life (18). And because knowledge is of what is true, we shall also need to treat of truth and falsity (16-17). Again, since all that is known is in the knower, and the intelligible natures of things, as they exist in God's knowledge, are called Ideas, the treatment of God's knowledge will require also that of the Ideas (15).<sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup>Figures in brackets are to Question numbers.

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[More information](#)

## SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 1a. 14, 1

## Quaestio 14. de scientia Dei

Circa scientiam vero quaeruntur sexdecim:

1. utrum in Deo sit scientia,
2. utrum Deus intelligat seipsum,
3. utrum comprehendat se,
4. utrum suum intelligere sit sua substantia,
5. utrum intelligat alia a se,
6. utrum habeat de eis propriam cognitionem,
7. utrum scientia Dei sit discursiva,
8. utrum scientia Dei sit causa rerum,
9. utrum scientia Dei sit eorum quae non sunt,
10. utrum sit malorum,
11. utrum sit singularium,
12. utrum sit infinitorum,
13. utrum sit contingentium futurorum,
14. utrum sit enuntiabilem,
15. utrum scientia Dei sit variabilis,
16. utrum Deus de rebus habeat scientiam speculativam vel practicam.

*articulus 1. utrum in Deo sit scientia*

AD PRIMUM sic proceditur:<sup>1</sup> 1. Videtur quod in Deo non sit scientia. Scientia enim est habitus, qui Deo non competit cum sit medius inter potentiam et actum. Ergo scientia non est in Deo.

2. Præterea, scientia, cum sit conclusionum, est quaedam cognitio causata ab alio, scilicet ex cognitione principiorum. Sed nihil causatum est in Deo. Ergo scientia non est in Deo.

3. Præterea, scientia omnis vel universalis vel particularis est. Sed in Deo non est universale et particulare, ut ex superioribus patet.<sup>2</sup> Ergo in Deo non est scientia.

SED CONTRA est quod Apostolus dicit, *O altitudo divitiarum sapientiae et scientiae Dei.*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>cf 1 Sent. 35, 1; De veritate 11, 1; CG 1, 44; In Meta. XII, lect. 8; Compend. Theol. 28

<sup>2</sup>1a. 13, 9 ad 2

<sup>3</sup>Romans 11, 33

<sup>a</sup>Scientia in the general sense of clear and certain knowledge. The objections play on more restricted meanings of scientia. cf Vol. 1, Appendix 6 (1-7).

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[More information](#)

## ON GOD'S KNOWLEDGE

## Question 14. on God's knowledge

Concerning God's knowledge we raise sixteen points of inquiry:

1. is there knowledge in God?
2. does God understand himself?
3. has God comprehensive knowledge of himself?
4. is God's act of knowledge his substance?
5. does he know things other than himself?
6. does he know such things specifically?
7. is God's knowledge discursive?
8. is God's knowledge the cause of things?
9. does God know non-existent things?
10. does he know evils?
11. does his knowledge extend to individuals?
12. does he know infinites?
13. does he know contingent future events?
14. does he know propositions?
15. is his knowledge changeable?
16. is his knowledge of things speculative or practical?

*article 1. is there knowledge in God?*

THE FIRST POINT:<sup>1</sup> 1. It would seem that there is no knowledge<sup>a</sup> in God. For knowledge is a disposition, which God cannot have since it is intermediate between potentiality and actuality.<sup>b</sup> Therefore there is no knowledge in God.

2. Further, since 'science' is knowledge of conclusions, it is a kind of knowledge that is caused by something else, namely from knowing principles. But in God there is nothing caused. Therefore there is no knowledge in God.

3. Further, all knowledge is either universal or particular. But in God there is not universal and particular, as is clear from what we have said above.<sup>2c</sup> Therefore there is no knowledge in God.

ON THE OTHER HAND we have the words of St Paul, *O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God.*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Such in ourselves is acquired knowledge that can be remembered—intermediate between the mere capacity to learn and knowledge actually before the mind.

<sup>2c</sup>God transcends the categories whether of being or of knowledge.

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## SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 1a. 14, 1

RESPONSIO: Dicendum quod in Deo perfectissime est scientia. Ad cujus evidentiam considerandum est quod cognoscentia a non cognoscentibus in hoc distinguuntur, quia non cognoscentia nihil habent nisi formam suam tantum; sed cognoscens natum est habere formam etiam rei alterius; nam species cogniti est in cognoscente. Unde manifestum est quod natura rei non cognoscentis est magis coarctata et limitata; natura autem rerum cognoscentium habet majorem amplitudinem et extensionem; propter quod dicit Philosophus quod *anima est quodammodo omnia*.<sup>4</sup> Coarctatio autem formæ est per materiam; unde et supra diximus quod formæ, secundum quod sunt magis immateriales, secundum hoc magis accedunt ad quamdam infinitatem.<sup>5</sup> Patet igitur quod immaterialitas alicujus rei est ratio quod sit cognoscitiva; et secundum modum immaterialitatis est modus cognitionis. Unde dicitur quod plantæ non cognoscunt propter suam materialitatem.<sup>6</sup> Sensus autem cognoscitivus est quia receptivus est specierum sine materia; et intellectus adhuc magis cognoscitivus, quia est magis separatus a materia et immixtus, ut dicitur in *De Anima*.<sup>7</sup> Unde, cum Deus sit in summo immaterialitatis, ut ex superioribus patet,<sup>8</sup> sequitur quod ipse sit in summo cognitionis.

1. Ad primum ergo dicendum quod, quia perfectiones procedentes a Deo in creaturas, altiori modo sunt in Deo, ut supra dictum est,<sup>9</sup> oportet quod quodcumque aliquod nomen sumptum a quacumque perfectione creaturæ Deo attribuitur, secludatur ab ejus significatione omne illud quod pertinet ad imperfectum modum qui competit creaturæ. Unde scientia in Deo non est qualitas vel habitus, sed substantia et actus purus.

2. Ad secundum dicendum quod ea quæ sunt divisim et multipliciter in creaturis, in Deo sunt simpliciter et unite, ut supra dictum est.<sup>10</sup> Homo autem secundum diversa cognita habet diversas cognitiones: nam secundum quod cognoscit principia, dicitur habere intelligentiam; scientiam vero, secundum quod cognoscit conclusiones; sapientiam, secundum quod cognoscit causam altissimam; consilium vel prudentiam secundum quod cognoscit agibilia. Sed hæc omnia Deus una simplici cognitione cognoscit, ut infra patebit.<sup>11</sup> Unde simplex Dei cognitio omnibus illis nominibus nominari potest, ita tamen quod ab unoquoque eorum, secundum quod in divinam prædicationem venit, secludatur quidquid imperfectionis est, et retineatur quod est perfectionis. Et secundum hoc dicitur, *Apud ipsum est sapientia et fortitudo; ipse habet consilium et intelligentiam*.<sup>12</sup>

3. Ad tertium dicendum quod scientia est secundum modum cognoscentis; scitum enim est in sciente secundum modum scientis. Et ideo,

<sup>4</sup>*De Anima* III, 8. 431b21<sup>5</sup>1a. 7, 1 & 2<sup>6</sup>*De Anima* II, 12. 424a32<sup>7</sup>*De Anima* III, 4. 429a18. The idea that mind must be 'unmixed' goes back to Anaxagoras, as Aristotle notes.

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[More information](#)

## ON GOD'S KNOWLEDGE

REPLY: God has knowledge, and that in the most perfect way. This will become evident if we note that the difference between knowing and non-knowing subjects is that the latter have nothing but their own form, whereas a knowing subject is one whose nature it is to have in addition the form of something else; for the likeness of the thing known is in the knower. Thus, clearly, the nature of a non-knowing subject is more confined and limited by comparison with knowing subjects; the latter have a greater scope and extension; hence Aristotle says that *the soul is in a manner all things*.<sup>4</sup> Now form is limited by matter: for which reason we said above that the freer forms are from matter the more they approach to a kind of infinity.<sup>5</sup> It is clear, then, that a thing's freedom from matter is the reason why it is able to know; and the capacity to know is in proportion to the degree of freedom from matter. Thus plants are said to have no knowledge because of their materiality.<sup>6</sup> But the senses are able to know because they are able to receive the likenesses of things without the matter; and intellect is still more capable of knowing because it is freer from matter and unmixed, as we read in Aristotle.<sup>7</sup> Hence since God is immaterial in the highest degree, as is clear from what we have said above,<sup>8</sup> it follows that he has knowledge in the highest degree.

Hence: 1. The perfections which go out from God into creatures are in God in a higher way, as we have said above;<sup>9</sup> therefore whenever a description taken from any perfection of a creature is attributed to God, we must eliminate from its meaning all that pertains to the imperfect way in which it is found in the creature. Hence knowledge in God is not a quality nor an habitual capacity, but substance and pure actuality.

2. Perfections found in creatures in a state of division and multiplicity exist in God without division and in unity, as we have said above.<sup>10</sup> In man different objects of knowledge imply different kinds of knowledge: in knowing principles he is said to have 'understanding', in knowing conclusions 'science', in knowing the highest cause 'wisdom', in knowing human actions 'counsel' or 'prudence'. But all these things God knows by one simple knowledge, as will be shown below.<sup>11</sup> Hence God's simple knowledge may be called by all these names, provided that in using any of them of God we exclude from their meaning all that implies imperfection and retain only what implies perfection. It is in this sense that we find the words, *With him is wisdom and strength; he has counsel and understanding*.<sup>12</sup>

3. Knowledge depends on the capacity of the knower; for what is known is in the knower according to the measure of his capacity. And

<sup>8</sup>1a. 7, 1<sup>9</sup>1a. 4, 2<sup>10</sup>1a. 13, 4<sup>11</sup>1a. 14, 7<sup>12</sup>Job 12, 13

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[More information](#)

## SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 1a. 14, 2

cum modus divini esse sit altior quam modus quo creaturæ sunt, scientia divina non habet modum scientiæ creatæ, ut scilicet sit universalis vel particularis, vel in habitu, vel in potentia, vel secundum aliquem talem modum disposita.

*articulus 2. utrum Deus intelligat se*

AD SECUNDUM sic proceditur:<sup>1</sup> 1. Videtur quod Deus non intelligat se. Dicitur enim in lib. *De Causis* quod *omnis sciens qui scit essentiam suam est rediens ad essentiam suam reditione completa.*<sup>2</sup> Sed Deus non exit extra essentiam suam, nec aliquo modo movetur; et sic non competit sibi redire ad essentiam suam. Ergo non intelligit se.

2. Præterea, intelligere est quoddam pati et moveri, ut dicitur in *De Anima*;<sup>3</sup> scientia etiam est assimilatio ad rem scitam; et scitum etiam est perfectio scientis. Sed nihil movetur vel patitur vel perficitur a seipso; *neque similitudo sibi est*, ut Hilarius dicit.<sup>4</sup> Ergo Deus non est sciens seipsum.

3. Præterea, præcipue Deo similes sumus secundum intellectum: quia secundum mentem sumus ad imaginem Dei, ut Augustinus dicit.<sup>5</sup> Sed intellectus noster non intelligit se nisi sicut intelligit alia, sicut dicitur in *De Anima*.<sup>6</sup> Ergo nec Deus intelligit se, nisi forte intelligendo alia.

SED CONTRA est quod dicitur: *Nemo scit quæ sunt Dei nisi Spiritus Dei.*<sup>7</sup>

RESPONSIO: Dicendum quod Deus seipsum per seipsum cognoscit. Ad cuius evidentiam sciendum est quod, licet in operationibus quæ transeunt in exteriorum effectum, objectum operationis, quod significatur ut terminus, sit aliquid extra operantem, tamen in operationibus quæ sunt in operante, objectum quod significatur ut terminus operationis est in ipso operante: et secundum quod est in eo, sic est operatio in actu. Unde dicitur in *De Anima* quod sensibile in actu est sensus in actu, et intelligibile in actu est intellectus in actu.<sup>8</sup> Ex hoc enim aliquid in actu sentimus vel intelligimus, quod intellectus noster vel sensus informatur per speciem sensibilem vel intelligibilem. Et secundum hoc tantum sensus vel intellectus est aliud a sensibili vel intelligibili quia utrumque est in potentia.

<sup>1</sup>cf *De veritate* II, 2; *CG* I, 47, 48; *In Meta.* XII, lect. 11; *In De causis*, lect. 13

<sup>2</sup>*Liber de Causis* prop. 15. The *Liber de Causis*, a work based on the *Elements of Theology* (*Στοιχείωσις Θεολογική*) of Proclus, had for long before St Thomas's time been regarded as a work of Aristotle. Comparison with William of Moerbeke's translation (in 1268) of the *Elements* enabled St Thomas to correct the ascription.

<sup>3</sup>*De Anima* III, 4. 429b24; 7. 431a6      <sup>4</sup>*De Trinitate* III, 23. PL 10, 92

<sup>5</sup>*De Genesi ad Lit.* VI, 12. PL 34, 348; *De Trinitate* XV, 1. PL 42, 1057

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[More information](#)

## ON GOD'S KNOWLEDGE

therefore since the divine nature exists in a manner higher than that by which creatures exist, divine knowledge is not measured by the manner of created knowledge, so as to be universal or particular, or to be habitual or potential, or to be similarly qualified.

*article 2. does God understand himself?*

THE SECOND POINT:<sup>1</sup> 1. It would seem that God does not understand himself. For it is stated in the *Book on Causes* that *every knower who knows his own essence is in the condition of returning on his essence by a complete returning.*<sup>2</sup> But God does not go forth outside his essence, nor does he move in any way; and thus it is impossible for him to return to his essence. Therefore he does not understand himself.

2. Further, to understand is a kind of passivity and movement, as Aristotle states;<sup>3</sup> also knowledge is an assimilation to the thing known; and further, the thing as known is a perfecting of the knower. But nothing is moved or is passive or is perfected under its own agency; *nor is a thing its own likeness*, as Hilary says.<sup>4</sup> Therefore God does not know himself.

3. Further, our likeness to God is chiefly in our intellect: it is in our mind that we are made in the image of God, as Augustine says.<sup>5</sup> But our intellect does not understand itself except as it understands other things, as we read in Aristotle.<sup>6</sup> Therefore God does not understand himself, except perhaps in understanding other things.

ON THE OTHER HAND we have the words: *The things that are of God no one knows but the Spirit of God.*<sup>7</sup>

REPLY: God knows himself through himself. This will become evident if we note that whereas in activities which produce an external effect the object of the activity, its end or terminus, is something outside the agent, in activities which take place in the agent the object which is the end of the activity is in the agent itself: the object in the agent is the activity actually taking place. Thus we read in Aristotle that the sensible actualized is the sense in activity, and the intelligible actualized is the intellect in activity.<sup>8</sup> We have actual sensation or actual knowledge because our intellect or our senses are informed by the species or likeness of the sensible or intelligible object. Sense or intellect is other than the sensible or the intelligible only to the extent that all of themselves are in a condition of potentiality.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*De Anima* III, 4. 430a2   <sup>2</sup>1 Corinthians 2, 2   <sup>3</sup>*De Anima* III, 2. 426a16; 4. 430a3

<sup>4</sup>That is, not identified in the actuality of knowing and being known.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

## SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 1a. 14, 2

Cum igitur Deus nihil potentialitatis habeat, sed sit actus purus, oportet quod in eo intellectus et intellectum sint idem omnibus modis: ita scilicet ut neque careat specie intelligibili, sicut intellectus noster cum intelligit in potentia; neque species intelligibilis sit aliud a substantia intellectus divini, sicut accidit in intellectu nostro cum est actu intelligens; sed ipsa species intelligibilis est ipse intellectus divinus. Et sic seipsum per seipsum intelligit.

1. Ad primum ergo dicendum quod redire ad essentiam suam nihil aliud est quam rem subsistere in seipsa. Forma enim, inquantum perficit materiam dando ei esse, quodammodo supra ipsam effunditur; inquantum vero ipsa in se habet esse, in seipsam redit. Virtutes igitur cognoscitivæ quæ non sunt subsistentes, sed actus aliquorum organorum, non cognoscunt seipsas; sicut patet in singulis sensibus.<sup>9</sup> Sed virtutes cognoscitivæ per se subsistentes cognoscunt seipsas. Et propter hoc in libro *De Causis* dicitur quod *sciens essentiam suam redit ad essentiam suam*. Per se autem subsistere maxime convenit Deo; unde secundum hunc modum loquendi, ipse est maxime rediens ad essentiam suam, et cognoscens seipsum.

2. Ad secundum dicendum quod moveri et pati æquivoce sumuntur secundum quod intelligere dicitur esse quoddam moveri vel pati, ut dicitur in *De Anima*.<sup>10</sup> Non enim intelligere est motus qui est actus imperfecti, qui est ab alio in aliud: sed actus perfecti, existens in ipso agente. Similiter etiam quod intellectus perficiatur ab intelligibili vel assimiletur ei, hoc convenit intellectui qui quandoque est in potentia; quia per hoc quod est in potentia differt ab intelligibili, et assimilatur ei per speciem intelligibilem, quæ est similitudo rei intellectæ; et perficitur per ipsam, sicut potentia per actum. Sed intellectus divinus, qui nullo modo est in potentia, non perficitur per intelligibile, neque assimilatur ei: sed est sua perfectio et suum intelligibile.\*

3. Ad tertium dicendum quod esse naturale non est materiæ primæ, quæ est in potentia, nisi secundum quod est reducta in actum per formam. Intellectus autem noster possibilis se habet in ordine intelligibilium sicut materia prima in ordine rerum naturalium, eo quod est in potentia ad

\*Piana: *suum intelligere*, its own act of knowledge

<sup>9</sup>cf *De veritate* I, 9

<sup>10</sup>*De Anima* III, 4. 429b24; 7. 431a6; cf II, 5. 417b2. In the text *æquivoce*, equivocally, is used broadly for *analogice*, analogically, cf 1a. 13, 10 ad 4

<sup>11</sup>An act of knowledge is complete from the first and is not the gradual actuation of a potency; for Aristotle only the latter type of actuation is properly termed 'movement'. Again, though human knowledge actuates a potency, it does not displace a form but only adds one; hence it is more properly termed an activity than a passivity.

<sup>12</sup>Aristotle's *νοῦς παθητικός*, *intellectus possibilis*, the mind in its capacity to receive