Thomas Aquinas and "Ogden and Richards Triangle": The reality, language and human being

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Abstract: Christianity is a matter of perception and conception of reality: of language (Word-words), of thought (intellect, *Fides et ratio*) and of referents (God the foundation of all created reality, the Church and the «Kingdom of God»). It is a matter of imaginary and collective imagination. Human beings have not only intelligence, but also imagination, creativity, emotionality and the ability to adapt. These are very high standards to achieve and to simulate (think of robots with artificial intelligence). If one assumes that, for a human being, there are socio-institutional constraints (of which language is among the most important), physical constraints (the physical materiality of the environment in which all human beings are immersed) and cognitive constraints (the brain-mind-body), the «Ogden and Richards Triangle» is a valid model for analysing these three constraints (language, thought and the referents of language and thought) and their relationships also with regard the analysis of Aquinas's philosophy-theology. What was reality for Thomas Aquinas? And what was reality for his interlocutors, for those who saw, heard and read him? These questions are still relevant today and cannot be ignored, given the social force exerted by traditionalist Catholic culture (*i.e.* certain Catholic elites) within our disenchanted, secularised and re-enchanted societies. This article contains a reflection on «Ogden and Richards Triangle», Thomas's philosophy and Marr's «Three Levels Model». The application of Aquinas's reflections on "*ens*" and "*essentia*" (I use the singular and plural nominatives of these Latin words for convenience) to the problem of referents and reference of «Ogden and Richards Triangle» shows the importance, for cognitive sociology, of the philosophy of mind and the problem of who, what, where, when, why, how reality.

Index Terms – ontology, social ontology, «Ogden and Richards Triangle», Marr's «Three Level Model», cognitive sciences, sociology cognitive.

I. INTRODUCTION

Before starting, I would like to point out that the translations from Italian of the quotations in the article were done by me. In the *Appendix* of a 2014 book of mine, entitled «Il cognitivismo di S. Privitera e il modello di scienza cognitiva proposto da D. Marr. I limiti del modello cognitivista proposto da S. Privitera e i vantaggi dell'adozione, anche per l'etica, del modello di scienza cognitiva proposto da D. Marr» (The Cognitivism of S. Privitera and the Cognitive Science Model proposed by D. Marr. The limits of the cognitivist model proposed by S. Privitera and the advantages of adopting, also for ethics, the cognitive science model proposed by D. Marr, Pinello, 2014), to which I refer, with reference to the «Ogden and Richards Triangle» and Marr's «Three Level Model» I have already addressed the question of the contribution to cognitive science that can come from certain theological themes treated by some authors who are more philosophers than theologians. In it, I tried to bring theology into dialogue with the cognitive sciences, in an extradisciplinary way. The interdisciplinary way in fact implies that theology is founded with other disciplines, a hypothesis that for the Catholic Church is radically to be excluded. The extradisciplinary way can be combined with the transdisciplinary way, *i.e.* with the mediations of the philosophy of mind, ontology, social ontology, general linguistics, cognitive psychology, cognitive anthropology, cognitive sociology, neuroscience, etc.

> Theology, in my view, cannot [theologians cannot], directly, make its [make their] entry into «communities of people from different disciplines who are confronted with a series of common problems relating to intelligence [*i.e.* cognitive science, or the cognitive sciences]» (A.M. Collins), but it can be involved in this *challenge* [...] by psychology [...] by philosophy ([...] philosophy of mind [...]ontology [philosophy of language]) [by cognitive sociology] and by anthropology (theological [or Christian] and cognitive anthropology), should a real interest mature in such a community of people from different disciplines to research human intelligence [...] in relation to the question of the *dignity of human reason* [issue that has to do with the *dignity of reality* and with the *dignity of the human person*; on the critique of the concept of the human person and on the focus instead on the human being, see Pinello, 2021], theologically understood, and *reality*, theologically understood, and not only in relation to the simulation techniques of electronic computers (Pinello, 2014, p. 262).

One theme is certainly the realisation of the so-called «language of God» in human language, in the terms of Ogden and Richards' science of symbolism (*see* Pinello, 2022a; Pinello, 2022b), *i.e.* in terms of the influence of language on human thought, given that one of the three levels of Marr's «Model» is the realisation of computational theory, through representations and representation processes, in human hardware and computer hardware. The problem is also one of perceptions, reasoning and optical, perceptive and cognitive illusions, bearing in mind that the perimeter of hermeneutics has been, and continues to be, language. In this regard, I reproduce the abstract and some arguments of an article by Alessandra Jacomuzzi (*see also* Pinello, 2021; Pinello 2022a; Pinello 2022b) who cites, among others, two essays by Maurizio Ferraris, «*The Imagination*» (Ferraris, 1996) and «*Rational Aesthetics*» (Ferraris, 1998).

Common sense tends to believe in the existence of optical and perceptual illusions but it hardly supports the thesis of an illusory reasoning [cognitive illusions]. In the psychology of reasoning, one rather talks of errors of reasoning that experience can fix and change. For this reason, over the years, the belief that there is a clear distinction between optical and perceptual illusions has been reinforced [leaving out cognitive illusions]. The former [optical illusions] would be stronger, the latter [perceptual illusions] weaker and correctable. [On the contrary, it is possible] to demonstrate, through the presentation and analysis of a topology of illusions, that there is indeed a universal structure underlying every kind of illusion. This same structure allows us to talk about a universal criterion to identify illusions: a key part of the outside world [...] perceptual channels never provide us with a perfect copy of external reality. Perceived reality is constantly conditioned by states of mind, expectations and the percipient subject's aims [*see* Pinello, 2021] [...] even intuitive reasoning is not always correct [*see* Kahneman, 2019] [...] In both cases, perception and cognition, what are called illusions can occur; mistaken perceptions or reasoning that, unlike errors, can hardly be changed once detected [...] hermeneutics seemed to dominate [...] the contemporary philosophical landscape [in sociology the weight exerted by Max Weber continues to be imposing, see Pinello, 2022a and Pinello, 2022b] [...] [but it is not correct to say that] our experience [is] really a matter of interpretation [...] aesthetics is not the philosophy of art but rather the science of sensible things, of perceptions [...] "Illusion is not the same thing as an error, and it is not necessarily an error" [...] Common sense tends to believe in the existence of optical and perceptual illusions but hardly supports the thesis of illusory reasoning [cognitive illusions]. It speaks of errors in reasoning [in cognition] that can be modified through experience. This is why a distinction between perceptual illusions and cognitive illusions was thought to be possible. The former would be stronger, the latter weaker and with the possibility of correction. And I too, in line with common sense, have for many years accepted this thesis. Today, however, I believe I can argue that despite the undoubted difference between these different types, it is possible to derive a universal structure. And it is precisely this universal structure that allows us to affirm the existence of a criterion by which illusions can be identified. This criterion concerns the subject's awareness of an incongruity between two representations of reality [*i.e.* one must take into consideration two different representations of reality and argue, or demonstrate, their incongruity]. It is an apparently simple criterion, perhaps a trivial one, but one that allows us to bring together two domains hitherto studied separately, that of perceptual illusions and that of cognitive illusions; domains that constitute an important and fundamental part [of] the external world» (Jacomuzzi, 2015, p. 1-3 and 6).

As we will see by applying the «Ogden and Richards Triangle», these concepts and notions, although expressed differently, are fundamental in the philosophy-theology of Thomas Aquinas. Indeed, he compares his different representations of reality (in very general terms the Platonic and Neo-Platonic and the Aristotelian) and argues their incongruence. To introduce the arguments I am developing, I will begin by summarising the key points of the *Appendix* of my essay on theological cognitivism by Salvatore Privitera, adding that, as Federica d'Auria writes quoting Marco Iacoboni, «There are basically two ways of conceiving neuroethical enquiry […] as either a collaboration between philosophers, moral psychologists and neuroscientists to discover the neural substrates of certain moral behaviours, or as a way of using neuroscience to resolve certain philosophical or psychological questions concerning, for example, the justifications for prosocial behaviour (*e.g.* why does a person perform an act of solidarity, a moral act?)» (*see* D'Auria, 2022). Referring again to my *Appendix*, in particular to a citation by Manuel Barbera, I also add that the model of the «Ogden and Richards Triangle» for some linguists (among them the Italian Tullio De Mauro) should not be used in general linguistics (general linguistics is one of the cognitive disciplines, since the official birth of cognitive science), because it would constitute, in their view, a considerable step backwards (ontological and metaphysical: philosophy of being) compared to Saussure and the semiological tradition that is linked to his theories. The limit of such a triangular model, again in their view, would consist precisely in the introduction of a sign/symbol referent (*see* Pinello, 2022b) understood as an indispensable element of signification, of the meaning of meaning. This, again in their view, would risk compromising Saussure's reductionist achievement of the abstractness of the linguistic sign. To reintroduce the referent into the model of signification, to reintroduce in general linguistics the problem of the meaning of meaning, would mean going back to the pre-Saussure conception of language understood (or easily misunderstood) as nomenclature, *i.e.* as a collection of names with which to refer to things, to material objects, of the world, of reality. Eliminating the referent (the right vertex of the «Triangle»), again in their view, means defending the persistence of the reductionist conception of language as an autonomous, conventional and unmotivated structure; while considering all three sides of the «Triangle» means taking into account what the sign refers to, in the sense that the sign refers to something, which can be perceived or imagined, and that this something, which exists independently of the sign, determines it (*see* Pinello, 2014, p. 249-250; Barbera).

The issue I have been dealing with, more philosophical than theological, is the who, what, where, when, why, how of reality, divine natural and social, *i.e.* the referents of thought and symbols and the processes of symbolisation, referencing and adaptation (*see* Pinello, 2019; Pinello, 2022a; Pinello, 2022b), in some authors, more philosophers than theologians. I begin with the summary of the *Appendix* (*see* Pinello, 2014, p. 233-292). The notion of theology is far from unambiguous. Indeed, there are many theological systems theorised from "collections of data" (*loci theologici*). Having said this, I attempt to propose a pragmatic and functional definition of it, in terms of cognitive science. That is, a functional definition for the application of the «Ogden and Richards Triangle» and Marr's «Three Level Model» to the problem of reality. «Theology is the discourse that the *believer* makes about the *reality of God* from the *reality of Creation* and the reality of his *self-Revelation* (divine Word in human words: the Word-words and the substantive Word of God)». The Word-words (and the substantive Word of God) reveals that God is the *unique* and *absolute foundation of reality* (this is the referent of the meaning of meanings of the philosophical and theological discourses of some authors, who in my opinion are first of all philosophers and then also theologians). I use the words signifier, signified and referent for convenience because I deal not only with the «Ogden and Richards Triangle» but (not in this article) also with Hjelmslev's biplanar theory of language (*see* Pinello, 2022b, with citation of Miceli, 2005, see also Hjelmslev, 1968),

for which language can be considered as an association of sensory expression (*i.e.* perceivable by the senses: phonemes, graphemes, gestures, facial expressions and microexpressions, proxemics, etc.; *order of expression*) and internal content by definition (*i.e.* not perceivable by the senses, but thought, conceived, by the brain-mind; *order of content*).

The meaning (or rather, the meaning of meaning) of reality (ontology and social ontology), understood in the manner of Thomas Aquinas and millions of human beings for generations and generations to the present day, albeit in a disenchanted and secularised and reenchanted manner, that is the problem of reality, is the problem of problems. What it is and how it is reality for Thomas Aquinas? How was it perceived, conceived, thought, spoken, lived, communicated, transmitted in its objectivity? What it is and how it is reality for us today? Is it a reality that no longer needs God, for which God is no longer necessary? Is it a reality still influenced by the theories of Thomas, albeit with weak thinking? As I wrote in my *Appendix*, citing other authors, for today's believers «the reality of God always comes too late with respect to man conceived as an autonomous nature. When one does not deny the affirmation of divine action [action] [the discourse is also valid for liturgical community action], it takes on the trait of a "second" intervention, which is superimposed on the consciousness of human action [increasingly understood, anthropologically, sociologically and psychologically, as originating from a (biological and psychological) urge to act, which can be a physiological or "spiritual" need, *see* Pinello, 2021]. [...] The gratuitousness of divine action runs the risk of being presented in extrinsic, added and even superfluous terms» (Brambilla, 2009, p. 19; see also Pinello, 2020; Pinello, 2022a).

What are the main theories, developed over centuries, not necessarily dating back to Thomas Aquinas, on ways of coming into contact with God-reality? There are those who insist on the senses, or rather pre-modern sensoriality, pre-modern perceptions, feelings and values. This is the emotional function of language (*see* Pinello, 2022b). It is a good thing to insist on the five senses and perceptions (to be nostalgic for lost pre-modern sensoriality), feelings and values (which are also sentimental and affective projections), that is, after all, aesthetics, but it is also necessary to understand (knowledge as the unifying consciousness of knowledge open to a foundation) that, to do this, reason and reality must be restored to dignity. The five senses, perceptions (primarily optical), and aesthetics are not an alternative to the weaknesses of reason and man and reality (in fact, by other means, they participate in the same weaknesses of reason and man and reality), but are intimately connected to reason and man and reality. There are theological ways that favour sensoriality (the five senses and perceptions) and aesthetics. This in no way means that they do not also take reason into account. How could this be, after all, since reason and the five senses and perceptions are intimately connected? *Verbis gestique*! *Per signa sensibilia*! «The privilege granted to them (five senses and perceptions and aesthetics) depends above all on the fact that they allow one to deal rationally with "things" that reason cannot account for. On such things reason prescribes silence [...], but if certainties come from sensoriality and perceptions and aesthetics, then reason can begin to build on such certainties, that is, to reflect on them" (Pinello, 2014, footnote no. 494 on p. 242, with reference to Cattorini, cited by Tomatis, 2010).

> This thesis [with regard to Catholic communal liturgical action] can be expressed as follows: the liturgy is a mystery of the involvement of the senses in the surpassing experience of God's revelation. The liturgy is that action (in the order of poietics) that by virtue of the singular symbolic evidence of its languages "makes the senses enter" into an order of meaning (implication) at the same time as it "brings them out" of themselves, in order to open them up to perception (in the order of aesthetics) of the Trinitarian Mystery that makes itself present (surplus) (Tomatis, 2010, p. 21-22).

Clearly, this definition contains within itself the whole problem of perceptual and cognitive illusions. The risk, in fact, is precisely this. Some authors have argued that faith and reason (*Fides et ratio*) can perform the task in question concerning reality through intelligence (understood as *Intellectus fidei* founded by/"in the" faith, illuminated through faith), as distinct from reason (*see* Rossi, 2009). Others (*see* Sabetta, 2007, p. 125), helping to criticise the reason/intelligence distinction, have instead insisted on contemplation, subsequent to the activity of reason (*i.e.* subsequent to philosophy), whose task is to show and demonstrate the limit of rational necessity. In both cases, a prominent role is played by the natural-historical languages (the Word/words *i.e.* the Divine Word spoken through human words) of God's self-revelation in the history of human beings. Here again, the risk of cognitive illusions is constantly around the corner. The expression «The Word affirms that God is the unique and absolute foundation of reality» means that the Word/words (and the substantive Word of God) contains within itself (reveals) the foundation (this is why the sacred Scriptures that form the Canon of Orthodoxy cannot be changed), that reality has its foundation in God and that this foundation is unique and absolute. Reality, and the various cultures and societies, are therefore not the mere product of history, because history itself (and with it the various cultures and societies) has a foundation (God), which is given and said historically, culturally and socially, without however being merely history, or a mere historical product (*see* Pinello, 2014, p. 238).

> God has spoken in Sacred Scripture through men and in a human manner [the Word-words and the substantive Word of God] (*Dei Verbum*, 12). Just as the substantive Word of God [Jesus Christ] has made itself similar to men in all points except sin [the intellect of the Father and the Son, in the Holy Spirit, is in fact pure, not corrupted by the limitations and weaknesses of human intellect and human reason], so God's words, expressed in human tongues [Word-words], have made themselves similar to human language, in all points except error (Dei Verbum, 13). As far as the *intellectus fidei* is concerned, it must be considered, first of all, that the divine Truth «proposed to us in the Sacred Scriptures, correctly interpreted by the doctrine of the Church» [authentic interpretation or Magisterium of the Church], enjoys an intelligibility of its own that is so logically coherent as to be proposed as authentic knowledge. The intellectus fidei makes this truth explicit, not only by grasping the logical and conceptual structures of the propositions in which the Church's teaching is articulated, but also, and primarily, by bringing out the meaning of salvation that these propositions contain for the individual and for humanity [...] If the important task of theology is the interpretation of the sources, a further and even more delicate and demanding task is the *understanding of revealed truth*, or the elaboration of the *intellectus fidei* [...] the *intellectus fidei* requires the contribution of a philosophy of being, which allows *dogmatic theology* to carry out its functions in an adequate manner. The theological pragmatism of the beginning [of the twentieth century], according to which the truths of faith are nothing more than rules of conduct, has already been rejected; nevertheless, the temptation to understand these truths in a purely functional manner always remains (*Fides et ratio,* 66 and 97). Theology is organised as a science of faith in the light of a dual methodological principle: the *auditus fidei* and the *intellectus fidei*. With the former, it comes into possession of the contents of Revelation as they have been progressively made explicit in Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the living Magisterium of the Church. With the second, theology seeks to respond to the demands of thought through speculative reflection (*Fides et ratio*, 65).

Applying Marr's «Three Level Model» by analogy (*see* Pinello, 2022b), we can state that God's language is realised in the human linguistic hardware and, by this means, in the human being in its totality, personal and communitarian (note the primary and fundamental role of announcement of the Gospel, of language). The way of considering and interpreting sacred scriptures (*see* the document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, «The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church») has profound consequences on the way of understanding language (symbolisation), thinking, reference processes and referents, internal and external to the human being. Catholic exegesis does not turn its attention to the divine aspects of biblical revelation alone (in which case exegesis would be fundamentalist), nor to human aspects alone (in which case exegesis would be historicist, anthropological, sociological: that is why exegesis of the sacred Scriptures conducted with a critical historical method and with various anthropological, psychological, sociological approaches, is like the soul of theology). Instead, it seeks to highlight both the divine and human aspects, which are united together in the divine "condescension" (*Dei Verbum*, 13) that underlies the sacred Scriptures. It is in this sense that one can speak of theological anthropology, *i.e.* natural reason and divine reason (*i.e.* natural reason illuminated by grace, in faith), natural sensoriality and divine sensoriality (*i.e.* natural sensoriality illuminated by grace, in faith), natural affectivity and divine affectivity (*i.e.* natural affectivity illuminated by grace, in faith). Revelation is supernatural and historical at the same time and the economy of salvation, internal and external, is Trinitarian (the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son: first the sending of the Word-words, of the substantive language, and then the sending of Grace to understand Reality and Truth – the Kingdom of God – in faith).

«In a world where scientific research is becoming increasingly important in numerous fields, it is indispensable that exegetical science be placed at an appropriate level» (Pontifical Biblical Commission, «The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church», 6.16). For theology, scientificity consists in making explicit and defined its value relations (this is also the teaching of Max Weber, in the field of social sciences); in making explicit and defined its object of enquiry with respect to reality (Creation and the Church, which have their foundation in God); in making explicit and defined its model of enquiry; in being consistent about its object of enquiry and its model of enquiry (*see* Pinello, 2014, p. 240-241). As, in considering Revelation, theology, as it did with Augustine and Thomas, must equip itself with a philosophy of being (ontology and social ontology; today, for example, some theologians use Heidegger or Habermas, in the next section we will see how Thomas used Aristotelian philosophy), so, in considering nature, it cannot do without confronting the natural sciences. «With regard to the preparation for a correct *auditus fidei*, philosophy makes its peculiar contribution to theology when it considers the structure of knowledge and personal communication and, in particular, the various forms and functions of language» (*Fides et ratio*, 65). Rondinara identifies three different levels in the relationship between theology and the natural sciences: 1) ontological level (what is natural reality and what is theological reality? Is the reality being investigated the same? Rondinara answers in the affirmative); 2) the epistemological level; 3) the ethical level (*see* Rondinara, 2007, p. 38-39). In both the philosophy of being and the natural sciences, *i.e.* in the relationship between faith and reason, one must start from the assumption that faith does not originate in man. Instead, it is produced by the foundation of reality (God) that draws the human person to itself, involving him or her with the whole mind, the whole heart, the whole body and the whole soul, that is, totally (total experience of reality, in its foundation: the Kingdom of God). It is this foundation of reality (God) that "ignites", activates, faith in the human person and, with it, reality. With respect to the conciliar definitions given here, applying the «Ogden and Richards Triangle» (*see* Pinello, 2022b), there is a not insignificant problem, which has serious repercussions on reality that is grounded in God,

> that of the perennial validity of the conceptual language used in the conciliar definitions [...] Reflecting on this topic is not easy, because one must seriously take into account the meaning that words acquire in different cultures and at different times. The history of thought, however, shows that through the evolution and variety of cultures certain basic concepts maintain their universal cognitive value and thus the truth of the propositions that express them [...] The realistic value of many concepts, on the other hand, does not exclude the fact that their meaning is often imperfect. Philosophical speculation could help a great deal in this field. It is desirable, therefore, that it should be particularly involved in the deepening of the relationship between conceptual language and truth [or the foundation of reality] and in the proposal of adequate paths for its correct understanding (*Fides et ratio*, 96).

Applying the «Ogden and Richards Triangle» (*see* Pinello, 2022b), the starting point is that some words, not all words but those of Revelation, the Word/words of the sacred Scriptures (the language of God, the Substantial Word of God, the tongues of fire of the Holy Spirit), contain an eternal, absolute meaning, unchanging in time. The meaning of that meaning is God and that is why they cannot be changed by human beings (on human beings see Pinello, 2021). By means of this triangular model, it becomes easier to understand and explain the difference between a reality, internal and external to human beings, cultural, social, political, that has its foundation in God and a reality instead that is entirely constructed by human beings (constructivism), between the "Great Awakening" and the "Great Reset" (*see* Dugin, 2022). The differences lie at the level of symbols (symbolisation/representation), at the level of thought and reference processes and at the level of referents.

> A first problematic aspect concerns the relationship between meaning and truth. Like any other text, so too the sources that the theologian interprets transmit first of all a meaning, which must be revealed and exposed. Now, this meaning is presented as the truth about God, which is communicated by God himself through the sacred text [divine Word in human words: the Word-words and the substantive Word of God, the tongues of fire of the Holy Spirit]. In human language, therefore, the language of God takes shape, who communicates his own truth with the admirable "condescension" that reflects the logic of the Incarnation. In interpreting the sources of Revelation, therefore, it is necessary for the theologian to ask himself what is the profound and genuine truth that the texts wish to communicate, even within the limitations of language [of human beings]. As for the biblical texts, and in particular the Gospels, their truth is certainly not reduced to the narration of mere historical events or the revelation of neutral facts, as historicist positivism would have it. These texts, on the contrary, contain events whose truth lies beyond mere historical occurrence: it lies in their significance *in* and *for* salvation history. [It lies in the meaning of the meaning, in the full significance]. This truth finds full explicitness in the Church's perennial reading of these texts over the centuries, keeping their original meaning unchanged (*Fides et ratio*, 94).

I close the introduction with a quotation from Paolo Tomatis on the problem of the meaning of meanings of liturgical actions (Tomatis, 2010).

Giuseppe Busani writes in the Introduction to Tomatis' book: «In recent decades much research has been devoted to showing the centrality of the liturgy for the life of faith. [...] Perhaps the roots lie within the path of liturgical renewal itself. The "liturgical question", which arose as a problem of the meaning of celebrating that asks why and how to celebrate, has answers that initially placed too one-sided an emphasis on what to celebrate. A problem of significance was answered by dealing with meanings. [...] before the rite the question is still "what does it mean and not what happens" [...] Today [...] we are all aware that the liturgical question arises as a ritual question. [...] It is clear that it is insufficient to know the meaning of what one is doing, what counts is rather the act of doing it [...] For the Council Constitution [*Sacrosanctum Concilium*] it is evident how the ritual act needs the interweaving, or rather, the harmonious integration of different verbal and non-verbal codes, of word and gesture. It is about the interaction of sounds, images, movements, speech acts, scents, flavours that activate the different forms of human perception and allow the involvement of the totality of man in the experience of the Mystery [...] *"Accende lumen sensibus"*, that is, to what extent and under what conditions our senses can make in the liturgy a living and real experience of the Word incarnate [...] Paolo Tomatis, in the Introduction to his work, writes: «*Accende lumen sensibus*: the wisdom of the ancient hymn to the Holy Spirit leaves no doubt about the full involvement of the senses in the liturgical experience of faith. The Holy Spirit, who is at work in the liturgy, does not extinguish the senses of the body: he kindles them. The spiritual senses, which the Christian tradition has investigated so much, are not an alternative to the material senses, but the refinement of those same senses, illuminated by the light of the Spirit». And Silvano M. Maggiani, in his *Preface*, in turn, writes: «More than once, in the path of research led by Paolo Tomatis, which I followed dialectically in the shadows, conscious of learning and of having to orientate, and more than once in the reading and re-reading of the text he weaved, and again in the final text, Gregory Bateson's challenge, taken up by his daughter Mary Catherine Bateson, came back to my mind, as it does at present, entrusted to me in an Italian translation, in an Adelphi edition, which bears the title: *Dove gli angeli esitano*, and as subtitle: *Verso un'epistemologia del sacro*. The title is taken from a verse by A. Pope: «For fools rush in where angels hesitate to set foot» [...] The author's courage is already evident in the *Introduction*, when, among other authors, he compares himself with the refined Cristina Campo who, in her Adelphi work *Gli Imperdonabili* (p. 231), notes: «He who approaches, attracted and terrified, the sacred precincts of the ways of the century, two complementary anxieties, always the same, seize him. The terror of "losing" his five senses (since implicitly or explicitly he was taught that he possesses nothing else) and, conversely, the fear of remaining too carnal for those precincts» (Pinello, 2017, p. 24-25).

II.   THOMAS AQUINAS: THE REALITY, HUMAN BEING AND GOD THE PRINCIPLE OF ALL REALITY

Thomas Aquinas was and wanted to be a theologian [...] he was a theologian in his own way and not in the way of today's theologians [...] in his conception of theology rational enquiry (i.e. philosophy) has an essential place and function (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 40).

For this paragraph I will use Sofia Vanni Rovighi's *Introduction to Thomas Aquinas* (*see* Vanni Rovighi, 1973). The problem, with reference to the «Ogden and Richards Triangle» (because it is this triangular model that I also apply in this paragraph), is that of *entiă*, *essentiae* (*De ente et essentia*), being, existence, matter, form, *substantia* (substance) and pure form, *i.e.* symbols (language), thought, referential processes, referents (Ogden and Richards, see Pinello, 2022b), reality, the foundation of reality (God the principle of all reality, as being) and human being (on the human being see Pinello, 2021).

I will quote *Summa theologiae* with *Summa* from here on. The Roman number refers to the *pars* (*prima*, *prima secundae*, *secunda secundae*), then come the *quaestio* number and the article number. I will then quote the *De ente et essentia* from the ROLAND-GOSSELIN edition (Le «*De ente et essentia*» de S. *Thomas d'Aquin*, «Bibliothèque thomiste», VIII, Paris 1926) indicating not only the chapter number but also the page and the lines (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, footnote 1 on p. 41).

What was Thomas' conception of reality, thought and language and their mutual relations (these are the three vertices and three sides of the «Ogden and Richards Triangle», see Pinello, 2022b)? Everything starts from God and this has lasted for centuries and, in some ways, still lasts today. That is why it is important to set the problem right, in order to understand it. We have an «Ogden and Richards Triangle» hinged on God, and thus symbols/signs, thoughts, referents, symbolisations, references and adaptations, meaning of meaning hinged on God. The existence of an entity (*ens*) is one thing, the ideas and thoughts we have about it are another thing, the words we use to speak and write about it are yet another thing. There is also the difference to be made between orality and writing (*see* Ong, 1970; Ong, 1986; Ong 1989).

For Thomas, who in this follows the teaching of Avicenna, who comments on Aristotle, it is not possible to affirm that the existence of God is immediately evident [to thought, to the mind], nor can the argument of Anselm of Aosta's *Proslogion* be used for this purpose. Using a concept, notion and assertion that are not Thomas', we can state that this would be a cognitive illusion, in the sense illustrated above. «The existence of God, in fact, is not immediately evident to the intellect nor can it be discovered only by reflection on the idea of God as Anselm said in the *Proslogion*» (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 55). The existence of an entity cannot be derived from reflection on the idea of it, assuming we have the idea, because in fact we do not have an idea of God to reflect on. «For Thomas we form the idea of God as we prove his existence [the five ways, or evidences, of the existence of God] […] Seeing sensible things we arrive at God by proceeding from them […] we do not arrive at God except by reasoning, not by immediate evidence […] Anselm, Bonaventure (and others later) could admit that the existence of God was an immediately evident truth, discovered in simple reflection on the idea of God, because they believed that the idea of God was somehow imprinted by God himself in our minds» (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 56 and 55-56). Thomas' starting point is therefore sensible things, perceptions, human and social experiences, and, as we shall see, the assumption that in God (the Creator) being and essence are identified, whereas in every creature being and essence are not identified and are distinguishable. «All that is not God is not [...] being, but *has* it, receives it, participates in it, and cannot receive it except from the one who *is* the being (*Summa,* I, q. 44, 1) [...], that is, from God» (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 67). Creation and creatures meaning that God is the total cause of being. It is in this sense that the «Ogden and Richards Triangle» is hinged on God. Reflecting on God's existence therefore means reflecting on God's being and conversely, as well as on being in its totality.

Sensible creation (created things: *entiă*) is composed of matter and form. However, there are creatures that are pure forms (*see* Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 18). This is why knowledge implies both a rational activity, since sensible creation is composed of

matter and form, and a reflection of the intellect on pure forms, on being that coincides with existence and on itself. Reason also reflects on its own act. Reason in fact is speculative (theoretical) and practical. The practical reason that reflects on its own act is free will.

The distinction between necessity (determinism, automatic choices and automatic actions, fast thinking, see Kahneman, 2019) and free will choices (that are the result of conscious reflection, of logical reasoning, slow thinking, see Kahneman, 2019) is interesting. «[...] natural facts are explained by nature and deliberate actions are explained by reason and the human will» (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 58). Free will is being the master of one's own judgement and choices, reflecting on one's own rational act. Clearly, there are also automatic human actions for which it is not possible to speak of free will, i.e. conscious reflection of reason on one's choices and decisions. Since reason is the being master of one's choices, it is through reflection on one's acts that it knows the good in the universal, *i.e.* ultimately God. Thus God can be known, as intelligence, through reflection on the sensible creation (created things: *entiă*), and as will (Good), through reason reflecting on one's choices and decisions. «There are some [supernatural] truths that surpass all power of human reason [intellect] [...] Others [natural truths] are such that they can be reached by natural reason [intellect] [...] Man is man by reason [intellect] [...] "*intellectus et ratio est potissima hominis natura*" (*Summa,* Iᵃ IIᵃᵉ, q. 31, art. 7) even if reason is not the whole man (*potissima, not tota*) [...] the divine gift of grace does not destroy his nature, but elevates it: "Cum igitur gratia non tollat naturam sed perficiat, oportet quod naturalis ratio subserviat fidei sicut naturalis inclinatio voluntatis obsequitur charitati" (*Summa,* I, q. 1, art. 8)» (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 24, 27 and 41).

That is, Thomas rejects (can we say because it is a cognitive illusion, in the sense specified above?) Boethius' Neo-Platonic doctrine of knowledge (*De Trinitate*) according to which there are two ways of knowledge: the first way is from below, the second way from above, « «by intuition of the intelligible» (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 24).

> That is, he advocates intellective knowledge by abstraction and not by illumination. […] It is rather the sense of mystery, of the limit of human knowledge, the presentiment of an immense zone of reality and truth that eludes human intelligence and towards which, nevertheless, a secret aspiration of man is directed, that which reveals Thomas's religious attitude to those who read his writings [...] the difficulties of reason when approaching the truths that most affect the meaning of human life (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 40). Thomas affirms that one must start from the truths accessible to reason because, in expounding and justifying Christian doctrine by arguing with heretics, one can assume the entire Bible as a presupposition, with Jews one can assume the Old Testament, but with Muslims and pagans one cannot assume as a presupposition except what is common to all men: reason. «Therefore it is necessary to return to reason, to which all must assent». But he immediately adds: «Quae [sc. *ratio*] tamen in rebis divinis deficiens est [*Contra Gentiles,* cap. 2; *see In Boethium De Trinitate,* q. II, art. 3)» (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 28).

For Thomas, the concepts of real *ens* (entity of which one can have sensory experience, *i.e.* sensible creation, *entiă,* entities) and essence (*essentia*) are basic (*De ente et essentia*), because they are implied in all other concepts. What is the meaning of these two terms? In what way are different realities *entiă* and *essentiae* (*De ente et essentia*)? What is the relationship between genus, species and specific difference and logical *entiă*? *Ens* for Thomas is the concrete, the perceivable, the sensory-experiencable; *essentia*, on the other hand, is the abstract, «because our [sensory] experience is of [*entiă*], of concrete things [external to the human being, not in the spatial sense but in the sense of other than itself], of which we then ask ourselves what constitutes them as such [...] we have experience of men [*ens- entiă*], for example, and then we ask ourselves what constitutes man's humanity, that is, what is his essence [*essentia*]». The *ens* (or *entiă,* plural)*,* to be precise*,* can be both a real *ens* and a logical *ens*, *i.e.* it can be understood in two ways: 1) «uno modo quod dividitur per decem genera», 2) *«*alio modo quod significat propositionum veritatem» (*Opusculum De ente et essentia*, 1, p. 2, 9-11). Let us see the first way. The real *ens* «is of different genera, *i.e.* there are different ways of really being: it *is* a man and it *is* the colour of his skin; a man and the colour of his skin are [*entiă*], but in different ways, the man *is* as *substantia* (in Aristotelian terms), *i.e.* as a reality capable of existing for itself [*ens*: *substantia*], the colour of his skin is as an accident ([*accidens*] in Aristotelian terms), *i.e.* as a determination of man and more precisely as a quality [*ens* quality: this is the ten Aristotelian categories] [...] (ways in which being can be predicated of different realities and thus ways that define the supreme genera of reality) […] Accident cannot be nor can it be conceived without the *substantia* to which it is inherent. Accident *is* not proper, but by accident a *substantia* is in a certain way (red or green, heavy or light)» (Vanni Rivighi, 1973, p. 42-43 and 53). Let us analyse the statement «Man is white-skinned, black-skinned, etc.». Let us now look at the second case. Man is the *substantia ens*, the colour of his skin [on the other hand] is the quality *ens* (the accident) the verb to be (the copula) is the logical *ens*. In fact, the verb «to be» is also used to express «connections of concepts». The real *ens* (we are at the ontological level) expresses the existence and truth of the concept. The logical *ens* (and here we are no longer at the ontological level but at the level of language, more precisely of verbs, of grammar), on the other hand, expresses the existence of connections of concepts, through the copula. It does not express the existence of concepts (which is expressed by real *entiă*) but the existence of connections between these concepts. It is therefore only the connection that is true, if it is correct. If we state that blindness is in the eye, this does not mean that blindness exists. «There are eyes [that ontologically exist] deprived of their normal function, but there is no such thing as blindness: blindness is the way the intellect expresses the fact that certain eyes do not see» (Vanni Rovighi, p. 43).

Alongside and together real *entiă*, which are material things external to human beings, there are also «objects of thought», which are internal to human beings, in their minds. «We must not [...] hypostatise our concepts and believe that every concept of ours corresponds to a thing», to a reality external to human beings, because «not everything that is an object of thought exists as it is thought. [...] The [*ens*] of which Thomas intends to speak [...] is the real [*ens*] [concrete, external to the human being], and only with respect to this [*ens*] can one speak of essence» (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 43).

The real, concrete *ens*, external to the human being (applying the «Ogden and Richards triangle», it is the reference external to the human being) is a primordial concept which, as primordial, is implicit in every other concept, *i.e.* in the ten categories, and which, in terms of definition (i.e. posing the question of definition), can be called essence. Free will, on the other hand, is being the master of one's own social and moral and esthetic act. This is a characteristic of practical reason that reflects on its own act. On closer inspection, one can glimpse in this one of the embryos of the distinction between the natural sciences and the human

and social sciences. But let us proceed further. If the *ens* of which Thomas speaks is the real, concrete *ens*, external to the human being, if only with regard to this *ens* can one speak of essence, if *ens* is already implicit in any concept (but not everything that is the object of thought exists as it is thought), if all reality is *ens*, then, despite free will, nothing real can be added by the mind to this *ens* (*entiă*). This means that what mind adds to real *entiă* is the explication or expression of what was already implicit in the notion of the real *ens* and in the connections of the real *entiă*. «And this explicitation or expressing itself can take place in two ways: either so that the mode expressed specifies the [*ens*] [...] and then one goes from the [*ens*] to the different genera of [*entiă*] [the categories] [...] or so that the mode expressed universally belongs to every [*ens*] [...] Now there is no affirmative predicate that belongs to every [*ens*] except its essence» (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 44). This second mode, namely predicates that belong universally to every *ens*, is the mode of *transcendentals*. They are called *transcendentals* because they transcend the categories. I will also discuss the question of human artefacts that are added to natural *entiă*.

At this point we can also define essence.

> Essence (let us now return to *De ente et essentia*) is what is expressed in the definition, when it says "*what it is* (*quid*)" an [*ens*], so it is also called quiddity (*quiditas*), or, as Aristotle says, *quod quid erat esse* [...] «id est hoc per quod aliquid habet esse quid (*Opusculum De ente et essentia*, 2, p. 322) [The definition, when it says "*what is* (*quid*)" a (*ens*), expresses its essence]. Essence is sometimes also called *form* because, in Aristotelian terminology, form is the determining element of the thing, that by which a thing is what it is, distinct from any other, while matter is the undifferentiated common element (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 44).

Cotinuing on the real *entiă* (*i.e.*, applying the «Ogden and Richards Triangle», remaining on the ontological level of external referents to the human beings; I reiterate that "external" is not to be understood in the spatial sense but as other than oneself, for God is also external, just as his Word is external), we can now state that they are the combination (*sýnolon*) of a matter common to all real *entiă* and of different forms. Matter is also called nature. Which means that «an [*ens*] can exist, can have "being", only insofar as it is something determinate», *i.e.* common matter that has its own form. «The every compound substance (body) form is the determining element, that by which the substance is a determinate substance (man, cat, horse) – and this is the substantial form» (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 45). Form is the determinative element (substantial form) while matter is the determinable element. «As the accident, so also the substantial form, is not a thing in itself, and therefore does not have a complete essence» (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 53). However, common matter, called nature, is not present in all *entiă*. In the definition of soul, for example, but the question of the soul as we shall see is much more complex (I will reduce and simplify for the moment), when considering it physically, one must also include the body. The soul, from a physical point of view, is the form of the body of a given human being, it is substantial form. But, as soul, *i.e.* not as substantial form, it is a separate *substantia*, *i.e.* without matter, and it is because of this that it cannot be destroyed and transformed, or perish. It is because of its matter that a *substantia* can be destroyed and transformed into another *substantia* (e.g. wood being turned into ashes by the action of fire). Form is the actual element, *i.e.* «that by which a body is in place and is what it is», matter is the potential element, identical in all bodies (nature), *i.e.* «that by which a body can be transformed into another body» (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 45). Essence is primarily of *substantiae* and secondarily of its accidents. *Substantiae*, I repeat, are the *entiă* that exist for their own sake, *e.g.* a human being. *Substantia* can exist without a given accident, but a given accident cannot exist without a given *substantia*. Form, except as we shall see for separate pure forms (the soul, angels), is always the form of an *ens* and cannot exist separately from it. *Ens* that, always and in any case, is a compound of matter and form, in act.

At the level of thought, of mind, let us always remember that I am applying the «Ogden and Richards Triangle» (*see* Pinello, 2022b), Thomas not only considers concepts that are in the mind and correspond to real *entiă* (corporeal compound *substantiae* natural or created by artists) and concepts that are in the mind and do not correspond to real *entiă* (not all concepts that we have in the mind, in thought, correspond to real *entiă* existing in the world external to human beings), but also considers angelic *substantiae* (incorporeal simple *substantiae*) that are pure forms, *i.e.* not combined with matter (separate *substantiae*). With regard to the concepts that are in the mind, in general, «I can understand what man is or what the phoenix is and yet ignore whether they really exist or not. So it is clear that being is distinct from essence or quiddity [*quiditas*] [*De substantiis separatis*]» (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 51). This concept is important because, in addition to essence, or quiddity (*quiditas*), one must consider being, namely God. Even for God, it is not enough to think of his idea in order to be able to say that he exists, because instead one must prove that he really exists. With regard to entities created by artists, it is possible to point out that «[...] the God of Thomas is an intelligent and free creator, he creates like an artist [*Summa*, I, q. 14, art. 8] with the difference that the human artist presupposes matter [created by God] and only transforms it, while God presupposes nothing, and is the cause of all being» (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 67).

There remains the question of the "individuation principle" and the matter *signata* that is different from common matter (common matter, it is like saying: all things are formed of atoms, or all living things are formed of cells). So far we have spoken of common matter, of nature in general, but for Thomas there is not only common matter because there is also matter *signata*. It is not only man that exists because Socrates, the human being Socrates, also exists; indeed, man exists because the human beings Socrates, Santippe, Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Augustine, Anselm, etc. exist. If *substantia* is the compound of form and matter (*sýnolon*), then, for example, one can define the individual human being and not man as such (on these issues, *i.e.* the human being, which for Thomas is matter *signata*, see Pinello, 2021). Thomas, who is anti-realist on the subject of universals, adopts a Platonic solution for the principle of individuation. The principle of individuation is not common matter but rather matter *signata*: «et dico materiam signatam quae sub determinatis dimensionibus consideratur» (*De ente et essentia*, 2, p. 11, 2-3). It can be said, as Hjelmslev would say for language (*see* Miceli's citation below), that it is possible to distinguish a distinct formal matter from a material matter (or matter *signata*). From this, Thomas deduces that in the definition of the universal – for example of man as such – matter is included, but not matter *signata*, *i.e.* the individual concrete and determinate human being. This is the problem of determination down to the individual, *i.e.* the principle of individuation:

«in the definition of man, in fact, these bones and this flesh are not included, but flesh and bones in general, which are the matter non-*signata* of man» [*De ente et essentia,* 2, p. 11] [...] «The difference between the essence of Socrates and the essence of man is thus manifest: the essence of Socrates is determined up to individuality whereas the essence of man is not determined [up to individuality] (*non differunt nisi secundum signatum et non signatum*)», just as the essence of the species (*e.g. man*) is nothing other than the essence of the genus (*animal*) which is further determined; only that the difference which determines the species with respect to the genus comes from the form, while the difference that determines the species up to individuality derives by the matter *signata* [...] it clearly turns out that […] the individual [the concrete human being, real *ens*] [...] is conceived as the only true reality that only the inadequacy of our intellect makes us first know more indeterminately and which we then try to grasp more closely by means of the addition of one notion to another. Genera and species are nothing but the individual known indeterminately: «Sic ergo genus significat indeterminate totum id quod est species» [*De ente et essentia,* 2, p. 16, 1-2] [...] the genus is not a reality distinct from the species, but is only the species confusingly conceived, so too the species is not a reality distinct from the individual [*e.g.* the concrete human being], but is only the individual [*e.g.* the concrete human being] confusingly conceived [...] nothing can exist that is not the individual [*e.g.* the concrete human being] (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 46-48).

With respect to the topics discussed in this article of mine, I can therefore state that the concept of human being I use (*see* Pinello, 2021) corresponds to Thomas' concept and notion of matter *signata, i.e.* the principle of individuation, while the idealtype of man used by Max Weber corresponds to Thomas' concept and notion of matter *non-signata*. It remains to be clarified how it is possible, on the linguistic level, that two words "Socrates" and "man" are linked by the copula (logical *ens*), in the judgement, *i.e.* by a relation of identity: "Socrates [matter *signata*] is a man [matter *non-signata*]". In this regard, Thomas distinguishes between what the essence means (absolute), regardless of its mode of realisation (particular or universal, one or multiple) and the manner in which the essence is realised (Socrates).

If I have in mind the essence *man* as a synthesis of animality and reason, I still do not know whether it is one or multiple, whether there is only one man or there are many. If, on the other hand, I consider *man's* essence as realised in Socrates, Plato and others, I will say that man's essence is multiple; but reflecting on the fact that I conceive of these many under a common aspect, which is that of humanity in which we are alike, I will conclude that their various humannesses are present [to my mind] under one aspect. The essence of man, therefore, is realised as multiple in the various individuals, but [in my mind] and in the various individuals is present that [unique] essence, that quid, which abstracts from the mode of realisation [in the multiple individuals] (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 49-50).

At the level of the mind, of thought, again with reference to the «Ogden and Richards Triangle», I note that that Thomas, resorting to Avicenna, speaks of spirit (*mens*) or intellect and adds «the human soul, which is called intellect or spirit […] (*Summa,* I, q. 75, 2)» (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 90) and distinguishes between «the intentional being of the object (*essence*) in spirit» and «the real being of the act that thinks that object». «[...] the first [the intentional being of the object (essence) in spirit] is universal, that is, it can be predicated about different *entià*, the second [the actual being of the act that thinks that object] is an individual act [*i.e.* it can be predicated about a given *ens*]. What is common to different men is not the act by which I think them men (an act that is mine and not another's), but what I think» (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 50). This concept can be useful in the field of *qualia* («What is it like to be a bat?», «What Mary did not know» etc., see De Palma and Pareti, 2015). Furthermore, it must be added that, according to Augustine, the soul is spiritual *substantia*. Vanni Rovighi also reports a passage by Alexander of Aphrodisias (but this is not Thomas' perspective) who identifies the active intellect (see also Averroes' possible intellect, also spiritual) with a separate *substantia* (*i.e.* without matter), which is God, that illuminates man's passive intellect, which is mortal in that it is the combination of the elements of the human body (*see* Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 84). The problem, as we shall see, is that there are not only mental concepts of which we do not know whether or not they correspond to real *entià* and which are in the minds of human beings, but there are also spiritual *entià*, which are also intelligent like the human mind, but which exist outside human beings. That is why the concept of spirit is more appropriate than the concept of mind, if by mind is meant the human mind. This can be a first criterion to distinguish the concept of spirit from the concepts of soul, intellect and mind, also taking into account the fact that the Latin term ratio, as Vanni Rovighi writes, is difficult to translate. I would add that it is to the Augustinian concept of soul that dualist theories of mind can be traced, even before the Cartesian distinction *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. For Augustine, in fact, the soul «is a *substantia* independent of the body, even if made to unite with it [...] At man's death, only the body properly dies, but the soul remains […] The Augustinian definition of the soul is in fact*: substantia quaedam rationis particeps regendo corpori accomodata* (*De quantitate animae*, XIII, 22). The soul will continue to live after the death of the body and will then resume the body at the resurrection» (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 83). The soul understood, at the same time, as the form of the body and as a *substantia* in its own right is a problem that Thomas resolves by stating that «the human soul is [...] pure form (not composed of matter and form), but subsistent form, even though it is the only form of man. [...] subsistent form [...] [meaning that] it has being in its own right [for itself, independently of the body] [...] [and that] it does not participate only in the being of the individual, like other forms of bodies. In a tree (and thus in every infra-human being) the one who exists is the tree, not its substantial form, which exists insofar as the tree whose form it is exists; in man, on the other hand, the soul exists [in its own right]» (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 90).
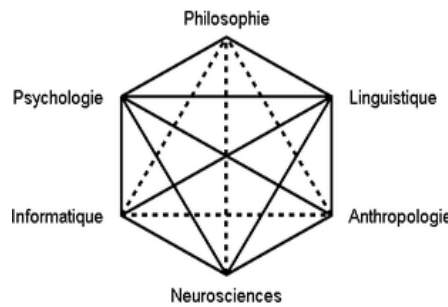
Averroes had also affirmed the spirituality and immortality of the possible intellect, but this was a unique and separate intellect; Thomas, on the other hand, [...] after saying that the human soul is a subsistent form, affirms that this soul, precisely that which is the principle of intellective activity (the *mens*, as he called it [...] in Augustinian terms) is the form of the body. Form, in fact, is the determining principle of the essence of everything, it is that by which a thing is what it is, and therefore it is also that by which a thing has its own activity; now *intelligere*, intellective knowing, is man's activity, therefore the intellective principle is that by which man is man, it is his substantial form. The Platonic objection to this argument could be this: man is man because of the soul, indeed man is the soul – *ego animus*, Augustine said – a soul that then goes on to govern a body. «Either, therefore, one must say that Socrates, for example, knows with the intellect for his whole self, as Plato admitted when he said that man is the intellective soul, or one must say that the intellect is a part of Socrates. But the first hypothesis does not hold up, because it is the same man who is conscious both of knowing intellective and of feeling [sensoriality]; now feeling [the five senses] implies the body [*ipse idem homo est qui percipt se et intelligere et sentire: sentire autem non est sine corpore*]; and therefore the body is a part of man [*Summa*, I, q. 76, 1]». The claim that the intellective soul is the substantial form of the body is not directed against a generic Platonism: it is historically directed against Averroes' theory. With Averroes, Thomas agrees in affirming the

independence from the body of the possible intellect, but he does not agree in affirming that it is a separate and unique intelligence for the human species (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 92-93).

These arguments take on their own relevance if one considers Marr's three levels (*see* Pinello, 2022b). The human mind (*mens*) is indeed typical of man, but it can also be considered as a subsistent form (in its own right). Hence the possibility of identifying a computational theory, representations and representation processes that can also be realised in non-human hardware. It must be made clear, however, that

> Thomas found it difficult to reconcile two apparently contradictory theses: the human soul is subsistent, the human soul is a form of the body. And all the more contradictory in that he asserts (a thesis that aroused scandal) that the soul, the *mens*, is the only form of man. That the *mens* was the only soul, that there were not three souls in man (vegetative, sensory, intellective) was commonly admitted by the theologians of the 13th century, but all of them (except, I believe, Albertus Magnus) admitted that the intellective soul was joined to an already formed body, that there were, precisely, soul *and* body in man. Thomas, on the other hand, asserted that the intellective soul is the only substantial form in man, which meant that the intellective soul is not only the principle by which man knows with the intellect, but is also what causes man to have a certain colour of eyes; this meant emphasising to the highest degree the unity of man in all his aspects. Thomas considers this to be the logical conclusion of the thesis that the soul is the first act, the substantial form of the body. Substantial form is in fact that which gives being *simpliciter*, makes a thing be, *is* a determinate *ens* [...] «It is necessary to say that for the substantial form, which is the human form, this individual has not only to be man, but must be animal, must be alive, must be body, must be *substantia*, must be something» (*Q. d. De spiritualibus creaturis*, art. 3) [...] the theory of the soul as the sole form of man had the advantage of eliminating many pseudo-problems of philosophical psychology, problems that also plagued modern philosophy after Descartes, namely all those that ask how the soul [the *mens*] is united with the body. Such problems in fact presuppose the conception of the soul [the *mens*] and the body as *two substantiae* that must in some way unite in man, whereas for Thomas man is *a substantia*, of which the soul [the *mens*] is the form, *i.e.* the determinator principle (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 94-95).

These are dualist and monist theories of the brain-mind relationship, which today fall within the field of philosophy of mind (*Philosophie,* see the figure of the hexagon), which has been one of the disciplines of the «hexagon» of cognitive science since its inception as an interdisciplinary discipline (*see* Bechtel, 1992; Tabossi, 1998; De Palma and Pareti, 2015).

For Thomas, and this passage is very interesting because it gives a good understanding of how he sees the relationship between reality external to the human being (external not only in the spatial sense, but in the sense of other than oneself), the mind of the human being, the knowledge of which the human being is capable, and the knowledge of which God is capable,

> The proper object of the human intellect [*mens*] is [...] the essence of corporeal things: *quidditas sive natura in materia corporali existens* (*Summa*, I, q. 84, 7), *quidditas rei materialis* (q. 88, 3), which means: corporeal reality considered in its essence. A statement that in no way contradicts that of the first question *De veritate*, according to which the first object of the intellect is being, since *quidditas rei materialis* is that in which the intellect first discovers being, that which it first grasps as an entity [*ens*] [or as non-being, as non-entity, *i.e.* not "an entity external to the human body"]. For we know things by proceeding from the most universal concepts to the least universal (*Summa*, I, q. 85, 3) and the most universal of concepts is each of being. [...] Being can be confusingly present as the background of each reality (*ens concretum quidditati sensibili*, as the Gaetano says) – and so it is in whatever knowledge – or it can be taken as the subject of research, as in metaphysics, asking what it means *to be*, under what conditions a thing can be etc. But metaphysics would be vain reverie if it did not refer to what is implicit in each our concepts [...] In the multi-coloured data offered to us by the senses (and everything the senses offer us is singular) we grasp the intelligible aspect first in a vague and confused way, then progressively trying to determine it better and better [*reflexio*]. We can see, therefore, how for Thomas Aquinas, knowledge of the universal is in a certain way the sign of man's greatness and misery, to use a Pascalian term; of greatness because it is the way in which man goes beyond the impact of the sensible to grasp an intelligibility, to respond to the *quid est*; of misery because knowledge of the universal is always a confused knowledge of reality, which is singular, individualised. The ideal would be an intellective knowledge of the singular in its singularity [of the human being, for example, not through idealtypes and abstract models but precisely as a single human being], an intellective intuition in the strong sense; but it is an ideal that is only realised in divine knowledge, not in human knowledge [...] What the intellect knows and intends to know is the individual (we know things and not concepts, *Summa*, I, q. 85, 2), but it does not come to know it in its individuality: it knows, for example, that existing men, whom it sees, encounters, knows from history, are rational, and it says – *this* one of whom I have an image, direct or indirect, is rational (and has many other predicates, but always universal) – but it does not know to the full, that is, to individuality, what this man is [...] There are [...] two reasons why Thomas denies that our intellect [*mens*] knows the individual: one, which we might call phenomenological, is that our intellect is imperfect, proceeding from the confused to the distinct, hence from the more universal to the less universal, without ever exhausting all the richness of the individual; the other is the residue of the Greek (Platonic and Aristotelian) conception of matter as an unintelligible reality (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 100-102).

This passage in Thomas' argument is Copernican. For we believe that we know in a direct way, through our senses. perceptions, direct experiences. In reality, our intellect is imperfect, that is, it proceeds from the confused to the distinct, hence from the more universal to the less universal, to the singular, to the individual, without ever exhausting all the richness of the individual *ens*, for example of the individual human being. This helps us to understand why it is so much easier to proceed by Weberian idealtypes, or similar concepts and notions, and how the real challenge is to strive for an increasingly less confused and increasingly distinct knowledge, going from the confused to the distinct, from the universal to the singular (on the biographical method see Pinello 2022a; on the human being see Pinello, 2021). Now I want to take a gamble and compare "simple incorporeal

entiă of pure form" to natural laws (eternal laws): anthropomorphised "separate intelligences" (*substantiae* separated from matter), Aristotelian "pure forms per se subsisting". «And since the principle of individuation is matter *signata*, in such *substantiae* there cannot be many individuals of the same species, but each of them is its own species» (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 51). There may be some basis to my hazard if one considers that heavenly bodies are moved by angelic, *i.e.* spiritual, simple *substantiae* that have essences and are *substantiae* (pure forms, separate *substantiae*, *i.e.* without matter) capable of knowing with the intellect, *i.e.* acting intelligently, *i.e.* as if they responded to a rational, logical, intelligent scheme. A law of nature, after all, is as if it had to do with an intelligence and order within the *entiă*, within things: the sun rises and the sun sets, the moon has its own cycle, always the same, a living being that dies can no longer be brought back to life, etc. My hazard may also have some foundation if we consider Aristotle's demonstration of the existence of a first motionless motor. For Aristotle, the immobile motor is "thought of thought" (for Thomas, the ideas that are in the mind of God) and is not an efficient cause of the world. However, it must be made clear that God for Thomas is not comparable to a natural law because instead he is the foundation (the unchanging and necessary principle) of all reality (he is the being of reality, that for which reality is) and of all its changes and, as such, he is free in his actions and endowed with intelligence and will. In this Thomas, for Vanni Rovighi, radically diverges from Avicenna, Averroes and pagan antiquity, for whom things derive from God by necessary, determined natural processes.

> In the Thomistic concept of creation, Gilson has rightly and effectively emphasised the aspect whereby God is seen as the source of *being*, of all being, whereas Greek philosophy conceives of God as that which gives *form* to the world, which shapes pre-existing matter, and therefore does not give being, but only a certain mode of being (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 70-71)

The God of Thomas, on the other hand, is anthropomorphised through through the human and divine Person of Christ, to mark the difference from pantheism, that is, from being diffused in all things, but not as a unique and immutable foundation. We do not yet have the mechanistic, no longer anthropomorphised, view of nature, for which God intervenes as a great watchmaker of the whole universe, of all reality and all change in reality. In Thomas's vision, however, it is the things that have a clock inside them. «But this, [clock] intrinsic to the things of nature, [unlike God] is a non-intelligent principle, it is a pure life force […] Among the divine attributes of particular importance to [Thomas] are [instead] intelligence and will [...] And after all it is the attributes that distinguish a theistic from a deistic conception» (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 62 and 66).

To understand Thomas's philosophy, his theological conception of God and his philosophical conception of reality, one must therefore start with the problem of being. How does one explain the being, separate from essence, of corporeal real *entiă* and incorporeal spiritual *entiă*? Thomas' answer, philosophical and theological at the same time, is that the principle of being of all *entiă*, corporeal-reals and incorporeal-spirituals, is God (pure form), in whom, unlike in *entiă*, being and essence coincide. That is why the foundation of all reality (corporeal-real and incorporeal-spiritual *entiă*) is God: for it is God who is the separate foundation of the being of all *entiă*.

Continuing to apply the «Ogden and Richards Triangle», it is at this point that the problem of language intervenes (the symbols and symbolisation, again with respect to the «Ogden and Richards Triangle»). There is therefore a reality that has being and is being (God, the foundation of the being of all reality) and there is a reality that has being but is not being (the corporeal real *entiă* and the incorporeal spiritual *entiă*). «[...] every reality in which essence and being are distinguished, every reality that *has* being, but *is* not being itself, must have received being from something else, and precisely from that which has not received being, but *is* its own being. This is the reason for being, the *causa essendi* of all reality […] "[...] what receives something from someone is in potency with respect to what it receives, and what is received in it is its act" […] Being is that by which (*quo*) an essence actually exists (*subsistit in rerum natura*)» (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 52). Every reality has the essence and receives being. With respect to each human being, the soul is the first act of a body that life in potency in the ontological foundation of all reality («*actus primus corporis physici potential vitam habentis*»). Thomas interprets «in his own way the Augustinian doctrine of the *rationes seminales* [...] Just as in the seed of a tree all the parts that will later develop are present invisibly, so were all the different bodies present virtually (*potentialiter atque causaliter*) in matter from the beginning […] What exists is the compound, not the form for itself [...] the form begins to be when the compound (the body) passes from potency to act, and the act is the form» (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 77-78). God is also the foundation of the movement-mutation of all reality. Things (thing in the sense of a thing in itself, of *ens*) are generatable and corruptible. All that can be and not be has a proximate cause and an immutable foundation (God), Every movement-movement has in fact a «*Primum movens quod in nullo moveatur*», *i.e.* an immutable (the being that coincides with existence and is not separate from it). Taking into consideration not infinite series of causes but very close relations of causes and effects, for generations from human beings of a human beings there are cause *essendi*. For natural things there are efficient causes because things produce other things. Since human reason and intellect (the mind) are weak and labefacts, it is necessary to refer to the proofs of God's existence (the five ways) and to refer to the truths contained in the sacred Scriptures (the Word-words). Hence the distinction between *conclusio rationis* (truth known by man through his own reason and intellect) and *articulus fidei* (revealed truth).

> I mean to say: just as philosophy in general and metaphysics in particular do not exhaust for Thomas all that man can and needs to know in order to make sense of his life, and must be supplemented by divine revelation, neither does philosophical ethics exhaust all that man needs to know in order to guide his conduct, and must be supplemented by revelation (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 111).

That is to say, the Christian system is a system that, through God's self-revelation (*Fides et ratio*), solves the problem of the incompleteness of system of knowledge, given the weaknesses of human reason and intellect and given the incompleteness and weakness of their systems of knowledge. The problem will reappear in the first decades of the 20th century, with Kurt Gödel (*see* Kline, 1985).

How the difference between philosophical theology and revealed theology lies not in the fact that the former knows some things and revealed theology (*sacra doctrina*) some others, but in the fact that the former is an imperfect and indeterminate knowledge of the same things that the latter teaches […] On the other hand, in the Thomistic conception, theological discourse – in moral theology as in speculative theology – presupposes as *preambulum* a rational discourse (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 111-112).

How do we reconcile the thesis that we can affirm something about God [affirmative theology] with the thesis that we only know God *via remotionis*, saying what he *is not* [negative theology]? [...] «The names we give to God signify him as our intellect knows him, and our intellect, which goes back to God from the creatures, knows him as the creatures represent him» (*Summa*, I, q. 13, VII, 5) [...], as well as bearing the simile [...] The «names» we give to God compete with him in what they signify, but not in the way they are signified by us (*Summa*, I, q. 13, 3) [...] Ours is therefore a knowledge of God by *analogy* [...] but our knowledge of him is a non-knowing: God is *Deus Absconditus*, just as the deep structure of things is hidden from us, which is also their essence (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 65-66).

But the structure of language is also hidden from us. Going back to what I said at the beginning about Tullio De Mauro and other linguists, it is very interesting to relate what Silvana Miceli writes about Louis Hjelmslev with what Vanni Rovighi writes about Thomas. We are not dealing with the specific problem of revelation, of the Word/words, but with the problem of the matter (or *substantia*) of the content of language.

Hjelmslev [...] did not evade the problem of meaning at all, as some "formalistic" structuralisms do. Rather [...] he believed [...] that it was possible to account for it – for certain aspects of it – with instruments that are still structural. His structuralism attacked objects in their entire "semiotic" dimension, proposing, in line with his fundamental positions, the algebraisation of both the form of expression and the form of the content in their reciprocal relationship [...] Hjelmslev […] is very prudent and shrewd in his formulations. He distinguishes, first of all, in language, the two *planes* of *expression* and *content* while still distinguishing, within each of them, the two *layers* of *form* and *substantia*. Language thus consists of four layers (form of expression and *substantia* of expression; form of content and *substantia* of content). It also recognises that the two *substantiae* are in turn articulated, each of them, in several *layers* (it identifies, for each, at least three). Of this complex object, he considers *only* the two layers that are the forms to be attackable by structural analysis: the content can (and must) therefore be studied structurally, but *limited* to that aspect of the system of internal dependencies (form) by which it is organised (naturally on the condition of working on the basis of a *hypothesis* – continually reaffirmed as such – that is structuralist on language). Hjelmslev's position, as we can see, is not only extremely rigorous, but also extremely open; he by no means believes that he exhausts, through structural analysis, the entire semantic dimension of language: quite the opposite; and yet his rigorous «formalism» (unlike others) never forgets that the linguistic object can only ever be configured as a *sign* and that is, at the same time, expression and content: there is no linguistic analysis, however formalised, that can set aside the problems of semantics (Miceli, 2005, p. 33-34). [...] only matter is opacity, an obstacle to intelligence: form, the principle of being and actuality, is by its nature intelligible and intelligent when it is not bound to matter (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 66).

The problem [of Thomas] is to demonstrate that the substantial form of man is a forma *sui generis*, capable of subsisting independently of the body. [...] Thomas, taking special advantage of Avicenna, [demonstrates] that the human soul [*mens*] is a *forma subsistens*; but he realises the difficulty of this demonstration when [...] he recognises the difficulty of thinking of a life of the soul [*mens*] separate from the body (*Contra Gent.*, II, c. 81). [That the knowing subject is corporeal is a *given*: «percipit se intelligere et sentire, sentire autem non est sine corpore»: that certain features of knowledge prove that there is an element independent of the body in man must be *demonstrated*; man's naturalness is a given, his spirituality must be demonstrated. We are in a considerably different position from Augustine's and even antithetical to the Cartesian one]. This is why Revelation is so necessary (Vanni Rovighi, 1973, p. 96).

III. CONCLUSION

Thomas' vision, in terms of the philosophy of mind, is Copernican for its time, because we believe we know directly, through our senses, our perceptions, our direct experiences. In reality, our intellect is imperfect, that is, it proceeds from the confused to the distinct, then from the more universal to the less universal, to the singular, to the individual, without ever exhausting all the richness of the individual whole, for example of the individual human being. This view may be a useful hypothesis for understanding why it is so much easier to proceed by Weberian ideal-types, or similar concepts and notions, and how the real challenge is to strive for less and less confused and more and more distinct knowledge, moving from the confused to the distinct, from the universal to the singular, from the ideal type of man and social action to the individual human being in action (on the question of residues see Pinello, 2022a). For Thomas Aquinas, only matter is opacity, an obstacle to intelligence; form, the principle of being and actuality, is by its very nature intelligible and intelligent when not bound to matter (on this, as I have already mentioned, see Miceli, 2005, p. 33-34 also Hjelmslev, 1968). But what exists, physical reality, is in act matter and form: in physical reality there is no matter without form nor form without matter. A different question, with respect to the existence and definition of what exists, of physical reality, is the being of what exists and the possibility of complete knowledge about it. The Christian system is a system that, through the self-revelation of God (*Fides et ratio*), solves the problem of the incompleteness of knowledge systems, given the weakness of human reason and intellect. The problem will arise again in the first decades of the 20th century, with Kurt Gödel (*see* Kline, 1985; Miceli, 2005).

What is and how is reality for Thomas Aquinas? How was it perceived, conceived, thought, spoken, experienced, communicated, transmitted in its objectivity? What were and how were language, thought, referents and the relations between language, thought and referents for Thomas Aquinas? If one assumes that, for a human being, there are socio-institutional constraints (of which language is among the most important), physical constraints (the physical materiality of the environment in which all human beings are immersed) and cognitive constraints (the brain-mind-body), the «Ogden and Richards triangle», as I have shown in this article by applying it to the philosophy-theology of Thomas Aquinas, is a valid model for analysing these three constraints (language, thought and the referents of language and thought) and their relationships.

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