

## QUESTION 14

### God's Knowledge

Having considered the things that pertain to God's substance, we must now consider the things that pertain to His operation. Since some operations remain within the one who is operating and others proceed to an outward effect, we will first discuss God's knowledge (qq. 14-18) and His will (qq. 19-24)—for understanding exists within the knower, and willing exists within the one who wills—and after that His power (q. 25), which is treated as a principle of God's operation as it proceeds to an outward effect.

Since to understand is to be alive in a certain way, after considering the divine knowledge, we will have to consider God's life (q. 18). And since knowledge is of truths, we will also have to consider truth (q. 16) and falsity (q. 17). Again, since whatever is known exists in the knower, and since the natures of things as they exist in God as a knower are called ideas, a consideration of God's ideas (q. 15) will have to be adjoined to the consideration of His knowledge.

On the topic of God's knowledge there are sixteen questions: (1) Is there knowledge in God? (2) Does God understand Himself? (3) Does God comprehend Himself? (4) Is God's act of understanding His substance? (5) Does God understand things that are distinct from Himself? (6) Does God have a proper cognition of those things? (7) Is God's knowledge discursive? (8) Is God's knowledge a cause of things? (9) Does God have knowledge of non-beings? (10) Does God have knowledge of evils? (11) Does God have knowledge of singular things [as singular]? (12) Does God have knowledge of things that are infinite? (13) Does God have knowledge of future contingents? (14) Does God know propositions (*enuntiabilia*)? (15) Is God's knowledge variable? (16) Is God's knowledge of things speculative or practical?

### Article 1

#### Is there knowledge in God?

It seems that there is no knowledge (*non sit scientia*) in God:

**Objection 1:** Knowledge is a habit. But habits do not belong to God, since they fall in between potentiality and actuality. Therefore, there is no knowledge in God.

**Objection 2:** Since knowledge is of conclusions, it is a type of cognition that is caused by something else, viz., by the cognition of the principles. But there is nothing caused in God. Therefore, there is no knowledge in God.

**Objection 3:** Every instance of knowledge is either universal or particular. But, as was shown above (q. 13, a. 9), the universal and the particular do not exist in God. Therefore, there is no knowledge in God.

**But contrary to this:** In Romans 11:33 the Apostle says, "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God!"

**I respond:** Knowledge exists in God in the most perfect way.

To see this clearly, notice that things with cognition differ from things that lack cognition by the fact that things that lack cognition have nothing except their own form alone, whereas things with cognition are capable of having the form of another thing as well, since a species of the thing that is known exists in the knower. Hence, it is clear that the nature of a thing that lacks cognition is more contracted and limited, whereas the nature of a thing with cognition is more expansive and extensive. This is why, in *De Anima* 3, the Philosopher says, "The soul is in a certain way all things."

Now form is contracted by matter. That is why we said above (q. 7, aa. 1-2) that the more

immaterial a form is, the closer it comes to being in some sense infinite. Therefore, it is clear that the immateriality of a given thing is the reason that it is capable of cognition, and its mode of cognition corresponds to its mode of immateriality. Hence, *De Anima 2* says that it is because of their materiality that plants do not have cognition. On the other hand, the senses are capable of cognition because they are receptive of species without matter, and the intellect is even more capable of cognition because, as *De Anima 3* says, it is more separated from matter and unmixed with it.

So because, as is clear from what was said above (q. 7, a. 1), God is at the summit of immateriality, it follows that He is at the summit of cognition.

**Reply to objection 1:** Since, as was explained above (q. 4, a. 2), the perfections that proceed from God to creatures exist in a higher mode in God Himself, it follows that whenever a name taken from some perfection of a creature is attributed to God, it is necessary to exclude from its signification anything that pertains to the imperfect mode which belongs to the creature. Hence, knowledge is not a quality or habit in God, but is instead His substance and pure actuality.

**Reply to objection 2:** As was explained above (q. 13, a. 4), things that are fragmented and multiplied in creatures exist in God in a simple and unified way. Now a man has diverse cognitions corresponding to the diverse things that are known. Insofar as he knows principles, he is said to have understanding (*intelligentia*); insofar as he knows conclusions, he is said to have knowledge (*scientia*); insofar as he knows the highest cause, he is said to have wisdom (*sapientia*); and insofar as he has cognition of things to be effected, he is said to have deliberation (*consilium*) or prudence (*prudentia*).

Now, as will be explained below (a. 7), God knows all of these things by a unified and simple cognition. Hence, God's simple cognition can be called by all of the above names, but in such a way that when these names are used in predications about God, whatever involves imperfection is excluded from them and whatever involves perfection is held on to. And this is in accord with Job 12:13, "With Him is wisdom and strength, He has counsel and understanding."

**Reply to objection 3:** Knowledge exists according to the mode of the knower, since what is known exists in the knower according to the mode of the knower. And so because the mode of God's essence is higher than the mode with which creatures exist, God's knowledge does not have the mode of created knowledge; more specifically, it does not have the mode of being universal or particular, or of existing as a habit or in potentiality, or of being disposed in accord with any other such mode.

## Article 2

### Does God understand Himself?

It seems that God does not understand Himself:

**Objection 1:** The *Liber De Causis* says, "Every knower who knows his own essence returns to his essence with a complete return." But God does not exit from His essence; nor is He in any way moved. And so it does not belong to Him to return to His essence. Therefore, He does not know His own essence.

**Objection 2:** As *De Anima 3* says, to understand is to be acted upon and moved in a certain way; again, knowledge is an assimilation to the thing that is known; yet again, the knower is perfected by what is known. But nothing is moved or acted upon or perfected by itself; and, as Hilary puts it, "nothing is a likeness of itself." Therefore, God does not know Himself.

**Objection 3:** We ourselves are similar to God principally because of our intellect, since, as Augustine says, it is because of our minds that we exist in the image of God. But, as *De Anima 3* says,

our intellect does not understand itself except insofar as it understands other things. Therefore, neither does God understand Himself—except, perhaps, by understanding other things.

**But contrary to this:** 1 Corinthians 2:11 says, “The things that are of God, no man knows, but the Spirit of God.”

**I respond:** God understands Himself through Himself (*per seipsum*).

To see this clearly, notice that in actions that pass to an outward effect, the object of the action, which is signified as its terminus, is something outside of the thing that is acting; by contrast, in actions that exist within the thing that is acting, the object signified as the terminus of the action exists within the very thing that is acting. And it is just insofar as this object exists within the thing that is acting that the action exists in actuality. This is why *De Anima* says that the sensible thing in actuality is the act of the sensory power, and that the intelligible thing in actuality is the act of intellect. For we are actually sensing or understanding something by virtue of the fact that our intellect or sensory power is being actually informed by an intelligible or sensible species. Accordingly, the senses (or the intellect) are distinct from the thing sensed (or the thing understood) only insofar as both are in potentiality [with respect to the sensing (or understanding)].

Therefore, since God has nothing at all of potentiality, but is instead pure actuality, in Him the act of the intellect and the thing understood are the same in every way. More specifically, He does not lack an intelligible species in the way our intellect does when it is understanding only in potentiality; nor is the intelligible species distinct from the substance of God’s intellect, as happens with our intellect when it is understanding in actuality. Rather, in the case of God, the intelligible species itself is the divine intellect itself. And so God understands Himself through Himself.

**Reply to objection 1:** ‘To return to its own essence’ is nothing other than for the thing to subsist in its very self. For insofar as a form perfects matter by giving it *esse*, it is in a sense poured out upon it, whereas insofar as it has *esse* in itself, it returns to itself. Therefore, those cognitive powers that are not subsistent, but are instead acts of certain organs, do not know themselves, as is clear in the case of the particular sense powers. But cognitive powers that are subsistent *per se* do know themselves. This is why the *Liber de Causis* says that “one who knows his own essence returns to his own essence.”

But subsisting *per se* belongs especially to God. Hence, using this manner of speaking, it is especially true of God that He ‘returns to His own essence’ and knows Himself.

**Reply to objection 2:** As *De Anima* 3 says, ‘moved’ and ‘acted upon’ are being taken equivocally when one says that to understand is to be moved or acted upon in a certain way. For to understand is not a motion that is an act of something incomplete, i.e., an act that exists in one thing because of something else. Rather, to understand is an act of something complete, i.e., an act that exists within the agent itself.

Likewise, it is [only] in the case of an intellect that is sometimes in potentiality [with respect to an act of understanding] that the intellect is perfected by, or assimilated to, the intelligible thing. For the reason it is in potentiality is that it differs from the intelligible thing and is assimilated to it by means of an intelligible species, which is a likeness of the thing that is understood. And the intellect is perfected by the intelligible species in the way that potentiality is perfected by actuality.

However, God’s intellect, which is not in potentiality in any way, is neither perfected by nor assimilated to the intelligible thing, but is instead its own perfection and its own intelligible thing.

**Reply to objection 3:** Natural *esse* belongs to primary matter, which exists in potentiality, only insofar as it is brought into actuality by a form. Now our passive intellect (*intellectus noster possibilis*) has the same status in the order of intelligible things that primary matter has in the order of natural things, since it is in potentiality with respect to intelligible things in the same way that primary matter is in potentiality with respect to natural things.. Hence, our passive intellect cannot have an act of understanding except insofar as it is perfected by an intelligible species of some entity. And so it

understands itself, just as it understands other things, by means of an intelligible species. For it is clear that by having a cognition of an intelligible thing, it understands its very own self as engaged in understanding, and through the act of understanding it knows the intellectual power.

God, on the other hand, is pure actuality both in the order of existing things and in the order of intelligible things. And so He understands Himself through Himself.

### Article 3

#### Does God comprehend Himself?

It seems that God does not comprehend Himself:

**Objection 1:** In *83 Quaestiones* Augustine says, “That which comprehends itself is finite with respect to itself.” But God is infinite in all respects. Therefore, He does not comprehend Himself.

**Objection 2:** Someone might reply that He is infinite to us, but finite to Himself.

Against this: Each thing is more true as it appears to God than as it appears to us. Therefore, if God is finite to Himself but infinite to us, then it is more true that God is finite than that He is infinite. But this is contrary to what was proved above (q. 7, a. 1). Therefore, God does not comprehend Himself.

**But contrary to this:** In the same place Augustine says, “Everything that understands itself comprehends itself.” But God understands Himself. Therefore, God comprehends Himself.

**I respond:** God comprehends Himself perfectly. This is clear as follows:

Something is said to be comprehended when the limit of the cognition of that thing is reached, and this occurs when the thing is known as perfectly as it can be known. For instance, a demonstrable proposition is comprehended when it is known through a demonstration, but not when it is known through some probable argument.

Now it is clear that God knows Himself in as perfect a way as He can be perfectly known. For each thing is knowable according to the degree of its actuality, since, as *Metaphysics* 9 says, something is known insofar as it exists in actuality and not insofar as it exists in potentiality. But God’s power in knowing is as great as His actuality in existing. For, as was shown above (a. 1), God has cognition because He is actual and separated from any matter or potentiality. Hence, it is clear that He knows Himself to the full extent that He can be known, and because of this He perfectly comprehends Himself.

**Reply to objection 1:** If ‘comprehend’ is taken properly, then it signifies something that possesses and includes another. And in this sense anything that is comprehended must be finite, just as everything that is included in another is finite. But this is not the sense in which God is said to be comprehended by Himself—as if His intellect were distinct from Himself, and captured and included Him.

Instead, locutions of this sort have to be explained in terms of negation. For just as God is said to exist in Himself because He is not contained by anything external, so too He is said to be comprehended by Himself because there is nothing of Him that lies hidden from Him (*nihil est sui quod lateat ipsum*). For as Augustine says in *De Videndo Deum*, “A whole is comprehended by sight when it is seen in such a way that nothing of it lies hidden from the seer.”

**Reply to objection 2:** When one says ‘God is finite with respect to Himself’, this should be interpreted according to a proportional similarity. For in not exceeding His own intellect, He is like something finite is in not exceeding a finite intellect. However, God is not called ‘finite to Himself’ in the sense that He understands Himself to be something finite.

## Article 4

### Is God's very act of understanding His substance?

It seems that God's very act of understanding is not His substance:

**Objection 1:** Understanding is a certain action. But 'action' signifies something that proceeds from the one who is acting. Therefore, God's act of understanding is not itself God's very substance.

**Objection 2:** When someone understands that he understands, this is not to understand anything great or central, but is instead to understand something secondary and subordinate. Therefore, if God is His very act of understanding, then to understand God will be, as it were, understanding an act of understanding. And so it will be no great thing to understand God.

**Objection 3:** Every act of understanding is an act of understanding something or other. Therefore, if, when God understands Himself, He Himself is not distinct from His own act of understanding, then He understands that He understands, and He understands that He understands that He understands—and so on *ad infinitum*. Therefore, it is not the case that God's very act of understanding is His substance.

**But contrary to this:** In *De Trinitate* 7 Augustine says, "For God, to be is the same as to be wise." But to be wise is to understand. Therefore, for God to be (*esse*) is the same as to understand. But, as was shown above (q. 3, a. 4), God's *esse* is His substance. Therefore, God's act of understanding is His substance.

**I respond:** It is necessary to say that God's act of understanding is His essence. For if God's act of understanding were distinct from His essence, then, as the Philosopher says in *Metaphysics* 12, the actuality and perfection of God's substance would have to be some distinct thing to which God's substance would be related as potentiality to actuality—which is altogether impossible. For an act of understanding is the perfection and actuality of the one who understands.

But we have to consider how this is so. For, as was explained above (a. 2), to understand is not an action that proceeds to something extrinsic, but instead remains within the agent as his actuality and perfection, in the way that *esse* is the perfection of a thing that exists. For just as *esse* follows upon a form, so an act of understanding follows upon an intelligible species. But, as was shown above (q. 3, a. 4), in God there is no form that is other than His *esse*. So because, as was explained above (a. 2), His very essence is also an intelligible species, it necessarily follows that His very act of understanding is His essence and His *esse*.

So from everything that has been said so far, it is clear that in God the following are altogether one and the same thing: (a) the intellect, (b) that which is understood, (c) the intelligible species, and (d) the very act of understanding. Hence, it is clear that when God is claimed to be an intelligent being, no multiplicity is being posited within His substance.

**Reply to objection 1:** An act of understanding is not an action that goes forth from the who is acting, but rather remains in him.

**Reply to objection 2:** When an act of understanding that is not subsistent is understood, then what is understood is no great thing—as when we understand our own act of understanding. And so there is no comparison with God's act of understanding, which is subsistent.

**Reply to objection 3:** The reply to this objection is clear from the reply to the second objection. For God's act of understanding, which subsists in itself, is an understanding of His very self—and not of anything distinct from Him, which is what would be necessary in order to generate an infinite regress.

## Article 5

### Does God understand things that are distinct from Himself?

It seems that God does not understand things that are distinct from Himself:

**Objection 1:** Anything that is distinct from God exists outside of Him. But in *83 Quaestiones* Augustine says, “God does not see anything outside of Himself.” Therefore, God does not know things that are distinct from Himself.

**Objection 2:** The thing that is understood is a perfection of the one who understands. Therefore, if God understands things that are distinct from Himself, then something distinct from God will be God’s perfection and more noble than Him—which is impossible.

**Objection 3:** An act of understanding takes its species from the intelligible thing, just as every other kind of action takes its species from its object; hence, an act of understanding is itself more noble to the extent that the thing understood is more noble. But, as explained above (a. 4), God is His very own act of understanding. Therefore, if God understands something distinct from Himself, then God Himself will take His species from something distinct from Himself—which is impossible. Therefore, God does not understand things distinct from Himself.

**But contrary to this:** Hebrews 4:13 says, “All things are naked and open to His eyes.”

**I respond:** It must be the case that God knows things that are distinct from Himself. For it is clear that He understands Himself perfectly; otherwise, His *esse* would not be perfect, since His *esse* is His act of understanding. But if something is known perfectly, then its power must be known perfectly; and something’s power cannot be known perfectly unless the things to which that power extends are known. Hence, since God’s power extends to things distinct from Himself in virtue of the fact that, as is clear from what was said above (q. 2, a. 3), He is the first efficient cause of all beings, it must be the case that God knows things that are distinct from Himself.

This becomes even more evident if we add that the very *esse* of the first efficient cause, i.e., God, is His act of understanding. Hence, if all effects preexist in God as in a first cause, then they must exist in His very act of understanding, and all of them must exist in Him according to an intelligible mode. For everything that exists in another exists in it according to the mode of that in which it exists.

Now in order to determine the way in which God knows things distinct from Himself, notice that there are two ways in which something can be known: (a) in itself and (b) in another. Something is known in itself when it is known through a proper species that measures up to the knowable thing itself—as when the eye sees a man through a species of the man. On the other hand, a thing is seen in another when it is seen in the species of something that contains it—as when a part is seen in the whole through a species of the whole, or as when a man is seen in a mirror through a species of the mirror, or in whatever other way it is possible for one thing to be seen in another.

Therefore, one should say that God sees Himself in Himself, since He sees Himself through His own essence. Things distinct from Himself, however, He sees not in themselves, but in His own self, insofar as His essence contains a likeness of things that are distinct from Himself.

**Reply to objection 1:** The passage from Augustine, where he says that God “does not see anything outside of Himself,” should not be interpreted to mean that nothing which exists outside of Himself is seen. Rather, as has been explained, it should be interpreted to mean that what exists outside of Himself is not seen except in Himself.

**Reply to objection 2:** The thing understood is the perfection of the one who understands, but not according to its substance. Rather, it is the perfection of the one who understands according to the species by which it exists in the intellect as the intellect’s form and perfection. As *De Anima* 3 puts it, “It is not the rock, but a species of the rock, that exists in the soul.”

However, things that are distinct from God are understood by God insofar as His essence contains species of them in the way that has been explained. Hence, it does not follow that anything distinct from the very essence of God is a perfection of the divine intellect.

**Reply to objection 3:** An act of understanding takes its species not from that which is understood in another, but from the principal thing which is understood and in which the other things are understood. For an act of understanding takes its species from its object insofar as the intelligible form is a principle of the intellectual operation, since every action takes its species from the form that is the principle of the action, in the way that the action of giving heat takes its species from the heat. Hence, an intellectual operation takes its species from the intelligible form that makes the intellect to be in act. And this is the species of the principal thing that is understood—which in the case of God is nothing other than His essence, in which all the species of things are included. Hence, God’s act of understanding—or, better, God Himself—does not need to take its species from anything distinct from the divine essence.

## Article 6

### Does God know things that are distinct from Himself by means of a proper cognition?

It seems that God does not know things that are distinct from Himself by means of a proper cognition:

**Objection 1:** As was just explained (a. 5), God knows things distinct from Himself insofar as things distinct from Himself exist within Him. But things distinct from Him exist within Him as in a general and universal first cause. Therefore, things distinct from God are likewise known by Him as in a first and universal cause. But this is to know them in general and not according to a proper cognition. Therefore, God knows things distinct from Himself in general and not according to a proper cognition.

**Objection 2:** God’s essence is as far distant from a creature’s essence as a creature’s essence is from God’s essence. But as was explained above (q. 12, a. 2), God’s essence cannot be known through a creature’s essence. Therefore, neither can a creature’s essence be known through God’s essence. And so, since God does not know anything except through His own essence, it follows that He does not know a creature according to its essence in the sense of knowing of it what it is (*quid est*)—which is what it means to have a proper cognition of an entity.

**Objection 3:** A proper cognition is had of an entity only by means of a concept that is proper to it. But since God knows all things through His own essence, it does not seem that He knows each thing through a proper concept. For it cannot be the case that one and the same thing is a proper concept of many and diverse entities. Therefore, God has a general, and not a proper, cognition of things. For to know things without knowing them according to a proper concept is to know them only in general.

**But contrary to this:** To have a proper cognition of things is to know them not only in general, but insofar as they are distinct from one another. But this is the way in which God knows things. Hence, Hebrews 4:12-13 says, “He reaches unto the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also and the marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; neither is there any creature invisible in His sight.”

**I respond:** On this topic some have made the mistake of asserting that God knows things distinct from Himself only in general, viz., insofar as they are beings. For, they claim, just as fire, if it knew itself as a principle of heat, would know the nature of heat and would know all other things insofar as they are hot, so too God, insofar as He knows Himself as a principle of being, knows the nature of being and knows all other things insofar as they are beings.

But this is impossible. For to understand something in general, and not specifically, is to know it

imperfectly. Hence, as is clear from *Physics* 1, when our intellect goes from potentiality into its act, it proceeds from the imperfect to the perfect, attaining a universal and vague cognition of things before attaining a proper cognition of them. Therefore, if God's cognition of things distinct from Himself were only general and not specific, it would follow that His act of understanding—and, consequently, His *esse* as well—is not perfect in every way. But this is contrary to what was shown above (q. 4, a. 1). Therefore, one must maintain that He knows things distinct from Himself by means of a proper cognition, i.e., not just insofar as they share in the concept *being*, but insofar as one is distinct from another.

To see this clearly, notice that some authors, when they want to show that God knows many things by means of one thing, use a certain type of example: If, say, the center of a circle knew itself, it would know all the lines that proceed from the center; or, again, if light knew itself, it would know all the colors. Now these examples are, to be sure, similar [to the case of God] in one respect, viz., universal causality. However, the examples are deficient because the one universal principle in question causes the multiplicity and diversity not with respect to the principle of distinction, but only with respect to what the things share in common. For the diversity of the colors is caused not by the light alone, but also by the diverse dispositions of the diaphanous recipients of light. Similarly, the diversity of lines [in the circle] is caused by the diverse places. And from this it follows that diversity and multiplicity of the sort in question can be known in their principle only by means of a general cognition and not by means of a proper cognition.

But this is not how it is with God. For it was shown above (q. 4, a. 2) that all the perfections that exist in creatures preexist in their entirety within God and are contained within Him in the most excellent way. But what pertains to perfection is not just that which creatures share in common, viz., the very fact that they exist, but also that by virtue of which creatures are distinct from one another—e.g., living, and understanding, and other such perfections by virtue of which living beings differ from non-living beings and intelligent beings from non-intelligent beings. In addition, every form through which an entity is constituted in its own species is a certain perfection. And so all things preexist in God not just with respect to what is common to all of them, but also with respect to that by virtue of which they differ from one another.

And so since God contains all perfections within Himself, God's essence is related to all the essences of things not as what is common to what is proper—in the way that unity is related to numbers, or the center of a circle to the lines—but rather as a perfect actuality is related to an imperfect actuality—in the way, say, that *man* is related to *animal*, or that the number six, which is a perfect number, is related to the imperfect numbers contained under it. But it is clear that an imperfect actuality can be known through a perfect actuality not only in general, but also by means of a proper cognition. For instance, if someone knows a man, he knows an animal by means of a proper cognition; and if someone knows the number six, he knows the number three by means of a proper cognition.

So, then, since God's essence has within itself whatever perfection is had by the essence of any other entity, and still more beyond that, it follows that God can know all things within Himself by means of a proper cognition. For the proper nature of each thing consists in its participating in some way in God's perfection. But God would not know Himself perfectly if He did not know all the ways that His own perfection can be participated in by other things; in fact, He would not even know the very nature of being perfectly if He did not know all the modes of being. Hence, it is clear that God knows all things by means of a proper cognition, i.e., He knows them insofar as they are distinct from one another.

**Reply to objection 1:** The proposition 'A thing is known insofar as it exists in the knower' can be taken in two senses.

In one sense, the adverb 'insofar as' connotes the mode of cognition on the part of the thing known. Taken in this sense, the proposition is false. For it is not always the case that a knower knows the thing

that is known with respect to the *esse* that the latter has in the knower. For instance, it is not the case that the eye knows a rock with respect to the *esse* that the rock has in the eye; instead, by means of the species of the rock that exists within itself, the eye knows the rock with respect to the *esse* that the rock has outside the eye. Even if the knower knows the thing that is known with respect to the *esse* it has within the knower, it is still the case that he knows it with respect to the *esse* that it has outside the knower. For example, the intellect knows a rock with respect to the intelligible *esse* it has within the intellect insofar as it knows that it itself is understanding [a rock]; but it still knows the rock's *esse* in its proper nature.

On the other hand, if the proposition is taken in such a way that the adverb 'insofar as' connotes the mode of cognition on the part of the knower, then it is true that the knower knows the thing that is known only insofar as the latter exists within the knower. For the more perfectly the thing known exists in the knower, the more perfect the mode of cognition.

So, then, one should say that God not only knows that the things exist within Himself, but also knows the things in their proper natures by virtue of containing them within Himself. And the more perfectly a thing exists within Him, the more perfectly He knows it in its proper nature.

**Reply to objection 2:** A creature's essence is related to God's essence as an imperfect actuality is related to a perfect actuality. And so a creature's essence is not sufficient to lead to a cognition of God's essence, but God's essence is indeed sufficient to lead to a cognition of a creature's essence.

**Reply to objection 3:** The same concept cannot be taken as the concept of diverse things in the sense of corresponding exactly to each of the things. But God's essence is something that surpasses all creatures. Hence, it can be taken as the proper concept of each thing insofar as it is able to be participated in, or imitated by, diverse creatures in diverse ways.

## Article 7

### Is God's knowledge discursive?

It seems that God's knowledge is discursive:

**Objection 1:** God's knowledge exists not as a habit of knowing, but as an occurrent act of understanding. But according to the Philosopher in *Topics* 2, one can know many things at once in a habit of knowing, whereas one can have an occurrent act of understanding only with respect to one thing. Therefore, since God knows many things—for, as has been shown (aa. 2 and 5), He knows both Himself and other things—it seems that He does not understand all things at once, but instead moves from one to another.

**Objection 2:** To know an effect through its cause is to know as a discursive reasoner. But God knows other things through Himself in the way that one knows an effect through a cause. Therefore, His cognition is discursive.

**Objection 3:** God knows each creature more perfectly than we do. But it is in created causes that we ourselves know their effects, and so we move from the causes to what is caused by them. Therefore, the same thing seems to be true of God.

**But contrary to this:** In *De Trinitate* 15 Augustine says, "God does not see all things one by one or individual by individual, as if He were turning His sight from here to there and from there to here; rather, He sees all things at once."

**I respond:** There is no discursive reasoning in God's knowledge. This is clear as follows:

In our knowledge there are two types of discursive reasoning. The one type involves just succession, as when, after having an act of understanding with respect to one thing, we turn to consider something else. The second type involves causality, as when we arrive at the cognition of conclusions

through their principles.

The first type of discursive reasoning cannot belong to God. For while we understand many things successively when each is considered in itself, we understand them all at once when we understand them in some one thing—as, for example, when we understand the parts in the whole, or when we see diverse things in a mirror. But, as has been established (a. 5), God sees all things in some one thing, viz., in Himself. Hence, He sees them all at once and not successively.

Similarly, the second type of discursive reasoning cannot belong to God. For, first of all, the second type presupposes the first type, since those who are proceeding from principles to conclusions do not consider both of them simultaneously. Second, this sort of discursive reasoning is had by one who is proceeding from what is known to what is unknown. Hence, it is clear that while he is considering the first, he is still ignorant of the second, and so the second is being discerned not *in* the first, but rather *on the basis of* the first. By contrast, the terminus of discursive reason occurs when the second is seen *in* the first—after the effects have been analyzed into their causes—and at that point discursive reasoning ceases. Hence, since God sees His own effects *in* Himself as in a cause, His cognition is not discursive.

**Reply to objection 1:** Even though just one thing at a time can be understood in itself, nonetheless, as has been explained, it is possible to understand many things in some one thing.

**Reply to objection 2:** God does not know effects through a cause in the sense that the cause is first discerned while the effects are still unknown. Rather, he knows the effects in the cause. Hence, as has been explained, His cognition does not involve discursive reasoning.

**Reply to objection 3:** God sees the effects of created causes in those very causes much better than we do. However, He does not see the effects in such a way that His cognition of the effects is caused in Him by His cognition of their created causes—as happens with us. Hence, His knowledge is not discursive.

## Article 8

### Is God's knowledge a cause of things?

It seems that God's knowledge is not a cause of things:

**Objection 1:** In his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Origen says, "It is not the case that something will occur because God knows that it will occur; rather, it is because it will occur that it is known by God before it occurs."

**Objection 2:** Once a cause is posited, its effect is posited. But God's knowledge is eternal. Therefore, if God's knowledge is a cause of created things, then it seems that creatures exist from eternity.

**Objection 3:** As *Metaphysics* 10 says, what is knowable is prior to the knowledge of it and is a measure of that knowledge. But what is posterior and is measured cannot be a cause [of what is prior to it and measures it]. Therefore, God's knowledge is not a cause of things.

**But contrary to this:** In *De Trinitate* 15 Augustine says, "It is not because they exist that God knows all creatures, both spiritual and corporeal. Rather, they exist because He knows them."

**I respond:** God's knowledge is a cause of things. For God's knowledge is related to all created things as a craftsman's knowledge is related to his artifacts. But a craftsman's knowledge is a cause of the artifacts, because the craftsman acts through his understanding. Hence, the form of his act of understanding must be a principle of action, in the way that heat is a principle of producing warmth.

Notice, however, that a natural form does not denominate a principle of action insofar as it is a form that remains in the thing to which it gives *esse*; rather, it denominates an action insofar as it has an

inclination toward its effect. Similarly, an intelligible form does not denominate a principle of action insofar as it merely exists in the knower, if it is not joined to an inclination toward its effect—an inclination that comes from the will. For because an intelligible form is related to opposites (since the same knowledge applies to opposites), it would not produce a determinate effect if it were not determined by a desire to one of the opposites, as *Metaphysics* 9 points out.

Now it is clear that God causes things through His understanding, since His very *esse* is His own act of understanding. Hence, His knowledge must be a cause of things insofar as it is joined to His act of will. This is why God's knowledge, insofar as it is a cause of things, is customarily called His 'knowledge of approbation' (*scientia approbationis*).

**Reply to objection 1:** Origen was invoking the nature of knowledge, which, as has been explained, does not involve the nature of causality unless it is adjoined to an act of will.

However, his claim that God foreknows certain things because they will exist should be interpreted as referring to a cause of *inference*, and not to a cause of *being*. For if anything will occur, it follows that God foreknows it—even though it is not the case that the future things are a cause of God's knowing them.

**Reply to objection 2:** God's knowledge is a cause of things according to the way in which the things are contained in His knowledge. But it was not part of God's knowledge that the things should exist from eternity. Hence, even though God's knowledge is eternal, it nonetheless does not follow that creatures exist from eternity.

**Reply to objection 3:** Natural things fall in between God's knowledge and our knowledge. For we take our knowledge from the natural things of which God is a cause through His knowledge. Hence, just as knowable natural things are prior to our knowledge and a measure of that knowledge, so God's knowledge is prior to natural things and a measure of those things. In the same way, a house falls in between the knowledge of the craftsman who built it and the knowledge had of it by someone who takes his cognition from the house after it has already been built.

## Article 9

### Does God have knowledge of non-beings?

It seems that God does not have knowledge of non-beings:

**Objection 1:** God's knowledge is only of things that are true. But *true* and *being* are convertible. Therefore, God does not have knowledge of non-beings.

**Objection 2:** Knowledge requires a likeness between the knower and the thing known. But non-beings cannot have any likeness to God, who is *esse* itself. Therefore, non-beings cannot be known by God.

**Objection 3:** God's knowledge is a cause of the things known by Him. But God's knowledge is not a cause of non-beings, since a non-being does not have a cause. Therefore, God does not have knowledge of non-beings

**But contrary to this:** In Romans 4:17 the Apostle says, "He calls those things that are not, as those that are."

**I respond:** God knows all things whatsoever, in whatever way they exist. But nothing prevents things that do not exist absolutely speaking from existing in some way or other. For things that exist absolutely speaking are those that have actuality. But things that do not have actuality exist in the power either of God Himself or of some creature—where this power may be active or passive, or a power of conceiving or of imagining or of signifying in some way or other. Therefore, even if they do not exist

with actuality, God knows all things that can be made or conceived of or talked about by a creature, as well as all the things that He Himself can make. And to this extent one can claim that He has knowledge even of non-beings.

However, we must note a certain diversity among things that do not exist with actuality.

For some of them, even though they do not now actually exist, have actually existed or will actually exist—and all of these God is said to know by His ‘knowledge of vision’ (*scientia visionis*). For since God’s act of understanding, which is His *esse*, is measured by eternity, which exists without succession and comprehends the whole of time, God’s present vision carries through to the whole of time and to all things that exist at any time whatsoever, insofar as they are subject to that vision in their presentness.

By contrast, there are other things which are in the power of God or of some creature, but which nonetheless do not actually exist and have never actually existed and will never actually exist. And with respect to these God is said to have ‘knowledge of simple understanding’ (*scientia simplicis intelligentiae*) and not knowledge of vision. This is because in our own case the objects of vision have *esse* outside of the one who is seeing them.

**Reply to objection 1:** Things that do not actually exist have truth insofar as they exist in potentiality. For it is true that these things exist in potentiality. And they are known by God as such.

**Reply to objection 2:** Since God is *esse* itself, each thing exists to the extent that it participates in a likeness of God—just as each thing is hot to the extent that it participates in heat. So, too, things that exist in potentiality, even if they do not actually exist, are known by God.

**Reply to objection 3:** God’s knowledge is a cause of things when it is joined to His act of will. Hence, it need not be the case that everything known by God either exists or has existed or will exist. Rather, only those things that He wills to exist or permits to exist are such that they exist or have existed or will exist. Again, what is contained in God’s knowledge is that the things in question can exist and not that they do exist.

## Article 10

### Does God have knowledge of evils?

It seems that God does not know evil things:

**Objection 1:** In *De Anima* 3 the Philosopher says that an intellect that is not in potentiality does not know privations. But, as Augustine says, evil is a privation of good. Therefore, since, as is clear from what has been said (a. 2), God’s intellect is always acting and is never in potentiality, it seems that God does not know evils.

**Objection 2:** Knowledge either (a) is a cause of what is known or (b) is caused by what is known. But God’s knowledge is not a cause of evil, and it is not caused by evil. Therefore, God does not have knowledge of evils.

**Objection 3:** Everything that is known is known either through its likeness or through its opposite. Now, as is clear from what has been said (aa. 2 and 5), God has knowledge through His own essence. But God’s essence is not a likeness of evil; nor is it an opposite of evil, since, as Augustine says in *De Civitate Dei* 12, nothing is contrary to God’s essence. Therefore, God does not know evils.

**Objection 4:** What is known through another and not through itself is known imperfectly. But evil is not known by God through itself, since otherwise evil would have to exist in God. For what is known must exist in the knower. Therefore, if evil is known through another, viz., through good, then it will be known imperfectly by God. But this is impossible, since there is no imperfect cognition in God. Therefore, God does not have knowledge of evils.

**But contrary to this:** Proverbs 15:11 says, “Hell and destruction are before the Lord.”

**I respond:** In order to know something perfectly, one must know all the things that can happen to it. But there are some goods to which it can happen that they are corrupted by evils. Hence, God would not know goods perfectly if He did not also know evils.

Now each thing is knowable insofar as it exists. Hence, since the *esse* of an evil is to be a privation of a good, by the very fact that God knows goods He also knows evils—just as shadows are known through light. This is why, in *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 7, Dionysius says, “God has a vision of shadows through His very self, just like one who sees shadows because of the light.”

**Reply to objection 1:** The Philosopher’s words should be taken to mean that an intellect that is not in potentiality does not know a privation through any privation that exists within itself.

This fits in with what he had previously said, viz., that points and all other indivisibles are known [by us] through a privation of division. This is because simple and indivisible forms do not actually exist in our intellect, but exist in it only in potentiality—since if they actually existed in our intellect, they would not be known through privations. For simple things are known by separated substances without recourse to privations.

Therefore, God does not know an evil through a privation that exists within Himself, but instead knows it through the opposite good.

**Reply to objection 2:** God’s knowledge is a cause not of the evil, but rather of the good through which the evil is known.

**Reply to objection 3:** Even though evil is not opposed to God’s essence, which is not corruptible by evil, evil is nonetheless opposed to God’s effects. He knows these effects through His essence, and in knowing them, He knows the opposite evils.

**Reply to objection 4:** To know something just through another is to have an imperfect cognition as long as the thing in question is knowable through itself. But evil is not knowable through itself, since it is part of the concept of an evil that it is the privation of a good. And so it cannot be either defined or known except through a good.

## Article 11

### Does God have knowledge of singular things [as singular]?

It seems that God does not know singular things:

**Objection 1:** God’s intellect is more immaterial than the human intellect. But because of its immateriality, the human intellect does not know singular things; instead, as *De Anima 2* puts it, “reason is of universals, whereas sensation is of singulars.” Therefore, God does not know singular things.

**Objection 2:** The only powers in us that have cognition of singular things are those which receive species that are not abstracted from material conditions. But things exist in God in such a way that they are maximally abstracted from every sort of materiality. Therefore, God does not know singular things.

**Objection 3:** Every cognition takes place through a likeness. But no likeness of singular things as singular seems to exist in God. For the principle of singularity is matter, which, since it is merely a being in potentiality, is altogether dissimilar from God, who is pure actuality. Therefore, God cannot know singular things.

**But contrary to this:** Proverbs 16:2 says, “All the ways of a man are open to His eyes.”

**I respond:** God knows singular things. For, as is clear from what has been said (q. 4, a. 2), all the perfections found in creatures preexist in God in a higher way. But to know singular things pertains to our perfection. Hence, it is necessary that God should know singular things. For even the Philosopher

considers it absurd that we should know something that God does not know. Thus, in *De Anima* 1 and *Metaphysics* 3 he argues against Empedocles that God would be utterly stupid if He did not know about strife. But the perfections that are divided among lower beings exist in God in a simple and unified way. Hence, even though we ourselves know that which is universal and immaterial by one [cognitive] power and that which is singular and material by another power, God knows both sorts of things through His simple understanding.

Now some writers, wishing to show how this is possible, have claimed that God knows singular things through universal causes. For there is nothing in any singular thing that does not find its origin in some universal cause. And they invoke the following example: If an astronomer knew all the universal motions of the heavens, he could predict every future eclipse.

But this is not enough. For singular things receive from their universal causes certain forms and powers which, in whatever way they might be connected with one another, are individuated only by individual matter. Hence, someone who knew Socrates insofar as he is white, or insofar as he is the son of Sophroniscus, or whatever else of this sort might be said, would not know him insofar as he is *this* man. Hence, given the proposed mode of cognition, God would not know singular things in their singularity.

Other writers have claimed that God knows singular things by virtue of the fact that He applies universal causes to particular effects.

But this amounts to nothing. For no one can apply one thing to another unless he has prior knowledge of that other thing. Hence, the application in question cannot be the explanation for the knowledge of particulars, but instead presupposes the cognition of singular things.

And so we must respond in a different way: Since, as has been explained (a. 8), God is a cause of things through His knowledge, His knowledge extends as far as His causality does. Hence, since God's active power extends not only to forms, from which the universal concept is taken, but also—as will be shown below (q. 44, a. 2)—to matter, God's knowledge must extend to the singular things that are individuated by matter. For since He knows things distinct from Himself through His essence insofar as it is a likeness of things and their active principle, His essence must be a sufficient principle for knowing all the things that are made by Him, not only in their universal features, but also in their singularity. The same would be true of a craftsman's knowledge if the craftsman produced the whole of a thing and not just its form.

**Reply to objection 1:** Our intellect abstracts an intelligible species from individuating principles, and so our intellect's intelligible species cannot be a likeness of the individual principles. For this reason, our intellect does not know singular things.

However, the divine intellect's intelligible species, which is God's essence, is immaterial not through abstraction but through itself, and it is a principle of all the principles that enter into the composition of a thing—regardless of whether they are the principles of the species or the principles of the individual. Hence, through His essence God knows not only universals, but also singulars.

**Reply to objection 2:** Even though the divine intellect's [intelligible] species does not have material conditions in its own *esse*, in the way that the species received in the imagination and senses do, still, as has been explained, by its power it extends to both material and immaterial things.

**Reply to objection 3:** Even though matter is far removed from a likeness of God because of its potentiality, still, insofar as it has *esse* even of this sort, it retains a certain likeness to God's *esse*.

## Article 12

### Does God have knowledge of infinities?

It seems that God cannot know infinities:

**Objection 1:** The infinite *qua* infinite is unknown, since, as *Physics* 3 says, “The infinite is such that if one takes a quantity of it, it is always possible to take something else outside that quantity.”

Also, in *De Civitate Dei* 12, Augustine says, “Whatever is comprehended by knowledge is limited by the comprehension of the knower.” But infinities cannot be limited. Therefore, they cannot be comprehended by God’s knowledge.

**Objection 2:** Someone might reply that what is infinite in itself is finite to God’s knowledge.

Against this: As *Physics* 3 says, the nature of the infinite is such that it cannot be traversed, and the nature of the finite is such that it can be traversed. But, as *Physics* 6 proves, what is infinite cannot be traversed either by what is finite or by what is infinite. Therefore, the infinite cannot be finite either to what is finite or even to what is the infinite. And so what is infinite cannot be finite to God’s knowledge, which is infinite.

**Objection 3:** God’s knowledge is a measure of the things known. But it is contrary to the nature of the infinite that it should be measured. Therefore, what is infinite cannot be known by God.

**But contrary to this:** In *De Civitate Dei* 12 Augustine says, “Even though none of the infinite numbers is numbered, the infinite is nonetheless not incomprehensible to Him whose knowledge is not numbered.”

**I respond:** Since (a) God knows not only things that exist in actuality, but also, as has been shown (a. 9), things that exist either in His own power or in the power of a creature, and since (b) there are clearly infinitely many of the latter, one must claim that God knows infinities. And even though God’s knowledge of vision, which is only of things that now exist or will exist or have existed, is not a knowledge of infinitely many things in the way that some claim—for we do not hold that the world has existed from eternity, or that generation and motion will continue into eternity, so that individuals are multiplied to infinity—nonetheless, if we consider the matter more carefully, we must claim that God knows infinitely many things even by His knowledge of vision. For God knows even the thoughts and affections of the heart, which will be multiplied to infinity, since rational creatures will endure without end.

Now this is because each knower’s cognition extends to things in accord with the type of form that is the principle of cognition. For instance, a sensible species that exists in the senses is a likeness of just a single individual, and so only a single individual can be known through it. On the other hand, an intelligible species of our intellect is a likeness of a thing with respect to the nature of its species, which can be participated in by infinitely many particular things. Thus, through the intelligible species of a man our intellect in some sense knows infinitely many men—not, to be sure, insofar as they are distinct from one another, but rather insofar as they share in the nature of the species. For this reason, an intelligible species of our intellect is a likeness of men not with respect to their individual principles, but only with respect to the principles of the species.

However, as has been shown (a. 11), God’s essence, through which God’s intellect has cognition, is a sufficient likeness of all the things that exist or can exist, not only with respect to their common principles, but also with respect to the proper principles of each individual. Hence, it follows that God’s knowledge extends to infinitely many things, even insofar as they are distinct from one another.

**Reply to objection 1:** According to the Philosopher in *Physics* 1, “The nature of the infinite is congruent with quantity.” But what belongs to the nature of quantity is the ordering of the parts. Therefore, to know the infinite according to the mode of the infinite is to know one part after another.

And in this sense there is no way in which it is possible to know the infinite. For no matter how many parts are taken, something always remains outside of what has been taken.

However, God does not know the infinite, or infinitely many things, in such a way that He enumerates one part after another. For, as has been explained (a. 7), He knows all things at once and not successively. Hence, nothing prevents Him from knowing infinitely many things.

**Reply to objection 2:** ‘To traverse’ implies a certain succession in the parts, and this is why the infinite cannot be traversed either by what is finite or even by what is infinite.

Equality, however, is indeed sufficient for the notion of comprehension, since something is said to be comprehended when nothing of it escapes the one who comprehends. Hence, it is not contrary to the nature of the infinite that it should be comprehended by an infinite being. And so what is infinite in itself can be said to be finite to God’s knowledge in the sense of being comprehended by it, though not in the sense of being traversable by it.

**Reply to objection 3:** God’s knowledge is a measure of things, but not a quantitative measure of the sort lacked by what is infinite. Rather, it is a measure because it measures the essence and truth of a thing. For each thing participates in the truth of its own nature to the extent that it imitates God’s knowledge—in the way that an artifact comports with its corresponding craft.

Now if there were things that were actually infinite either according to number (e.g., infinitely many men) or according to continuous quantity (as, e.g., if air were infinite, as some ancients claimed), then it is clear that they would have determinate and finite *esse* in the sense that their *esse* would be limited to certain determinate natures. So in this sense they would be measurable by God’s knowledge.

### Article 13

#### Does God have knowledge of future contingents?

It seems that God does not have knowledge of future contingents:

**Objection 1:** From a necessary cause there proceeds a necessary effect. But, as was explained above (a. 8), God’s knowledge is a cause of the things that are known by it (*causa scitorum*). Therefore, since that knowledge is itself necessary, it follows that the things known by it (*scita eius*) are necessary. Therefore, God does not have knowledge of contingent things.

**Objection 2:** Every conditional is such that if its antecedent is absolutely necessary, its consequent is absolutely necessary. For the antecedent is related to the consequent in the way that principles are related to a conclusion, and, as is proved in *Posterior Analytics* 1, the only sort of conclusion that follows from necessary principles is a necessary conclusion.

Now the following is a true conditional: ‘If God knew that this was going to be, then it is going to be’. For God has knowledge only of truths. But the antecedent of this conditional is absolutely necessary, both because it is eternal and also because it is signified as past. Therefore, the consequent is likewise absolutely necessary. Therefore, whatever is known by God is necessary. And so God does not have knowledge of contingent things.

**Objection 3:** If anything is known by God, it is necessarily so, since it is even the case that if anything is known by us, it is necessarily so—and God’s knowledge is more certain than our knowledge. But no future contingent must be so. Therefore, no future contingent is known by God.

**But contrary to this:** Psalm 32 says, “He who has made the hearts of every one of them, who understands all their works,” i.e., the works of men. But the works of men are contingent, since they are subject to free choice. Therefore, God knows future contingents.

**I respond:** It was shown above (a. 9) that God knows all things—not only (a) those that are actual,

but also (b) those that exist either in His own power or the power of a creature. Some of the latter are contingent things that are future to us. It follows that God knows future contingents.

To see this clearly, note that there are two ways in which a contingent thing can be thought of.

First, it can be thought of in itself, insofar as it is already actual. And when considered in this way, it is not being thought of as future; rather, it is being thought of as present, and it is being thought of not as contingent with respect to two opposites, but rather as determined to one of them. For this reason, it can be infallibly subject to a cognition that is certain—e.g., to the cognition of the sense of sight, as when I see that Socrates is sitting.

Second, a contingent thing can be thought of as existing in its cause. And considered in this way, it is being thought of as future and as contingent, not yet determined to one opposite; for a contingent cause is open to both opposites. And a contingent thing, when thought of in this way, is not subject to a cognition that is certain. Thus, if someone knows a contingent effect only in its cause, then he has only a conjectural cognition of it.

Now God knows all contingent things not only insofar as they exist in their causes, but also insofar as each them is actual in itself. And even though contingent things become actual successively, nonetheless, God, unlike we ourselves, does not know contingent things successively as they exist in their own *esse*; rather, he knows them all at once. For His cognition, like His *esse*, is measured by eternity. But as was explained above (q. 10, a. 2), eternity, which exists as a simultaneous whole, embraces the whole of time. Hence, all the things that exist in time are present to God from eternity, not just because, as some claim, God has the natures of things present to Himself, but because His gaze extends from eternity to all things as they exist in their presentness. Hence, it is clear that contingent things are both (a) known infallibly by God insofar as they are subject to the divine gaze according to their presentness and yet (b) future contingents in relation to their causes.

**Reply to objection 1:** Even if the highest cause is necessary, the effect can nonetheless be contingent because of a contingent proximate cause. For instance, the germination of a plant is contingent because of a contingent proximate cause, even though the motion of the sun, which is a first cause, is necessary. Similarly, the things known by God are contingent because of their proximate causes, even though God's knowledge, which is a first cause, is necessary.

**Reply to objection 2:** Some claim that the antecedent 'God knew that this contingent thing was going to be' is contingent and not necessary, because even though it is past-tense, it implies a relation to the future. However, this does not undermine the necessity of the antecedent. For that which once had a relation to the future is now such that it is necessary that it once had that relation—even if that which was going to be never follows at any time.

Others claim that the antecedent in question is contingent because it is composed of something necessary and something contingent—just as the dictum *that Socrates is a white man* is contingent. But this, too, amounts to nothing. For when one says, 'God knew that this contingent thing was going to be', what is contingent is posited here only as the subject-matter of the main verb and not as the principal part of the proposition. Hence, this subject-matter's contingency or necessity has no bearing on whether the proposition itself is necessary or contingent, or true or false. For instance, it can be true that I said that a man is a donkey, just as it can be true that I said that Socrates is running or that God exists. And the same line of reasoning holds for necessity and contingency.

Therefore, one should assert that the antecedent in question is absolutely necessary.

However, some claim that from this it does not follow that the consequent is absolutely necessary, because the antecedent is a remote cause of the consequent, which is contingent because of some proximate cause. But this amounts to nothing. For the proposition would be false if its antecedent were a remote necessary cause and its consequent were a contingent effect—as, for instance, if I were to say, 'If the sun moves, the plant will germinate.'

So we must respond in an alternative way: When something pertaining to an act of the soul is posited in the antecedent, the consequent should be taken not as it exists in itself, but as it exists in the soul. For the existence of a thing in itself is different from its existence in the soul. So, for instance, when I say, ‘If the soul understands something, then that thing is immaterial’, this should be taken to mean that the thing in question is immaterial insofar as it exists in the intellect and not that it is immaterial insofar as it exists in itself. Similarly, if I say, ‘If God knew something, it is going to be’, the consequent should be taken to mean ‘insofar as it falls under God’s knowledge’, i.e., ‘insofar as it exists in its presentness’. And, given this meaning, the consequent is necessary in the same way that the antecedent is; for, as *Perihermenias* 1 says, “Everything that is, while it is, is such that it is necessary that it be.”

**Reply to objection 3:** Those things that become actual in time are known by us successively in time, but they are known by God in eternity, which is beyond time. Thus, since we know future contingents insofar as they are contingent, they cannot be certain to us; rather, they are certain only to God, whose act of understanding exists in eternity and beyond time. Similarly, someone who is traveling along a road does not see those who come after him, whereas someone who is viewing the whole road from a height sees all the travelers on the road at once.

And so that which is known (*scitur*) by us must also be necessary insofar as it exists in itself, since things that are future contingent in themselves cannot be known by us. However, as has been explained, the things that are known by God have to be necessary insofar as they are subject to God’s knowledge—though they are not absolutely necessary insofar as they are considered in their proper causes.

Accordingly, the proposition, ‘If anything is known by God, it is necessarily so’ has two distinguishable meanings, since it can be either *de re* or *de dicto*. If it is interpreted *de re*, then it has a divided sense and is false—for its meaning is, ‘Anything that God knows is such that it is necessarily so’. Alternatively, it can be interpreted *de dicto*, in which case it has a composed sense and is true—for its meaning is, ‘The dictum *If anything is known by God, it is so* is necessary.’

However, some raise an objection here. They claim that this distinction is relevant in the case of forms that are separable from their subject, as when I say ‘A white thing is possibly black’—which is false if taken *de dicto* and true if taken *de re*, since a thing which is white is able to be black, whereas the dictum *A white thing is black* is never true. But, they say, in the case of forms that are inseparable from their subject, there is no room for this distinction, as when I say, ‘A black crow is possibly white’—for this is false in both senses. But being known by God is inseparable from a thing, since that which is known by God is not able not to be known.

Now this objection would be to the point if the term ‘known [by God]’ connoted a disposition that inheres in a subject. However, since it instead connotes the act of a knower, something can be attributed to the known thing in its own right (*secundum se*), even if it is always known, that is not attributed to it insofar as it is subject to an act of knowing (*inquantum stat sub actu sciendi*)—just as material *esse* is attributed to a rock in itself, but is not attributed to it insofar as it is intelligible.

## Article 14

### Does God know propositions?

It seems that God does not know propositions (*enuntiabilia*):

**Objection 1:** Knowing propositions belongs to our intellect insofar as it composes and divides. But there is no composition in God’s intellect. Therefore, God does not know propositions.

**Objection 2:** Every cognition is effected by means of some likeness. But in God there is no likeness of propositions, since He is altogether simple. Therefore, God does not know propositions.

**But contrary to this:** Psalm 93:11 says, “The Lord knows the thoughts of men.” But propositions are included among the thoughts of men. Therefore, God knows propositions.

**I respond:** Since (a) to formulate propositions lies within the power of our intellect, and since (b), as was explained above (a. 9), God knows whatever lies within either His own power or the power of a creature, it must be the case that God knows all the propositions that can be formulated.

However, just as He knows material things in an immaterial mode and composite things in a simple mode, so too He knows propositions but not according to the mode of propositions—as if the composition or division of propositions existed in His intellect. Rather, through His simple understanding He knows each thing by understanding the essence of each thing.

It is as if we ourselves were such that by the very fact that we understood what a man is, we understood everything that could be predicated of a man. Now, to be sure, this does not happen with our intellect, which reasons from one thing to another. For an intelligible species [in our intellect] represents one thing in such a way that it does not represent another. Hence, we do not, simply by virtue of understanding what a man is, understand the other things that exist in a man; instead, we understand them bit by bit, according to a certain succession. Because of this, we have to bring together, in the mode of composition and division, the things that we understand separately, thus formulating a proposition.

By contrast, the species of God’s intellect, viz., His very essence, is sufficient for making known all things. Hence, in understanding His own essence, God knows the essences of all things and whatever can accrue to them.

**Reply to objection 1:** This argument assumes that God knows propositions through the mode of propositions.

**Reply to objection 2:** A propositional composition signifies the *esse* of a thing. And so through His own *esse*, which is His essence, God is a likeness of all those things that can be signified by means of propositions.

## Article 15

### Is God’s knowledge variable?

It seems that God’s knowledge is variable:

**Objection 1:** ‘Knowledge’ is predicated relationally with respect to what is knowable. But names that connote a relation to creatures are predicated of God from a given point in time, and they vary according to variations in the creatures. Therefore, God’s knowledge is variable according to variations in the creatures.

**Objection 2:** God can know whatever He can effect. But God is able to effect more things than He in fact effects. Therefore, He is able to know more things than He in fact knows. And so His knowledge can vary by way of addition and subtraction.

**Objection 3:** God knew that Christ would be born. However, He does not now know that Christ will be born, since it is not now the case that Christ will be born. Therefore, it is not the case that God now knows everything that He once knew. And so God’s knowledge seems to be variable.

**But contrary to this:** James 1:17 says that with God “there is no change nor shadow of alteration.”

**I respond:** Since, as is clear from what has been said (a. 4), God’s knowledge is His substance, it follows that just as His substance is altogether immutable—as was shown above (q. 9, a. 1)—so too His

knowledge must be altogether invariable.

**Reply to objection 1:** ‘Lord’, ‘creator’, and other names of this sort connote a relation to creatures as they exist in themselves. By contrast, ‘God’s knowledge’ connotes a relation to creatures insofar as they exist in God. For each thing is actually understood insofar as it exists in the knower. But created things exist in an invariable way in God, even though they exist in a variable way in themselves.

An alternative reply is that ‘lord’, ‘creator’, and other names of this sort connote relations that follow upon acts that are understood to terminate in the creatures themselves insofar as they exist in themselves; and this is why relations of this sort are predicated of God in a way that varies according to variations in the creatures. By contrast, ‘knowledge’, ‘love’, and other names of this sort connote relations that follow upon acts that are understood to exist in God; and this is why they are predicated of God in an invariable way.

**Reply to objection 2:** God knows even those things that He can effect and yet does not effect. Hence, from the fact that He can effect more things than He does effect, it does not follow that He can know more things than He does know—unless we are talking about His knowledge of vision, according to which He is said to know those things that actually exist at some time or other.

Now from the fact that He knows that some things are able to exist and yet do not exist, or that some things are able not to exist and yet do exist, it does not follow that His knowledge is variable. Rather, all that follows is that He knows about the variability of things. To be sure, if there were something that God did not previously know and afterwards did know, then His knowledge would be variable. But this is impossible. For in eternity God knows whatever does exist or can exist at any time. And so on the assumption that a thing exists at some time or other, one must assert that it is known by God from eternity.

And so it should not be conceded that God can know more things than He does know, since this proposition implies that He previously did not know something and afterwards knows it.

**Reply to objection 3:** The old nominalists (*antiqui nominales*) claimed that ‘Christ is born’, ‘Christ will be born’, and ‘Christ has been born’ are the same proposition because exactly the same thing is signified by all three of them, viz., the birth of Christ. On this view it follows that whatever God did know, He now knows. For he now knows that Christ has been born, and this signifies the same thing as that Christ will be born.

But this opinion is false. First, a diversity in the parts of a sentence makes for a diversity of propositions. Second, it would follow that a proposition that is true at any one time (*semel*) would always be true—which is contrary to the Philosopher, who says that the sentence ‘Socrates is sitting’ is true as long as Socrates is sitting and is false once he gets up.

And so one should concede that ‘God now knows everything that He once knew’ is not true, if we are talking about propositions. But from this it does not follow that God’s knowledge is variable. For just as God’s knowledge does not vary by virtue of the fact that He knows that one and same thing exists at some times and not at other times, so too God’s knowledge does not vary by virtue of the fact that He knows that a given proposition is true at some times and false at other times.

To be sure, God’s knowledge would be variable if He knew propositions through the mode of propositions by composing and dividing, as happens with our intellect. Hence, our cognition varies either (a) according to truth and falsity, as, e.g., when, once a thing has changed, we maintain the same opinion about that thing, or (b) according to diverse opinions, as when we first think that someone is sitting and afterwards think that he is not sitting. But neither of these can happen with God.

## Article 16

### Is God's knowledge of things speculative?

It seems that God does not have speculative knowledge of things:

**Objection 1:** As was shown above (a. 8), God's knowledge is a cause of things. But speculative knowledge is not a cause of the things known by it. Therefore, God's knowledge is not speculative.

**Objection 2:** Speculative knowledge occurs through abstraction from things. But this feature does not belong to God's knowledge. Therefore, God's knowledge is not speculative.

**But contrary to this:** Everything that is more noble should be attributed to God. But as is clear from the Philosopher at the beginning of the *Metaphysics*, speculative knowledge is more noble than practical knowledge. Therefore, God has speculative knowledge of things.

**I respond:** Some knowledge is purely speculative and some purely practical, but some knowledge is both speculative in one respect and practical in another respect.

To see this clearly, notice that there are three ways in which knowledge can be called speculative:

First, on the part of the *things known*, when they are not things that can be effected by the knower—as, e.g., human knowledge about natural or divine things.

Second, with respect to the *mode of knowing*—as, e.g., when a builder thinks about a house by defining, distinguishing, and inquiring into its universal predicates. For here a thing that can be effected is being considered in a speculative way and not insofar as it can be effected. For something that can be effected exists through the application of form to matter, and not through the analysis of a composite into its universal formal principles.

Third, with respect to its *goal*. For as *De Anima* 3 says, “Practical understanding differs in its goal from speculative understanding.” For practical understanding is ordered to the goal of effecting something, whereas the goal of speculative understanding is the consideration of truth. Hence, if a builder is thinking about how a given house might be built, and he is ordering his thought only to knowing it and not to the goal of making it, then his inquiry will be speculative with respect to its end, even though it is about a thing that can be effected.

Thus, knowledge that is speculative by reason of the thing known is purely speculative. On the other hand, knowledge that is speculative by reason of either its mode or its goal is speculative in one respect and practical in another respect. And when knowledge is ordered to the goal of effecting something, then it is purely practical.

So, then, one should claim that God has purely speculative knowledge about Himself, since He is not a thing that can be effected. But His knowledge of all other things is both speculative and practical. It is speculative with respect to its mode. For anything that we ourselves know speculatively about things by defining and distinguishing is such that God knows all of it much more perfectly. On the other hand, as regards those things that He is able to effect but does not effect at any time, He does not have practical knowledge of them in the sense in which practical knowledge is called practical because of its goal. However, He does have practical knowledge of those things which He does effect at some time.

On the other hand, even though He cannot effect evils, they, like goods, nonetheless fall under His practical cognition insofar as He permits them or impedes them or orders them [to some end]—in the way that illnesses fall under a physician's practical knowledge insofar as he cures them through his art.

**Reply to objection 1:** God's knowledge is a cause not of Himself, but of other things. It is an actual cause of some of them, viz., those which are effected at some time, and it is a virtual cause of others, viz., those which God is able to effect and yet which are never effected.

**Reply to objection 2:** The fact that knowledge is taken from the things that are known is a feature that belongs to speculative knowledge not *per se*, but *per accidents*, viz., insofar as it is human

knowledge.

**Reply to argument for the contrary:** Perfect knowledge is had of things that are able to be effected only if they are known precisely insofar as they are able to be effected. And so since God's knowledge is perfect in every way, He must know the things that can be effected by Him insofar as they can be effected by Him and not just insofar as they are knowable speculatively. Still, this does not fall short of the nobility of speculative knowledge, since He sees all things that are distinct from Himself in Himself, and He knows Himself speculatively. And so in His speculative knowledge of Himself He has both speculative and practical cognition of all other things.