

THOMAS AQUINAS AND GILES OF ROME ON THE RECEPTION OF FORMS WITHOUT THE MATTER

Abstract

In a passage of *De Anima* 2.12 (424a17-24) Aristotle makes a general claim about the senses, which is condensed in the formula that the senses are receptive of the sensible forms without the matter. While it is clear that this formula must play an important theoretical role in Aristotle's account, it is far from clear what it exactly means. Its interpretation is still matter of controversy among contemporary scholars. In this paper I present the exegeses of this formula proposed by the two most authoritative commentators on *De anima* from the second half of the 13th century, namely, Thomas Aquinas and Giles of Rome. Both commentators assume that with this formula and in particular with the qualification "without the matter" Aristotle intends to characterize an "intentional" reception of a form, and to contrast it with a "natural" reception, but they give different accounts of intentionality.

Introduction

"Reception of the forms without the matter" is the celebrated formula used by Aristotle in a passage of *De anima* 2.12 to characterize the senses.¹ As to the theoretical context of this formula, its most general feature is the assumption that the senses are passive powers: powers to be acted upon by something, that is, to undergo a change. The things that act upon them are the sensible objects.² According to Aristotle's characterization of change, passive powers are receptive powers, powers to receive something from the agent by which they are acted upon. Thus, the senses as passive powers are such that they are apt to receive something from the sensible objects that act upon them. Aristotle, however, also suggests that the passivity or receptivity of the senses is of a special kind, not totally similar to that involved in ordinary changes, like the change of a body from being cold to being hot as a result of its being acted upon by a hot body.³ The formula of *De anima* 2.12 seems to be intended to make explicit what the special kind of passivity of the senses consists in:

¹ Aristotle, *De anima* II, c. 12 (424a17-19).

² Aristotle, *De anima* II, c. 5 (416b32-417a2).

³ Aristotle, *De anima* II, c. 5 (417b2-418a6).

they receive the forms of the sensible objects by which they are acted upon, just like a cold body receives the relevant form of the hot body by which it is acted upon, i.e., the form of heat, but they receive such forms without the matter.

The definition of the special receptivity of the senses expressed by the Aristotelian formula, however, seems very unhelpful. Both the claim that the senses receive the forms of the sensible objects and the claim that they do so without the matter are indeed obscure. For example, how are to understand that sight or the eyes (i.e., the organ of sight) receive colours and that they do so without the matter? Aristotle's passage of *De anima* 2.12 does not offer much in terms of clarification. Instead of expanding on the theoretical significance of the formula, Aristotle is content to illustrate it with the example of the signet ring and its imprint on the wax:

It is necessary to grasp, concerning the whole of perception generally, that perception is what is capable of receiving perceptible forms without matter, as wax receives the seal of a signet ring without the iron or gold. It acquires the golden or the metallic seal, but not insofar as it is gold or metal. In a similar way, perception is also in each case affected by what has the colour or taste or sound, but not insofar as each of these is said to be something, but rather insofar as each is of a certain quality, and corresponding to its proportion.⁴

The focus of Aristotle's illustration is on the qualification "without the matter", which he obviously takes to be the crucial part of the formula. We shall return to this later when we shall deal with Thomas Aquinas's and Giles of Rome's interpretations. To introduce the problems raised by this passage, however, it is important to point out that some Aristotelian scholars were puzzled in the first place by the part of the formula that Aristotle seems to take for granted, namely, the claim that the senses receive the sensible forms. Thus, for example, D.W. Hamlyn in his notes on the translation of *De anima* says:

As in the case of the other formula he introduced at 418a3 (i.e. that that which can perceive is potentially such as the object of perception is

⁴ Aristotle, *De anima* II, c. 12 (424a17-24). The translation is that of C. Shields in *Aristotle. De Anima*, Translated with an Introduction and Commentary by Christopher Shields (Oxford, 2016).

actually), the range of applicability of the present formula seems limited and it fits touch best. It is not easy to see how the eye can receive the colour when we see, or the ear sound when we hear.⁵

The problem raised by Hamlyn seems to originate from the assumption that the sensory organ receives the form of a sensible object and so it is informed by the form of the sensible object in exactly the same way as the sensible object itself is informed by the sensible form. This assumption explains why Hamlyn thinks that the formula fits touch best: when the organ of touch (say, a hand) is acted upon by a hot body, it becomes hot just like the hot body acting on it so that the organ of touch is informed by heat in the same way in which the hot body acting on it is informed by heat. This assumption, however, seems highly implausible in the case of other senses and especially of sight. Do my eyes (or more precisely the eye-jelly, which is supposed to be the organ of sight) become actually red when I see a red apple? Hamlyn thinks that this is not the case.

This is not, however, the only view among Aristotelian scholars. In more recent times, Richard Sorabji has defended the apparently implausible view that my eyes do become red when I see a red apple and that it holds more generally for all senses that a sensory organ is informed by the form of the sensible object acting on it just like the sensible object itself is. His contemporary Myles Burnyeat has strongly criticised this view and taken the opposite view that the eyes do not become red when they receive the form of red of a red apple without the matter, and likewise for all the other senses too, including touch (although this requires some explanation). The contrast between Sorabji and Burnyeat has shaped the debate about Aristotle's theory of perception for many years and it still does.⁶ As Victor Caston has suggested, this contrast can be described as a contrast between the letter and the spirit of Aristotle's passage, or between Literalism and Spiritualism. In accordance with Sorabji's view, Literalism maintains that a sensory organ literally takes on the sensible form of the corresponding sensible object. On the contrary, in accordance with Burnyeat's view,

⁵ Aristotle. *De anima. Books II and III*, Translated with Introduction and Notes by D.W. Hamlyn (Oxford, 1968), 113.

⁶ For a very comprehensive presentation and assessment of this debate, see especially V. Caston, "The Spirit and The Letter: Aristotle on Perception," in *Metaphysics, Soul, and Ethics in Ancient Thought. Themes from the work of Richard Sorabji*, ed. R. Salles (Oxford, 2005), 245-320.

Spiritualism denies that a sensory organ literally takes on the sensible form and posits that it takes on such a form in an alternative way, labelled “spiritual”.⁷

The term “spiritual”, which is now commonly used in the Aristotelian literature, is actually taken from Aquinas’s characterization of perception as a spiritual change or of the mode of being of a perceptible form in the sensory organ as a spiritual being.⁸ Although Aquinas does not explicitly distinguish the two different readings of the Aristotelian formula that shape the modern debate, it is clear that his interpretation fits the spiritualist reading as described by Caston.⁹

Aquinas’s insight as Aristotelian commentator is highly praised by Burnyeat, who in the opening words of his paper devoted to Aquinas’s view on sense perception says:

One of the pleasures that Aquinas offers a student of ancient philosophy like myself is a sense of recognition. Here is a thoroughly Aristotelian mind at work ... Nowhere is this more true, I believe, than in Aquinas’ theory of perception and his remarks about spiritual change.¹⁰

Burnyeat substantiates his positive evaluation with a comprehensive analysis of the relevant texts from Aquinas’s works, which include not only his commentary on the passage of *De Anima* 2.12 about the reception of forms without the matter, but also passages from other sections of his *De anima* commentary and from the *Summa Theologiae*.

The focus of this paper, instead, will be restricted to the passage from *De anima* 2.12. But I will look at it from a broader historical perspective. For, in addition to offering a detailed account of Aquinas’s interpretation of it, I will also compare it with the interpretation of Giles of Rome, another authoritative commentator on *De anima*.¹¹ I will show that Giles is strongly influenced by Aquinas’s exegesis but he also departs from it on some crucial points.

⁷ Caston specifies that both Literalism and Spiritualism admit a variety of different versions. See Caston, “The Spirit and The Letter,” 247-264.

⁸ See, for example, Aquinas’s commentary on the passage of *De anima* 2.12 quoted below, xxx.

⁹ See below, xxx.

¹⁰ M.F. Burnyeat, “Aquinas on “Spiritual Change” in Perception,” in *Ancient and Medieval Theories of Intentionality*, ed. D. Perler (Leiden-Boston-Köln, 2001), 129.

¹¹ For Aquinas’s commentary on *De Anima* I will use the Leonine edition by R. Gauthier (Rome-Paris, 1984). For Giles’s commentary I will use the edition of Venice, 1500 (reprinted Frankfurt, 1982). All translations from Latin to English are mine. For an outline of the interpretations of the Aristotelian passage in the Greek, Arabic, and Latin commentary traditions up to Aquinas’s, see M.M. Tweedale,

Giles too proposes a spiritualist reading of the formula “reception of the forms without the matter” but a different version from that proposed by Aquinas. Giles’s version –I believe– would hardly have given the pleasure of a sense of recognition to a student of ancient philosophy like Burnyeat, but it helps to reveal an important tension in Aquinas’s own account of intentionality.

1 Thomas Aquinas

Aquinas begins his commentary on the passage from *De anima* 2.12 with a literal quotation of its initial sentence about the characterization of the senses as receptive of the forms without the matter.¹² He immediately points out, however, that there is a major problem with this characterization, a problem that must be addressed before proceeding to an exegesis of the passage:

This, however, would seem to be common to all patients; for every patient receives something from an agent insofar as agent; but an agent acts in virtue of its form and not in virtue of its matter; therefore, every patient receives a form without the matter. This is indeed sensibly manifest; for air does not receive the matter of fire from the fire acting upon it, but its form only. Thus, it would not seem to be distinctive of the senses that they receive the species without the matter.¹³

The problem raised in this passage is that the characterization of the senses given by Aristotle does not seem to be the correct one, because it fails to exclusively characterize the senses. Aristotle assumes that receiving the (sensible) forms without the matter is distinctive of the senses or at least a special kind of receptivity or passivity, but actually there seems to be nothing distinctive or special about it. The reason for this is that any kind of patient (both the senses and any other) receives from

“Origins of the Medieval Theory That Sensation Is an Immaterial Reception of a Form,” *Philosophical Topics* 20/2 (1992), 215-230.

¹² Thomas Aquinas, *In De anima*, II, c. XXIV (ed. Gauthier, 168b.13-16): “Dicit ergo primo quod hoc oportet accipere uniuersaliter et communiter omni sensui inesse quod *sensus est susceptiuus specierum sine materia*, sicut *cera recipit signum anuli sine ferro et auro*.”

¹³ Thomas Aquinas, *In De anima*, II, c. XXIV (ed. Gauthier, 168b.18-169a.26): “Set uidetur hoc esse commune omni paciēti: omne enim paciēns recipit aliquid ab agente secundum quod est agens; agens autem agit per suam formam et non per suam materiam; omne igitur paciēns recipit formam sine materia. Et hoc etiam ad sensum apparet: non enim aer recipit ab igne agente materiam eius, set formam. Non <igitur> uidetur hoc esse proprium sensus, quod sit susceptiuus specierum sine materia.”

the agent (what acts on it) only a form and not also its matter. In the passage just quoted, Aquinas also gives a concise argument for this point about agency. In the case of a material agent, that is, an agent composed of matter and form (a material substance), it is its form only that is the active principle in virtue of which such an agent acts, whereas matter does not have any active role. But that in virtue of which an agent acts corresponds to what the patient receives from the agent. Therefore, in all cases the patient simply receives a form from the agent, and not the matter or particles composite of matter and form of the agent. Aquinas then illustrates the conclusion of this general argument with a paradigmatic change with which Aristotle intends to contrast the case of the change involved in perception, that of water's being acted upon by fire and being changed into fire. According to Aristotle, in this change too, air simply receives the form of fire, but not also its matter, that is, particles of fire.

The objection raised by Aquinas to Aristotle's characterization of the senses as receptive of the forms without the matter relies on genuine Aristotelian assumptions about change. And indeed it is rehearsed in the contemporary Aristotelian scholarship.¹⁴ Aquinas, however, does not think that this objection is compelling, because in his view it is based on a misunderstanding of what Aristotle means by the reception of the forms without the matter. Aquinas explains this in his long reply to the objection, which deserves to be quoted in full because it contains his most original contribution to the understanding of the Aristotelian formula:

(i) It must be replied that, while it is common to every patient that it receives a form from the agent, there are different ways of receiving a form.

(ii) Indeed, in some cases a form received in a patient from the agent has the same mode of being in the patient as in the agent (this occurs when the patient has the same disposition to the form as the agent. For whatever is received in another thing is received according to the mode of the recipient; so that, if the patient has the same disposition as the agent, then the form is received in the patient in the same way in which it was in the agent). In these cases then, the form is not received without the matter.

¹⁴ See, for example, Caston's comments on the Aristotelian example of the ring and the wax in "The Spirit and The Letter," 301-302.

For although the numerically one and the same matter that is in the agent does not become the matter of the patient, the matter of the patient, however, becomes somehow the same as that of the agent, inasmuch as the patient acquires a material disposition to the form similar to that which was in the agent. And it is in this way that air is acted upon by fire, and any other passive thing that is subject to a natural passion.

(iii) In other cases instead the form is received in the patient in a mode of being other than that which the form has in the agent, because the material disposition of the patient to receive a form is not similar to the material disposition that was in the agent. In these cases, therefore, the form is received in the patient without the matter, insofar as the patient is assimilated to the agent in respect of the form and not in respect of the matter. And it is in this way that a sense receives the form without the matter, because the form has a different mode of being in the sense and in the sensible thing. In the sensible thing the form has natural being, but in the sense it has *intentional or spiritual being*. Aristotle finds in the case of the seal and the wax a good example of this. For the disposition of the wax to the image is not the same as the disposition which was in the iron or gold.¹⁵

Let us analyse this text in some detail.

In the opening sentence (i), with his appeal to different ways of receiving a form, Aquinas introduces the most general key feature of his interpretation of the

¹⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *In De anima*, II, c. XXIV (ed. Gauthier, 169a.27-b59): “Dicendum est igitur quod, licet hoc sit commune omni paciēti quod recipiat formam ab agente, differēcia tamen est in modo recipiendi. Nam forma que in paciēte recipitur ab agente, quandoque quidem habet eundem modum essendi in paciēte quem habet in agente (et hoc quidem contingit quando paciēns eandem habet dispositionem ad formam quam habet et agens; unumquodque enim recipitur in altero secundum modum recipientis, unde si eodem modo disponatur paciēns sicut agens, eodem modo recipitur forma in paciēte sicut erat in agente), et tunc non recipitur forma sine materia, quia, licet illa et eadem materia numero que est agentis non fiat paciētis, fit tamen quodam modo eadem in quantum similem dispositionem materialem ad formam acquirit ei que erat in agente; et hoc modo aer patitur ab igne, et quicquid patitur passione naturali. Quandoque vero forma recipitur in paciēte secundum alium modum essendi quam sit in agente, quia dispositio materialis paciētis ad recipiendum non est similis dispositioni materiali que erat in agente, et ideo forma recipitur in paciēte sine materia in quantum paciēns assimilatur agenti secundum formam et non secundum materiam; et per hunc modum sensus recipit formam sine materia, quia alterius modi esse habet forma in sensu et in re sensibili: nam in re sensibili habet esse naturale, in sensu autem habet esse intentionale siue spirituale; et ponit conueniens exemplum de sigillo et cera, non enim eadem est dispositio cere ad ymaginem, que erat in ferro et auro.”

Aristotelian formula and of his solution to the objection to it. This is that the contrast that Aristotle has in mind does not concern the kind of entity that a patient receives from an agent, but the mode of reception. More explicitly, the contrast is not that in an ordinary change what is received in the patient is a form with the matter whereas in the case of perception what is received in the senses is a form without the matter, as the objection assumes. Rather, the contrast is that between receiving with the matter and receiving without the matter the same kind of thing or form. Every patient, and not only the senses, receives a form only from the agent. The difference is that while the senses receive a form in an “immaterial way” (without the matter), the other/ordinary patients receive it in a “material way” (with the matter). For example, an apple receives the colour red in a material way, while the eyes receive the same colour in an immaterial way.

In the rest of the passage above Aquinas provides a general account of the distinction between the two different modes of reception, starting from (ii) the “material reception” and then passing to (iii) the “immaterial reception”, and at the very end of it he applies the distinction to the case of the senses.

Let us now see how Aquinas fleshes out the distinction between the two modes of reception. He appeals to a common principle among medieval Aristotelians (but not of an evident Aristotelian origin) according to which the mode of reception is determined by the mode of the recipient (*unumquodque recipitur in altero secundum modum recipientis*), so that a difference in modes of reception should be accounted for by a difference in recipients. Since in our case the difference between modes of reception is supposed to provide an explanation of the contrast between receiving with the matter and receiving without the matter, one may suggest that this difference is reducible to the difference between a material recipient and an immaterial recipient, so that while in the ordinary reception of a form the recipient is something material, in the reception distinctive of the senses the recipient would be something immaterial. This kind of literal interpretation, however, cannot be right, as Aquinas makes clear in another section of his commentary.¹⁶ The recipients of the forms of the sensible

¹⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *In De anima*, II, c. XXIV (ed. Gauthier, 169b77-170a89): “quia enim dixerat quod sensus est susceptivus specierum sine materia, quod etiam intellectui conuenit, posset aliquis credere quod sensus non esset potencia in corpore sicut nec intellectus, et ideo ad hoc excludendum assignat ei organum. Et dicit quod *primum sensitivum*, id est primum organum sensus, *est in quo est potencia huiusmodi*, que scilicet est susceptiva specierum sine materia. Organum igitur sensus cum potencia ipsa, utputa oculus, est *idem* subiecto, *set esse alterum est*, quia ratione differt a corpore potencia; potencia enim est quasi forma organi, ut supra habitum est.”

objects are the sensory organs, and the sensory organs are indeed material things. For example, the eyes are the things that receive the form of red in an immaterial way but the eyes are material just as the apple that receives the form of red in a material way is material.¹⁷

The difference in recipients, therefore, should be understood in a less literal and more sophisticated way. But how? As a difference, in Aquinas's own words, in the material dispositions of the recipients to a form. Thus, a form F that is received from an agent by a patient is received with the matter if the material disposition of the patient is similar to that of the agent, whereas a form F is received without the matter if the material disposition of the agent is not similar to that of the patient.¹⁸ In the first case, the assimilation of the patient to the agent is both in respect of the form and in respect of the matter: agent and patient have a similar form and a similar material disposition to that form. In the second case, the assimilation is only with respect to the form: agent and patient have a similar form but dissimilar material dispositions.

Aquinas does not offer any clarification here about what the relevant difference in the material dispositions consist in. Note, however, that, at least in the case of sensible forms, it is legitimate to assume that there can be differences in the material dispositions of the subjects of such forms. Indeed, these forms are accidental forms and so their immediate subject is not prime matter, which is totally undifferentiated, but a substance. In our example of the colour red, the relevant subjects are an apple and the eyes, which are different kinds of substance and so different kind of subjects.

¹⁷ Despite Aquinas's explicit rejection of this understanding of the immaterial reception proper to the senses, Hamlyn ascribed it to Aquinas and maintained that Aquinas thinks that what receives the sensible forms are not the sensory organs but the soul itself, which is immaterial. See D.W. Hamlyn, *Sensation and Perception* (London, 1961), 46. The first scholar to point out that Hamlyn's interpretation is not the correct one is possibly S.M. Cohen in his paper "St. Thomas Aquinas on the Immaterial Reception of Sensible Forms," *The Philosophical Review* 91/ 2 (1982), 193-209.

¹⁸ Burnyeat gives a slightly different interpretation of this distinction: "The patient receives a sensible form *with* matter when its matter *becomes disposed* to that form in the same way as it is already disposed in the agent ... The patient receives a sensible form *without* matter when it becomes like the agent in form *without becoming similarly disposed* in its matter." (Burnyeat, "Aquinas," 140). The emphasis on the two expressions involving becomes/becoming is mine and points to the difference with respect to my reading, according to which the material disposition of the patient *is* either similar or dissimilar to that of the agent regardless of the action of the agent. Although my 'static' reading fits better with the general principle about the dependence of the modes of reception on the nature of the recipients, Burnyeat's 'dynamic' reading also finds some support in Aquinas's text (for example, the use of the verb 'acquire' in part (ii)). I am not aware of any passages in which Aquinas notes this ambiguity and clarifies it.

Going back to Aquinas's text, note that Aquinas also uses the notion of mode of being (*modus essendi*) of a form F to describe the difference between the two modes of reception of F. According to this description, the material reception of a form F in a patient is that in which F has the same mode of being in the agent and in the patient, whereas the immaterial reception of F in a patient is that in which F has a distinct mode of being in the agent and the patient. The relevant forms are inhering forms so that their mode of being is a mode of being in a subject. As we have seen, for Aquinas, it is the nature of the subject that determines the mode in which a form is received and hence has being in it. Accordingly, the appeal to the notion of mode of being does not shed further light on the distinction between the two modes of reception of a form as we have presented it above. Anyway, it is the language of the modes of being that Aquinas employs at the end of the passage when he applies his general account to the case of the senses. Thus, he says that the senses receive the form without the matter because the form has a different mode of being in the senses and in the sensible thing. And it is to mark the distinction between these different modes of being that Aquinas introduces the terms "natural" and "intentional"/"spiritual": a sensible form has natural being in the sensible thing and an intentional or spiritual being in the senses. Thus, the form of red has natural being in the apple and intentional or spiritual being in the eyes. Here, like elsewhere in similar contexts, "spiritual" and "intentional" are taken as synonymous.

What does Aquinas mean by "spiritual" or "intentional"? This is a crucial question but difficult to answer, since Aquinas does not offer anywhere an explicit definition or characterization of these terms.¹⁹ What is very clear from other passages is that his understanding of them supports the "spiritualist" interpretation advocated by Burnyeat: a form F with intentional or spiritual being in a subject does not make that subject being F.²⁰ Thus, while the apple, in which the form of red has natural being, is red, the eyes, in which the same form has intentional being, are not red. It is

¹⁹ For a very good and comprehensive discussion of this issue, see R. Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1997), 31-60.

²⁰ See, for example, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 78, a. 3, resp.: "Est autem duplex immutatio, una naturalis, et alia spiritualis. Naturalis quidem, secundum quod forma immutantis recipitur in immutato secundum esse naturale, sicut calor in calefacto. Spiritualis autem, secundum quod forma immutantis recipitur in immutato secundum esse spirituale; *ut forma coloris in pupilla, quae non fit per hoc colorata*. Ad operationem autem sensus requiritur immutatio spiritualis, per quam intentio formae sensibilis fiat in organo sensus [...]" (ed. Rome, 1888; emphasis is mine).

mainly because of this negative feature that Aquinas's view has attracted the attention of Aristotelian scholars.

Despite its omission of any substantial clarifications of what spiritual or intentional being is, Aquinas's exegesis of the Aristotelian formula is actually very helpful to reach an accurate assessment of his view of intentionality. For it contains precise indications in support of a specific model of intentionality. The two basic ingredients of this model are (i) sameness in form and (ii) intentional being. In our example, it is (specifically) the same form of red that has natural being in the apple but intentional being in the eyes. As to (i) there is indeed nothing in Aquinas's exegesis of the Aristotelian formula that suggests that the sensible form received in the sensory organs is specifically different from the form existing in the sensible object. The difference he points out is only relative to the modes of being of one and the same kind of form. Thus, the crucial feature of this model is that intentionality is associated to a distinctive type of being of a form but not to a distinctive type of form or entity, so that the contrast is between the natural and intentional beings of the same kind of form F rather than between a form F and its intentional counterpart, that is, form F and the intention of form F, or between natural and intentional forms.

This is very relevant for my purpose of assessing Giles of Rome's exegesis of the Aristotelian formula and its relationship to Aquinas's. For we shall see that Giles resorts to the notion of intentional form.

Giles of Rome

Giles devotes a specific Question of his *De anima* commentary to the Aristotelian formula (*utrum sensus sit susceptivus specierum sine materia*).²¹ His discussion is much more extensive than that of Aquinas but shows his influence. Note for example that, like Aquinas, Giles opens his Question by raising the problem of the relevance of the Aristotelian formula:

²¹ Giles's Commentary on Aristotle's *De anima* is an early work, written before 1278. For an excellent study of Giles's views on cognition in his mature works *De cognitione angelorum* (1287) and *Quodlibeta* (1285-1295), see G. Pini, "Cognition," in *A Companion to Giles of Rome*, ed. C.F. Briggs and P.S. Eardley (Leiden-Boston, 2016), 150-172. On Giles's contrasting accounts of sensory cognition in the *De anima* Commentary and in *De cognitione angelorum*, see C. Trifogli, "Giles of Rome on Sense Perception," forthcoming in *Quaestio. Yearbook of the History of Metaphysics*. For the dates of Giles's works, see F. Del Punta, S. Donati, and C. Luna, "Egidio Romano," in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, vol 42 (Rome, 1993), 319-341.

One may doubt whether the senses are receptive of the species without the matter.

It seems that this is not the case, because the condition “without the matter” can either be understood (i) in the sense that the senses do not receive the matter of the agent or (ii) in the sense that the senses do not receive the form in a material way.

(i) If to receive a form without the matter is understood in the sense that the senses do not receive the matter of the agent, this is not distinctive of the senses, but, as is commonly maintained, this holds for all patients. For a patient receives something from the agent only insofar as the agent acts; but an agent does not act in accordance with the matter but in accordance with a form. Accordingly, what a patient receives from the agent is a form and not the matter.

(ii) Nor can the claim that the senses are receptive of the species without the matter be understood in the sense that they do not receive a form in a material way, given that whatever is received in the senses is received as here and now and therefore in a material way.²²

In this passage the influence of Aquinas is clear. Of the two initial arguments against the soundness of the Aristotelian formula presented in it, the first one (i) is actually the same as the argument presented by Aquinas.²³ The second one (ii), although not found in Aquinas, is an objection to Aquinas’s reply to argument (i). As we have seen, Aquinas’s strategy to deal with (i) is to propose an alternative understanding of the expressions “with the matter” and “without the matter” according to which they are not used to distinguish the kinds of entity received in the subject of an ordinary change and in the senses respectively (i.e., form with the matter and form without the matter respectively), but the kinds of way in which one and the same kind of entity is

²² Giles of Rome, *In De anima*, II, c. 122 (ed. Venice, 1500, fol. 52ra): “Dubitaret forte aliquis utrum sensus sit susceptivus specierum sine materia. Et videtur quod non, quia aut (i) intelligitur sine materia quia non recipit materiam agentis aut (ii) quia non recipit formam modo materiali. (i) Si intelligitur recipere formam sine materia quia non recipit materiam agentis, hoc non est proprium sensus, sed, ut communiter ponitur, est commune omni passo. Nam passum non recipit ab agente nisi secundum quod agens agit; agens autem non agit secundum materiam sed secundum formam. Unde passum non recipit ab agente materiam sed formam. (ii) Rursus, non potest intelligi quod sensus sit susceptivus specierum sine materia quia non recipit formam modo materiali, cum quicquid recipitur in sensu recipiatur hic et nunc et per consequens materialiter.”

²³ See above, xx.

received: materially in the subject of an ordinary change and immaterially (/spiritually/intentionally) in the senses.²⁴ Argument (ii) points out that Aquinas's strategy fails because it is not the case a sensible form is received in the senses immaterially, given that the senses are material.

Giles's actual reply to the two initial arguments at the very end of his Question is relatively uninteresting, and does not add much to Aquinas's own reply, except hinting at how the notion of immaterial reception should be understood to avoid the problem raised in (ii).²⁵ Much more interesting are the general arguments that Giles presents in the body of the Question in support of the Aristotelian formula. There are three of them, one from each of the three main factors involved in a change: in Giles's words, the "Way from the patient", the "Way from the agent", and the "Way from the mode of acting".²⁶ By Giles's own admission the third way does not add anything to the first two ways but it is rather a corollary of them.²⁷ So we shall concentrate on the first two ways.

The first way becomes clear as follows.

(i) For in some cases an agent assimilates the patient to itself in an absolute sense so that the patient receives the name and the definition of the agent. For example, fire acts on air in such a way that air becomes fire and fire assimilates air to itself. In other cases, however, an agent acts on a patient in such a way that the patient is not assimilated to the agent in an absolute sense, but it only receives a **likeness of the form** that exists in

²⁴ See above, xx.

²⁵ Giles of Rome, *In De anima*, II, c. 122 (ed. Venice, 1500, fol. 52rb-va): "(i) Quod vero obiciebatur quod hoc est commune omni agenti quod agat secundum formam, non secundum materiam, et per consequens est commune omni passo quod recipiat formam sine materia, dicendum quod in actionibus realibus, licet verum sit quod a forma illae sint principaliter, tamen totum compositum agit ita quod non est verum ibi quod agat forma sine materia. Et sicut ibi non agit forma sine materia, sic passum non recipit formam sine materia, sed recipit formam illo modo materiali quo in agente existit. In actionibus vero intentionalibus quae attribuuntur formae, non composito, ibi quodammodo agit forma sine materia et passum recipit quodammodo formam sine materia quia non recipit formam illo modo materiali quo in agente existit. (ii) Quod vero ulterius addebatur quod sensus recipit formam modo materiali quia recipit eam cum condicionibus hic et nunc, dici debet quod non est intentio quod sensus non recipiat formam modo materiali quia non recipiat eam cum condicionibus, sed quia recipit eam modo intentionalibus, non illo modo materiali quo est in obiecto."

²⁶ Giles of Rome, *In De anima*, II, c. 122 (ed. Venice, 1500, fol. 52ra): "Dicendum quod sensum esse susceptivum specierum sine materia triplici via venari possumus secundum quod in omni actione tria est considerare, videlicet agens et patiens et modum agendi. Prima ergo via ad hoc declarandum sumitur ex parte passi, secunda ex parte agentis, tertia est parte modi agendi."

²⁷ Giles of Rome, *In De anima*, II, c. 122 (ed. Venice, 1500, fol. 52rb).

the agent, for example, a solid and coloured body that acts on air does not assimilate air to itself in such a way that air becomes a solid body, but only a **likeness of a colour** is produced in air.²⁸

(ii) The reason why air receives the **likeness of a colour** existing in a solid body in such a way that it does not become a solid body is that *the matter in air has a different disposition from the matter in the solid body*. And since the acts of the active things are in the patient and what has a disposition, because of *different dispositions of matter* different receptions occur in the two cases so that *a colour exists really and naturally* in a solid body, whereas it is received in air adventitiously and according to an **intention**. Thus, air is assimilated to a coloured body in such a way that it receives the **likeness of the form of the colour** without, however, being assimilated in such a way that *its matter has a similar disposition* to the reception of such a form. Therefore, looking at this issue from the side of the patient, for example, from the side of air, we can say that air is **receptive of the form without the matter because it receives the likeness of the form** of the agent in such a way that, however, *its matter does not have a similar disposition to the agent*.

(iii) And what has been said about the medium must also be understood in the case of the organ. For the senses are not acted upon by a sensible object in such a way that they become such an object, but they only receive a **likeness of the sensible form** without the condition that *their matter has a similar disposition to the sensible object...*

(iv) What the Philosopher intends to say, therefore, is that just as wax receives **the likeness of the form** that exists in an iron or golden signet ring in such a way that it does not become iron or gold because it

²⁸ The background of Giles's remarks about colour is Aristotle's definition of colour in *De Sensu* 3, 439b11-12 as "color est extremitas perspicui in corpore terminato" (J. Hamesse, *Les Auctoritates Aristotelis* (Louvain-Paris, 1974), 196). From the context of the discussion it is clear that by *corpus terminatum*, Aristotle does not simply mean a finite body as distinct from an infinite one, but a body that is limited by its own boundaries rather than by the boundaries of the bodies surrounding it. Indeed, he contrasts *corpus terminatum* with bodies like air or water. I think therefore that the notion of solid body is that which gives a good approximation of what Aristotle and Giles mean here by *corpus terminatum*. For the connection between solid body and body limited by its own boundaries, see Aristotle, *Meteorologica* IV.4-5. In Giles's interpretation of Aristotle's definition, a colour has proper/natural existence in solid bodies only, whereas fluid bodies like air and water can only receive a likeness of a colour.

receives a **likeness of that form**, due to the fact that neither *matter has a similar disposition in* the two cases nor the matter of the wax has a similar disposition to the agent, so when sight or air are acted upon by a solid body in which the colour exists they receive a **likeness of the form of a colour** in such a way that they do not become the solid body itself nor the object itself. And because from such an action they receive a similar form in such a way it does not follow from it that they have a *matter with a similar disposition*, therefore they are said to receive the form or species without the matter.²⁹

The initial move of this argument is that of understanding the distinction implied by the Aristotelian formula as a distinction between two different ways in which a patient becomes similar to a thing acting on it, that is, to the agent:³⁰ a patient P acted upon by an agent A of kind F either becomes itself a thing of kind F, that is, absolutely similar to A, or does not become a thing of kind F, but only somehow similar to A. As the rest of the argument makes clear, the senses or the sensory

²⁹ Giles of Rome, *In De anima*, II, c. 122 (ed. Venice, 1500, fol. 52ra): “Prima via sic patet. (i) Nam aliquando agens assimilatur sibi passum simpliciter ita quod passum suscipit nomen et definitionem agentis, ut ignis agit in aerem ita quod aer fit ignis et assimilatur sibi ipsum; aliquando vero agens agit in passum ita quod passum non simpliciter assimilatur agenti, sed solum accipit aliquam similitudinem formae existentis in agente, ut corpus terminatum et coloratum agens in aerem non assimilatur sibi aerem sic quod aer fiat corpus terminatum, sed solum quaedam similitudo coloris in aere efficitur. (ii) Ratio autem quare aer sic recipit similitudinem coloris existentis in corpore terminato quod tamen non efficitur corpus terminatum est quia materia in aere est aliter disposita quam in corpore terminato. Et quia actus activorum sunt in patiente et disposito, per aliam et aliam dispositionem materiae fiet ibi alia et alia receptio ita quod in corpore terminato habet esse color realiter et naturaliter, in aere vero recipitur extranee et secundum intentionem. Aer itaque sic assimilatur corpori colorato accipiens similitudinem formae coloris quod tamen non assimilatur ita quod habeat materiam similiter dispositam ad susceptionem talis formae. Ex parte ergo ipsius passi, ut ex parte aeris, dicere possumus quod [si] aer <est> susceptivus formae sine materia quia sic recipit similitudinem formae agentis quod tamen non habet materiam similiter dispositam agenti. (iii) Et quod dictum est de medio intelligendum est de organo. Nam ipse sensus non patitur a sensibili quia fiat ipsum sensibile, sed solum accipit similitudinem formae sensibilis absque eo quod habeat materiam similiter dispositam sensibili... (iv) Est ergo intentio Philosophi quod, sicut cera accipit similitudinem formae existentis in sigillo ferreo vel aureo ita tamen quod non fit ferrum nec aurum quia accipit similitudinem illius formae eo quod materia non similiter disponitur hic et ibi nec habet materiam similiter dispositam agenti, sic visus vel aer patiens a corpore terminato in quo est color sic suscipit similitudinem formae coloris quod non efficitur ipsum corpus terminatum nec ipsum obiectum. Quia ex tali actione sic suscipit formam similem quod ex hoc non sequitur quod habeat materiam similiter dispositam, ideo dicitur suscipere formam vel speciem sine materia.”

³⁰ This move suggests that in Giles’s reading the Aristotelian formula about the reception of the forms without the matter is supposed to explain and qualify Aristotle’s earlier claim that the senses become like the object perceived. See Aristotle, *De anima*, II, c. 5 (418a3-6): “What is capable of perceiving is in potentiality such as the object of perception is already in actuality, as was just said. Hence, it is affected while being unlike what affects is, but when it has been affected, it has been made like it and is such as what affected it is.” (translation Shields).

organs become similar to the sensible objects acting on them in the second way. For example, the eyes do not become a red thing when they are acted upon by a red apple. In the contemporary jargon, this is the spiritualist reading of the Aristotelian formula, which is then at the forefront of Giles's exegesis of the passage from *De anima* 2.12, whereas it remains implicit in Aquinas's. Another difference between the exegeses of the two commentators is that, while they both think that the Aristotelian formula applies not only to the senses or sensory organs but also to the medium of some senses (typically of sight), Aquinas does not mention the case of the medium in his comments on the Aristotelian passage whereas Giles does.³¹ In fact, the first example that Giles uses in pars. (i) and (ii) to illustrate the distinction between the two ways in which a patient becomes similar to the patient is that of air being acted upon by fire and by a coloured body, respectively: when it is acted upon by fire, air becomes fire, but when it is acted upon by a coloured body, that is, as a medium of sight, air does not become a coloured body. It is only later in par. (iii) that Giles applies this distinction to the case of the senses. In his exegesis of the Aristotelian example of the signet ring in par. (iv) too, Giles treats the cases of the medium and the senses as parallel. These differences between the exegeses of the two commentators can at least in part be explained in terms of the different scopes of their respective discussions. Aquinas's intention seems to be that of complementing his literal exposition with only what is strictly required to make sense of the Aristotelian formula about the reception of forms without the matter, whereas in devoting a whole Question to this formula Giles seems to take it as an occasion to present a good number of general aspects of his view about intentionality.

Giles's discussion, however, does not differ from Aquinas's simply in having a broader scope, but also in doctrinal content. For Giles introduces the notion of likeness of a form (*similitudo formae*), printed in bold in the text above, which is not present in Aquinas's text. Furthermore, this notion has a central role in Giles's argumentation. Indeed, it is the notion he resorts to when he gives an explicit definition of the two ways in which a patient becomes similar to the correlated agent. The contrast drawn by Giles is that between the case in which a patient receives the form F of the agent ("absolute" assimilation) and the case in which it receives a likeness of the form F of the agent ("qualified" assimilation). For example, the eyes

³¹ For Aquinas, see, for example, *In De anima*, II, c. XX (ed. Gauthier, 152a24-153a88).

and the air do not become absolutely similar to the red apple acting on them because they do not receive the form of red but a likeness of the form of red.

The difference between the two commentators' exegeses of the Aristotelian formula suggested by Giles's appeal to the notion of likeness of a form seems to be quite substantial. For Aquinas, receiving a form with the matter and receiving it without the matter are to be understood as two different modes of reception of the same kind of thing: material and immaterial reception of the form F of the sensible object. For Giles, instead, they are to be primarily understood as receptions of different kinds of thing: a form F and the likeness of F respectively. Thus, for short, for Aquinas the difference lies in the mode of reception, whereas for Giles in the thing received.

Note that, while he introduces the new contrast between a form and the likeness of a form, Giles also keeps Aquinas's contrast between different modes of reception due to different material dispositions, that is, the contrast between material and immaterial reception (see the italics in the text above). This may suggest that what Giles means by the likeness of a form F is the form F in a different mode of reception, that is, immaterial reception in Aquinas's sense. If this suggestion is correct, then the innovation introduced by Giles would be purely terminological and the contrast with Aquinas's not as substantial as it *prima facie* appears. But this suggestion is wrong –I think. Indeed, the different mode of reception or material disposition of the medium and the organ is adduced by Giles as an explanation of the fact that medium and the organ receive the likeness of the form of the agent, and not as an explanation of what the likeness of a form is or of the meaning of the word “likeness”. In my reading, Giles's view is that it is because the medium and the organ have a material disposition different from that of the agent that they receive a likeness of the form of the agent and not the form itself of the agent. But this view is not the same as the view that the likeness of the form of the agent is the form of the agent received in a subject having a different material disposition. Thus, according to my reading, the likeness of the form of the agent is something altogether different from the form of the agent, and in particular it is not even the form of the agent in a different mode of being.

My reading is confirmed by Giles's second Way in support of the Aristotelian formula, the “Way from the agent”:

(i) The second way of investigating this same issue <i.e., whether the senses are receptive of the species without the matter> is taken from the side of the agent. For although an agent principally acts in virtue of its form and a patient is principally acted upon in virtue of its matter, the whole composite acts and is acted upon in such a way that the matter too is somehow the ratio of acting and the form too is the ratio of being acted upon. This is, therefore, what happens in **real actions**, which are to be ascribed to the whole composite. But **intentional actions** are not to be ascribed to the composite but to the form.

(ii) For we should imagine that being is per se divided into the ten categories. **Intentions**, however, do not belong to the genus of being per se but accidentally and by reduction. Therefore, in the case of items that are per se beings what is generated is neither a form nor the matter but a composite, whereas in the case of items that are not beings per se we can say that what is generated is the **intention** itself and that what generates it is the form itself.

(iii) Therefore, to produce a **likeness of a colour** in air is more appropriately done by the colour itself than by the whole composite or the body that has the colour.³²

This argument “from the agent” does not appear at all in Aquinas, and so it is a genuine addition to Aquinas’s exegesis. It is not, however, totally unrelated to the passage of *De anima* 2.12. On the contrary, it may very naturally be read as an attempt to make sense of the last part of that passage, in which Aristotle says that the senses are affected by “what has the colour or taste or sound, but not insofar as each is said to be something, but rather insofar as each is of a certain quality, and

³² Giles of Rome, *In De anima*, II, c. 122 (ed. Venice, 1500, fol. 52ra-b): “(i) Secunda via ad investigandum hoc idem sumitur ex parte agentis. Nam licet agens principaliter agat per formam et patiens patiatur per materiam, totum tamen compositum agit et patitur ita quod ipsa materia est aliquo modo ratio agendi et forma ratio patiendi. Sic est ergo in actionibus realibus quae sunt attribuendae toti composito. Sed actiones intentionales non sunt attribundae composito sed formae. (ii) Debemus enim imaginari quod ens per se dividatur in decem praedicamenta. Intentiones autem non sunt in genere entis per se sed per accidens et per reductionem. In his ergo quae sunt entia per se non generatur materia neque forma sed compositum, sed in his quae <non> sunt entia per se dicere possumus quod ipsa intentio generatur et ipsa forma generat[ur]. (iii) Facere ergo similitudinem coloris in aere magis est ipsius coloris quam totius compositi vel quam sit corporis habentis colorem.”

corresponding to its proportion”.³³ It is clear that this claim is about the sensible objects, that is, the agents of perception, and their way of acting on the senses, and that Aristotle wants to suggest that there is something special about the action of the sensibles on the senses.³⁴ But what is special about it or what kind of distinction Aristotle intends to draw between the action of the sensibles on the senses and an ordinary action? It is difficult to get an articulated answer to this question from the compressed and very obscure Aristotelian passage itself. It is such an answer that Giles provides in his “Way from the agent”.³⁵

Par. (i) of the text above shows that, according to Giles, the distinction that Aristotle intends to draw is that between real actions and intentional actions. The action of sensible objects on the senses (as well as on the medium) are intentional actions, not real ones. The difference between the two kinds of action primarily derives from a difference in their respective agents. In a real action the agent is the whole composite of matter and form (a material substance or the composite of a substance and some accidents), whereas in an intentional action the agent is the form alone. For example, the agent of the real actions of a hot body is the hot body itself as a whole whereas the agent of its intentional action on the organ of touch is the form of heat alone of the hot body. In par. (ii) Giles points out that to this difference in the agents there corresponds a difference in what is produced through the two kinds of actions: what is produced through a real action is a composite of matter and form whereas what is produced through an intentional action is an intention of the form that is the agent. Thus, a real action is that in which a composite generates a composite, whereas an intentional action is that in which a form of a composite generates an intention of that form.

³³ See above, xx.

³⁴ Actually, this claim plays a crucial role in Tweedale’s interpretation of the Aristotelian formula about the reception of the forms without the matter. He maintains that the whole peripatetic speculation about sensation arises from a misreading of this formula that takes “matter” to refer to the matter of the sensory organs, whereas the correct reading is the one that takes it to refer to the matter of the sensible object, as the claim in question suggests. See Tweedale, “Origins,” 226-227.

³⁵ Aquinas offers a very short exegesis of the passage in question, in which he repeats his main point about immaterial reception but fails to address Aristotle’s suggestion that there is something special about the agent of perception. Thomas Aquinas, *In De anima*, II, cap. XXIV (ed. Gauthier, 169b64-75): “Et *similiter* sensus patitur a sensibili *habente colorem aut humorem*, id est saporem, *aut sonum*, *set non in quantum unumquodque illorum dicitur*, id est non patitur a lapide colorato in quantum est lapis nec a melle dulci in quantum est mel, quia in sensu non fit similis dispositio ad formam, que erat in illis subiectis, *set patitur ab eis in quantum huiusmodi*, id est in quantum coloratum uel saporosum, *et secundum rationem*, id est secundum formam: assimilatur enim sensus sensibili secundum formam, *set non secundum dispositionem materie*.” (the italics are Aristotle’s words).

Giles's favourite terms in this argument for the form received in a medium or a sensory organ is *intentio* or *forma intentionalis*. These are regarded as synonymous with the term *similitudo formae*, which is Giles's favourite term in the "Way from the patient". Relevant for our purpose are some explicit indications that the intentions Giles talks about in this argument are different ontological items from the corresponding real/natural forms.

One very compelling indication of this appears in par. (ii) where Giles claims that intentions are not per se beings of the Aristotelian categories, but they belong to a category only accidentally and derivatively. This idea is left unexplained, but one possible explanation is that, while the form of whiteness, for example, is a genuine quality, that is, a per se item of one of the Aristotelian categories of being, its intentional counterpart, the intention of whiteness, can be classified as a quality not because it is a genuine quality but because it is produced by or somehow associated to a genuine quality as its intention.³⁶

Another clear indication is offered by an argument that Giles presents in support of his main claim in the "Way from the agent" that the agent of sense perception is a form alone:

That this kind of action belongs to the form itself and that in such actions it is the form that generates and the **intention** that is generated can be proved by an argument and by a sign. The argument is the following: in those generations in which neither the matter nor the form but the composite is generated there cannot be many forms that are specifically the same in the same subject, so that there cannot be two whitenesses in the same subject, so that in the generation of a white body neither whiteness nor the body is generated but the whole composite, that is, a white body... In the generation of the **intentions**, however, this is not the case. The reason for this is that **intentions** do not receive their number from their subject. For in the same punctual portion of air there can be many **intentions** of whiteness, differing only in number, which would not

³⁶ Giles is not the only medieval philosopher who maintains that intentions are not genuine things in Aristotle's sense. This is actually the standard view among the English commentators of the second half of the 13th century. See S. Donati, "Tra psicologia e filosofia della natura: la teoria delle *species* nella discussione sulla causalità naturale (Commenti inglesi ai *Libri naturales*, 1240-1300 ca.)", *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 26 (2015), 277-336, esp. 301-309.

be possible if in such generation the composite rather than the form alone were generated. For if what is generated were not an **intention** or an **intentional form** but the body having a form, it would not be possible that there would be many such generations and that, however, there would not be many bodies having **intentional forms**; therefore, it would be impossible that many **intentions** of the same form were in the same part of the body.³⁷

This argument is overall quite obscure but the bit of it that is relevant for our purpose is relatively clear.³⁸ This is the claim about the difference between the properties of numerical identity/distinction of real forms and of the corresponding intentions respectively. Real or natural forms are such their numerical identity and distinction are determined by that of their subjects so that there cannot be numerically distinct forms in the same subject. For example, there cannot be numerically distinct whitenesses in the same body so that numerically distinct whitenesses require numerically distinct bodies as their subjects. But intentions are not “numbered” by their subjects so that there can be numerically many intentions of the same form in the same subject. For example, numerically distinct white bodies can produce numerically distinct intentions in the same portion of air.

To provide a more in-depth analysis of the issues raised by Giles’s “Way from the agent” and to attempt a reconstruction of his general theory of intentionality goes beyond the scope of this paper. I think, however, that the texts presented above provide enough evidence that in Giles’s interpretation the Aristotelian formula “receiving the forms without the matter” does not or not only signify a peculiar mode

³⁷ Giles of Rome, *In De anima*, II, c. 122 (ed. Venice, 1500, fol. 52rb): “Quod autem haec actio sit ipsius formae et in talibus ipsa forma generet et ipsa intentio generetur probare possumus ratione et signo. Ratione quidem quia in illis generationibus in quibus non generatur nec materia nec forma sed compositum secundum eandem speciem non possunt esse plures formae in eodem subiecto, ut non possunt esse duae albedines in eodem subiecto, ut in generatione corporis albi non generatur albedo nec corpus sed generatur totum compositum ut corpus album... Sed in generatione intentionum non sic se habent quia intentiones non recipiunt numerum ex subiecto. In eodem enim puncto aeris possunt esse plures intentiones albedinis solo numero differentes, quod esse non posset si in tali generatione non generaretur forma sed compositum. Si enim non generaretur intentio sive forma intentionalis sed generaretur corpus formam habens, esse non posset quod essent plures tales generationes et tamen non essent plura corpora habentia intentionales formas; quare numquam in eadem parte corporis esse possent eiusdem formae plures intentiones.”

³⁸ Giles offers a more extensive account of the special properties of numerical identity and diversity of intentions as well as of other distinctive properties in his *Quaestio de intellectu possibili*, in connection with his discussion of Averroes’s view about the possible intellect. See Giles of Rome, *De intellectu possibili* (Venice, 1500, fols. 91va-92rb).

of reception or inherence or being of a sensible form, as in Aquinas's interpretation, but also a peculiar thing received, that is, not a sensible form but the likeness or intention of it, which is something very different from the sensible form itself.

Conclusion

In concluding this paper, let us go back to the spiritualist reading of the Aristotelian formula about the reception of the forms without the matter proposed by the Aristotelian scholar Myles Burnyeat and let us compare it with the spiritualist readings proposed by Aquinas and Giles.

Burnyeat gives a very poignant description of the significance of his reading when he says:

For an Aristotelian, both sensible and intelligible forms are present to the world in two irreducibly different ways, one of which is cognitive of the other. The form of tiger, for example, is active in the forests as the organizing principle of the life of the tiger, but it may also be present, differently, in the intellect of a zoologist who has reached a principled understanding of that kind of life. Similarly, the orange and black colouring of a tiger's striped coat will also be present, differently, in the eye of its mate as they hunt together.³⁹

This is indeed a very fascinating story. However, I find it very hard to believe. And, as is clear from my assessment of Giles's view, Giles does not believe this story either or at least this is not the story he tells. It is true that Giles adopts the spiritualist reading and actually, as his "Way from the patient" shows, his major concern is that of accounting for the main point of the spiritualist reading, that is, that the cognitive subject does not take on the form of the cognized object in a literal way so that, to use Burnyeat's example for intellectual cognition, the intellect does not become a tiger because of its cognitive assimilation to the form of tiger. For Giles, however, the main reason why the intellect does not become a tiger is that it does not receive the form of tiger, but something else – a likeness of it or its intentional counterpart. Or

³⁹ Burnyeat, "Aquinas," 141.

with Giles's example, the medium of sight (air) and the eyes do not become white when they are acted upon by a white object, but the reason for this is that they do not receive the form of whiteness, but something else, i.e., its intention. So what Giles, unlike Burnyeat, does not seem to believe in is that the form of whiteness can be present in something without making it white; it is a likeness or an intention of the form of whiteness that by its presence does not make something white and actually makes it cognitive of whiteness, but not the form of whiteness itself.

What about Aquinas? Does he believe the fascinating story told by Burnyeat? Aquinas's interpretation of the Aristotelian formula suggests that he does. Actually, the way in which Burnyeat tells his story in the passage quoted above is inspired by Aquinas's distinction between the two ways of being of one and the same kind of form, which is the key feature of Aquinas's interpretation. However, I have strong doubts that this is the story that Aquinas consistently or even dominantly tells or believes. More precisely, I agree with Burnyeat that this is the story that Aquinas wants to tell in his interpretation of the Aristotelian formula. I also think, however, that in other important contexts Aquinas seems to tell a story very similar to that of Giles, according to which the form present in the senses in an intentional being is not specifically the same form F that is present in its natural being in the sensible object, but something else, which Aquinas, just like Giles, frequently calls "likeness" or "intention" of form F.

To explore this tension in Aquinas's account of intentionality in all its complexity is beyond the limits of this paper.⁴⁰ Here I just want to point out one such crucial context. This is when Aquinas explicitly raises the question of the relationship between the object of cognition (both in the case of sensory and in the case of intellectual cognition) and the form received in the corresponding cognitive faculty.⁴¹ Reformulated in terms of Burnyeat's examples, Aquinas's question would ask whether the object of an act of intellectual cognition about tigers is the form of tiger existing in a tiger or the form of tiger existing in the intellect and whether the object of a visual act about the colour of a tiger is the orange and black existing in the tiger itself or those existing in the eyes. An immediate reaction to these questions is that

⁴⁰ For an in-depth analysis and assessment of the different views of intentionality that Aquinas's texts suggest in the case of intellectual cognition, see J.E. Brower and S. Brower-Toland, "Aquinas on Mental Representation: Concepts and Intentionality," *Philosophical Review* 117, 2 (2008), 193-243.

⁴¹ For example, in *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 85, a. 2 (*Utrum species intelligibiles abstractae a phantasmatibus se habeant ad intellectum nostrum ut quod intelligitur*).

they are the wrong questions to ask since they arise from the assumption that there is a genuine distinction between the two alternatives they put forward. But this assumption is wrong. For it seems in contrast with a central idea of the spiritualist reading proposed by Burnyeat, namely, that in a cognitive act the relevant form of the object and the form caused by the object in the correlated cognitive faculty are forms of one and the same kind. Aquinas, however, clearly thinks that these questions are meaningful. His reply to them is that both in the case of sensory cognition and in that of intellectual cognition what is cognized is the form existing in the object and not that existing in the cognitive faculty. In this context Aquinas uses the term ‘species’ to refer to the cognitive counterparts of the forms existing in the object. Reformulated with this term, Aquinas’s reply is that what is cognized is the form existing in the object and not its species existing in the cognitive faculty.

One may suggest that what Aquinas means by ‘species’ in this context is the form of the object in its intentional existence. If we follow this suggestion, Aquinas’s reply to the question about the object of cognition can still be reconciled with his interpretation of the Aristotelian formula. For his reply would be that what is cognized is the form of the object in its natural existence and not the form of the object in its intentional existence. Just like Aquinas’s interpretation of the Aristotelian formula, this reply too focuses on the distinction between two kinds of existence of the same kind of form, but it does not also imply a distinction between the kinds of form existing in the object and in the cognitive faculty respectively. The problem with this suggestion is that there is no textual evidence for it in Aquinas’s official discussion of the question of the object of cognition.⁴² In this context Aquinas provides an explicit description of a species, but the description is not in terms of intentional existence of the same kind of form that exists naturally in the object but, just as Giles does in his interpretation of the Aristotelian formula, in terms of a likeness (*similitudo*) of this form.⁴³

⁴² See previous note.

⁴³ See, for example, how Aquinas replies to the first *contra* argument of the question about the object of cognition in the *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 85, a. 2, an argument that makes the point that what is understood (i.e., the object of an intellectual act) must exist in the intellect: “Ad primum ergo dicendum quod *intellectum est in intelligente per suam similitudinem*. Et per hunc modum dicitur quod intellectum in actu est intellectus in actu, inquantum *similitudo rei intellectae est forma intellectus*; sicut *similitudo rei sensibilis est forma sensus* in actu. Unde non sequitur quod species intelligibilis abstracta sit id quod actu intelligitur, sed quod sit *similitudo eius*.” (emphasis is mine).

