

**The Luminosity of Existence — Dr. C. S. Morrissey, Redeemer Pacific College**

Faith may arise from semiosis, the action of signs. But reason, capable of semiotic — the meta-scientific knowledge of the action of signs — is not at all at odds with faith. The very being of signs is indifferent to the objects which signs may present to the knowing subject. Signs, as intelligible supra-subjective relations, may present to the knowing subject either mind-dependent objects (like unicorns) that are not real things or mind-independent things (like horses) that may have also become objects for consciousness. Therefore we cannot set faith at odds with reason, as if the modern philosophical revolution has somehow disclosed for us, on the basis of existence, the primacy of faith with respect to reason. For the postmodern insight into the being of signs shows that any modern insights into “the luminosity of existence”, however salutary they may be in terms of clarifying the supra-subjective expanse of the object-world for any knowing subject, are nevertheless always nominalistic because they are always unable to admit the existence that is proper to that supra-subjective realm. For modern philosophy is ultimately oblivious to the being of signs, which being is indifferent to the mode of existence of whatever objects that the sign’s being brings into the awareness of thought. The supra-subjective relations that constitute both faith and reason have the same mode of being. To be sure, the objects of faith transcend the sensory subjects which alone may become the grounding bases for reason’s proper objects. But there is no discontinuity between the intellectual activity of both faith and reason due to the being of the sign which supra-subjectively relates the knowing subject to any object, because it doesn’t matter if the object is proportioned to reason (sensory in origin) or supra-rational in origin (as revelatory of things and relations directly inaccessible to either sensory or intellectual consciousness): faith and reason are both intellectual powers.

“We must assign on the part of the intellect some power to make things actually intelligible, by highlighting the relational and structural aspects in (‘abstraction of the species from’) the material conditions,”<sup>1</sup> because “nothing is reduced from potentiality to act except by something in act — just like the senses are made actual by what is actually sensible.”<sup>2</sup>

“Sensible things are found in act outside the soul; and hence there is no need for an active sense. Wherefore it is clear that in the nutritive part [of the soul] all the powers are active, whereas in the sensitive part all [the powers] are passive. But in the intellectual part, there is something active and something passive.”<sup>3</sup>

“light is required for sight, in order to make colors actually visible. And according to this the active intellect is required for understanding, in like manner and for the same reason as light is required for seeing.”<sup>4</sup>

“the intelligible in act is not something existing in nature, if we consider the nature of things sensible, which do not subsist apart from matter. And therefore in order to understand them, the immaterial nature of the passive intellect, would not suffice but for the presence of the active intellect which makes things actually intelligible by way of ‘abstraction’ [i.e., by highlighting the relations invisible to sense-perception].”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Aquinas, *S.T. I*, 79, 3, co.: *Oportebat ponere aliquam virtutem ex parte intellectus, quae faceret intelligibilia in actu, per abstractionem specierum a conditionibus materialibus.* (Translation mine, revised from the Dominican Fathers.)

<sup>2</sup> Aquinas, *S.T. I*, 79, 3, co.: *nihil autem reducitur de potentia in actum, nisi per aliquod ens actu, sicut sensus fit in actu per sensibile in actu.*

<sup>3</sup> Aquinas, *S.T. I*, 79, 3, ad 1: *Sensibilia inveniuntur actu extra animam, et ideo non oportuit ponere sensum agentem. Et sic patet quod in parte nutritiva omnes potentiae sunt activae; in parte autem sensitiva, omnes passivae; in parte vero intellectiva est aliquid activum, et aliquid passivum.*

<sup>4</sup> Aquinas, *S.T. I*, 79, 3, ad 2: *lumen requiritur ad visum, ut faciat colores actu visibiles. Et secundum hoc, similiter requiritur, et propter idem, intellectus agens ad intelligendum, propter quod lumen ad videndum.*

<sup>5</sup> Aquinas, *S.T. I*, 79, 3, ad 3: *intelligibile autem in actu non est aliquid existens in rerum natura, quantum ad naturam rerum sensibilibus, quae non subsistunt praeter materiam. Et ideo ad intelligendum non sufficeret immaterialitas intellectus possibilis, nisi adesset intellectus agens, qui faceret intelligibilia in actu per modum abstractionis.*