

Map of Possibilities for How Knowing Works in Rational Animals

(from Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I.Q84.aa1-3,6)

“What is received exists in the receiver according to the receiver’s own way of being” (a1, body)

	EMPIRICISTS (pre-Socratics)	RATIONALISTS (Plato and friends)	ARISTOTELIANS (Thomas)
Objects of Knowledge (article 1)	Only bodies exist (constantly changing; cannot have exactly same sensation twice)	Separate forms also exist (mind knows these; bodies participate imperfectly in them)	Forms exist <i>in</i> things in various ways (gradation, sensation, understanding)
[Difficulties raised by Thomas]	Problem: Science (rigorous knowing) perishes.	Problems: 1) No knowledge of motion (science of <i>nature</i> perishes). 2) Want to know stuff around us but have to know sth else instead.	Response: Change always presupposes something constant: both what underlies the change (substance, matter) and relations (laws) of change
Knowers (articles 2-3)	Like is known by like, so soul must be material if sensation and knowledge are to be possible.	Innate ideas (forms built into intellect), enlightened by the good. *Sensation is an occasion for recollection, not a cause of knowing. *Embodiment impedes the activity of forms.	*Knowing is better the less it is limited by matter (over distance, across time, etc.). *Learning = coming to understand conclusions through principles (reply to Meno problem).
[Difficulties raised by Thomas]	Problems: 1) So, intellect = sensation? 2) Beings <i>without</i> mind know in just the same way as beings <i>with</i> mind? (Plant nutrition = knowing; one part of fire knows other parts of fire?)	Problems: 1) Soul and body belong together, so how could embodiment impede forms? (Could we really forget innate knowledge because of birth?) 2) Broken sensation → lack of knowledge (blindness means no idea of color).	Response: *Even in sensing material things, what we sense is the thing’s activity (form), not primarily its potency (material). *Openness to what is not itself is unusual for material, since matter usually <i>limits</i> things, rather than opens up.
Interaction of Knower and Known (article 6)	Bodies discharge images, which enter us through sensation. This <i>is</i> knowledge. Sensation = intellect. (The soul is like a birdcage for images.)	Sensed stuff only <i>stimulates</i> an immaterial, idea-forming response (recollection). Sensation ≠ intellect. (Sensation unnecessary or harmful for knowing.)	Sensory images are necessary but not sufficient for knowing; actively working them over brings knowledge. (Sensation is like material cause for knowing.)

In modernity:

Hume

Descartes

(thought = dull sensation) | (sensation = confused thought)

(Kant) >

< (Merleau-Ponty)