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# Reading Teresa's Sixth Dwelling Places of the *Interior Castle* on Mystical Knowledge through Aquinas

*Leer las moradas sextas del Castillo Interior de Teresa sobre el conocimiento místico mediante Tomás de Aquino*

RECIBIDO: 6 DE MARZO DE 2021 / ACEPTADO: 1 DE AGOSTO DE 2021

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**Abstract:** The focal point of this article is the nature of the mystical knowledge presented in the sixth dwelling places of the *Interior Castle* of Teresa of Ávila. The aim is to offer a rational argument to explain the possibility and nature of such mystical knowledge. The introduction explains why the focus is specifically on the mystical knowledge of the sixth dwelling places and not on mystical knowledge in general. Further, the argument is based on Aquinas's teaching and proceeds therefrom. Since this choice of the «mental frame» is not intuitively comprehensible, the methodological part explains the reasons for it.

**Keywords:** Aquinas, Mystical Knowledge, Teresa of Ávila.

**Resumen:** El punto central de este artículo es la cuestión de la naturaleza del conocimiento místico presentado en las moradas sextas del *Castillo Interior* de Teresa de Ávila. El objetivo es ofrecer un argumento racional para explicar la posibilidad y naturaleza de tal conocimiento místico. La introducción también explica por qué el foco es particularmente el conocimiento místico de las moradas sextas y no el conocimiento místico en general. Además, el argumento se basa en la enseñanza de Tomás de Aquino. Dado que esta elección del «ámbito mental» no es comprensible intuitivamente, se explican las razones para ella en la parte metodológica.

**Palabras clave:** Tomás de Aquino, Conocimiento místico, Teresa de Ávila.

Teresa of Avila, the beloved mystic saint of Spain and teacher of the Universal Church, gave us a powerful legacy. She wrote about the spiritual life, prayer and God. She intertwined all of these topics with very mundane advice, jokes and notes on her own personal life<sup>1</sup>.

Although manifold Teresian topics have already been treated, there is one which is treated relatively sparsely and that is the question of mystical knowledge. Yet, even this question is too broad for a single paper. However, there is one specific problem connected to the question of mystical knowledge and that is mystical knowledge gained in the stage of spiritual life preceding the final union of God and man usually referred to as the «mystical marriage»<sup>2</sup>.

The full scope of St Teresa's teaching on the soul and the spiritual life is contained in her masterpiece, the *Interior Castle*<sup>3</sup>, where the teaching on the mystical marriage can also be found<sup>4</sup>. Since it is necessary to limit the topic of the article, I purposefully follow only the teaching of the *Interior Castle*. Also, this approach enables the reader to relatively easily follow the reasoning, for its fundamental symbol of a crystal castle of seven circuits of seven types of dwelling places is intuitively comprehensible and clear<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> On the topic of Teresa's style, see, for example, CARRERA, E., *Teresa of Avila's Autobiography. Authority, Power and Self in Mid-sixteenth Century Spain*, London: Legenda-Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney Pub., 2005; LORENZ, E., *Weg in die Weite. Die drei Leben der Teresa von Avila*, Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2003; PEERS, A. E., *Mother of Carmel. A portrait of St Teresa of Jesus*, New York: Morehouse-Gorham Co., 1946; WEBER, A., *Teresa of Avila and the Rhetoric of Femininity*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996; AHLGREN, G. T. W., *Teresa of Avila and the Politics of Sanctity*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996; AHLGREN, G. T. W., «Negotiating Sanctity: Holy Women in Sixteenth-Century Spain», *Church History* 64/3 (1995) 373-388.

<sup>2</sup> Teresa uses nuptial images closely related to the sixteenth-century formal process of being married with its prescribed stages (acquaintance-courtship-engagement-marriage). Thus, the pre-final stage is referred to as the «spiritual engagement». FROHLICH, M., *The Intersubjectivity of the Mystic. A Study of Teresa of Avila's Interior Castle*, Atlanta, Ga: Scholars Press, 1994, 183.

<sup>3</sup> However, various points may be found also elsewhere, namely in the *Life* and the *Way of Perfection*. Most of the features of the *Interior Castle* can be traced also in the *Life*, although the parallels are not obvious, for she uses two different styles. The *Way of Perfection* is primarily concerned with the topic of prayer. I use simultaneously the Spanish edition of her works and their English translation. ÁLVAREZ, T. (ed.), *Obras completas de santa Teresa de Jesús*, Burgos: Monte Carmelo, 2001; TERESA OF AVILA, *The Collected Works of Teresa of Avila*, III, KAVANAUGH, K. y RODRÍGUEZ, O. (eds.), Washington: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1976-1980.

<sup>4</sup> At the time of writing the *Life*, St Teresa had not reached the ultimate union with God, so this experience is absent there. There is not unanimity amongst the researchers in the Teresian corpus concerning the parallels between the *Interior Castle* and the *Life*, cfr. DICKEN, T., *The Crucible of Love. A Study of the Mysticism of St Teresa of Jesus and St John of the Cross*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, Ltd., 1963.

<sup>5</sup> I use «intuitively comprehensible» for Teresa herself complicates the basic image explicitly by stating: a. that one cannot imagine the dwelling places in a linear fashion since they encompass

Before delving deeper into St Teresa's thought, I would like to specify the topic of this article in more detail. Teresa distinguishes between natural and supernatural (mystical) knowledge. However, she also seems to describe two types of mystical knowledge – that reached or gained before the final union of mystical marriage and that which is connected solely to the latter. In this article I focus on the former type. This former mode of mystical knowledge is given by God, yet it is somehow still mediated, unlike knowledge connected to the final union, which in many respects seems not to be mediated at all. The reason for this choice is that the latter is closely connected to the question of the beatific vision and that is another complicated topic which would be better treated in a separate paper.

At this point one thing should be stressed: the aim here is not to provide an exhaustive theory of mystical knowledge as such for that is a topic worthy of monography. Rather, the question is what St Teresa of Avila says about this theme in her *Interior Castle*. However, this question serves only as a fundament for a more philosophical inquiry, namely whether there is any reasonable way of supporting Teresa's teaching on this topic by philosophical argument. Since I think there is, the major part of this article offers such philosophical argument(s) and does so in three steps which are mutually supportive.

The philosophical inquiry proceeds from Aquinas. To explain the choice of Aquinas could easily take another separate article. In brief, while directing the reader to secondary literature, the answer follows two lines. First, there have always been researchers who read the works of the great Spanish Mystics, namely Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross, through the prism of Aquinas's teaching and the second could be called a historical one. They have one common fundamental problem in how to grasp the «mystical experience» which is described usually in symbols, metaphors or vivid images, which surpasses the experience of the reality of the majority of us.

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man on all sides (in front, behind, up, down, on the right and on the left), and b. she insists that man needs not walk through all the chambers in each layer of the dwelling places. Personally, I am convinced that she implicitly aims at expressing something even more fundamental and that is that one should not imagine the journey through the castle as a spatial journey where one leaves one point in order to reach another one. Rather, I think that her struggling with this symbol in the first dwelling places hints at the need to understand the journey as a process of gradual actualisation where the spiritual goal that has been reached remains actual and is not lost only because one «moved further».

Concerning the «historical» line of the argument, the secondary literature shows beyond doubt that Teresa lived in turbulent and troubled times<sup>6</sup>. The intellectual life flourished immensely, however, the pressure to minimise the spiritual life both of the laity and women was immense<sup>7</sup>. Thus, the relations between the universities and the world beyond (specifically with the laity) were much less intense than one would judge according to our present experience and that there even were strong tendencies to prevent the laity from those ideas discussed within the universities. Teresa of Avila was regarded as a highly suspicious woman: her book *Life* was held by the Inquisition and was not released sooner than she died<sup>8</sup>. Further, her vocabulary was

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, EFRÉN DE LA MADRE DE DIOS (STEGGINK, O.), *Tiempo y vida de santa Teresa*, Madrid: Editorial Católica, 1968. AHLGREN, G. T. W., *Teresa of Avila and the Politics of Sanctity*, 2, 9-10. HAMILTON, A., *Heresy and Mysticism in the Sixteenth Century Spain. The Alumbrados*, Cambridge: James Clarke and Co., Ltd., 1992. CARRERA, E., *Teresa of Avila's Autobiography*, 28-29. LLAMAS-MARTÍNEZ, E., «Teresa de Jesús y los Alumbrados: Hacia una revisión del “alumbradismo” español del siglo XVI», en MARTÍNEZ y otros (eds.), *Congreso Internacional Teresiano I*, Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1983, 137-167.

<sup>7</sup> Due to the widespread lay spiritual movements which attracted women on a larger scale than men, Spaniards began to use a not so favourable expression «mujercillas» (little women) to denote the (lay) women daring to aspire for spiritual perfection and/or inner prayer. Teresa herself uses this expression repeatedly, usually when talking about herself. Melchor Cano was an especially fervent opponent of the «mujercillas», writing: «Por más que las mujeres reclamen este fruto (de la oración), es menester vedarlo y poner cuchillo e fuego para que el pueblo no llegué a él», cit. en MARTÍNEZ y otros (eds.), *Congreso Internacional Teresiano*, 153. There is plentiful and interesting conversation about the «mujercillas» and also about general attitude towards women, their social status and the usual connotations of womanhood. See AHLGREN, G. T. W., *Teresa of Avila and the Politics of Sanctity*; AHLGREN, G. T. W., «Negotiating Sanctity», 373-388. HALICZER, S., *Between Exaltation and Infamy. Female Mystics in the Golden Age Spain*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, esp. 48-79. WEBER, A., *Teresa of Avila and the Rhetoric of Femininity*, 17-41. On the flourishing intellectual life, see, for example, NOVOTNY, D. D., *Ens Rationis from Suárez to Caramuel. A Study in Scholasticism of the Baroque Era*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2013, 1-22.

<sup>8</sup> It was denounced to the Inquisition by the Princess of Eboli in April/May 1574. ÁLVAREZ, T. (ed.), *Diccionario de santa Teresa: Doctrina e Historia*, Burgos: Monte Carmelo, 592. The book remained in the hands of the Inquisition even after Teresa's death in 1582, was finally released in 1587 and published in 1588. Both Teresa herself and her *Life* were under the suspicion of the Inquisition. Although she feared she could have been misled by the evil one, she felt herself to be an obedient daughter of the Church, so she never really feared the Inquisition. Cfr. ÁLVAREZ, T., *St Teresa of Avila. 100 Themes on Her Life and Work*, Washington: ICS Publications, 2011, 37-40. This is further well illustrated by this quote: «Representative of the Inquisition, Alvaro de Quiñones, visited Teresa anonymously to warn her to remember Magdalena de la Cruz, “whom the people had taken for a saint, whereas the devil had her completely under his control”. With no slightest change of expression Teresa replied very humbly, “I never remember her without trembling”». On Magdalena de la Cruz and the impact of her scandalous case on Teresa, see AHLGREN, G. T. W., *Teresa of Avila and the Politics of Sanctity*, 21-22. CARRERA, E., *Teresa of Avila's Autobiography*, 107-108. WEBER, A., *Teresa of Avila and the Rhetoric of Femininity*, 45-46. HAMILTON, A., *Heresy and Mysticism*, 115-116.

clearly scholastic and since she lacked a formal education she could have gained such vocabulary only through her confessors<sup>9</sup>.

But whose works could help us grasp her teaching philosophically? There were not so many philosophers among her spiritual guides but there was Domingo Báñez, one of the most important commentators on Aquinas. However, concerning the drift between the universities and «world outside» and Teresa's suspicious reputation<sup>10</sup>, it was unlikely that she would have been presented with new philosophical or theological ideas. It was more likely that she was given the solid food of traditional teaching leaning against the shoulders of the spiritual giants of the past. Since Báñez himself was one of the most faithful commentators of Aquinas, it was not unlikely that he would lean on Aquinas in his counselling Teresa.

Concerning this line of argumentation, the tendency to read both Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross has never completely disappeared even in modern works. K. O'Reilly admits that John of the Cross rooted his account of the spiritual life in the first sixth questions of *Prima Secundae* of Aquinas<sup>11</sup>. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange<sup>12</sup>, Jacques Maritain<sup>13</sup>, Augustin Francois Poulain<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> On Teresa and her confessors, see, for example, ROMBOUGH, J., «Teresa of Avila and Her Many Confessors. Lowly and Exalted Men in The Book of Her Life», *Conference of Carlton University*, 1-III-2012, 433 Paterson Hall, 10,25-11,55. This topic is further treated also in CARRERA, E., *Teresa of Avila's Autobiography*. WEBER, A., *Teresa of Avila and the Rhetoric of Femininity* or ÁLVAREZ, P., *Santa Teresa y el P. Báñez*, Madrid: Lezcano, 1882.

<sup>10</sup> TERESA OF AVILA, *The Collected Works of Teresa of Avila*, I, 27. The *Introduction* makes it clear it was the Princess of Eboli who denounced the manuscript to the Inquisition. Afterwards, Fr. Domingo Báñez became its censor. He used to be a confessor of St Teresa. According to his own testimony, however, he remained in close contact with St Teresa for the rest of her life, giving her counsel both in spiritual and worldly matters. SILVERIO DE SANTA TERESA (ed.), *Procesos de Beatificación y Canonización de Sta. Teresa de Jesús*, I, Burgos: Monte Carmelo, 1935, 6-11. Interestingly, Allison Peers was convinced it was D. Báñez himself who took the manuscript to the Inquisition. PEERS, A. E., *Mother of Carmel*, 41. This assumption seems to be in the light of recent research untenable. Tomás Álvarez is convinced that D. Báñez secured St Teresa's work by declaring it to be suitable for the «adult Christians», i.e., the inquisitors themselves. ÁLVAREZ, T., *Comentarios al «Libro de la Vida» de santa Teresa de Jesús*, Burgos: Monte Carmelo, 2009, 17.

<sup>11</sup> «Essentially, the teaching of both St Thomas and St John of the Cross concerning the journey of the soul towards union with God – achieved in the beatific vision in the next life and by faith and love in this life – is the same». O'REILLY, K., *The Hermeneutics of Knowing and Wishing in the Thought of St Thomas Aquinas*, Leeuven-Walpole, MA: Thomas Institute Utrecht-Peeters Leuven, 2013, 17.

<sup>12</sup> GARRIGOU-LAGRANGE, R., *The Three Ages of Interior Life*, II, London: Catholic Way Publishing, 2013.

<sup>13</sup> MARITAIN, J., *The Degrees of Knowledge*, Glasgow: University Press [year omitted].

<sup>14</sup> POULAIN, A. F., *The Graces of Interior Prayer. A Treatise on Mystical Theology*, London: Kegan Paul-Trench-Grouber and Co., 1921.

and Joseph Maréchal<sup>15</sup> all tried to understand either Teresa of Avila or John of the Cross through Aquinas's thought<sup>16</sup>. B. McGinn recalls also Edward Cuthbert Butler and adds an interesting remark: «Butler's return to the "simple practical mysticism" [...] was an important departure in contemporary Catholic discussion of mysticism, which centred on Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross as witnesses and which looked to the theology of Thomas Aquinas for its theoretical concepts»<sup>17</sup>. This remark shows very clearly that in Butler's time there was a strong tendency to read Teresa of Avila through the prism of Aquinas's thought.

Besides, B. Lonergan found inspiration in Aquinas as well and his work was a chief inspiration for M. Frohlich's book on the intersubjectivity in Teresa<sup>18</sup>. T. Dicken returned back to Aquinas<sup>19</sup>, as did Edward Howells<sup>20</sup>. Therefore, it is clear that there have been at least some scholars who placed the great Spanish mystics in relation to Aquinas. John of the Cross has been treated through this prism more extensively than Teresa, though. Those who have tried to grasp Teresa's teaching through Aquinas's thought usually limit themselves to the basic psychological categories creating a background for Teresa's notions.

All of these reasons have inspired me to make an attempt to try to support what Teresa herself in a rather informal manner says on behalf of mystical knowledge with an argument hugely derived from Aquinas's teaching.

<sup>15</sup> MÁRECHAL, J., *The Psychology of the Mystics*, Dover Publications, 2012, <<http://www.myilibrary.com?id=625044>>. He is considered to be the ancestor of «transcendental thomism», who was also sceptical about the possibilities of the modern sciences like the newly developing secular psychology in the study of religions and religious phenomena in general, and mysticism in particular. McGinn shows that his theory of mysticism is ambiguous, confusing, mixing the philosophy of essence and existence. MCGINN, B., *The Foundations of Mysticism*, I, New York: Crossroad, 2003, 291-293.

<sup>16</sup> Besides the works of these scholars themselves, there is a great and exhaustive overview of modern approaches to the study of mysticism provided in the Appendix at the end of the first volume of Bernard McGinn's history of western mysticism. He enumerates the most important works from the fields of theology, philosophy and psychology. He summarises the important points of many scholars, the above-mentioned including, and also quite aptly highlights the problematic traces of each concept. He also successfully sketches the mutual relations between the scholars of mysticism, possible antagonism between them, and the «evolution of ideas». MCGINN, B., *The Foundations of Mysticism*, Appendix: Theoretical Foundations: The Modern Study of Mysticism, 265-343.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.

<sup>18</sup> FROHLICH, M., *The Intersubjectivity of the Mystic*.

<sup>19</sup> DICKEN, E. W., *The Crucible of Love. A Study of the Mysticism of St Teresa of Jesus and St John of the Cross*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, Ltd., 1963.

<sup>20</sup> HOWELLS, E., *John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila. Mystical Knowing and Selfhood*, New York: Crossroad Pub., Co., 2002.

Two more notes about the approach here are necessary. First, I deliberately do not draw any parallel to the teaching of St John of the Cross. There is a specific reason for such a decision. St John of the Cross and St Teresa were of course spiritually very close. She held him in high esteem and was glad to receive him as one of the first two male members of her reformed cloister. He was also her confessor for a couple of years and they consulted each other on matters spiritual. It would be logical and fascinating to point out the parallels between their teachings. And this is the problem and the reason why I have deliberately chosen not to draw any comparison between the two. Simply, to compare the two without knowing exactly (or as exactly as it is possible to know taking into account the mystical character of their teaching) what each of them says themselves would lead to the danger of reading one's concepts into the other's works, which I wish to avoid, for there is a chance to depict all the nuances of their meaning, as well as possible convergences and divergences only by a thorough knowledge of the corpus of their works. I cannot claim such a knowledge of St John.

Second, St Teresa pays far more attention to the will and its role in the mystical stage of the spiritual life, at least before reaching the final union with God in the mystical marriage. Therefore, it is legitimate to ask why to focus on the question of knowledge instead of the will and whether it is legitimate to suppose that she held an intellectualist position as Aquinas did. This paper will therefore briefly touch also upon this topic.

## I. BRIEF OUTLINE OF ST TERESA'S TEACHING IN THE INTERIOR CASTLE

The *Interior Castle* divided into seven dwelling spaces depicts, apart from other things, the seven stages of the spiritual life of man. However, these dwelling places can be further sorted into three groups. First are the dwelling places pertaining to the natural life of man (first to third), second, those pertaining to the super-natural life of man (fifth to seventh) and then there is the transitional ones (fourth).

This larger scale grouping of the dwelling paces – natural, supernatural and transitory – are also connected to different kinds enjoyments, a different active mover of the spiritual life and different modes of knowledge.

The natural dwelling places are more or less connected to the bodily life of man. In his spiritual striving, man has to exert himself and toil and thus may be considered to be the main promoter of his own spiritual progress, although



St Teresa did not forget to remind the reader that the grace and help of God is needed in every stage. Interestingly, these dwelling places are also connected to the «natural» way of knowledge based on discursive thought, which St Teresa herself marked by a specific expression (*pensamiento*)<sup>21</sup> to distinguish it from a different mode of knowledge gained in the further chambers. Besides, these dwelling places are distinguished from the mystical ones also by a different kind of enjoyment experienced there called «consolations» (*contentos*). These are the results of man's own efforts.

The fourth dwelling places on the one hand represent the first stage of the mystical life but on the other hand are still bound to a certain degree to the previous stage, therefore they are deemed to be transitional – between the natural and supernatural – stages of spiritual life. This is reflected in all of the previously mentioned features. First, the active role in promoting one's spiritual life is somewhat divided between God and man. God already pulls man to Himself to a considerable degree, but man still toils a lot himself. Although one does not lack the consolations yet, he also for the first time tastes the sweetness of the spiritual delights (*gustos*). These dwelling places belong already among the mystical ones, and are also a stage where for the first time man may be given «glimpses» of supernatural knowledge.

The fifth to seventh dwelling places are fully mystical ones. They are connected solely to the sphere of the «spirit» or more precisely to the intellective part of the soul which surpasses corporeity and simply has nothing in common with it. St Teresa denotes this part with a different word – *entendimiento*, the intellect. The main promoter of one's spiritual life is God and God alone. Man acts insofar as to give his consent to be acted upon. Also, these are the chambers of most astonishing mystical experiences ranging from locutions to ecstasies, sleep of the faculties to transverberation. If the mystical knowledge in the fourth dwelling places was given only scarcely and for no more than brief moments, in this stage the mystical knowledge is being given more often and with clearer profundity – St Teresa finds it hard to approximate the knowledge gained during her mystical encounters (be it visions or locutions or ecstasies) to something comprehensible and/or to find appropriate expressions. Yet, she

<sup>21</sup> St Teresa distinguishes *pensamiento* from *entendimiento*. Detailed analyses of her use of these expressions suggests she deems *pensamiento* to be «discursive thought», while the latter seems to be correlative to the «intellect». For further discussion of these terms, cfr. FROHLICH, M., *The Intersubjectivity of the Mystic*, 178–200. HOWELLS, E., *John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila*, 77–78.



puts emphasis on one point – in a very short time man may understand much with greater clarity than he would ever be able to gain without this gift<sup>22</sup>. Yet, never is such knowledge a permanent state, not even after reaching the ultimate union. It should be noted, though, that the matter of the knowledge in the seventh dwelling place is a bit more complicated. Teresa explains that it is not permanent in the sense that its intensity would make it impossible for man to sin but it is permanent in the sense that there always remains a sort of awareness of the Divine presence<sup>23</sup>.

Before fully concentrating on the topic of the mystical knowledge, I would like to briefly mention the «problem» of the will. From the fourth dwelling places onwards, the will and its gradual uniting with the will of God clearly plays an ever-increasing role and becomes more «important» than the intellect itself. This is shown in often cited proclamations like «not to think much but to love much»<sup>24</sup>.

On the one hand, it seems that the role of the intellect and of knowledge is effectively diminished. On the other hand, there are other features of Teresa's teaching that should be taken into account for they question such a limited reading. First, the progress of our spiritual life from the natural to the supernatural also means that the focal point is transferred from the bodily dimensions of one's spiritual life (including that which is connected to the rational thought) to the intellective part. This shift is best shown in the example of prayer. It is a shift from meditation to contemplation, from vocal prayer to mental prayer<sup>25</sup>. The supernatural life characterised by Teresa by a considerable detachment from the material on the one hand and increasing activity of God in man's soul on the other hand seems to be, however, connected to the intellect as the only power of man which is immaterial and therefore apt for «communication» with God. This shift shows also on the level of know-

<sup>22</sup> For supernatural knowledge gained during mystical experience, see *Moradas* 6,3,13; 6,3,15; 6,4,5-6; 6,4,8; 6,5,7; 6,5,10; for courage needed, see, for example, *Moradas* 6,5,5.

<sup>23</sup> *Moradas* 7,1,9; see also 7,2,3.

<sup>24</sup> «No está la cosa en pensar mucho, sino en amar mucho». *Moradas* 4,1,7. The whole chapter 4,1 emphasises the role of the will.

<sup>25</sup> The division of the kinds of prayer is more complicated in Teresa's work. I use this basic distinction only to illustrate my point. Teresa never really loses sight of the body and everything which is connected to the bodily dimension of our present existence, including our natural way of knowledge. Yet, she gradually shifts the focus of the reader from this natural way of life to the supernatural one connected to the intellect, more precisely the passive intellect as I hope to show further.

ledge. Teresa puts emphasis on a shift from *pensamiento* as discursive thought to the *entendimiento*, as the intellect being able to be enlightened by God.

Second, even though Teresa stresses the will in the mystical dwelling places, she never really loses from her sight the intellect which is depicted in her paying attention to what happens to individual powers of the soul during each specific spiritual experience. Moreover, these spiritual experiences often end up with the gift of some kind of knowledge.

Third, at the beginning of the *Interior Castle* she introduces her project for the book and for the first but not last time explains the symbol of the castle. At one point she says: «There we shall learn true humility, the intellect will be enhanced, as I have said, and self-knowledge will not make one base and cowardly»<sup>26</sup>. Here she already shows the importance both of the intellect and knowledge. It is true that in this excerpt the focus is on self-knowledge. However, self-knowledge in her teaching goes hand in hand with knowledge of God. Thus, increasing knowledge of God also leads to an increase in self-knowledge. In this respect, the mystical knowledge of God as a knowledge surpassing the natural power to know God also leads to much deeper knowledge of one's self. Further, in the fourth dwelling places (already belonging to the mystical ones) where she stresses the will and the need for love she also says: «We must [...] not fail to work with the will and the intellect»<sup>27</sup>. This is one of the instances where she explicitly shows that the focus on the will does not eradicate the importance of the intellect.

Fourth, the final stage of the spiritual life described as the final union between God and man or the mystical marriage is interesting because the will seems to lose its sovereignty and both the will and the intellect seem to be made equal. Further, Teresa also clearly distinguishes the mode of knowledge gained in the seventh dwelling place (the place of the mystical marriage) from the previous one, stating:

In this seventh dwelling place the union comes about in a different way: our good God now desires to remove the scales from the soul's eyes and let it see and understand, although in a strange way, something of the favor He grants it. When the soul is brought into that dwelling place, the Most Blessed Trinity, all three Persons, through an intellectual vi-

<sup>26</sup> «Allí deprenderemos la verdadera humildad [...], y ennoblecerse ha el entendimiento –como he dicho– y no hará el propio conocimiento ratero y cobarde». *Moradas* 1,2,11.

<sup>27</sup> «Dejemos andar [...] no dejando de obrar la voluntad y entendimiento». *Moradas* 4,2,13.

sion, is revealed to it through a certain representation of the truth. First there comes an enkindling in the spirit in the manner of a cloud of magnificent splendor; and these Persons are distinct, and through an admirable knowledge the soul understands as a most profound truth that all three Persons are one substance and one power and one knowledge and one God alone. *It knows in such a way that what we hold by faith, it understands, we can say, through sight* although the sight is not with the bodily eyes nor with the eyes of the soul, because we are not dealing with an imaginative vision. Here all three Persons communicate themselves to it, speak to it, and explain those words of the Lord in the Gospel: that He and the Father and the Holy Spirit will come to dwell with the soul that loves Him and keeps His commandments. [...] Each day this soul becomes more amazed, for these Persons never seem to leave it any more, but it clearly beholds, in the way that was mentioned, that they are within it. In the extreme interior, in some place very deep within itself, the nature of which it doesn't know how to explain, because of a lack of learning, it perceives this divine company<sup>28</sup>.

There exist very good reasons not to overlook the intellect and its role in the mystical stage of the spiritual life, although it is common among scholars to focus solely on the will. This shift of attention also unveils the importance of knowledge, specifically the mystical knowledge. Before attempting to create a rational explanation of the possibility, function and purpose of the mystical knowledge, it is necessary to have a closer look at Teresa's teaching in the Sixth Dwelling Places.

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<sup>28</sup> «Aquí es de otra manera: quiere ya nuestro buen Dios quitarla las escamas de los ojos y que vea y entienda algo de la merced que le hace, aunque es por una manera extraña; y metida en aquella morada, por visión intelectual, por cierta manera de representación de la verdad, se le muestra la Santísima Trinidad, todas tres personas, con una inflamación que primero viene a su espíritu a manera de una nube de grandísima claridad, y estas Personas distintas, y por una noticia admirable que se da al alma, entiende con grandísima verdad ser todas tres Personas una sustancia y un poder y un saber y un solo Dios; de manera que lo que tenemos por fe, allí lo entiende el alma, podemos decir, por vista, aunque no es vista con los ojos del cuerpo, porque no es visión imaginaria. Aquí se le comunican todas tres Personas, y la hablan, y la dan a entender aquellas palabras que dice el Evangelio que dijo el Señor: que vendría El y el Padre y el Espíritu Santo a morar con el alma que le ama y guarda sus mandamientos. [...] Y cada día se espanta más esta alma, porque nunca más le parece se fueron de con ella, sino que notoriamente ve, de la manera que queda dicho, que están en lo interior de su alma, en lo muy muy interior, en una cosa muy honda, que no sabe decir cómo es, porque no tiene letras, siente en sí esta divina compañía». *Moradas* 7,1,6-7.

## II. SIXTH DWELLING PLACES

Teresa distinguishes three types of knowledge, two of them pertaining to the mystical stage of the spiritual life. The natural mode of knowledge is closely connected to man's discursive thought and can be thought of as a product of man's own efforts. Further, there are two kinds of the mystical modes of knowledge. The former is described in the sixth dwelling places in detail, although it is not limited to the sixth dwelling places alone but is experienced with a different intensity and depth from the fourth dwelling places. The latter is reached only in the seventh dwelling place. The lengthy citation above shows clearly that this kind of knowledge is somehow direct, unmediated. Since Teresa in the same excerpt hints that knowledge of the seventh dwelling place and the mystical knowledge gained previously radically differ, I suggest that the previous mode of knowledge is a mediated one although it is given by God. This is where I mark the difference between natural knowledge and this kind of supernatural knowledge. The former is a mediated one, namely mediated through sensual apprehension, species and abstraction. The latter does not seem to depend on this kind of mediation for it is somehow given by God without the dependence on the sensual apprehension or the process of abstraction. To show how it might be mediated even though it is given by God is shown further.

In this perspective, the importance of the sixth dwelling places comes to the fore. These dwelling places constitute the longest part of the *Interior Castle* and are full of descriptions of the lofty states. Individual chapters deal with various kinds of mystical phenomena. Some of them, like visions, are even multiplied there, that is, treated in two different places in the text<sup>29</sup>. The interesting thing is that St Teresa speaks of «spiritual impulses» proceeding from the most interior part of the soul where the King of Kings dwells. These impulses are «somewhat» perceived by the soul and thus, when she speaks about the mystical phenomena, she compares them to «bodily sensation» even though she repeatedly stresses that they have nothing in common either with the body or anything pertaining to the body<sup>30</sup>. Thus she paints a vivid image of «spiritual sensation» likened to bodily sensation<sup>31</sup>. She speaks about

<sup>29</sup> *Moradas* 6,1,1; 6,3,12; 6,4-11; for inner locutions, see *Moradas* 6,3,7; for other phenomena, see *Moradas* 6,2,3; 6,2,5; 6,11,2-4.

<sup>30</sup> *Moradas* 6,2,1.

<sup>31</sup> Others have also marked this parallel to bodily sensation important, although they give a different interpretation than I aim to do. Cfr. AHLGREN, G. T. W., *Entering Teresa of Avila's Interior Castle*, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005, 80-90. DICKEN, T., *The Crucible of Love*, 375-406. It

spiritual sight (visions – both imaginative and intellectual), spiritual hearing (locutions), spiritual touch (transverberation), or deep spiritual delights. All of these phenomena lead to or open up a way for «deep spiritual understanding» far surpassing the ability of plain *ratio*<sup>32</sup>. Such deep understanding pertains primarily to the ultimate reality, both to God and the spiritual world.

The matter of intellectual vision is somewhat complicated. Teresa distinguishes two kinds of *imaginative* visions. One consists in having an image of something which is not there, the other in perceiving someone/something as if it were bodily present. On the contrary, the *intellectual* vision is not mediated by any kind of vision and therefore it is indescribable, yet Teresa makes it clear that it communicates some kind of supernatural knowledge. Further, Teresa speaks about the knowledge gained in the seventh dwelling place also as of a kind of intellectual vision. Yet, she also insists it is somehow different from the previous one. In other words, it seems she also recognises two kinds of intellectual vision – one bound to the fourth to sixth dwelling places and the other to the seventh dwelling place.

Since she speaks about the intellectual vision of the seventh dwelling place as of something bringing unmediated insight into the intra-trinitarian relations and at the same time considers it to be a completely different mode of knowledge than the knowledge gained through the intellect in dwelling places preceding this final union, I think it possible to assume that the previous intellectual vision must communicate a *mediated* knowledge even though it is not mediated by any kind of image.

This assumption might be seen as a confusing one. How can some kind of knowledge brought by a vision be mediated and yet not be mediated by an image? Strangely, the answer to this question brings us right to the main question of the whole article: what kind of knowledge does Teresa describe in the sixth dwelling places and is it possible to make a philosophical argument that

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should be noted that it is not my aim to present an exhaustive study of the history of (Catholic) mysticism, nor to include an overview of all the mystics who also liken mystical experiences to sensual apprehension. Rather, I use St Teresa, one of the pivotal mystics of the Church, as an exemplar and in her case try to ask some more general questions about the nature of the mystical knowledge mediated by such experiences.

<sup>32</sup> She herself actually does not use the expression «ratio» but speaks about the «pensamiento» and describes it as a «millclapper» (*Moradas* 4,1,13) and characterises it in such a way that the «discursive thought» (which is her term) or «ratio» are quite apt terms. Cfr. «Por la mayor parte, tienen estas devociones las almas de las moradas pasadas, porque van casi continuo con obra de entendimiento, empleadas en discurrir con el entendimiento y en meditación». *Moradas* 4,1,6.

would a. explain the nature of such a knowledge, and b. show whether and/or how such a knowledge is enabled by human nature?

### III. THE ANSWER FORMED ON ST THOMAS'S THOUGHT

To find the answer I would like to carry out an enquiry in three major steps. Each one of them consists of a set of arguments explaining some aspect of the «problem» of the mystical knowledge of the sixth dwelling places. Although some of the arguments may be found to contain common traits, I hope to show that a slight distinction is being made so that the final conclusion may be thus enriched.

#### III.A. *Step One*

Our natural knowledge is, according to St Thomas, closely bound to the sensual apprehension of material objects upon which the inner senses create *species sensibiles*. But some of the material entities are alive. This is marked by their ability to move themselves and to act. Whereas in the case of plants their movements are determined by their environment, in the case of animals their movements are determined not only by environmental conditions but also by a limited range of inner motives, sometimes not even present at the moment of apprehension, as is clear from their search for missing food. In the case of the human being, the situation is different in several respects. First, man is endowed not by *vis aestimativa* but by *vis cogitativa*<sup>33</sup>; he has an intellect, will, and memory, and is capable of abstraction. Therefore, his movements and acts are connected to knowledge and intentionality, rather than to mere impulses and/or instincts. This also means that in contrast to plants and animals, the movement and acting of man cannot be predicted, for man is endowed with free volition (*liberum arbitrium*)<sup>34</sup>.

Upon seeing a man, we do not apprehend only his physical appearance but also his movement (or lack of movement) and his acting (or his being

<sup>33</sup> «Sed quantum ad intentiones praedictas, differentia est, nam alia animalia percipiunt huiusmodi intentiones solum naturali quodam instinctu, homo autem etiam per quandam collationem. Et ideo quae in aliis animalibus dicitur aestimativa naturalis, in homine dicitur cogitativa, quae per collationem quandam huiusmodi intentiones adinvenit». *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 78 a. 4.

<sup>34</sup> I intentionally do not use the expression «free will» for two reasons. First, St Thomas uses the former term, and second, I don't believe that the will alone is, according to St Thomas, free, but that is a different topic and need not be treated here. Cfr. *Summa Theologiae*, I, qq. 82-83; *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, qq. 6-17; *De Malo*, q. 6; *De Veritate*, q. 22; *In II Sententiis*, d. 2, q. 25; O'REILLEY, K., *The Hermeneutics of Knowing and Willing*.

inactive). From the latter, we are able to make conclusions about his features and qualities that are *per se* non-material. We can conclude that this man is kind or unkind, respectable or disreputable; we can even make a conclusion about more abstract qualities, like justice or injustice.

But all such qualities are immaterial and therefore our abstraction in connection to them cannot use the same medium as in the case of the abstraction based in our apprehension of material objects. Fortunately, St Thomas did not distinguish only the *species sensibiles* but also a mysterious entity called *species intelligibiles*.

Now, if the human intellect is capable of creating the *species intelligibiles* during the process of abstraction from immaterial reality, which is nevertheless still in some respect bound to the material reality (for example, creating the species of «kindness» assumed upon the apprehension of the material reality of a man playing at the playground with his children), that is, bound to the movements and acts of a specific man in a specific time and space, it is possible to assume that he is also able to gain knowledge of the immaterial, spiritual reality, based on his spiritual experience. It should be noted that at this point we are not yet touching upon the topic of «mystical knowledge» and/or mystical experiences for there are also spiritual experiences that would not fit the category of mystical and yet they are no less real than the latter ones, as anyone who prays experiences regularly (and even those who do not pray or do not believe in God may incidentally experience during their lives, be it an experience of good or evil). I would regard these spiritual yet not mystical experiences as «natural spiritual experiences» for their root is in human nature and they proceed from human spiritual striving. In this sense the «natural spiritual experience» would correspond to the spiritual experiences gained and described by Teresa in the first three dwelling places of the *Interior Castle*.

Now the question arises regarding how we gain a natural spiritual experience. At first glance, it would seem that such an experience is not bound to sensory apprehension – we do not normally encounter an angel playing with the children at the playground. Yet, at second glance it is not so. Unless we reach the «mystical realm», our spiritual experience is always bound in a certain way also to sensual apprehension – reading the words of Scripture, praying the Divine Office, receiving the sacraments<sup>35</sup>, participating in the spiritual dance of the liturgy in the

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<sup>35</sup> It should be noted that St Thomas writing on the Sacraments stresses the importance of their being sensually perceptible. Cfr. *In IV Sententiis*, d. 1, q. 1, a. 1, ad q1a 1.



case of the experience being connected to God, or we may experience more frightening spiritual experiences (e.g., hearing strange sounds, witnessing peculiar events) in the case that they are not connected to God but to some demons.

This situation differs from the situation of a man playing at the playground. In his case, we assume his qualities by apprehending him or through the report of him, a living *person* and his acts, whereas in the case of the natural spiritual experience we assume about the qualities of the «other one» through material *objects* (Scripture/witnessing a peculiar event) and/or actions that are our own (reading the Scripture). However, just as in the case of the man playing with his children in the park, so also in the case of the spiritual experience the knowledge of the other can be gained through the mediacy of something corporeal and the *species intelligibiles*.

Now, since God is not the only spiritual being as there also are angels both good and evil, a spiritual experience need not necessarily be of God. Teresa pays special heed to discern between true mystical experience coming from God and false mystical experiences coming from evil spirit(s). Once we cross the boundary of the natural and enter the realm of super-natural, to distinguish the true and false mystical phenomena, that is, those given by God for our benefit from those given from the evil one for our destruction, it is not easy to tell them apart, as St Teresa explains very vividly<sup>36</sup>. Thus, even in the case of spiritual experiences we come to a conclusion about the origin of such an experience, deducing from the «acts» of the spiritual persons and the fruits of those acts.

Thus, it seems that the soul can gain some kind of *natural knowledge* also about the spiritual entities or spiritual reality through the mediacy of the *species intelligibiles* which are still in a certain respect bound to the sensual apprehension of the material reality, although this material reality either signifies or symbolises the spiritual reality.

St Teresa in her account of the sixth dwelling places and individual super-natural experiences, however, speaks about a kind of knowledge not bound to material externals *in any way*. She speaks about «mystical theology», but this term might have broader connotations and need not necessarily be bound to «knowledge» alone. Since in this article I focus especially on the topic of «knowledge» I have decided for the sake of clarity to call such knowledge «mystical». The question regarding how it is possible remains.

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<sup>36</sup> G. T. W. Ahlgren even deems the mystical dwelling places to be a kind of instruction for the discernment of spirits. Cfr. AHLGREN, G. T. W., *Entering Teresa of Avila's Interior Castle*, 79.

If it is possible to create the *species sensibiles* and *intelligibiles* through the mediacy of sensual apprehension of the bodies, movements and actions both of material living entities and the actions and results of actions of immaterial entities, then St Teresa's claim that the soul is capable of receiving «impulses from God» could be explained if there was a part of the human soul fittingly created for the apprehension of immaterial reality<sup>37</sup>. Since the immaterial reality surpasses, according to St Thomas, the material one, because it is not limited by matter, time, or space, the part of the human soul capable of apprehending the immaterial reality has to be immaterial itself. The intellect seems to be, according to St Thomas, the only candidate for the mediator between the soul and God<sup>38</sup> since it is in one of its acts totally immaterial and independent of corporeity, being independent of any physical organ<sup>39</sup>. Moreover, it is

<sup>37</sup> This is true even if the knowledge of the bodies, movements, and actions of immaterial living entities is bound to sensual apprehension only indirectly.

<sup>38</sup> One might argue that the will could receive these impulses as well, especially when St Teresa often speaks about these impulses in connection to love. However, there are two things that should be considered. First, these «impulses» are mediums of mystical experience which ultimately lead to the gaining of supernatural knowledge. Second, St Thomas considers the will to be an intellectual power and shows that the relation between the intellect as the cognitive and the will as the appetitive power is very close. They are mutually interdependent. In this respect what involves the will in some way influences the intellect and vice versa. Considering all of these, the objection rather loses its strength. Cfr. «Et hoc modo intellectus movet voluntatem, quia bonum intellectum est obiectum voluntatis, et movet ipsam ut finis». *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 82, a. 4. «Ex his ergo apparet ratio quare hae potentiae suis actibus invicem se includunt, quia intellectus intelligit voluntatem velle, et voluntas vult intellectum intelligere». *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 82, a. 4, ad 4. «Nunc autem, cum utrumque radicitur in una substantia animae, et unum sit quodammodo principium alterius, consequens est ut quod est in voluntate, sit etiam quodammodo in intellectu». *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 87, a. 4, ad 1. «Ex his ergo apparet ratio quare hae potentiae suis actibus invicem se includunt, quia intellectus intelligit voluntatem velle, et voluntas vult intellectum intelligere. Et simili ratione bonum continetur sub vero, in quantum est quoddam verum intellectum; et verum continetur sub bono, in quantum est quoddam bonum desideratum». *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 82, a. 4, ad 1. Excellent analysis of this topic is provided in O'REILLEY, K., *The Hermeneutics of Knowing and Willing*, 80-107.

<sup>39</sup> Cfr. *De ente et essentia*; *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 76, esp. a. 1, co.; ad 1; ad 4. Editio Leonina, Corpus Thomisticum [online]: <https://archive.org/stream/operaomniaiusui5thom#page/n207/mode/2up>. ROBB, J., «St Thomas and the Infinity of Human Beings», *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 55 (1981) 118-125. PEGIS, A., *St Thomas and the Problem of the Soul in the Thirteenth Century*, Toronto-Ontario: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1978, Chapter IV: St Thomas and the Problem of the soul. KLIMA, G., «Aquinas on the Immateriality of the Human Soul and the Immateriality of the Human Intellect», New York: Fordham University, 9-10. <http://legacy.fordham.edu/gsas/phil/klima/FILES/Aquinas-on-Soul-and-Intellect.pdf>. GREDT, J., *Elementa philosophiae aristotelico-thomisticae*. PASNAU, R., *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature. A Philosophical Study of Summa Theologiae 1a* 75-89, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

due to this feature of the human intellect that St Thomas includes the human being both among the animals and among the spiritual substances<sup>40</sup>.

Now, the immaterial human intellect seems to be able, due to its immateriality and its belonging among the spiritual substances, to receive an «apprehension» from the spiritual realm, which is further supported by St Thomas's thesis about God providing for the lack of sensual apprehension after the separation of the soul from the body by directly pouring the *species intelligibiles* into the separated intellect<sup>41</sup>.

If the human intellect while connected to the body *were not* able to receive the *species intelligibiles* directly from God at all, then it would follow that either

The intellect would not be able to receive them even after its separation from the body,

or

There would have to be a substantial change on the part of the intellect after the death of the body.

The first is contrary to St Thomas's notion, and the second would lead to the distortion of the identity of the subject. The intellective soul after its separation from the dead body would be a completely different entity from the intellective soul which had inhabited the body before.

Now, St Thomas maintains the basic unity between the human body and the soul but states that the body comes into existence through the act of being of the soul, although the soul itself cannot pre-exist before the body<sup>42</sup>. Moreover, he is convinced that the human intellective soul is in regard to the intellect independent of the body, bodily functions, and any corporeal organ. Otherwise, man would not be able to know the universal and to grasp essences. He also provides arguments for the subsistence of the intellective soul.

<sup>40</sup> Cfr. *De ente et essentia*, IV. For an interesting discussion on the human soul being enumerated among the spiritual substances while being also enumerated among the corporeal substances, see ETZWILLER, J., «Man as Embodied Spirit», *The New Scholasticism* 54 (1980) 358-377. LEHRBERGER, J., «The Anthropology of Aquinas's *De ente et essentia*», *The Review of Metaphysics* 51/4 (1998) 829-847.

<sup>41</sup> Cfr. *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 89, a. 1, ad 3.

<sup>42</sup> For the soul communicating its being to the body, see *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 76, a. 1, ad 5. Cfr. *De ente et essentia*, V. LEHRBERGER, J., «Anthropology of Aquinas», 837-838.

Further, he claims that even after its separation from the body, the intellectual soul preserves a tendency towards re-union with the body<sup>43</sup>. St Thomas never loses sight of the big picture of salvation history, thus anticipating the final resurrection of the body. Therefore, the identity of the soul before and after its separation from the body needs to be maintained.

If the identity of the human intellectual soul remains the same before and after its separation from the body and it is able to receive the *species intelligibiles* directly from God after its separation from the body (especially if it is independent of the body in a certain way even while man is in his body), it follows that it is possible to assume that the intellectual soul is capable of receiving spiritual «impulses», or rather *species intelligibiles*, directly from God even while it is in the body.

Even though the intellect normally needs the sensual apprehension of the material or materially bound entities to gain any knowledge, there is no material impediment on the part of the intellect itself that could disable it from receiving the species directly from God.

### III.B. *Step Two*

In this part I would like to support the previous claim, namely that the human intellect is capable of receiving the intelligible species directly from God even during life on earth, from a somewhat different angle. I would like to proceed from St Thomas's question on the self-knowledge of the intellect both in q. 87 of the first part of *Summa* and from the tenth question of the *Disputed question on Truth*. Here, St Thomas claims that the intellect knows itself directly, through its own act.

Now, man is created in the image and likeness of God as Scripture, Tradition, St Thomas and St Teresa<sup>44</sup> teach us in unison. Moreover, the traditional teaching further elaborated by St Thomas shows that God and knowledge of God is man's ultimate end, which is usually called the beatific vision and

<sup>43</sup> For the soul's subsistence, cfr. *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 75, a. 2; for the separated soul's tendency towards body, see *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 76, a. 1, ad 6.

<sup>44</sup> «El mismo dice que nos crió a su imagen y semejanza». *Moradas* 1,1,1. «Cada una de nosotras la [alma] tiene, sino que como no las preciamos como merece criatura hecha a la imagen de Dios, así no entendemos los grandes secretos que están en ella». *Moradas* 7,1,1. «Aunque no se trata de más de siete moradas, en cada una de estas hay muchas: en lo bajo y alto y a los lados, con lindos jardines y fuentes y laberintos y cosas tan deleitosas, que deseareis deshaceros en alabanzas del gran Dios, que lo crió a su imagen y semejanza». *Moradas*, Epílogue 3.

is reached only post-mortem under specific conditions (sanctity). If man is created in the image and likeness of God, then this image and likeness must be «grounded» in the essence of the human being<sup>45</sup>. The question is where in the human essence it is «encoded».

The immediate answer that comes to mind is «in the DNA». As with many other immediate answers, this seems to fail upon closer consideration. If man is the unity of the body and the intellective soul which surpasses the body in some respect and moreover the body shares in the act of being of the soul and not vice versa, then it follows that the DNA, which is something material, is insufficient to explain and contain the whole of «human essence». It can explain the corporeal part and that which is immediately united to the corporeity, but it cannot «encode» the intellect, since the effect cannot be higher than the cause<sup>46</sup>.

Since «being created in the image and likeness of God» does not contain in itself any material aspect, then it must pertain to the intellect: it must be somehow «encoded» there. Now, if the intellect knows itself directly through its own act, as Aquinas claims<sup>47</sup>, it follows that it also has to be able to know di-

<sup>45</sup> It could be asked how to reconcile this with the views of those theologians who are convinced that the image and likeness can be lost or actually were lost by the Original Sin. To this objection I would say: a. Teresa is a Catholic and teaches as a Catholic, and this article is written from the Catholic perspective; b. there are many Fathers of the Church who distinguish the image and the likeness and hold that the image is retained while the likeness was lost and is to be regained through spiritual striving towards the final end. Cfr., for example, a very good overview of the problem in LOSSKY, V., *In the Image and Likeness of God*, Crestwood-NY: St Vladimir's Seminary, 1974, 125-139. In this chapter, Lossky himself also provides a brief encounter of the positions of some of the most influential protestant theologians. Besides, he relates the teaching to the Church Fathers, namely St Gregory of Nyssa and St Gregory Nazianzus. Naturally, there are many more who wrote on the same topic. Besides, there are authors who also show the traces of the teaching on the «image and likeness of God» in Aquinas as fundamentally based on the teaching of the Fathers. Cfr. WILLIAMS, A. N., *The Ground of Union. Deification in Aquinas and Palamas*, New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. Of course, Gregory Palamas was even younger than Aquinas but the book is full of references to the Fathers and shows quite convincingly that the topic of «theosis» or regaining the likeness of God is present in Aquinas's teaching.

<sup>46</sup> I have made use of R. Pasnau's argument that, if we understand a man to be the unity of body and soul, we cannot argue for the identity of a «human being» only from the standpoint of DNA analyses. If we accept St Thomas's conclusion that the human soul is immaterial, then the DNA analysis refers only to the body itself, not to the soul, therefore, only to one component of a human being. R. Pasnau originally uses this argument in connection to early-term abortion. Although I am not in favour of his conclusions, the first part of the argument is sound. Cfr. PASNAU, R., *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, the whole chapter 4, 100-120 (especially 107-120).

<sup>47</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 87, a. 1.

rectly that which pertains to this part; in this case, the intellect must be able to gain the knowledge that «man is created in the image and likeness of God».

Now, the species – both *sensibiles* and *intelligibiles* – are forms and as such could also be taken for basic units of thought upon which man grasps the universal notions. St Thomas, apart from *notiones*, distinguishes also the *rationes*. It is not easy to distinguish between these two categories as it seems that they could be translated with the same word – the notions. Nevertheless, the text of St Thomas could be read in such a way that the *notiones* be understood as well-distinguished and thoroughly known or grasped notions, the knowledge of which man gains through intentional rational discursive thought, that is, the «clear notions», whereas the «*rationes*» may be seen as «obscured», being partly known notions present in man's mind.

Now, it seems that «man being created in the image and likeness of God» does not belong among the most basic units of thought, but to something more complex. Therefore, man's likeness to God could belong either among the «*notiones*» or «*rationes*». Since the knowledge thereof is not immediate as our daily experience shows, and since it needs some effort and toil on the part of the thinking subject to come to the knowledge of this truth, it seems this likeness must belong among the «*rationes*». Now, even the «*rationes*» cannot be present in the mind all by themselves but have to be mediated by *species*.

Since we believe that «man is created in the image and likeness of God», that this is «engraved» in or is «a part of» human nature, and since it was shown above that it cannot be «encoded» in the DNA, it follows that it must be somehow «encoded» in the intellect. Further, it was shown that it can be «encoded» in the intellect as a «*ratio*» based on the species, namely the *species intelligibiles*. There still remains a question regarding how that can be. I suggest that it is «impressed» into the intellect directly by God<sup>48</sup>, possibly at the moment of conception<sup>49</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> M. Cuddeback treats in his article primarily the question of human knowledge of truth as a participant in the Truth of God. His argument is based not only on the *Summa* but also on some other texts, for example, *Questio disputata De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, 10. Although he does not ask the question «how», he mentions explicitly the «impress [impressio]» of the First Truth and first principles on the human intellect. Further, he adds «Aquinas describes the natural law as an *impressio* in us of the divine light, a divine instruction that moves to the good». CUDDEBACK, M., «Thomas Aquinas on Divine Illumination and the Authority of the First Truth», *Nova et Vetera*, de Friburgo (Suiza), 7, English ed., 3 (2009) 579-602 (590-598).

<sup>49</sup> Or at the moment of the intellectual soul being created in the body, should we take seriously St Thomas's account of gradual animation, cfr. *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 76, a. 3, ad 3; q. 118, a. 2, ad 2.

Now, if we follow this line of speculation a little further, it follows that this impressed «being created in the image and likeness of God» is where the possibility to *know* God is grounded. Second, even though it makes a huge difference for man himself whether he is given some «knowledge» through the impressed *rationes* and *species intelligibiles* as an embryo or when a fully matured man, it does not make any real difference when we are considering the *principle*, much less so from the point of the Eternal God. If, therefore, God can impress some *species intelligibiles* and *rationes* into the human intellective soul while one is a tiny baby in the mother's womb, there is no reason why God could not do so while man is fully grown. Therefore, if we hold that certain immaterial truths are part of our nature, part of the way we are created<sup>50</sup>, mystical knowledge is possible.

An objection might be raised stating that no Catholic would seriously deny that God is able to impress the *species intelligibiles* into the intellect and therefore this part of the argument is superfluous. Although God is definitely able to impress the *species intelligibiles* into the intellect, I do not consider this second step a superfluous one for several reasons. First, I do not ask whether God is able to give man supernatural (mystical) knowledge for He surely is as the abundant messages of the mystics throughout Church history show, but rather, my question is how does such knowledge happen. In other words, I am searching for the possibility to describe the reception of this kind of knowledge rationally. Second, even though God is able to impress the *species intelligibiles* directly into man's intellect, is able to give man supernatural knowledge, He does not seem to be doing it regularly. Or to put it otherwise, the majority of human beings are not mystics.

Interestingly, the problem could be re-formulated: why is it common among mystics to gain mystical knowledge on a relatively regular basis while it is exceptional among non-mystics, if God is able to impress the *species intelligibiles* into the human intellect?

The straightforward reason surely is divine respect for man's freedom. The explanation follows several steps. Teresa shows us that the kind of the mystical knowledge presented in the sixth dwelling places is typical for

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<sup>50</sup> M. Cuddeback based on the reading of J. Ratzinger's *On Conscience* states that «Every person possesses a "primordial knowledge" of truth that is "implanted", "stamped", and "instilled" by the Creator». CUDDEBACK, M., «Thomas Aquinas on Divine Illumination», 579, 581.



the mystical stage of the spiritual life<sup>51</sup>. But to enter the mystical stage of the spiritual life, man must make a crucial decision «to give God everything». Teresa further explains that this decision means much more than the necessary requisites for entering the monastery but rather pertains to the «inner» life as was shown. Now, if God gave man the mystical knowledge mediated by the *species intelligibiles* on a regular basis before man entered the mystical stage of the spiritual life, it would mean that God would give man mystical knowledge before man decided to «give God everything». The impression of the *species intelligibiles* directly by God into the soul, however, means: a. that the ordinary way of man's intellection is distorted, and b. that God is operating directly within the soul of man. If God did such a thing before man decided to «give God everything» it would mean a serious distortion of one's freedom. First, such a step would deprive man of the dominium over his own being. Second, mystical knowledge can communicate anything, even the superior goodness of God. However, if man was given the knowledge of the superior goodness of God, his will due to its nature would be unable to choose anything but God, hence man would not be free for he would lose the opportunity not to choose God.

### III.C. *Step Three*

When St Teresa speaks about «impulses» proceeding from God into the soul and further compares various mystical experiences to sensual apprehension, we might suggest that these «impulses» themselves be compared to sensory apprehension<sup>52</sup>. In the case of natural knowledge, it is the active intellect which abstracts from the matter of the object perceived and from the specific

<sup>51</sup> It should be noted that Teresa does not exclude the possibility of gaining mystical knowledge even in the case of beginners. However, she draws a distinction between beginners and the advanced and is, so to say, convinced that mystical knowledge is gained more regularly when one has stepped into the mystical stage of the spiritual life and that mystical knowledge is more proper to the latter stage. Also, I would like to point out that the mystical life is, for St Teresa, led by and through contemplation. She does not speak about contemplation before entering the mystical stage. Moreover, she is convinced that true contemplation is a gift of God and as such is unreachable by man's own powers. She would deem the «philosopher's contemplation» to be no more than meditation.

<sup>52</sup> Paul Murray mentions St Thomas's *In De Divinis Nominibus* and *In Psalmos*, 33, where St Thomas's treatment of «mystical knowledge» stresses the experiential side. «The word "experience" itself Aquinas clearly borrows from the vocabulary on the senses». MURRAY, P., «Aquinas at Prayer: The Interior Life of a "Mystic on Campus"», *Logos* 14/1 (winter 2011) 38-65 (45).

conditions, and enlightens the passive intellect so that it can grasp the universal<sup>53</sup>. This kind of knowledge is closely bound to material reality, although the material reality is passing and has received its being from God and only in Him and through Him is further preserved in existence. Such a natural kind of knowledge is the primary and most important way of man's understanding.

On the other hand, there is the question of mystical, supernatural knowledge and Teresa's «impulses» from God. It should be recalled that the mystical experiences bound both to those «impulses» and to mystical knowledge ordinarily pertain to the mystical stage of spiritual life<sup>54</sup>.

Now, it could be argued that just as in the case of natural knowledge it is the light of the active intellect that «uses» sensory apprehension, creates the *species*, and imprints them into the passive intellect, so similarly it is with mystical knowledge. The difference is that instead of the passive intellect being enlightened by the active intellect, it is being enlightened by the light of the divine intellect, who enlightens the contemplating soul, that is, the soul turned from the passing material reality which is focused on the everlasting immaterial Reality, by directly pouring knowledge into it through the mediacy of *species intelligibiles impressa*. «Yet intellectual knowledge does not consist in the phantasms [*species sensibiles*] themselves, but in our contemplating in them the purity of the intelligible truth; and this not only in natural knowledge, but also in that which we obtain by revelation»<sup>55</sup>.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Teresa connects mystical knowledge solely to the mystical stage of the spiritual life connected to contemplation. Even the fantastic visions, locutions, and raptures seem to be only a prolongation or a kind of «superstructure» of the less spectacular forms of contemplation. Moreover, Michael Wadell (following St Thomas) points out the structure of the *Summa*, which follows the *exitus* from

<sup>53</sup> Cfr. *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 79; M. Cuddeback does not forget to remind us that even the light of the active intellect is derived from the light of the divine intellect. CUDDEBACK, M., «Thomas Aquinas on Divine Illumination», 591, 597.

<sup>54</sup> The topic of the «impulses» given by God can be found throughout the whole Sixth Dwelling Places of the *Interior Castle*, although there are hints already in the Fourth Dwelling Places.

<sup>55</sup> «Sed tamen intellectualis cognitio non sistit in ipsis phantasmatis, sed in eis contemplatur puritatem intelligibilis veritatis. Et hoc non solum in cognitione naturali, sed etiam in eis quae per revelationem cognoscimus». *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 180, a. 5, ad 2.

God and *reditus* back to Him<sup>56</sup>, and it is interesting to realise that the question about rapture can be found in the third part where one is already on the return back to God<sup>57</sup>. Moreover, this part has not been finished due to St Thomas's famous vision of the other reality, by his possibly gaining mystical knowledge<sup>58</sup>.

Both in St Teresa's work and in St Thomas (just as in many other Christian treatises on spiritual life, for example, Dionysius Areopagite or John Climacus), the return to God cannot even begin if one does not turn away from «the world» and cannot reach the end without prayer. This «turn from the world» can be understood not only, but also, as a turning from the natural way of knowledge to knowledge gained through meditation, contemplation, and – God willing – to mystical knowledge received as a pure gift, «the participated likeness thereof»<sup>59</sup>.

It was shown in the previous part that a certain type of mystical knowledge resembles or mirrors, so to say, natural knowledge, and only the fount of apprehensions is different: it is not the world, but God, for «all things can easily be seen through the enlightenment of the divine light»<sup>60</sup>. St Thomas shows that in the case of natural knowledge, such knowledge consists in the reception of the form of the thing to be known. This is the way our human intellect grasps the essences of its objects and, in a way, becomes those objects, although in a purely immaterial way.

If this type of mystical knowledge, described in St Teresa in the sixth dwelling places of the *Interior Castle* bound to various kinds of mystical experiences, rupture including<sup>61</sup>, mirrors in a way natural knowledge, it is perhaps

<sup>56</sup> I am fully aware that nowadays not all of the researchers accept this exitus-reditus idea but M. Wadell does and uses it as a part of his own argument about mystical knowledge (rapture) and its importance in Aquinas. Therefore, I mention it as well.

<sup>57</sup> M. Wadell argues in the following way. He is convinced that St Thomas sees the knowledge gained through rapture as the peak of all knowledge, that is, he understands mystical knowledge to seal the natural one. Although, based on the text of St Teresa I do not limit the gain of such knowledge solely to rapture, Wadell's basic intuition seems to point in the right direction. WADDELL, M. M., «The Importance of Rapture in the Thought of Aquinas», *Nova et Vetera*, de Friburgo (Suiza), 12, English ed., 1 (2014) 255-285.

<sup>58</sup> Cfr. MURRAY, P., *Aquinas in Prayer*, 57-59 (and relevant footnotes).

<sup>59</sup> «Divina scientia non est discursiva vel ratiocinativa, sed absoluta et simplex. Cui similis est scientia quae ponitur donum spiritus sancti, cum sit quaedam participativa similitudo ipsius». *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 9, a. 1, ad 1.

<sup>60</sup> «Per illustrationem divini luminis de facili possint quaecumque videri». *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 180, a. 5, ad 3.

<sup>61</sup> Interestingly, St Thomas's treatment of a kind of mystical knowledge appears in *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 175 and is called *De Raptu*.

possible to conclude that it also becomes its object, meaning that it becomes what it knows via the mystical way. Now, what it comes to know in the mystical way may be of two basic categories, namely God and that which is not God. Since it seems that that which is not God may also be known in a supernatural way, I would like to concentrate only on the possibility that through this mode of knowledge the intellect comes to know God and that pertaining to God. Now, this does not seek to mean that such knowledge might be exhaustive for that is impossible. Yet, on the other hand, it is a kind of knowledge that is splendour and magnificent, surpassing our «ordinary, analogical» knowledge of God and it is more profound, as St Teresa's texts suggest (although many other mystics of the Church could provide almost inexhaustible accounts). So, if «to know» something means «to become» something in an eminent, spiritual way and if the object of our knowledge is God, it might be concluded that to «know» God through the immediacy of mystical knowledge means to «become» God, or rather, to become «like God» and thus to gain the fulfilment of the end for which man was created – to become the image and likeness of God.

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