NOTE FOR BOOK THREE ABOUT THE SOUL, READING 13

Notice the order in which Aristotle has shown the distinction between thinking and imagining and between thought and image. In the Fourth Reading or Lectio of this third book About the Soul, Aristotle has shown that thinking and imagining are distinct because I can imagine something without having any reason for so doing, but I cannot think that something is so without having some reason to think so. I can imagine now myself winning a million dollars in the sweepstakes. But I cannot think that I have won when I have not even bought a ticket. This is to distinguish thinking from imagining by the third act of reason for to give a reason for thinking something is to reason. But at the end of this reading, Aristotle first distinguished image from the thought which is true or false which is to distinguish thinking from imagining by the second act of reason. Finally, he distinguishes thought from the image because it is about the universal while the image is always of the singular. This last difference is the most basic or first difference, but it is perhaps the hardest to see while the one from reasoning is the easiest to see.

In English, the word *idea* may mean an image or a thought. We can see in John Locke and George Berkeley the confusion of the two. Consider the confusion in this passage from Berkeley's *Treatise* where he quotes Locke:

> 13. To give the reader a yet clearer view of the nature of abstract ideas and the uses they are thought necessary to, I shall add one more passage out of the *Essay on Human Understanding*, which is as follows:
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> > "*Abstract ideas* are not so obvious or easy to children or the yet unexercised mind as particular ones. If they seem so to grown men, it is only because by constant and familiar use they are made so.
> >
> > For when we nicely reflect upon them, we shall find that general ideas are fictions and contrivances of the mind, that carry difficulty with them, and do not so easily offer themselves as we are apt to imagine.
> >
> > For example, does it not require some pains and skill to form the general idea of a triangle (which is yet none of the most abstract, comprehensive, and difficult); for it must be neither oblique nor

> rectangle, neither equilateral, equicural, nor scalenon, but *all and none* of these at once?
>
> In effect, it is something imperfect that cannot exist, an idea wherein some parts of several different and *inconsistent* ideas are put together.
>
> It is true the mind in this imperfect state has need of such ideas, and makes all the haste to them it can, for the *conveniency of communication and enlargement of knowledge,* to both which it is naturally very much inclined.
>
> But yet one has reason to suspect such ideas are marks of our imperfection.
>
> At least this is enough to show that the most abstract and general ideas are not those that the mind is first and most easily acquainted with, nor such as its earliest knowledge is conversant about. [Book IV, Chapter VII, Sec. 9]

> If any man has the faculty of framing in his mind such an idea of triangle as is here described, it is in vain to pretend to dispute him out of it, nor would I go about it. All I desire is that the reader would fully and certainly inform himself whether he has such an idea or no. And this, methinks, can be no hard ask for anyone to perform. What more easy than for anyone to look a little into his own thoughts, and there try whether he has, or can attain to have, an idea that shall correspond with the description that is here given of the general idea of a triangle, which is "neither oblique nor rectangle, equilateral, equicrural nor scalenon, but all and none of these at once."?[1]

Although one can *understand* the universal, what is common to all triangles, and indeed define what is common to all of them, leaving aside their differences, one cannot *imagine* triangle in general. Any attempt to do so will result in the confusion of Locke. Any triangle one imagines will be a particular kind and not

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[1] George Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning The Principles of Human Knowledge*, Introduction, n.13, in *The English Philosophers From Bacon To Mill*, Modern Library Ed., p. 516

fit all triangles. Locke tries to combine them by running together as it were many images of the particular kinds of triangle. The universal idea (that is thought) of triangle, he thinks, is then all and none of the particulars. And Berkeley will deny we have any universal ideas as such.

In the following text, Thomas insists upon the role of likeness in knowing:

> ratio causae et causati non est ratio cognitionis, nisi quatenus causatum similitudinem habet suae causae, et e converso. Unde si in uno angelo ponamus similitudinem alterius, praeter hoc quod sit causa vel causatum eius remanebit sufficiens ratio cognitionis, cum cognitio sit per assimilationem.[2]

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[2] *De Veritate*, Q. 8, Art. 7, ad 2