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On the Object of Human Cognition

Kojiro Nakayama

The thing-in-general as an object philosophical studies is a transcendental universality, which we can represent or conceive of, not by means of our senses, but by making use of our concepts. There have been great controversies between sensationalism and nativism concerning the origin of our concepts. Although Kant is said to have synthesized these two viewpoints, we should better call him a nativist in the sense that he regards the "form" of Intuition and Understanding as innate.

I would like to point out, in this paper, that real synthesis of these views had been made by Thomas Aquinas in his philosophy. He argues that we certainly acquire our concepts through our senses, but cannot have them in mind without further help of intellectual faculty which he calls *intellectus agens*. He also insists that our concepts are non-material and non-individual and this means that they are rather abstracted from the given in our senses and are separated from the latter. I agree with him in this point.

Our intellectual cognition, starting from sense-data, is performed by means of the concepts which are *id quo* but not *id quod* of our cognition; they cannot be objects of cognition (of *intentio secunda*) until we make further reflection upon them. The proper objects of our cognition (of *intentio prima*), i.e. *id quod* (the being of thing), can be acquired only by making use of these concepts, *id quo*.