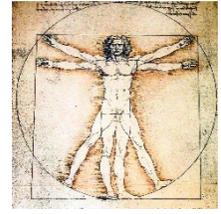




Aquinas 101: The Human Soul



Week 5: The External Senses

Skepticism, Ancient and Modern

- Pyrrho, fl. 300 BC: suspension of judgment in the face of competing arguments.
- Sceptics in Plato's Academy ca. 266 BC: calling criterion of truth into question through dialectic.
- Cartesian skepticism, 1640s: the evil demon scenario.
- David Hume, mid 18th c. empiricism: impressions (sensations) and ideas; bundle theory of mind
- Immanuel Kant, late 18th c.: idealism, a great gap between ideas and things in themselves

Aristotle's General Account of the Senses

- Method is to distinguish powers of the soul by their objects
- First act and second act: mere potency is changed from one state to a state of 1st act, which can then produce second act. Teaching is not like sculpting, it is produced by student's mental acts
- Sense powers are first act of an organized body, the sense organs. Second act not produced by material changes like sculpting.
- Sense power is potentially like the sensed object; a change of some kind is produced in it

Function of the Sense Powers

- Proper sensibles: color, sound, odor, flavor, the tangible
- Common sensibles: movement, rest, number, figure, magnitude
- Cognition is both sensing and thinking, sense powers regard only the first type
- Sense objects act on each sense through a medium and make them like themselves
- There is an identity between sensed object and the sense power according to form and not matter: not like a pizza warmed by a stone, but somehow immaterial or spiritual

The Common Sense

- The common sense has the activity of sensing as its proper object, along with the proper objects of each sense.
- It distinguishes between the objects of different senses: "What says that two things are different must be one."
- It is also rooted in a sense organ, some part of the brain. Deals only with sensible particulars.
- Unifies sensations into objects: the material object is pictured, not just formal objects of each sense.
- Trusting our senses is a basic epistemic option.