

Reflections on the Concept of Truth: articulation of Thomas Aquinas' *adequatio* and Hegel's absolute Knowing

Reflexões sobre o Conceito de Verdade: articulação da 'adequatio' de Tomás de Aquino e o Saber absoluto de Hegel

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ABSTRACT:

This article examines the Thomistic definition of truth as *adaequatio rei et intellectus* and the status of truth in God, comparing it with the Hegelian conception of truth as a process that culminates in absolute Knowing. It also tests the hypothesis of a conceptual articulation between *adaequatio* and absolute Knowing, and indicates the limits and implications of this comparison. It is understood that by bringing two classical theoretical matrices into dialogue, the study illuminates the relationship between being and thinking and re-qualifies the contemporary problem of the intelligibility of the real, avoiding both static realism and strict constructivism; the importance of the comparison lies in shedding light on the tension between thought and reality, finite and infinite. To do this, the theoretical references used as primary sources were *De Veritate* (q.1, a.1; a.7) and *Phenomenology of Spirit* (final chapter, §§798–808), with support from the *Encyclopedia* to address the absolute Spirit, articulated with commentators. Based on these, the work is divided into three parts: in the first part, we seek to understand truth in God as adequacy by identity; in the second part, we seek to understand the Hegelian absolute as self-knowledge of the Spirit; in the third part, a careful comparison is made, guided by a theological-metaphysical point of convergence (truth in God/absolute Spirit), evaluating compatibilities and asymmetries. In summary, the work argues for a qualified proximity between *adaequatio* and absolute Knowing without erasing structural divergences, proposing the unity of being and thinking anchored in the absolute as an interpretive key.

KEYWORDS: Truth, Thomas Aquinas, Hegel, *Adequatio*, Absolute Knowing.

RESUMO:

O presente artigo tem como objetivo examinar sistematicamente a definição tomista de verdade como *adaequatio rei et intellectus* e o estatuto da verdade em Deus, confrontando-a com a concepção hegeliana de verdade como processo que culmina no Saber absoluto; além disso, pretende testar a hipótese de uma articulação conceitual entre *adaequatio* e Saber absoluto; e indicar limites e desdobramentos dessa comparação. Entende-se que ao pôr em diálogo duas matrizes teóricas clássicas, o estudo ilumina a relação ser–pensar e requalifica o problema contemporâneo da inteligibilidade do real, evitando tanto um realismo estático quanto um construtivismo estrito; a importância do confronto está em lançar luzes sobre a tensão entre pensamento e realidade, finito e infinito. Para fazer isso, o referencial teórico

utilizado teve como fontes primárias o *De Veritate* (q.1, a.1; a.7) e a *Fenomenologia do Espírito* (cap. final, §§798–808), com apoio da *Enciclopédia* para o tratar sobre Espírito absoluto, articuladas a comentadores. A partir dessas, o trabalho se divide em três partes: no primeiro momento se procura entender a verdade em Deus como adequação por identidade; no segundo momento procura-se entender o absoluto hegeliano como autoconhecimento do Espírito; no terceiro momento, faz-se uma comparação criteriosa orientada por um ponto de convergência teológico-metafísico (verdade em Deus/Espírito absoluto), avaliando compatibilidades e assimetrias. Em síntese, o trabalho sustenta uma proximidade qualificada entre *adaequatio* e Saber absoluto sem apagar divergências estruturais, propondo a unidade de ser e pensar ancorada no absoluto como chave interpretativa.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Verdade, Tomás de Aquino, Hegel, *Adequatio*, Saber absoluto.

INTRODUCTION

The notion of truth occupies a central place in Western philosophical tradition, being approached from different perspectives depending on the historical context and systems of thought. Despite the various issues that can be raised about this notion, one of the most thought-provoking refers precisely to the question of which perspective takes precedence in the process of seeking truth: reality (being) or rationality (intellect). This debate has been present throughout the history of philosophy, with many philosophers pointing out that first there is a world of things (beings) and then it is known by the intellect, so that the intellect only reproduces the truth that is in reality. On the other hand, there are those thinkers who argues that truth is like a property of statements or propositions, so that what we know is only the result of our intellect, and therefore truth will be limited by our conditions, so that it can be said that the intellect is the founding element of truth. However, would it be possible to find a balance here, so as not to favor one side or the other? Or, would it be possible to speak of a moment of encounter between the order of act of being and the order of thinking (intellect)?

To answer this, this work proposes an analysis of two fundamental conceptions of truth: that of Thomas Aquinas and that of G. W. F. Hegel. These two philosophers were chosen precisely because, from a more general perspective, it is easy to see the great distance between the two thinkers, both chronologically and conceptually – so that at first glance, each seems to represent one of the sides already mentioned regarding the primacy of truth. On the one hand, in Thomas, truth is defined as *adaequatio rei et intellectus*, that is, the conformity of the intellect to reality (thing). On the other hand, in Hegel, truth is not given immediately, but results from the dialectical process by which thought, by overcoming its own contradictions, reaches the totality of the real as an expression of the Spirit, at the moment of absolute Knowing.

Although at first glance these thinkers seem distant, one wonders whether it would be possible to find a way to balance the notion of truth based on these two philosophical conceptions, or rather: would it be possible to establish a point of dialogue between truth as something given and eternal, rooted in the order of being, and truth as a historical and dynamic construction of reason? Furthermore, to what extent can the relationship between being and thought serve as an interpretive key to bring these two perspectives closer together?

Based on this problem, the present work is structured around the hypothesis that, despite differences in historical context and conceptual language, the conceptions of Thomas Aquinas and Hegel present a fundamental convergence: both maintain that being and thinking are not separate realities, but moments intrinsically linked in the understanding of the absolute. In the case of Thomas, this unity is exemplified in God, in whom there is no distinction between *intellectus* and *esse*, but rather a complete identity between being and thinking. The hypothesis to be verified is that this understanding not only determines the Thomistic conception of truth, but also establishes a possible proximity to the Hegelian notion of Truth as an unfolding and manifestation of the absolute Spirit. Thus, the research seeks to show that, under different conceptual matrices, Thomas and Hegel offer ways of thinking about the relationship between being and thinking, broadening the understanding of the very notion of Truth.

Of course, given the difficulty of presenting the entire thought of both philosophers with regard to the concept of truth, two renowned works by each of the thinkers were defined as the object of analysis: Thomas Aquinas' *De Veritate* and Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, although other texts are also referred to at times. More specifically, on the one hand, we take the first question of Thomas' text; on the other hand, we take the last chapter of Hegel's work, that is, Absolute Knowing. And, in light of these texts, the first part of this work seeks to analyze the Thomist text, seeking to understand how the philosopher dialogues with other theorists who preceded him, so that he can then present his position on the concept of truth. Then, we seek to understand how Hegel presents his concept of truth as knowledge in search of totality, that is, Absolute Knowing, the culminating moment of the entire *Phenomenology of Spirit*. And, in the last part of this work, we analyze how the concept of truth can be analyzed in God, a moment in which there seems to be a convergence between being and thinking, which allows us to relate the concepts of adequacy and absolute knowledge.

Finally, it should be made clear that the analysis intended here is not to establish all the possible elements for such a correlation, nor to give a final answer to the problem now pointed out. What is intended, above all, is to raise possibilities for future discussion, which may deepen the theme now being presented.

1 NOTES ON THE DEFINITION OF TRUTH IN THOMAS AQUINAS' *DE VERITATE*

1.1

The concept of truth is of fundamental importance in the thought of Thomas Aquinas, since this theme appears in several of his major works. And certainly one of the best-known passages in which this concept is discussed is precisely question 1, more specifically the first article of the work *The Disputed Questions on Truth (De Veritate)*. It is in this text that Thomas Aquinas not only presents his understanding of the notion of truth, but also presents and discusses the various arguments and positions that came to him on this subject. Thus, in the first part of this work, we seek to present, above all, the argumentation on the concept of truth, or the true, as understood by Thomas in this passage.

In this way, looking directly at the text *De Veritate*, Thomas Aquinas initially asks, “What is truth?” However, it is possible to see that this is a secondary question, since in light of the answer that follows – which is based on Augustine’s thought (*Soliloquies*, II, 5): “the true is that which is” – it can be seen that the definition held until this moment can cause confusion. This happens because this is also the definition of being (*ens*¹), that is, being is that which is. Therefore, the fundamental question, which will be addressed throughout Article 1, is precisely the one that is apparently between the lines: are truth and being the same thing? It is from this question that Thomas will first present arguments in favor of this thesis and then arguments against it, so that only then can he present his own position.

Therefore, initially, a series of arguments arise that defend the position of equality between truth, or the true, and being; they do not correspond to Thomas Aquinas' position, but are presented by him so that the true Thomistic position can be better understood later. Thus, for example, he presents the possibility of saying that the two terms, truth and being, are equal only according to their suppositions (*supposita*), but differ in terms of their *ratio*, that is, their intelligibility. However, it is ultimately pointed out that this is not possible, since the two terms cannot be thought of separately – truth is defined by means of being, so that one cannot even think of what truth is without being. Or, one can think of the possibility that truth should be understood as a “disposition” to being, and thus they would not be the same. However, truth cannot be a disposition of being, since, if this were the case, in a case of restrictive disposition, for example, one could say, ‘it is true, therefore it is,’ which is not valid, for example, when

¹ In this article, the Latin term ‘*ens*’ is translated as being, following the usage common in contemporary Thomistic scholarship. To preserve the conceptual distinction central to Aquinas’s metaphysics, the Latin term ‘*esse*’ is rendered as act of being when the context refers to the act of existence itself rather than to that which exists. This terminological choice reflects a widely adopted convention in English-language studies of Aquinas, where *ens* designates that which is (a being), while *esse* refers to the act by which a being exists. Such a distinction allows the translation to maintain the metaphysical difference between the existing subject and the act of existence that actualizes it.

saying that 'it has white teeth, therefore it is white'. To further emphasize this point, Thomas quotes Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, saying that: "The disposition of a thing in act of being (*esse*) is like its disposition in truth" (*Metaphysics* II, 993, b30). Therefore, even if we only skim over what Thomas presents as a first position in favor of equality between being and truth, it is already possible to see that, even though it is not strictly the Thomistic position, the inseparability between being and truth is demarcated, suggesting that the 'configuration' of something as existing already contains, in germ, its mode of being true. That is why one of the last arguments deals precisely with the fact that being and truth do not differ in essence:

All things that are not the same differ in some way; but the true and the being do not differ in any way, because they do not differ in essence, since every being is true by its essence, nor do they differ in some differences, because it would be necessary for them to agree in some common genus; therefore, they are totally the same. (*De Veritate*, q1, a1).

Certainly, one could list every detail of all the arguments² that go in this same direction, but in all of them one arrives at the same position: "it seems that the true is totally the same as the being." (*De Veritate*, q1, a1). Although this is not the Thomist position properly explained, it must be said that here, as Lima Vaz (2001) states, when it is said that being and truth are ordered in the same way, it opens the way to think of truth not as an accidental property, since things do not gain or lose anything by being thought, but rather as transcendental, that is, inseparable from their own 'beingness'. Thus, to speak of the truth of a being is to speak of its way of being: there is no truth that applies to something that is not already true in its mode of existence. This perspective elevates truth to the status of ontological foundation, and not just an epistemic instrument – this is what seems to reverberate in Thomas's position, even though at this point that position is not clear³.

However, it should be noted that, on the other hand, a contrary position also emerges in the text, supposedly from those who do not agree that the true and the being are the same. Thomas Aquinas' position is not yet presented here, although later in the text, when commenting on these arguments, he will show himself to be much closer to this position, since he does not add much to each argument. Thus, just pointing out some of these arguments, it is first said that truth and being cannot be the same thing because, otherwise, using the term 'the true being' would be nothing more than a useless repetition of words (what he calls *nugation*), which is not in fact the case. Or, if they were the same, a term that can

² There are other arguments in this regard. For a more in-depth analysis of this position, see XAVIER, 2020, pp. 15–16: seven arguments are systematically presented in this regard, as follows in this translation.

³ Later, still in the first article, Thomas himself makes a more appropriate analysis, reinterpreting each of these arguments and correcting them from his position.

be converted with being should also be able to be converted with the true: it is known that being and good are convertible with each other, but this cannot be verified with the true, since there are things that are true but are not good (for example: it is true that someone killed a person, but that is not good). Similarly, there are still more arguments that lead to the same conclusion: “being and truth are different.” (*De Veritate*, q1, a1).

And in light of all these presentations, here arises what is the pivotal moment of the passage studied here: Thomas's truly position, which will not only be a response to the question between being and truth, but will also lay the fundamental elements for further discussion throughout the work, from which the place of truth in his system is presented. Thus, Thomas Aquinas begins this moment by presenting his own position, pointing out that the first thing that presents itself to the intellect as most evident – and which, therefore, serves as the basis for all other conceptions – is the being⁴. Therefore, it can be inferred that every other concept must be added to being, that is, through some form of addition to it. However, this addition creates a problem, since one cannot add to being in the most common ways, namely, by specific difference (such as adding two *genera* to explain something, as in rational animal), or as an accident to a subject. This is because nothing can be added to being as something extrinsic to it. So, the difference is added to the genus as something extrinsic to it, and the accident is added to the subject also as something extrinsic to it. Therefore, nothing can be added to the entity as a difference, but it is added to a genus or as an accident is added to a subject. How can we arrive at a solution to this question?

Given this, Thomas proposes as a solution the fact that something can be added to the being only in the sense that it expresses a mode of being (*modus entis*⁵), not in the sense of adding something extrinsic to it, but of expressing aspects that are not explicitly included in the term ‘being’ itself. These modes can be understood in two different ways: first, it can be a mode that expresses a more specific or special form of being: these degrees correspond to the supreme genera – the substance and the nine accidents. Second, there are modes that accompany being in all its generality, that is, properties that apply to any being, without restricting it. These modes are called transcendental, that is, they transcend all categories, or rather, they are common to all categories. According to the argument that follows Thomas, there are five such modes that follow being in all its extension. They are linked to the being considered either in itself or in relation to something else. When considered from the being itself, such modes can be affirmative or negative. The affirmative mode expresses the essence of being and, in this context, every being can be

⁴ This was previously stated by Avicenna in his *Metaphysics* (I,6), as presented by Thomas Aquinas himself.

⁵ Cf. WIPPEL, 2007 p. 77.

called a 'thing' (*res*). The negative mode, on the other hand, refers to the indivisibility of being with itself, and is expressed by the term 'one' (*unum*). On the other hand, when the transcendentals accompany being (*ens*) insofar as it relates to something distinct, there are two paths. One considers the entity as distinct from other entities; in this sense, it is called 'something' (*aliquid*), that is, 'another what' (*quasi aliud quid*), meaning that it is one among others. The other path starts from the conformity between the entity and some other reality (in relation to the other and, therefore, to plurality). This conformity is only possible thanks to the soul, which, according to Aristotle⁶, has a property that makes it, in a way, all things. In the soul, two powers are distinguished: the appetitive and the cognitive. If the entity is seen in accordance with the appetitive power, it can be called 'good' (*bonum*). If, on the other hand, this conformity occurs with the cognitive power, that is, with the intellect, the entity is referred to as 'true' (*verum*). Therefore, it is clear that this is where Thomas explicitly introduces truth as a property of the entity, in other words, as a transcendental. But he does not stop there, and gives an even more precise definition of the concept:

[...] while the convenience (*convenientia*) of the entity to the intellect is expressed by the name 'true' (*verum*). For all knowledge is achieved through the assimilation of the knower to the thing known, so that assimilation is said to be the cause of knowledge: for example, sight, capable of color, knows color. The first consideration regarding being and intellect is therefore that being agrees with intellect: this agreement is called the adequacy of intellect and thing, and in it the notion of true is formally realized. (*De Veritate*, q1. a1).

Given this presentation of the place of truth as transcendental, and now a definition of what truth is, it is interesting to note that, as Wippel (2007, p. 78) argues, Thomas does not restrict truth to the realm of the intellect as subject. On the contrary, he understands it as a formal property of being, that is, as something that manifests itself in its adequacy to the intellect. Knowledge arises from this adequacy, understood as assimilation between the knower and the known. This assimilation is the cause of knowing, since the primary relationship between being and intellect is one of conformity. Truth, in this sense, formally consists of this correspondence – the *adaequatio* between the intellect and reality. When asked what truth adds to being, Thomas replies: it is this conformity or adequacy of the thing and the intellect – the knowledge of the thing arises from this conformity. The entity, as such, is ontologically prior to its truth, but the knowledge we have of it stems from that truth. Thus, it can be concluded that truth does not alter the entity, since nothing can be added to it extrinsically, but nevertheless, it is truth that makes its manifestation knowable, that is, it is necessary in order to demonstrate the knowability of the being.

Precisely for this reason, at the end of his presentation on the concept of truth, Thomas Aquinas still presents a vast foundation based on *auctoritates*, that is, renowned thinkers who can help corroborate

⁶ *On the Soul* III [431 b 21] *apud De Veritate* q.1 a.1

this point of view and, at the same time, give the possibility of listing once again the previous positions, albeit duly justified. He presents them as follows:

Consequently, three ways of defining truth or the true are discovered. One way, according to what precedes the notion of truth and on which the true is based: and thus Augustine defines, in the book Soliloquies, "the true is that which is" [II, 5]; and Avicenna, in his Metaphysics, "the truth of each thing is the property of its being that has been established for it" [VIII, 6]; and some say that "the true is the indivisibility of being and that which is." Another way of defining it is according to that in which the notion of the true is formally accomplished: and so Isaac says that "truth is the adequacy of the thing and the intellect"; and Anselm, in his book On Truth [11], "truth is the rectitude perceptible only by the mind" - in fact, this rectitude is said according to some adequacy -; and the Philosopher says, in Metaphysics IV [1011 b 25], what we say when we define the true, 'when it is said to be what it is or not to be what it is not'. In a third way, the true is defined according to the consequent effect: and so Hilary [On the Trinity V, 3] says that "the true is the declarative and manifestative being"; and Augustine, in the book On True Religion, "truth is that by which what is is shown" [36], and, in the same book, "truth is that according to which we judge about inferior things [31]". (*De Veritate*, q.1, a.1).

Therefore, based on this excerpt, it is interesting to note that the impression one gets is that truth taken formally is restricted to the intellect, since the intellect appears in all of Thomas' explanations regarding that "in which the notion of truth is formally accomplished." However, it must be said that from these three views of truth, Thomas demonstrates the complexity and richness of the notion of truth, articulating its ontological dimensions ("the true is that which is"), logical dimensions (truth is the rectitude perceptible by the mind), and epistemic dimensions (truth is declarative and manifestative being), without reducing it to a single perspective. What is striking about these three notions is how the philosopher, by systematizing definitions of truth according to three planes, already provides clues for debates that will take place in modernity and contemporaneity about 'truth as coherence' and 'truth as performativity'. This is because, by recognizing, on the one hand, the existential root of truth (being that is) and, on the other, its relational dimension (the *adaequatio* intellect-thing), he already senses that truth is not a mere static attribute, but a process that is realized in the act of knowing and in the way this act reverberates in discourse and action. However, it is not yet possible to extract all these elements from this excerpt from *De Veritate* alone. Nevertheless, it is possible to say that at least a first conceptualization has already been presented and that, through it, it will be possible to trace some relationships with other notions of truth subsequent to Thomas – and here we refer directly to the Hegelian notion, which will be presented below.

2 ASSUMPTIONS OF THE NOTION OF TRUTH IN HEGEL

In Hegel's philosophy and system, the concept of truth is also one of the fundamental elements, given that, since his first major work, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*⁷ (1807), the philosopher's main objective was to “develop a science of knowledge that would investigate the process by which human consciousness attains truth [...]”. (SILVA, 2025, p. 18). Thus, it is also very important to analyze how the German philosopher presents this concept, taking into account this first work in particular.

A first fundamental element in Hegel's conception of truth is the break with the idea of a static and immutable truth: the philosopher proposes to present the true from a dynamic process, which leads to the knowledge of the whole, that is, of the absolute. Thus, instead of understanding truth as a simple correspondence between thought and a fixed reality, Hegel proposes that the true is revealed through a movement from which the absolute is reached: “The true is the whole. But the whole is only the essence that is implemented through its development. Regarding the absolute, it must be said that it is essentially a result; that the absolute is only in the end what it truly is.” (FE, §20, p. 36). Of course, in order to understand how this Hegelian conception is structured, one must first realize how this possibility already appears as a necessity, since Hegel argues that this need to ground truth primarily in its relation to the absolute emerges from consciousness itself, because, in seeking truth in each of its particular moments, the subject initially achieves a result that is a truth *for us* – that is, a truth that reflects the way the subject apprehends a given object, and not the real essence of that object. In other words, what is stated about the nature of something, at the initial moment of knowledge, does not correspond to its full truth, but only to the interpretation of the one who knows⁸. Thus, Hegel demonstrates that, in order to attain true knowledge, it is necessary to overcome this partial perception through a dialectical process that allows for deepening until the essence of the object is reached. Hegel explains this situation as follows:

If we now investigate the truth of knowledge, it seems that we are investigating what knowledge is in itself. However, in this investigation, it is our object; it is for us. The In-itself of knowledge resulting from this investigation would be, rather, its being for us: what we would affirm as its essence would not be its truth, but rather our knowledge about it. The essence or standard of

⁷ HEGEL, G.W.F., *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1988. Hereinafter referred to in the body of the text as *Phenomenology* and, in the case of the Brazilian edition (2014), it will be referred to in citations as FE and the paragraph and page number.

⁸ Here it is necessary to take into account that Hegel, not only at this moment, made a harsh criticism of Kantian philosophy, according to which it would only be possible to reach this moment of knowledge, since the thing in itself (*noumenon*) would be inaccessible to human cognizability. In another work, *Difference between the Systems of Fichte and Schelling*, Hegel also argued that, precisely because Kantian philosophy set out to be a critical examination of human understanding, it condemned itself to being unable to overcome its starting point. (cf. HYPOLITE, 1991, p. 09).

measurement would be in us, and the [object] to be compared with it and on which it would be decided through such comparison would not necessarily have to recognize its validity. (FE, §83, p. 78).

Thus, the first knowledge we have of something reveals itself only as an appearance, but it is not the thing itself. But how would it be possible to go beyond all these appearances of truth and arrive at true knowledge? Here the philosopher proposes that, in order to reach the absolute, one must observe precisely this movement of consciousness and how far it will lead. And so, dialectics emerges here as the characteristic movement of the search for truth, since consciousness, upon noting the difference that initially exists in knowledge, or the moment of negativity in general, which drives the movement, also understands that this inequality between the knowledge of the 'I' and its object, that is, the thing itself, is part of itself. This negative, which could be considered a defect of the subject and the known object, is, in fact, the soul and the motor of both – this means that, in order to arrive at the truth, one is resorting here to the very internal dynamics of natural consciousness⁹.

In this way, dialectics corresponds to “the movement of thinking in its characteristic, since, through it, the immediate, the isolated, is denied, and it is demonstrated that thinking is not an abstract, fixed moment that isolates, but is always a movement that denies and dissolves isolation.” (SILVA, 2025, p. 47). This process does not eliminate what is denied, but preserves it at a new level, requiring the formation of a truer concept. It is this movement that Hegel calls *Aufhebung* (sublation): the overcoming and preservation of contradictions in a higher synthesis. From this movement, Hegel demonstrates that both thought and reality advance through a succession of overcome contradictions. Thus, each new stage¹⁰ represents a higher and more complex level of totality, which includes and transforms the previous moments into a richer and more developed unity.

Even taking into account all this dialectical movement of consciousness, it remains to be shown that what is sought is not limited to an infinite movement that will always reveal a new truth', which is then replaced by the next higher stage. On the contrary, the search for truth will only find its object when it goes beyond the immediate objects that consciousness encounters, which are given in a static way. This is precisely why Hegel says that “only the absolute is true, or only the true is absolute” (FE, § 75, p. 72). This indicates, therefore, that it is not possible to have any kind of true knowledge before the absolute can be attained. But how exactly does Hegel understand this concept of the absolute, and when can one be sure that such knowledge has been attained?

⁹ Cf. FE, §86, p. 80.

¹⁰ It must be taken into account that the entire path traveled by consciousness is described throughout the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Thus, beginning with the most elementary knowledge, sensible certainty, Hegel proposes moving from one stage, or figure, to another until the stage of higher knowledge can be reached: the Absolute Knowing.

To answer this, it is necessary to realize that, by overcoming each of the appearances of truth, consciousness reaches a moment that even surpasses itself, since it understands that the absolute it seeks outside is not something distinct from itself. At this moment, truth reveals itself as reflective knowledge, that is, knowledge of itself. This is because individual consciousness can no longer encompass this absolute within itself alone, and therefore, it must now be understood as 'Spirit'¹¹. With this concept, Hegel points to the fact that individual consciousness alone is not capable of reaching true knowledge and, therefore, this knowledge is only possible from this manifestation of a collective consciousness of humanity, which develops throughout history. Thus, the philosopher explains this moment of transition from the knowledge of reason to knowledge as Spirit:

Reason is spirit when the certainty of being all reality rises to truth, and [when] it is conscious of itself as its world and of the world as itself. The becoming of spirit was shown by the immediately preceding movement, in which the object of consciousness – the pure category – rose to the concept of reason. (FE, § 438, p. 304).

Even without covering all the twists and turns of the path of consciousness until it reaches this absolute self-knowledge, it is possible to see that, based on the concepts of the absolute as totality and self-knowledge of consciousness, two notions are integrated here: the notion of totality and the notion of subjectivity. And it is these notions that allow us to understand more deeply what it means to say that consciousness is now Spirit. On the one hand, we know that the absolute is substantially everything that exists, and this whole, in the final analysis, shows itself as a thinking subject, and therefore is Spirit, which begins to walk the path of knowledge, but now realizing that, in fact, it has itself as an object, since as the collective consciousness of all subjects, it is capable of encompassing the whole. In the words of Pulkkinen (2010, p. 20, our translation): "Everything that exists is a process of self-reflective thinking, which is simultaneously all reality shaping itself and on the way to a more complete self-recognition of itself as a conceptual process." And thus, the Spirit's self-knowledge consists precisely in the fact that it understands that what was outside itself, an object foreign to it, is in fact part of its interiority and must now be brought to consciousness, overcoming the opposition of consciousness, that is, knowing that "it is the extrusion of self-consciousness that puts thingness." (FE, §788, p. 517).

¹¹ Cf. INWOOD, 1997, pp. 142-143: "In a general sense, the concept of Spirit (Geist) denotes the human mind and its products, in contrast to nature and also to the logical idea. However, there are still many meanings in which this term is used in Hegelian philosophy, such as: 'Subjective Spirit', 'Objective Spirit', 'Absolute Spirit', 'World Spirit', etc. Hegel did not consider these to be distinct meanings of 'Geist', but rather systematically related stages in the development of a single 'Geist'. This is possible due to three special characteristics of '*Geist*': (a) it does not involve an underlying thing, or substrate, but is pure activity; (b) it develops in stages into successively higher forms, primarily through reflection on its current stage; and (c) it cognitively and practically takes possession of what is other, nature as well as the lower levels of *Geist*, and realizes itself in them."

Thus, starting from the notion of Spirit, one also arrives at the concept of absolute Knowing. This is because this knowledge is characterized by its reflective nature: it is a knowledge in which the Spirit recognizes itself. In its deepest dimension, absolute Knowledge is, therefore, the self-awareness of the Spirit – a moment in which it understands that, through its own knowledge, the substance that was at the core of the understanding of the external and static object becomes an element of its subjectivity. In other words, the truth that was previously conceived as something alien, external, is now recognized in the Spirit itself, which encompasses the totality of reality. But how is this possible? Hegel says that, in the formal process of knowledge, the subject who has consciousness always dealt with an object that was outside of itself. However, now this subject is the Spirit, which takes the content that was external to it as itself, and therefore gives it the form of the Self¹², which is itself. In order to understand what the philosopher indicates here, it must be clear that, in understanding that it is all reality, the Spirit also realizes that, in the phenomenological path, the object of knowledge was nothing other than spiritual substance, that is, from the beginning of the process of knowledge, it was the Spirit that knew itself in the universe, so that in the course of this winding and varied itinerary, *Phenomenology* reveals little by little that the knowledge of being proved to be knowledge of itself and, on the other hand, knowledge of itself led back to the knowledge of a being¹³.

Thus, looking directly at the concept of truth, it is understood that, before reaching absolute Knowledge, it was conceived only as a correspondence between the knowing subject and a known object, so that the subject sought to find the substance of things as something fixed, static, and independent. However, from now on, there is a new way of defining the relationship between knowledge and truth, since Hegel's idea is that substance, once considered the fixed and ultimate substrate of reality, must also be seen as a subject¹⁴. This is because, for Hegel, the philosophical method cannot be restricted to the analysis of an immobile and static substance; it must treat the absolute as a dynamic principle of totality – that is, as an active subject. The great innovation of Hegelian thought lies in the notion that the absolute is not only the final and immutable foundation of reality, but a dialectical process in which substance unfolds and realizes itself as subject. It is the Spirit, which, as it unfolds, manifests itself to consciousness, presenting its content to it – and, therefore, the path that consciousness must follow is precisely that which allows it to come to know itself as Spirit. Thus, what was previously conceived as immobile

¹² Cf. FE, §798, p. 523.

¹³ Cf. HYPOLITE, 1991, p. 522.

¹⁴ Cf. FE, §17, p. 32.

substance is thus penetrated by the movement of the subject, which is essentially active, self-developing, and returning to itself. Thus Hegel presents this position of absolute Knowing:

Absolute Knowing is the spirit that knows itself in spirit-form, that is: it is conceptual knowledge. Truth is not only perfectly equal to certainty in itself, but also has the form of certainty of itself: that is, it is in its being-there, that is, for the spirit that knows, in the form of knowledge of itself. Truth is the content that in religion is still unequal to its certainty. Now, this equality consists in the fact that the content has received the form of the Self. Therefore, what is the very essence, namely the concept, has become the element of being-there, or in the form of objectivity for consciousness. The spirit, manifesting itself to consciousness in this element, or, which is the same, produced by it in this element, is science. (FE, §798, p. 523)

Therefore, truth is not a static correspondence between intellect and reality, but the very movement of reality itself. And so, philosophy is not only concerned with describing the substance of things, but with showing how this substance is, in fact, the subject itself in its activity of knowing and determining itself. And this is only possible because the dialectical movement, which apparently belonged only to individual consciousness, which is limited, shows itself to be the path traveled by the totality that is Spirit: it is this that manifests itself to consciousness. This is precisely what Hegel calls absolute Knowing, that is, the knowledge of totality not only as something external and given, but as the result of a process in which the subject and substance identify with each other. Thus, knowledge is no longer a simple correspondence between thought and object, but the very realization of the subject as substance. Absolute Knowing represents, then, a new type of knowledge, in which the subject does not limit itself to observing the world, but recognizes itself as an intrinsic part of the reality process itself, integrating the substrate of things with the movement of consciousness.

3 ADEQUATIO AND ABSOLUTE KNOWING: verification of the possibility of articulating the two perspectives

So far, we have two very clear positions on the notion of truth: on the one hand, Thomas Aquinas points to truth as the adequacy between intellect and reality; on the other hand, Hegel affirms that it is necessary to realize that truth is not a static reality, but a dialectical path that leads to the Spirit's knowledge of itself as absolute, or the totality of reality. At first glance, these two views seem quite distant, not to say contrary or contradictory, to the point of thinking that any rapprochement between them is impossible. To make what is at stake here even clearer, it should be noted that this debate encompasses the question of which perspective has primacy in the process of seeking truth: reality (being) or rationality (intellect). This debate has been present throughout the history of philosophy, with many philosophers pointing out that first there is a world of things (beings) and then it is known by the intellect, so that the

intellect only reproduces the truth that is in reality – and here we can include everything from the Platonic conception to contemporary philosophers. On the other hand, there are those thinkers who point out that truth is like a property of statements or propositions, so that what we know is only the result of our intellect, and therefore the truth will be limited by our conditions (which makes it impossible to know the thing in itself – *noumenon* – for example); and this means that the intellect is the founding element of truth, since what we know is placed by our own consciousness – such is the position of thinkers such as Kant and Fichte, among others.

However, it must be said that Hegel attempts to balance this conflict, since the notion of truth as absolute Knowing would be the notion that, in knowing reality (which is apparently already given), the Spirit transforms it substantially – so that rationality and reality are two moments of the same exercise of knowledge (thus there is no primacy of either one or the other, but they complement each other). Hence Hegel's famous thesis that ‘the real is rational and the rational is real¹⁵’, from which the philosopher argued that reason is not only a human faculty of thought, but also the driving force behind the development of reality itself. Still, at first glance, this position seems quite distant from Thomistic realism, since Thomas undoubtedly endorses much more the thesis that first there is an existing world and only then does the intellect act on this world. However, there is one particular case where this does not happen and which must be taken into account, namely: in the case of God, the act of being and knowing are the same, since the philosopher defends the thesis that God is identical to truth (as will be presented later).

Thus, what we want to do now is to verify the possibility of this point of contact between the two philosophers, considering this moment in which being and thinking occupy the same position: can we understand here that, for Thomas, reality has an objective rational order because it was created by God? Furthermore, is the possibility that the human intellect knows this order due to a correspondence between the structure of the mind and the structure of being? And would this be an approximation of the concept of absolute Knowing, which points not only to reality as rationally ordered, but is rationality itself in process, since the Spirit manifests itself dialectically in reality?

Therefore, in order to answer these questions, we will now analyze more closely the notion of truth in God and how this can be understood in relation to absolute Knowing. Of course, this is only possible because, from the perspective of the starting point of both thinkers, there already seems to be a possibility of bringing these elements together. This is because the Hegelian idea of the absolute, which

¹⁵ “What is rational is real, and what is real is rational. This is the conviction of every unprejudiced consciousness, and it is the starting point of philosophy in considering both the spiritual and the natural universe.” (HEGEL, 1997, p. XXVI).

concerns that which must take into account the whole, seems to approach the concept of 'ens' for Thomas Aquinas, as Santos argues:

With regard to the whole (absolute), it is impossible to say it in one word, for it needs the mediation of another to define itself, and so on, in a series of co-implicated mediations, which make the speculative phrase the infinite manifested in the finite, or the result of all determined negations: the absolute is neither this nor that, but what allows us to say this or that. St. Thomas defended a similar point of view regarding the "immanent transcendence" of being¹⁶ (*ens*). It does not designate a specific concept, but the supreme concept in which the intellect resolves all other concepts. This concept, called transcendental because it transcends the multiplicity of beings, cannot be thought of in terms of specific differences, proper to genus and species, but in terms of ontological differences, which do not allow us to confuse being and entity. (SANTOS, 2007, p. 23).

With this approach, we seek to show that relating the Hegelian conception of the absolute to Thomas Aquinas' notion of truth is not a peripheral or irrelevant speculation, but rather a possibility to better understand the thinking of both thinkers. Furthermore, investigating this connection is not reduced to simple theoretical curiosity, since in the Thomistic context, truth in God is not a secondary or accessory notion, but a central axis, given that God, as the first cause of all things, is the ultimate foundation of intelligibility and of the very truth present in creatures. Thus, attempting to establish a connection with Hegel does not represent an escape or deviation from understanding truth in a more general way, that is, in the realm of created things; but, on the contrary, a search to shed light on its most fundamental element.

In this manner, initially, something that seems like a simple conclusion of Thomistic thought, namely, to say that God is the cause of truth – since God is the cause of everything, he is certainly the cause of truth – can become somewhat complex from a philosophical point of view. This is because Thomas does not limit himself to saying that God is the cause of truth, but that He is truth itself¹⁷. Therefore, in view of other arguments used to substantiate this question¹⁸, it is argued that the argument

¹⁶ Being can be interpreted as a noun, meaning entity (what is), therefore meaning things (objects); it can be interpreted as a predicate (meaning properties of things): either as part of a complex predicate, expressing the inherent properties of things that were mentioned by the subject (being as copula), or as a simple predicate, meaning the factual existence of things mentioned by the subject (being as factual existence); finally, these semantic considerations suggest a 'metaphysical' analysis: being can mean the act by which something (the entity) is. (Cf. LANDIN FILHO, 2006, p. 29).

¹⁷ Cf. *De Veritate*, q.1, a. 7: Here Thomas Aquinas explains that truth in God can be considered in two ways: first, as perfect identity between the divine intellect and His own essence, with no distinction between the one who understands and what is understood; and second, as the relationship of the divine intellect with creatures, in which truth takes on an exemplary and principled character, God being the measure and cause of all things.

¹⁸ Two other arguments that Thomas uses to defend this thesis are based, first, on the 'argument of Divine Perfection', according to which Thomas also affirms that all perfections existing in created beings must exist in an eminent form in God, the first cause of all things: "Everything that is perfect in the effect must exist in the effective cause" (*ST I*, q. 4, a. 2). Truth, being a perfection of the intellect, must exist essentially in God. Since God is simple and identical to his perfections, then: "God not only possesses truth, but is truth" (*SCG I*, ch. 60-62). In addition to this, another argument used refers to the notion of exemplary cause, from which it is stated that all created beings are true insofar as they imitate the ideal models that exist in

of adequacy is the most philosophical and at the same time the most daring starting point of the Thomist thesis according to which God is Truth – and it is precisely this question that we intend to advance from now on, so that we can understand this novelty of Thomas.

Therefore, when returning to the notion of adequacy, it should be clear that it is a relationship between the intellect and the known being, and not a simple quality of propositions – which has certainly been clear up to this point. However, we must now add some elements to the question of adequacy, taking into account the presentation of this concept in *the Summa Theologica*, a text in which Thomas argues that truth is ‘primarily in the intellect, and secondarily in things’, since it is in the act of judging (of composing and dividing) that the intellect affirms something as being or not being (cf. *ST I*, q. 16, a. 2). Precisely for this reason, judgment is the first bearer of truth (*veritas prima est in intellectu indicante*), and things are only called ‘true’ in relation to this judgment, that is, to the extent that they can be truly known. Apparently, these elements do not add much to what has already been presented in the first moment. However, how can this be understood when applied to God? This question is certainly fundamental, since the originality of this argument emerges precisely from this application. In the realm of the intellect of man, as a creature, truth depends on the correspondence between thought and extramental reality; however, in God, this scheme is inverted and, at the same time, elevated: there is no distinction between the knowing subject, the known object, and the act of knowing. The divine intellect, the act of knowing, and the known essence are one and the same – a direct consequence of divine simplicity. This is precisely why Wood (2013, p. 29) says that: “Since the divine intellect and essence are absolutely identical, God can be called truth itself”.

This point is essential, since it can now be understood that, in God, the relationship of adequacy is not between two distinct moments, as in creation, but a relationship of real identity. It is at this point that Thomas, still in *De Veritate* (q.1, a. 7), states that “Truth in God primarily implies the equality of the divine intellect with the divine essence... which, in God, is the same being.” Thus, if in creatures the truth is defined by the conformity (analogy) between two distinct terms (mind and thing), in God this conformity is surpassed by unity, without ceasing to perfectly fulfill the definition: it is a matter of ‘adequacy by identity’. What, in creatures, requires a comparative judgment between knowledge and reality, in God occurs as a single, simple, and perfect subsistent act.

the divine intellect. Just as a house is 'true' because it conforms to the architect's plan, natural beings are true because they conform to the idea of their species in God's intellect: "That which attains its own nature according to the preconception of the divine intellect is said to be true" (*ST I*, q. 16, a. 1). Thus, since God is the cause and measure of all created truth, He is the supreme standard of truth.

To make this element even clearer, Wood (2013) deepens this argument by resorting to the notion of the 'limit case' of a relationship. This means that, just as a circle is the limit case of a series of polygons with infinite sides (it is not a polygon, but expresses the ideal that they approximate), in the same way: "The identity of the intellect and the divine essence is the limit case of conformity between intellect and reality. It is not just a maximum degree of truth: it is the absolute model by which all truth is measured." (WOOD, 2013, p. 30). This analogy reinforces the fact that, in God, truth is not only possessed, but subsists in Him – so that Thomas concludes that God is not only true, but is the truth itself. However, in this case, how would this question of truth as adequacy between intellect and reality stand in the realm of creatures? Here it must be understood that the truth of creatures is shared, while in God it is essential. All created truth is possible precisely because there is an absolute, subsistent, and simple Truth, in reference to which created truth is defined by approximation and participation. Therefore, starting from God as the first truth, one can speak of the notion of truth in all other things:

The truth according to which the soul judges all things is the first truth: just as the innate species of things flow from the truth of the divine intellect into the angelic intellect, according to which angels know all things, so the truth of the first principles, according to which we judge all things, proceeds exemplarily from the truth of the divine intellect into our intellect; and because we could only judge by means of it as long as it is a likeness of the first truth, it is said that we judge all things according to the first truth. (*De Veritate*, q.1, a. 4, p. 220).

And here it is still understood that the logic of adequacy is connected to the logic of participation, further amplifying the strength of this argument, since Thomas establishes precisely a clear hierarchy in the understanding of truth: all finite intelligences know and judge things from a participation or likeness of the first Truth, which is the divine intellect itself. In angels, this communication occurs through innate species, while in man it passes through the first natural principles of understanding. In both cases, however, it is not a matter of absolute autonomy, but of an exemplary and derivative relationship, whereby the light of the divine intellect grounds and guides all particular judgments. Thus, the capacity to know and discern truth does not exist in isolation, but as a reflection and participation in the first Truth, which is God. Thus, it is rightly concluded that:

Aquinas would not agree that "God is truth" simply *means* that God is the cause of the truth of creatures. Instead, "God is truth" means that the truth of creatures preexists in God in a more excellent way. It is only because of this fact about the divine nature that we can say that God is the cause of truth. (WOOD, 2013, p. 37).

Having understood this argument from the Thomist point of view, it is now necessary to also verify how this movement occurs on Hegel's side. Here one may question in what sense absolute Knowledge approaches this notion of God as truth. First, it is necessary to remember that Hegel's

philosophy proposes a radical reformulation of classical metaphysics, in which the traditional concept of God – as an eternal, immutable, and transcendent substance – is rethought in historical, dialectical, and spiritual terms (as presented throughout the Hegelian system in the second part of this work).

Thus, one of the central elements of the Hegelian system is found in one of the last notions presented by him, but which corresponds to the one that encompasses the entire development of the system: the notion of Absolute Spirit (*der absolute Geist*)¹⁹. This concept, present in one of Hegel's last works, the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, brings a broader notion of the understanding of Spirit, going beyond the way it was presented in *Phenomenology* (this is relocated within the section on subjective Spirit in *the Encyclopedia*). Despite the multiple interpretations of this concept throughout Hegel's writings, it can certainly be understood as the Hegelian way of conceiving God²⁰. Of course, this identification does not follow the patterns of traditional theology, but rather through a profound transformation of the very structure of the divine: Spirit is God as a process, as a reality that knows itself and realizes itself in history. For Hegel, “God is God only insofar as he knows himself” (HEGEL, 2012, §564). So this self-knowledge, or knowing oneself, is not only a divine attribute, but constitutes the very essence of God. The Spirit, therefore, is the absolute that manifests itself, alienates itself, and reconciles itself with itself in the course of historical reality and philosophical knowledge.

Thus, unlike the Thomistic conception of a simple, eternal, and timeless God, Hegel asserts that “the true is the whole. But the whole is only the essence that implements itself through its development. About the absolute, it must be said that it is essentially a result; that only in the end is it what it truly is” (FE, §20, p. 33). Therefore, the ‘whole’ is not just a substance, but a subject that can be understood as Absolut – the full identity of subject and object, of thought and being, realized as truth. Thus, we are dealing here with a God who does not remain an immovable Absolut in itself, but unfolds in time and human consciousness, until it returns to unity. And it is precisely this notion that now allows us to speak of truth as absolute Knowledge, since this corresponds precisely to the Spirit's knowledge of itself:

While its perfection consists in knowing perfectly what it is – its substance – this knowledge is then its entering into itself, in which the spirit abandons its being-there and entrusts its figure to remembrance. Its goal is the revelation of depth, and this is the absolute concept. [...] Its goal is absolute Knowing, or the spirit that knows itself as spirit. (FE, §808, p. 544).

In this sense, the Absolute Spirit is God as it manifests itself in the world, as it alienates itself in nature and returns to itself through the finite spirit, especially in art, religion, and philosophy – the three moments in which the absolute becomes the object of knowledge. In religion, in particular, this identity

¹⁹ Cf. HEGEL, 2012, §553.

²⁰ Cf. TAYLOR, 1977, p. 108ff.

is expressed symbolically: "In religion, the content is the absolute, God, and the knowledge of the Spirit is the knowledge of God" (HEGEL, 2012, §564). Thus, it can be said that the Absolute Spirit is, for Hegel, the true God – not as an object external to reason, but as its very substance and foundation, which reveals itself fully to the extent that it is known conceptually. Ultimately, Hegelian theology is an ontology of reason, in which the divine is not only thought, but realizes itself as thought. Therefore, when one points to absolute Knowledge, it is understood that it consists precisely in the moment when the Spirit manifests itself to consciousness, and thus, also in Hegel, the truth of individual consciousness is only possible through the notion of truth that is the Absolute Spirit itself. Corroborating this, Taylor concludes:

Thus, God, as Absolute Spirit, places the world in order to think about it. This notion of God as thought thinking itself shows Hegel's debt to Aristotle, which is, in fact, quite evident throughout his work. Hegel's God is the linear descendant of the God of Metaphysics, but now expanded to incorporate everything." (TAYLOR, 1977, p. 108).

Therefore, at the end of this journey, it can be said that for both philosophers, Thomas Aquinas and Hegel, the notion of truth is fundamentally linked to God, or going further, God reveals himself as truth – whether following the transcendent Thomist understanding or the Hegelian notion of absolute Spirit. Furthermore, another necessary conclusion is that it would be impossible to think about the truth of reality without first taking into account truth in its highest sphere – even though, from the point of view of the human intellect, we first have access to truth only at the level of beings, of created creatures. *Adequatio* and absolute Knowing now appear as much closer concepts when one understands that, on the one hand, for Thomas, the rational order of the world is based on the divine Being and, on the other hand, for Hegel, reason manifests itself in reality as a dialectical process which is the unfolding of the Absolute Spirit. Of course, there is still the great difference that, for Thomas, the rationality of the world is fixed and given, while for Hegel it must develop historically. But both agree that reality is not chaos or irrationality, but has an intelligible and true structure precisely because such order already exists in God – the divergence lies in the fact that, while Thomas sees this order as fixed and created, Hegel sees it as a process and self-development of the Spirit.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this investigation, it has become evident that for both Thomas Aquinas and Hegel, the notion of truth is not limited to a simple extrinsic correspondence between intellect and reality, but must also take into account how such correspondence is grounded in God, in whom this notion refers

to a deeper unity between being and thinking. In Thomas, to say that this unity reaches its maximum expression in God means to point to the fact that in Him, *adequatio* does not constitute a relationship between distinct elements, but the absolute identity between thinking and being. The first Truth, present in the divine Intellect, not only grounds the intelligibility of all things that exist, but also determines the very structure of human knowledge, since all creatures participate in this exemplary Truth and receive from it their own determinations and measure.

In Hegel, in turn, the conception of absolute Knowing leads to a dynamic understanding of Truth, no longer fixed or given once and for all, but revealed in the historical-dialectical process of the Absolute Spirit. In this journey, Truth does not present itself simply as conformity, but as the unfolding and return of the Spirit to itself, reaching a final synthesis in which the finite and the infinite, the human and the divine, no longer appear as irreconcilable opposites. Thus, in the Hegelian system, the Absolute Spirit is not an abstraction, but the very realization of God as a living and self-conscious totality.

Thus, it can be concluded that Thomistic *adequatio* and Hegelian absolute Knowing are not mere isolated or incompatible concepts, but elements that share a significant proximity. Both conceptions make it possible to think of Truth not as a simple representation or copy of the real, but as a manifestation and realization of the absolute in understanding and being. It is precisely in this convergence – and in the productive tensions arising from it – that the importance of a comparison between the two views lies, not to satisfy superficial curiosity, but to shed deeper light on the relationship between thought and reality, finitude and infinity, man and God.

Of course, despite all these elements of approximation, this research does not fail to recognize its own limitations. The complexity and conceptual density of both Thomistic and Hegelian thought make it impossible to exhaust all the implications and ramifications involved in this comparison. For example, more detailed aspects of the specific criticisms that each thinker could offer to the other were not addressed, nor were all the metaphysical implications that derive from their conceptions of Truth and the Absolute. Furthermore, the interpretation of the many other texts by these thinkers on this subject requires attention that goes beyond the scope of this work. However, we understand that these difficulties do not invalidate the relevance of the proposed dialogue, but point to the need for more comprehensive and specialized future research, capable of exploring with greater rigor and depth the relationships and tensions between Thomas and Hegel in their understanding of Truth and the Absolute.

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