seen through it—and Aquinas regards this sort of restriction as evidently im-
possible. Whatever nature of thing an A may be, if there can be an A there
can be a thought of an A. . . . For if it is not impossible for there to be something
of the nature A, then there can be something of that nature existing with esse
naturale (viz., ‘in the world’), and, equally, there can be something of the nature
existing with esse intentionale (viz., as an ‘object of thought’). . . . It is only when
the esse is not merely intentional, but also freed from the limitation of matter,
that we have an unrestricted possibility of the occurrence, by that kind of esse,
of whatever natures can occur in reality at all” (1961, pp. 96–97). The point
here is not, of course, just that if A makes sense, so too does the thought of A.
It’s rather that, on the assumption that thought is immaterial, there are no
empirical (no nonlogical) constraints on what we can think about. The question
raised in the text is whether the universality of thought is plausible on any
other ontological assumption.

43. That this account of the recent history of AI is not entirely eccentric can be
seen by comparing Allport (1980), who, however, draws a quite different moral
from the one I have endorsed. Allport is explicit in viewing much of AI as the
attempt to treat what I’ve been calling central processes on the model of mod-
ularized systems of production rules. Allport cites (inter alia) the research of
Anderson, Schank, Newell, and Winograd as indicating the promise of this
approach. I am in agreement with Allport’s description of the research but not
with his evaluation of it. On the contrary, I take it that the bankruptcy of this
sort of AI is self-evident and constitutes a strong prima facie argument that the
organization of central processes is, in fact, not modular.

44. I am, of course, distinguishing between the theory of confirmation, which doesn’t
exist, and the theory of statistical probability, which certainly does. Like deductive
logic, probability theory is about a local relation—one which holds between a
hypothesis and an antecedently delimited body of data. Since the theory gives
no general account of what it is for data to be relevant to the assessment of a
hypothesis, or of how the acceptability of a hypothesis varies as a function of
the simplicity, plausibility, conservatism . . . etc. of competing hypotheses, there
can be no demonstrative inference from statistical significance to level of con-
firmation. Notice that this is not just because significantly skewed distributions
of data sometimes occur by chance. It is for the much deeper reason that the
confirmation of a hypothesis is sensitive to considerations for which probability
theory provides no metric.

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