

Theoretical and Practical Acts of Reason in Aquinas

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As we grow in our understanding and knowledge of different things, the inevitable result is greater knowledge of existing things which, as a knowledge of reality, is a knowledge which seeks to be purely truthful and factual. When the object of our thinking and reasoning is governed by a desire, by a purely intellectual desire which only desires understanding and truth, for an understanding and knowledge of things that are only given to us through affirmations of rational judgment (and which are not somehow produced by any other kind of human act), the reasoning whose object is the truth of things is directed only to a form of knowledge that, in Aquinas, is purely speculative, theoretical, or scientific.¹ By focusing exclusively only on our knowing of truths with no interest or having any other motive, in our speculative knowing, truths are contemplated and appreciated within this kind of knowing that we engage in.² The delight which exists exists only in our understanding and knowing, in our having an understanding and knowledge of the truth or the reality of different things;³ in the pleasure and the enjoyment that comes with our “consent to being, harmony with all that is, [and] peace with the universe.”⁴ The delight or joy which emerges emerges as a form of affective response, as a form of love which it to be understood as a type of completion; in joy or delight, it rests contentedly and pleasurably in the good which is being enjoyed in terms of knowledge of reality,⁵ and which has been properly elicited by our acts of questioning, understanding and judgment.⁶ Hence, through a form of

¹*De Veritate*, q. 3, a. 3; cf. *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 14, a. 16.

²*Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae, q. 180, a. 5, ad 2; *Sententia Libri Politicorum*, Prologue, 6.

³*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 5, a. 4, ad 1. See also Frederick E. Crowe, “A Recurrent Duality in Thomist Writings,” *Three Thomist Studies*, supplementary issue of *Loneragan Workshop*, vol. 16, ed. Fred Lawrence (Boston: Loneragan Institute, 2000), pp. 132-134. In understanding there exists an inherent goodness and so, in speaking about the enjoyment or the delight that a person can take simply in understanding something, as Aquinas argues in the *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 25, a. 2, Crowe is able to say, p. 134, that the “possession of the good by [our] understanding is correlative to the love of complacency” as an affective disposition of the human will which is to be understood as reception or passive activity.

⁴Crowe, “The Present Relevance of Complacency and Concern,” *Three Thomist Studies*, p. 153. See also p. 126; pp. 175-176.

⁵*Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 12, a. 1, ad 4; q. 25, a. 2. In the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1, 91, 17, Aquinas distinguishes between joy and love. Joy is to be understood in terms of end while love is to be understood as a principle of activity which seeks joy or delight as an end.

⁶Crowe, *Three Thomist Studies*, p. 88; Patrick H. Byrne, “Outer Peace, Inner Peace: Authenticity in Feelings and Personal Relations,” (paper presented at the Second International Loneragan Workshop, Regis College, Toronto, August 1-6, 2004), p. 12-14. While Aquinas speaks of joy and delight as an emotional response or corollary that comes with understanding and judgment in our human cognition, when, in his paper, Patrick Byrne argues that acts of human consciousness elicit affective responses that can initially reveal or point to realities or goods which exist at higher levels as ends to be achieved by us (by the acts and activities which are to be associated with our practical acts of understanding), he articulates a heuristic for grasping how our intellectual movements are always interrelated with elicited experiences of emotion and feeling whose presence not only reinforces the

passive affection which a person receives in receiving an enlightening, revealing act of understanding, as human beings, we rejoice in the good which is found to exist already or which has just been attained.⁷

However, with regard to the knowing that we seek through our speculative, inquiring acts of human reasoning, “when it comes to [our] understanding something, it is a matter of indifference whether we are going to do something with it or not.”⁸ Or, in other words, “whether or not a truth can be directed to a job of work is quite incidental to [the business of our] purely intellectual apprehension.”⁹ Mere knowing in itself causes nothing.¹⁰ Factual reasoning and knowing thus presents itself as one species of human understanding and knowing.¹¹ It wants to consider things and not to establish or to create

acts of inquiry which are constitutive of our cognition but also serves to help orientate us as subjects toward engaging in forms of inquiry that we would not otherwise conduct and engage in.

7See Crowe, *Three Thomist Studies*, p. 129; David M. Gallagher, “The Will and Its Acts (Ia IIae, qq. 6-17),” *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002), p. 78. The passive reception of goodness through experiences of delight that are elicited by our acts of understanding and judgment move us as human persons in terms of subsequent acts of willing which transcend our prior acts of understanding and judging that perform purely cognitive functions.

8*Summa Theologiae* Blackfriars, 1a, p. 79, a. 11.

9*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 79, a. 11, as quoted from *St. Thomas Aquinas Philosophical Texts*, trans. by Thomas Gilby (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 3, n. 5. In his *Commentary on Aristotle’s De Anima* (3, 14, 813), Aquinas makes the same point when he argues that our human minds function as a principle of action only when they are joined to desires or appetites that are constitutive of our human willing which, in turn, incline us as persons to engage now in this act or, later, in some other kind of act. As soon as, through our inquiry, we are joined to any desires or appetites that incline us to engage in any kind of action, the reasoning of our speculative understanding is replaced by the reasoning of our practical acts of understanding in the kind of reasoning or deliberating that we engage in. In his *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics* (6, 2, 1135; p. 361), Aquinas makes the same point when he similarly argues that, although the mind exists as always a principle of action, in and of itself *qua* mind, “it does not move anything because it prescribes nothing about pursuit or flight.” A connection with desire is essential if our human intellect is to exist in a practical way. This connection allows us to distinguish between the functioning of our speculative acts of understanding and the functioning of our practical acts of understanding. Speculative acts of reasoning (questioning, thinking, understanding, and judging) is not able to move anything (as Aquinas notes in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1, 72, 6, as translated and cited by Crowe, in “A Recurrent Duality,” *Three Thomist Studies*, p. 126-7, n. 31), but when moral or practical considerations are brought to bear through questions that ask about the rightness or the goodness of something, our speculative acts of reasoning turn into a form of reasoning that is moved by a supervening form of practical reasoning which asks about matters which transcend any questions that we might ask about the presence of truth or falsity.

10*De Veritate*, q. 2, a. 14.

11Please note however, as a qualification, that in the *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 79, a. 11, Aquinas argues for reasons which he adduces, that theoretical and practical acts of understanding should not be regarded as two different species of understanding since, with respect *per se* to *intellectus* or to acts of understanding, an understanding which leads to truth is the common object of both theoretical and practical acts of reasoning which lead us to an experience of understanding. Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 64, a. 3. Theoretical and practical acts of reasoning should not be

things.¹² It has an internal term or end which exists within itself.¹³ Its finality or end exists in terms of truths or rational intelligibilities which always hold and which can apply to many things as they exist within the concrete order of things for the further purpose of understanding the identify of different things and understanding how they possibly relate to each other.¹⁴ However, in direct contrast to this, practical, causal, productive, estimative, deliberative, or operative acts of human reasoning and knowing lack an internal term or end since it is not concerned merely or solely with the good of knowing something.¹⁵ Its term is something which is external. It is not able to reach its end *as an internal end or goal* since, instead, it is a “knowing that leads to doing [to making, execution, or operation].”¹⁶ It is a knowing that is concerned about how, through our human actions,¹⁷ we can bring

distinguished from each other as two different potencies or as two different powers although they can be distinguished from each other by referring to other factors which point to different contexts that are defined by different purposes, ends, or goals. In theoretical acts of understanding, a person is content with only understanding and knowing a given truth (the truth is itself a good) but, with practical acts of understanding, a person wants to understand and know a truth for purposes which transcend mere knowing as this occurs in our theoretical acts of understanding and knowledge. Hence, it is possible to argue that, in a very real way, our practical acts of reasoning (our good practical reasoning) includes good, critical, theoretical acts of reasoning if our practical acts of reasoning are to lead us toward good decisions on how we are to respond to that which we already understand and know. In our moral judgments, in good moral judgments, real goods need to be distinguished from goods that only appear to be real and which therefore should not be sought and brought into some kind of being. Cf.

Sententia Libri De anima, 3, 15, 827. Where theoretical acts of reasoning lead to judgments about whether or not it is possible to affirm a truth that is to be affirmed and simply known, our practical acts of reasoning head to different judgments in terms of goods that can be concretely realized (a “good that can be ordered to action,” beyond a good or a being that is simply known). Cf. Martin Rhonheimer, *Natural Law and Practical Reason: A Thomist View of Moral Autonomy*, trans. Gerald Malsbary (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), p. 25; Frederick E. Crowe, “Law and Insight,” *Developing the Lonergan Legacy: Historical, Theoretical, and Existential Themes*, ed. Michael Vertin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 273, n. 19.

¹²*Sententia libri Ethicorum*, 1, 1, 2.

¹³*Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 6, 4, 1230-1240. As Aquinas notes as he comments on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* and as he reiterates Aristotle’s views, 1240, “the true and the false, which are objects of knowing, are found in the mind, but that good and evil, which are the objects of appetite, are found in things.” *Verum et falsum sunt in mente, bonum autem et malum sunt in rebus* (see Crowe, *Three Thomist Studies*, p. 191). On the internal finality of human knowing purely as knowing, see Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 19, a. 3, ad 6; a. 6, ad 2; q. 27, a. 4; q. 59, a. 2; q. 82, a. 3; 1a2ae, q. 3, a. 5, ad 2; q. 40, a. 2; 2a2ae, q. 26, a. 1, ad 2; and q. 27, a. 4; *Compendium theologiae*, 1, c. 46. As Aquinas had noted in the *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 66, a. 6, ad 1, “knowledge is perfected by the known being in the knower.”

¹⁴*De Veritate*, q. 22, a. 11; *Sententia Libri De anima*, 3, 15, 820; cf. 3, 16, 845.

¹⁵*Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 2, 2, 290; *Sententia libri Ethicorum*, 6, 1, 1118; *Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae, q. 8, a. 8, ad 3.

¹⁶Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), p. 634.

¹⁷*Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 13, a. 4: *electio semper est humanorum actuum*, “choice is always about human actions,” my translation.

something into being what, as yet, simply does not be or exist.¹⁸ This type of knowing goes beyond our mere understanding and knowing into externalized specifications of action in order to deal with concerns and issues that have been raised by questions which ask about how we should behave or deport ourselves in contexts that are specified by an order of spatial-temporal coordinates (and which would thus vary as we move from one context to another).¹⁹ Practical reasoning and knowing (sometimes referred to as the order of our practical, human science)²⁰ is done for purposes that transcend our knowing, or which are not exclusively focused on a desire for understanding and knowledge since, here, the object or desire is an objective which must first be known before it can then be realized through some form of outer action that is not itself an intellectual act or an act which is known for the purpose of our then engaging in actions where our doing, as an activity, comes after our knowing as a new distinct type of activity.²¹ “Extension to a work [or task] makes an understanding practical.”²² The object of our practical acts of reasoning and knowing is the operable or *operabilia*: it is a “doable” good which we can achieve through an action, an operation, or a deed that we can accomplish.²³ It is “a work to be done,”²⁴ “an individual operative thing” which is grasped as an end

18Crowe, *Three Thomist Studies*, p. 134.

19*Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 1, 2, 47; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 66, a. 6, ad 1.

20See *Sententia Libri Politicorum*, Prologue, 6. As Aquinas notes, “the practical sciences are distinguished from the speculative sciences in that the speculative sciences are ordered exclusively to the knowledge of the truth, whereas the practical sciences are ordered to some work.”

21*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 14, a. 16; q. 21, a. 1, ad 2; q. 82, a. 3 & ad 2; a. 4; 1a2ae, q. 13, a. 5, ad 2; 2a2ae, q. 52, a. 4, ad 3. Please note that in his *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, 1, 1, 33, Aquinas recapitulates a point which had been initially noted by Aristotle. In the sequence of historical time, it cannot be doubted that the speculative or theoretical sciences whose object is knowledge for its own sake arose only after the practical needs of daily life had been adequately and fully met by the practical disciplines or sciences of life which had arisen to meet necessary utilitarian ends and, in addition, to give experiences of pleasure to persons as these desires had emerged in the course of their human living. In gaining a livelihood through some form of economic activity, some kind of knowledge is undoubtedly necessary. However, it must be admitted that the experience of knowledge for its own sake (although a later attainment) does create a new context which can enhance the skills and the better functioning of our practical acts of decision making since a better knowledge of reality is an acquisition which can make for better decisions on our part about how we would want to act in response to what we have come to know. If, for instance, we have a good theoretical understanding about the nature of our economic activity in terms of its constitutive elements and patterns, we should be in a position to make better decisions that directly relate to how we might increase our economic productivity in a way that will lead us to a greater measure of economic security, a security that should be sufficient for giving us more freedom for pursuing other kinds of goals and interests.

22*De Veritate*, q. 14, a. 4; 2, p. 229. In the *Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae, q. 4, a. 2, ad 3, Aquinas quotes directly from Aristotle, *De Anima*, 3, 10 when he says that “the speculative intellect becomes practical by extension.”

23*Super Boethius De Trinitate*, q. 5, a. 1 & ad 4; *Summa Theologiae*, 3a, q. 13, a. 1, ad 3. See also Crowe, “Practical Knowledge and Its Application,” *Three Thomist Studies*, p. 43. As Aristotle had noted in the *Metaphysics*, 2, 1, 993b 20-1, “the end of theoretical knowledge is truth, while that of practical knowledge is action.” Cf. Rhonheimer, *Natural Law and Practical Reason*, p. 28.

24*Sentencia Libri De anima*, 1, 8, 119.

that is to be achieved within a set of contingent circumstances.²⁵ The givenness of contingency and our need to respond in a contingent manner to contingent events and conditions explains why an indeterminacy or a vagueness belongs to the operations of our practical acts of human thinking and reasoning which do not belong to us if we should refer only to acts or activities which are purely speculative.²⁶

A true knowledge of facts, or a true knowledge of contextualizing conditions, normally precedes any kind of reasoning on our part which tries to determine possible or likely forms of response in our consequent acts of doing and making (if misjudgments about what we know are not to lead to misjudgments about what we are to do and make) and, because this is so, this alignment or order of conditioning in our thinking and understanding explains why factual knowledge exists as a species of prior condition which exists as a given if, profitably, we are to move toward other questions and queries which ask about what, on our part, would be an appropriate or fit response to that which we find is given to us and which we understand and know in some way. While our speculative acts of reasoning and knowing are to be always clearly distinguished from any of our practical acts of reasoning and knowing,²⁷ the reasoning which seeks an understanding and knowledge of facts necessarily prepares the way for rational acts of practical reasoning which necessarily move into another kind of rational order if, in the wake of the kind of rationality which exists in our knowing, we are to move into the kind of rationality which exists and which emerges as we determine what we should do given that which we intelligently understand and know.²⁸ In a real way, it can be argued that our knowing moves or it encourages our willing: *Nihil volitum nisi praecognitum*.²⁹ “Nothing is willed that has not first been known,” *appetitus sequens intellectum*, desire following [our] understanding,³⁰ willing being an effect of [our] understanding.³¹ Will, willing exists as a rational appetite.³² It is understood by our understanding.³³ It emerges from within our understanding.

25 *Sententia libri Ethicorum*, 6, 2, 1135; *Sententia Libri De anima*, 3, 4, 630.

26 *Sententia libri Ethicorum*, 6, 2, 1118.

27 See Edmund Dolan, “Resolution and Composition in Speculative and Practical Discourse,” *Laval Théologique et Philosophique* 6 (1950): 14-17, on how we can distinguish not only purely theoretical acts of reasoning from purely practical acts of reasoning (given what Aquinas has to say in the *De Veritate*, q. 3, a. 3 and the *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 14, a. 16) but also intermediate forms of reasoning that are partly theoretical and partly practical. Our practical reasoning is purely practical if the object of our reasoning and knowing is something that we are to bring into being; if our reasoning attends to all the other objects which must be considered if something is to be brought into being and existence; and if the purpose or end of our reasoning is to determine an operation that we are to engage in as a first step which leads to the realization of an object that is to be brought into a condition of being and existence.

28 *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 79, a. 11, *sed contra*; cf *Sententia libri Ethicorum*, 1, 1, 1; Disputations, *de Caritate*, 3, ad 13, quoted by Gilby, *Philosophical Texts*, p. 285, n. 785.

29 Rhonheimer, *Natural Law and Practical Reason*, p. 28.

30 *De Veritate*, q. 22, a. 12, ad 2; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 82, a. 4, ad 3; Crowe, *Three Thomist Studies*, p. 195.

31 Aquinas, *Super Epistolam S. Pauli ad Romanos Lectura*, 7, lect. 3, n. 564, as quoted by Crowe, *Three Thomist Studies*, p. 103, n. 83.

32 *De Veritate*, q. 25, a. 1; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 1, a. 2; q. 8, a. 1; 2a2ae, q. 58, a. 4.

33 *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 16, a. 4, ad 1.

Quoting Aristotle, “will exists within the reason.”³⁴ Its goodness or value is measured by the degree that “it follows the order of wisdom which [our] intelligence determines.”³⁵ In the grounding of our willing in our understanding of things which acknowledges the goodness or the wrongness of certain things (this act or this other act; this goal or this other goal), our acts of understanding and knowing move non-cognitive activity or later and other cognitional activities by working through us: by working through our experiences, desires, and appetites which, in turn, move us as persons to engage now in this action and now in this other action.³⁶ Tersely put, “a thing known moves the appetite.”³⁷ It moves us in our human willing toward some kind of object that is known through acts of understanding and judgment which present an object to us for our acts of willing to desire and move towards,³⁸ and these apprehensions of understanding and judgment move us in our willing to the degree that a given object is known and understood and to the degree that it is more thoroughly understood and known³⁹ (even if,

34 *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 9, a. 5, citing Aristotle, *De Anima*, 3, 9, 432b5, my translation. *Voluntas...est in ratione*.

35 Bernard Lonergan, *The Incarnate Word*, unpublished manuscript translated 1989 by Charles C. Hefling, Jr. from the Latin of the *De Verbo Incarnato* (Rome: Gregorian University Press *ad usum auditorum*, 1964), p. 385, citing *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 21, a. 1, ad 2. Cf. q. 82, a. 3, ad 2; 1, p. 415: the “good which is understood moves the will.” *Bonum intellectum est obiectum voluntatis*.

36 *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 20, a. 1, ad 1. See also *De Veritate*, q. 22, a. 12; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 82, a. 4.

37 *De Veritate*, q. 1, a. 2.

38 *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 9, a. 1; q. 13, a. 5, ad 1; q. 19, a. 3, ad 1: “the will cannot desire a good that is not previously apprehended by reason.” Through a rational mediation of meaning whose natural operations order lesser goods into relations which, as intelligible relations, reveal and participate in the ordering of God’s eternal law, goods emerge as practical or doable goods. Their truth is such that they can be properly realized. Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 19, a. 1, ad 3:

Good is presented to the will as its object by the reason: and in so far as it is in accord with reason, it enters the moral order, and causes moral goodness in the act of the will: because the reason is the principle of human and moral acts.

39 *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 40, a. 2. To explain his position, earlier in the *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 9, a. 1, Aquinas had carefully distinguished between the movement of the human subject and the movement of an object which can serve to move a subject (the subject as a human doer). In other words, as inquiry moves from a knowledge of facts toward a knowledge which knows about possible courses of action which can be put into effect, our human inquiry continues to be an interaction between outer and inner principles. On the one hand, as human subjects, we engage in certain actions which lead to certain results. A movement exists from the viewpoint of the human subject and this movement which initiates activity in all fields is our human willing or volition (*volitio*). However, on the side of the object, it has to be said that rational affirmations of fact and possibility possess a causality of their own which acts on our human willing in partially determinative ways (according to the specificity of the kind of understanding which is needed if a course of action is to be put into effect in a way which realizes the meaning of a form which is first understood before it is then implemented and acted upon in the willing that we do which comes after our acts of reasoning and understanding). Cf. *De Malo*, q. 6, a. 1. Knowing and willing mutually interact since knowing possesses a form and a structure that cannot be too easily violated by any form of human willing, and even if we try to argue that a desire for good is basic and foundational for any form of human inquiry,

admittedly, the initial knowing is something which is itself moved by a desire that is grounded in a prior movement or inclination of our human desire and willing which seeks a good of some kind that, as yet, is not understood or known). What can be known can be something which already exists outside of ourselves, or it can be something that has yet to exist beyond how we conceive and judge it. We refer to a good which should be realized because of its inherent worth or goodness where the goodness is known before it can be implemented in a way which points to an actualized type of good: a good which is concretized in a specific instance or context of it.⁴⁰ The more perfectly something is known, the more perfectly can it be willed, desired, or loved.⁴¹ It is impossible to engage in any form of good or virtuous activity if we act either “in ignorance or by chance.”⁴² In some way, we must know what we are doing.

the structuredness or the normativity of our human inquiry is such that it gives a form or a shape to the good which is the proper object of those desires that exist within our human willing to direct and to actualize the different acts which encompass the activities of our human acts of willing. While a person is not forced to act in a certain way and not in another way (“the will is not moved necessarily,” *De Malo*, q. 6, a. 1), a person is nonetheless encouraged to behave in a certain way and not in another way since the claims of reasonableness cannot be simply brushed aside in the decisions that we must make as we move from our acts of understanding to our acts of willing that we must make if a course of action is to be implemented as a reasonable human response in any given situation. The claims and requirements of reasonableness cannot be dismissed too lightly and, in fact, they cannot be brushed aside by any understanding of the kind of order which belongs to our acts of human willing which emphasize the reasonableness and rationality of our human willing in the knowing which properly belongs to it and which possesses a form which normatively structures its acts and operations. To use the kind of language that Aquinas had himself used, human cognitive activity always functions as a formal cause (*De Malo*, q. 6, a. 1). Knowing and willing influence each other in a mutual priority which Aquinas clearly refers to in a text which can be found in the *De Veritate*, q. 14, a. 5, ad 5 and which is translated by Frederick Crowe, in *Three Thomist Studies*, p. 82, in the following terms:

...will and intellect have a mutual priority over one another, but not in the same way. Intellect's priority over will is in receiving (*in via receptionis*), for if anything is to move the will it must first be received into intellect.... But in moving or acting (*in movendo sive agendo*) will has priority, because every action or movement comes from the intention of the good; and hence it is that the will, whose proper object is the good precisely as good, is said to move all the lower powers.

When later, in his theological speculation, Aquinas speaks about the relation between faith and charity, he takes the mutual relation which exists between understanding and willing and he employs it as an analogy for understanding how faith enjoys a certain priority over charity, and charity, a certain priority over faith. Cf. Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas Volume 2 Spiritual Master*, trans. Robert Royal (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), p. 323. Later, in the *De Veritate*, q. 14, a. 5, ad 11, Aquinas notes that, as our reason informs our prudence by its focus on the need to move toward a true and right understanding of things and as our reason is informed by our prudence when questions arise about how things are to be done or brought into being, in the same way too, as our faith directs us as believers to contemplate divine things as they exist in themselves, charity is to be understood as a principle which gives a form to our faith and which thus acts to perfect our

The causality of our knowing with respect to our willing accordingly suggests that our knowing possesses a greater goodness or a greater completeness than our later acts of willing since something can be fully known in terms of its form or nature but not be fully willed or desired in terms of a fully realized union that could come to exist between ourselves as living subjects and whatever we could be desiring and willing.⁴³ On the one hand, admittedly, it is easy for us to desire something. We can begin to want something given the kind of being that we have which has been mysteriously given to us. We exist within a world of many things that are perpetually changing in shifts and permutations which are constantly moving from conditions of potency to conditions of act. We undergo our own changes in shifting wants and desires which point to the degree and the extent of our incompleteness. We sense our incompleteness. And so, as we compare our willing with our knowing in our experience of them, the full actualization of our desires takes us beyond the orbit or the circuit that is constitutive of our acts of human knowing. Completion, fulfillment, full actualization exists as a more remote kind of thing; hence, as a less probable, less likely thing when we notice that, through our affirmative or our negative judgments, an end or terminus is reached when, perhaps, a truth is grasped and understood for the first time. No new questions have to arise (they are not always necessary) even as other questions are often asked and posed. In some cases, nothing more needs to be done although, for the moment, through our acts of knowing, an initial bond exists between us as potential knowers and that which we are currently understanding or knowing. Our knowing creates an initial connection or a first degree of intimacy through a familiarity which can then be nurtured and enhanced through other, later acts which

faith in a way which our faith cannot give to itself. In turn, the mutual relation which exists between faith and charity performs a service to us in the human order as the intellectual and practical life of a given human person is raised to a level which perfects the intellectual life of our human reason and the moral life of our human prudence. This is perhaps suggested in a passage that is taken from the *Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae, q. 4, a. 7, ad 5, where Aquinas notes that “the will cannot tend to God with perfect love, unless the intellect possesses right faith about him.”

40*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 5, a. 2, ad 2.

41In transposing this principle to how we might understand how the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity are to be understood and related to each other, while Aquinas speaks about a mutual priority in terms of how these virtues relate to each other, he also speaks about a linear or a cause and effect relationship which shows that acts of love and hope require acts of knowing as necessary, essential preconditions. Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 65, a. 5. In the *Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae, q. 4, a. 1, Aquinas notes that “faith is a habit of the mind [*habitus mentis*], whereby eternal life is begun in us, making the intellect assent to what is non-apparent.” As Torrell in *Aquinas*, Vol. 2, p. 323, cites texts from Aquinas, respectively from the *Compendium theologiae*, 1, c. 1 and the *In I ad Tim. I*, 5, n. 13:

Indeed, love cannot be right unless we first establish the right end of hope, and that is not possible if knowledge of the truth is lacking. You must first have faith to know the truth, then hope to put your desire on its true end, finally charity through which your love will be completely rectified. [In more lapidary fashion, but still suggestively Thomas specifies elsewhere]: “faith shows the end, hope makes us tend toward it, charity realizes union with it.”

42*Sententia libri Ethicorum*, 2, 4, 283.

43*De Veritate*, q. 22, a. 11.

can come from us as human subjects and which belong to us as human subjects. We can decide to move from an initial knowledge of things toward effects and consequences which can be experienced as new results that are somewhat inevitable if we should notice or argue that, without our prior knowing of certain things, we cannot move toward a fuller kind of union which can then begin to exist between that which we have initially understood and how we happen to exist as human subjects.

Where, on the one hand thus, through our speculative understanding, we seek only to know what a given thing is, on the other hand however, a “practical mind causes things”⁴⁴ through the questions that we and it asks and pursues. Beyond the receptivity of purely understanding and knowing, our practical acts of knowing and cognition tend to move more transitively as a way of moving (as a *via motionis*)⁴⁵ even as we must admit too that our practical reception of insight and knowledge and the delight or joy which is elicited by this type of knowledge is an experience which also points to a passivity in a species of reception which exists within us and which is endemic to us within the operations of our practical acts of inquiry and understanding,⁴⁶ reinforcing our desires and pointing to the kind of orientation which exists within the life of our practical human reason. We are directed toward activities that seek ever fuller realizations of goodness as our practical acts of human reasoning and inquiry lead us toward practical kinds of judgment and as, in turn, this kind of understanding elicits activities and deeds from us which concretize and instantiate the goodness of our knowledge in terms that are now more fully actual because they have been placed or because they have been actualized within conditions of space and time as our understanding of different things returns to a world that is first known by us through our acts of human sensing. A goodness that is desired becomes a good that can then be sensed as the ideality of an intended type of goodness becomes a goodness which has assumed a species of embodied form.

As our practical human knowing transcends acts of mere knowing since it is ordained to produce an action or product,⁴⁷ to produce or to make something that is other in some way,⁴⁸ what is produced or what is effected however can also exist as an achievement or an accomplishment which exists to some degree also within ourselves as we engage in acts that are properly constitutive of our practical acts of reasoning and knowing.⁴⁹ The goodness of what we do in its concreteness redounds to the goodness of who and what we are as human beings and subjects. The functioning of our practical acts of human understanding exists as the term or as the end of a more involved type of conscious process and it also stands as the beginning or as the inception of other lengthy processes that can then emerge in the context of our human lives.⁵⁰ Hence, as our practical human knowing seeks a knowledge and a familiarity and a kind of union which is more than the intimacy of merely our knowing, it should become more obvious to us that our human cognition exists as an activity that is not fully understood if only its speculative character is grasped and understood. It exists within a larger context of things. Other goals and purposes need to be met. The shift which occurs within our human acts of reasoning,

⁴⁴*De Veritate*, q. 1, a. 2; 1, p. 11. See also *In 4 Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, d. 50, q. 1, a. 3, quoted by Crowe, *Three Thomist Studies*, p. 83, n. 25.

⁴⁵Crowe, *Three Thomist Studies*, p. 83. See also Aquinas, *Quaestio disputata De anima*, a. 20; *Quaestiones de quodlibet*, 7, q. 1, a. 3, as quoted by Crowe, *Three Thomist Studies*, p. 83, n. 24.

⁴⁶Crowe, *Three Thomist Studies*, p. 90; p. 129.

⁴⁷*Sententia Libri Politicorum*, Prologue, 6.

⁴⁸*Summa Theologiae Blackfriars*, q. 14, a. 16.

⁴⁹*Sententia super Metaphysicam*, 1, 1, 34-35.

⁵⁰Crowe, *Three Thomist Studies*, p. 85.

as it moves from mere knowing to the good of a fuller form of doing and living, accordingly explains why an adequate understanding of our practical understanding of different things is a more difficult thing for us to grasp, achieve, and know. More variables need to be known and more needs to be coordinated to each other in a way which can acknowledge the due and just weight of all the singled, individual parts. An adequate understanding of human cognition points to why it is more challenging for us to move toward an adequate understanding about how we exist as moral subjects.