



# CLASSICAL MAN & THE TRADITIONAL ETHIC: *A Contemporary Defense*

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## Part I: Introduction

What is the nature of the human being and how can we know it?

### **Why is this work different?**

- 1. Clarity – difficult thought made easy**
- 2. Helpful Diagrams**
- 3. Plethora of primary text citations**
- 4. Chapter intros and summaries aid a beginner in acquiring key points**

Why is philosophy of human nature important?

We need to know *what* we are before we can know anything about the other big questions the confront the mind, such as:

What is the reason for our existence?

Where did we come from?

Why are we here? We are we going?

What happens to us after we die?

Do I have a soul?

Does human nature give us dignity and rights?

What is the basis for law and morality?

In what does happiness consist for the human being?

We will be seeking *philosophical* answers to these questions. Philosophy's conclusions are not always that abstract, but are actually based on common sense, i.e., I am more certain that there are substances and accidents than I am about the structure of the atom. The conclusions of philosophy give us true knowledge about the world without the need for specialized instruments.

Aquinas' philosophical insights are perennial, even if his science is faulty. Its enduring nature is a testimony to its accuracy. The permanent philosophical insights are isolated from any erroneous science.

Moreover, reason can go where empirical science cannot. Modern science is unable to say anything about the existence of the soul. The whole question of any immaterial component lies outside the scope of modern science, which concerns only the tangible and observable.

### **The Difference Between Philosophy, Science, and Theology**

*The Scientist* – uses complex experimental facts, specialized experience with elaborate technological equipment, making exact measurements and presenting the data quantitatively.

*The Theologian* – operates on a set of facts taken on belief or faith. For example, the theologian begins with the presupposition that the Bible is the word of God. If someone doesn't accept that, then they cannot begin to do theology proper. However, this doesn't mean that faith is without any rational foundation. Faith need not be blind. A special branch of theology, called *fundamental theology* or *apologetics*, will use reason to argue that it is rational and reasonable to take this certain set of facts based on faith. Reason lays the foundation for faith to then take over.

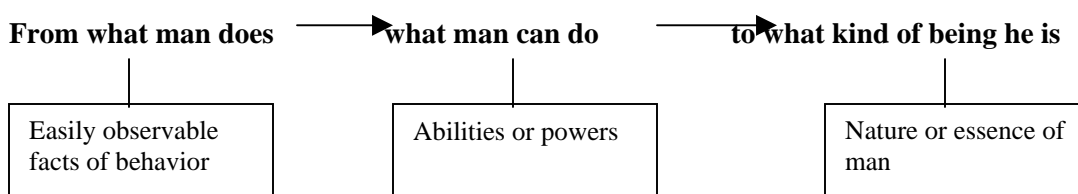
*The Philosopher* – begins with simple primary facts, commonly observable, which require no technology to discover. Of these facts, the philosopher can be absolutely certain and he need not worry about the precision of instrumental measurements. The conclusions come from common sense, general facts which are directly observable in the behavior of mankind: people live and die, think and feel, digest food, see and hear, talk about love, music, history, and religion. St. Thomas Aquinas commonly refers to two primary facts that are easily observed: this man knows, this man dies. We do not need a laboratory to know that people have knowledge and that people die. These facts are incontestably evident; they need no further verification and are universally admitted.

The philosopher's facts DO NOT CHANGE because his data does not change. We are not forced to revise our philosophical conclusions every time a new article pops up in some scientific journal. This is not to say that science is irrelevant to philosopher, on the contrary the philosopher at times may certainly consider the special experience of the scientist in the same way the scientist presupposes certain philosophical positions and relies on his common experience too.

NOTE: a view known as *scientism*, holds that "only science can give us true knowledge about the world", is a) itself not a scientific statement but a philosophical position and b) is self-refuting. There is no possible way that statement can be scientifically proven, and so undermines its own claim. Such a position is not only bad science, it is also bad logic. To say "science proves there is no human nature" is nonsense, science doesn't study natures. Moreover, any assertion such as "human beings are only material" is not a scientific position either, but a philosophical one. Science doesn't have anything to say about the existence or non-existence of immaterial reality, it studies only the material. To say things of this sort is to *go beyond the realm of science* and adopt a *philosophical position* of materialism.

### **Methodology**

Beginning with commonly observed behavior of human beings, the philosopher reasons according to strict logic, that because man does certain things, that same man must have the power to do certain operations to the conclusion that man then must be the kind of thing that can do these operations.



The procedure is from operation to power, to nature.

**Important:** We do *not* begin with the nature of man nor do we begin with blind assumptions like assuming man has an immortal soul. We begin with just the facts and see if these operations lead logically to and the existence of the soul and what these fact tell us about human nature:

In short, the philosopher begins with human acts and then logically discovers truths about human nature. The method of the philosopher is methodical and straightforward. The philosopher is seeking knowledge of human nature, in other words a true if limited understanding of man's nature.

*Ex nihilo nihil fit & agree sequitur esse*

Human operations need to be justified, and this means that a thing acts in accordance with its nature. The way a thing behaves will tell us about the nature of the being. If it does this or that, it is obviously the kind of being that can do so.

It is the whole human being that acts. If someone is thinking, it is *not the thinking power by itself that is working, but the whole person is doing the thinking. The power is not that which acts, but that by which a human acts.*

### **The Difference Between Distinct and Separate**

We just keep in mind the difference between distinct and separate. The powers of human beings are distinct, but they are not separate. If two things are never separated, they can be nevertheless distinct. Thinking and digestion are two distinct powers but they are not separable from the human being that does them.

*We must be careful to avoid the error of thinking that just because two things are inseparable that therefore they are identical.* A left side of the paper is distinct yet inseparable from the right side of the paper, obviously the two are not identical. In the same way as we will see, just because some mental operations do not occur without corresponding operations of bodily organs, it doesn't necessarily mean that they are the operations of bodily organs. Inseparability does not mean identity.

### **Preliminary View of the Human Person**

This is divided mainly between knowing and doing<sup>1</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> Diagram taken from James Royce *Man and His Nature* (New York: McGraw Hill 1961) p. 33

## Human Activities

Knowing	Desiring
Intellection (acts of thinking)	Volition (acts of the will)
Sensory Knowledge: Sensation Perception Memory Imagination etc.	Sensory Appetition: Drives Feelings Impulses etc.
Vegetative Powers	

**Knowing:** a complex activity involving sensation, perception, and intellectual judgments. Even though these activities occur simultaneously, we will study them in ascending order; from simple sensation to conceptual thinking.

**Desiring:** The human is not just a knower, but also tends to act upon knowledge. This action of desiring is called *appetition*. The fight or flight reaction used in modern psychology is an example of appetition, and any appetition is tending towards or away from an object.

**Vegetative:** Human beings have the same basic powers as do all living things; e.g., they grow and take in nourishment.

These activities imply a being, a substance in which functions as a ground for these activities. This being must have a certain kind of essence in order to perform such functions.

### What is the Soul?

Aristotle's definition: "The first actuality of a natural organic body potentially having life" The soul is that by which a thing is alive, a first principle of life. Bodies that should have souls but do not, are corpses.

The body as potentially alive is the material foundation for the soul

Kinds of Souls: vegetative, sensitive, and rational

The lower species of soul are virtually included in the higher

Vegetative soul – nutrition, growth and reproduction

Continuity of nature- gradual transition to animal life

Animals have at least an elementary sort of consciousness

The power of sensation is the reception of forms without matter - it receives an impression of its proper object without destroying it – the way the wax receives a seal imprint

Sense in potency vs in act

### **Humans as Body/Soul Unities**

It is of course quite obvious that human beings have a body, but that humans have a soul is derived from the fact that humans are living, and it as Aquinas argues, the body cannot be the cause of life, for if it were, there would be no reason why every body would not be living. This is not to say of course, that the body is not a principle or reason why a human lives, after all, in order to live we are dependent on the health of our bodies, but it is to say that the body is not the first or main reason why we live, there must be then something other than the body by which we are living:

Now, though a body may be a principle of life, or to be a living thing, as the heart is a principle of life in an animal, yet nothing corporeal can be the first principle of life. For it is clear that to be a principle of life, or to be a living thing, does not belong to a body as such; since, if that were the case, every body would be a living thing, or a principle of life. Therefore a body is competent to be a living thing or even a principle of life, as "such" a body. Now that it is actually such a body, it owes to some principle which is called its act. Therefore the soul, which is the first principle of life, is not a body, but the act of a body.<sup>2</sup>

But the relationship between this soul and body is quite natural. Human beings are a fundamental unity, that is they are one being comprised of both body and soul. When a person acts, it is the whole that acts, not the body nor the soul alone. The unit is the existing and acting agent, and this is understood if we remember Aristotle's understanding of form and matter. The form in this case, as in the case of all living things, is the soul. The soul is the form of the body. Humans are substantial unities of body and soul (living form). The body alone is not the human person, nor is the soul alone the human person. Apart, these components are incomplete. It is only when they are united into a complete unity, that these two complementary principles make one complete existing thing.

This unity is apparent from the seamless relationship that exists between sensing and knowing. When you walk through the woods, it is the same entity that both sees the forest and knows the forest. Sensation is through the body, and (as we will later see) knowledge is through the soul. This obvious recognition that it is both the same being that senses and knows is the basis for Aquinas' argument here:

But if anyone says that the intellectual soul is not the form of the body he must first explain how it is that this action of understanding is the action of this particular man; for each one is conscious that it is himself who understands. Now an action may be attributed to anyone in three ways, as is clear from the Philosopher (Phys. v, 1); for a thing is said to

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<sup>2</sup> ST I.75.1

move or act, either by virtue of its whole self, for instance, as a physician heals; or by virtue of a part, as a man sees by his eye; or through an accidental quality, as when we say that something that is white builds, because it is accidental to the builder to be white. So when we say that Socrates or Plato understands, it is clear that this is not attributed to him accidentally; since it is ascribed to him as man, which is predicated of him essentially. We must therefore say either that Socrates understands by virtue of his whole self, as Plato maintained, holding that man is an intellectual soul; or that intelligence is a part of Socrates. The first cannot stand, as was shown above, for this reason, that it is one and the same man who is conscious both that he understands, and that he senses. But one cannot sense without a body: therefore the body must be some part of man. It follows therefore that the intellect by which Socrates understands is a part of Socrates, so that in some way it is united to the body of Socrates.<sup>3</sup>

In order to correctly point to Socrates and say, “That man knows”, it must be the case that this man we see called Socrates does indeed know something. This knowing is of course not the only thing Socrates can do; he can sense things as well. But sensing is done with the body. So it is one and the same thing that both senses and knows, sensing through the body part and knowing (again as we will see later) through the knowing part.

It is through this mutual interaction of soul and body that we can understand the “oneness” of the human being. Other examples of this interaction is say how excessive drinking affects one’s ability to think, as does a boxer’s left hook also interfere with the man’s cognitive ability to figure out a math problem (or even remember his name and address!). We can also use the example of how say depression or embarrassment, have consequences on the body such as moping or blushing. Strong emotions can cause an increase in one’s heart rate, and physical exercise can increase one’s mental clarity. This tightly knit interaction of the body affecting the soul and the soul affecting the body, is an interactive two way street that seems to be beyond description without positing a fundamental unity between these two components. Being naturally united to the body, the body is not some sort of hindrance or form of punishment to the soul in Aquinas’ thought, as it was in other philosophies, The soul in the body is its natural home, and in the body is where it properly functions.

We will look at other issues regarding the soul later, but for now we turn to...

## Part II: Skepticism

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### **The Problem of Knowing Today**

In light of a growing skepticism however, we would be remiss in not mentioning the philosophical issues surrounding our ability to know external reality. In modern philosophy after the Middle Ages, it became widely held that all one really knows is their own ideas in their head. This position is collectively known as *idealism*. The external world was unreachable.

Later, a general philosophy of *post-modernism*, took this a step further by denying that anyone really knows any truth. If all we know is our own ideas then any truth founded upon those ideas is personal opinion. In post modernism – truth is a personal thing. “Who’s to say?”, “What gives you the right to say X is wrong”, “True for you but not for me”, “That’s just your interpretation” etc. This is the modern version of sophistry.

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<sup>3</sup> ST I.76.1

We live in a post-modern world. The philosophy of Nietzsche, Sartre, etc. has trickled down from the ivory towers of academia to the gas station attendant, the kid working behind the counter at McDonald's, and the newscaster on TV. Most everyone you meet today is a closet postmodern philosopher.

This modern climate is very skeptical towards truth and the ability to acquire knowledge. John Paul II notes that the Church, who in the past has come to the rescue of faith, ironically must now come to the rescue of reason. Citing this cultural malaise, the Holy Father notes:

“It has happened therefore that reason, rather than voicing the human orientation towards truth, has wilted under the weight of so much knowledge and little by little has lost the capacity to lift its gaze to the heights, not daring to rise to the truth of being. Abandoning the investigation of being, modern philosophical research has concentrated instead upon human knowing. Rather than make use of the human capacity to know the truth, modern philosophy has preferred to accentuate the ways in which this capacity is limited and conditioned...Recent times have seen the rise to prominence of various doctrines which tend to devalue even the truths which had been judged certain. A legitimate plurality of positions has yielded to an undifferentiated pluralism, based upon the assumption that all positions are equally valid, which is one of today's most widespread symptoms of the lack of confidence in truth. Even certain conceptions of life coming from the East betray this lack of confidence, denying truth its exclusive character and assuming that truth reveals itself equally in different doctrines, even if they contradict one another. On this understanding, everything is reduced to opinion; and there is a sense of being adrift. ... Hence we see among the men and women of our time, and not just in some philosophers, attitudes of widespread distrust of the human being's great capacity for knowledge. With a false modesty, people rest content with partial and provisional truths, no longer seeking to ask radical questions about the meaning and ultimate foundation of human, personal and social existence. In short, the hope that philosophy might be able to provide definitive answers to these questions has dwindled.”<sup>4</sup>

### **The Problem of Skepticism**

Skepticism is a philosophical position that denies one has the ability to know something, and it comes in all shapes and sizes, but the most radical is one that denies all knowledge or even the first principles. Many forms of skepticism are offered in the form of self-refuting arguments.

**Self-refutation** - arguments are about a subject matter, and sometimes that subject matter encompasses the argument itself. If an argument invalidates its own subject matter on which it relies, it self-destructs. As soon as these types statements are uttered they are false, they undermine themselves. Some examples of self-refuting statements:

- “All English sentences are only three words long”
- “My brother is an only child”
- “Every statement is false”
- “There is no such thing as truth" (Really? Is that true?)
- “There is no knowledge!” (Do you know this?)
- "No one can know anything" (Then how do you know that no one can know?)
- “The nerve of you! What gives you the right to judge other people?” (If judging others is wrong, then why are you judging me?)
- "All truth is appearance" (Is this true for everyone or just based on an appearance?)

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<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 5 emphasis added

Aristotle humorously highlights the folly of this last view:

But to attend equally to the opinions and the fancies of disputing parties is childish; for clearly one of them must be mistaken... For to maintain the view we are opposing [that all truth is appearances] is just like maintaining that the things that appear to people who put their finger under their eye and make the object appear two instead of one must be two (because they appear to be of that number) and again one (for to those who do not interfere with their eye the one object appears one).

So to say that “no one knows anything” is to utter a meaningless phrase, because it means the one who utters it doesn’t know anything either, and if they don’t know anything, we are under no obligation to accept what they have to say. Of course, not all arguments for skepticism are so easily dismissed. There are at least four others that fare better. When considering how we must respond to these arguments, we must make a distinction between **refuting the skeptic** vs. **rebutting the skeptic**. To **refute** someone is to positively prove the position wrong. To **rebut** someone is to simply show that they have not sufficiently proved their case and that they sufficiently shouldered the **burden of proof**.<sup>5</sup> Our main task here is concerned with rebutting the skeptic and not refuting them.

#### **Four Arguments for Skepticism**

**The Argument from Error** – Have you ever been wrong about anything in the past? Then how do you know you are not wrong now? If you have been mistaken before about say a moral decision or about something from your own sense experience, for all you know you could be mistaken now too. And unless you know that you are not mistaken right now, how can you possibly have knowledge?

**Response to the Argument from Error:** The mere existence of error in the past does not provide a sufficient reason for thinking one is in error now. Good reasons need to be provided now to show why someone is in error. If one has good reasons to believe something is colored white now, then in the absence of good reasons indicating otherwise, one is amply justified in believing the thing to be white. In fact, all reasonable doubt is founded on knowledge. For example, in order to realize one has been mistaken in the past, *one must first know the truth of the matter* before one can determine they were ever in error. If I thought a stick in the water was crooked, and later realized it was straight after taking it out of the water, *I cannot know I was ever in error unless I know the stick was really straight after all*. Thus, it cannot be that past error removes all claims to knowledge, because I could not even acknowledge past errors without knowledge. The reasons for recognizing an error come as a consequence of knowing the truth.

**The Argument from the Possibility of Error** – Isn’t it at least possible that you are being deceived right now? It is at least logically possible that you are dreaming or that all of your experiences are illusions produced by an evil demon who gets his kicks out of making you think you are having real experiences. Can you prove that you are not really a brain in the vat of an evil scientist tricking you into thinking you have experiences? Since all of these are possible and since nothing you can do would indicate that this is not true, there is no way for you to know that these things aren’t happening to you right now and so you cannot really know anything is real.

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<sup>5</sup> The “burden of proof” is the obligation to provide evidence for a position. The claim of the other side, the one that does not bear the burden of proof, is assumed to be true unless proven otherwise. For example, in American law a person is assumed to be innocent until proven guilty (hence the burden of proof is on the prosecution). We are claiming here that the realist position (that humans have at least some knowledge) is the “default” position, innocent until proven guilty, and that the skeptic must show otherwise.

**Response to the Argument from the Possibility of Error:** We make a distinction between the *logical possibility* of error and *plausibility* of error. A logical possibility is only a lack of logical contradiction. Plausibility occurs when there are good reasons for thinking something to be the case. While it is *logically possible* (that there is no logical contradiction in asserting an evil demon is tricking us) that we may be in error we agree. But that it is *plausible* or likely we are in error (that there is good reason to think an evil demon is tricking us) we do not. Just because it is logically possible that we may be mistaken in a particular case, doesn't mean there are good reasons for thinking one is wrong. *The skeptic must provide good reasons for thinking knowledge fails, mere logical possibilities will not do.* Knowledge does not require absolute certainty. After all, none of us are mathematically infallible but that does not mean we cannot be certain  $4 \times 4 = 16$ . One can acknowledge the overall possibility of error and yet still be certain about particular things.

**The Argument from Illicit Certitude** – Perhaps you do have some reliable current sensory experiences, but we often claim to know things that go beyond that experience. For example, do you know what is in your house when you are not there, does your favorite grocery store still exist when you are not there experiencing it, are you sure that Lincoln was a president of the United States, will the life sustaining medication you took in the past continue to work the same way? How do you know these things if you have never experienced them?

**Response to Argument from Illicit Certitude:** Again, knowledge does not require mathematical certitude. As Cardinal John Henry Newman has argued, we can have a degree of certitude based on probabilistic inferences. We are reasonably certain who our parents are, although the only way we know this is because some people have told us. We are certain that falling off of skyscraper will kill us even though we have never tried it. We are certain the earth is a globe or that cities such as Manila and Hong Kong exist even though we know these things only because others have said so, not because we have demonstratively proven each one. Newman wrote, "We laugh to scorn the idea that we had no parents though we have no memory of our birth; that we shall never depart from this life, though we have no experience of the future; that we are able to live without food though we have never tried; that a world of men did not live before our time or that that world has had no history..."<sup>6</sup>

**The Argument from Idealism** – All we really know are our ideas in our own head. If its not in our head, we cannot know it, and if its in our head, its not part of the real world but only a personal entity. Ergo, you don't know about reality, you only know your own personal ideas.

**Response to the Argument from Idealism:** As we will see, the primary object of our knowledge is the nature of sensible things. We do not know ideas; we know things and the concepts are instruments *by which* we know them. *As knowers we are primarily in contact with things, not ideas.* Ideas are posterior to things known. We are not faced with the problem of "getting out of ourselves" or with the problem of a mind way over here reaching a world way over there. Knowledge is not by contact of knower and known or by the presence of a *similitude* of the latter in the former but by an *identity* of knower and known. What the thing is is the same in the thing as it is in the intellect, though the *kind* of existence is different. It's the same form but only in two different modes.

Given the inability of skepticism to prove its case, we must penetrate and try to understand the processes involved in human knowledge.

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<sup>6</sup> John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (South Bend, Notre Dame) 149

## Part III: Human Knowledge

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**Fundamental Overview** It is a fundamental fact that human beings are able to know things, be aware of themselves, and even be aware of their own awareness. This is the direct experience that serves as a starting point. This data is presumed by the study of human nature, and no such study could proceed without it. What exactly is knowing and how should we understand it?

All forms of knowledge are a type of reproduction. A knower reproduces “on the inside” whatever it is that is known “on the outside”. Knowing is the possession of something, but in an immaterial, internal manner. By analogy, just as when we eat we take in our food and that food becomes a part of us, in a similar way, when we know we take in the object of our knowledge and it too becomes a part of us, but unlike the food, what is known stays the same. In other words, the object as known is not destroyed in the process of knowing. It is taken in, and as possessed by the soul is preserved. When we know an apple the apple as known is not changed into something else, rather the soul in a sense becomes the apple. Whatever is known is in the knower, and in this way, the knowing being has the power to become other things. A disciple of Aquinas, John of St. Thomas, puts it this way:

Things that know are nobler than things that have no knowledge, precisely in this: that they can receive into their being something else, exactly as it is something else; accomplishing their cognitive task in such a manner that, while remaining what they are in themselves, at the same time they are able to become things other than themselves.<sup>7</sup>

This taking in of objects in the act of knowing gives them what Aquinas understands as an **intentional existence**. Existing in the knower they do not exist like they do in the outside world, ideas of course do not have a weight and spatial location, rather they exist in the knower without their material properties in an immaterial or intentional way.

This ability is what separates all animals from plants. In this sense then, all sentient animals are able to become something other than themselves every time they take in external reality in an act of awareness. Already here, there is a certain degree of immateriality present. But we may ask, just what is it about the thing known that is capable of such an intentional existence in the knower? It is the thing’s form. Given that all material beings are made up of matter and form, it is clearly not the matter, the physical “stuff” that is inside the knower. We do not gain weight when we know an elephant. It is rather the form of the thing that is assimilated into the knower. When the knower becomes the object and possesses it, the knower is possessing the form of the object. Again, this ability is what distinguishes all conscious beings from plants.

Aquinas uses the term **species** to mean the form *as known*. In other words, the species is the form as it has intentional existence in a knower. So the species is simply the name for an intentional form. It is this species that is the instrument of a knower and enables it to become one with the external thing. If it weren’t for the intermediary quality of the species, knowing would not be possible.

When a sentient being comes into contact with an object, the stimulus of the sense impression results in an **impressed species** on the knower. In other words, a species is impressed on a sense organ and is thus called an impressed species. Intentional forms stem from external things. This impressed species is the means by which the object is known. As an instrument of knowledge, the

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<sup>7</sup> John of St Thomas, *Cursus Philosophicus Thomisticus*: Phil, Nat. p. IV, q. 4, a.1

impressed species is like a mirror that reflects the object enabling the knower to reach an awareness of it. This object of knowledge can be stored in the being's memory and imaginative powers, which can later be brought to the fore and expressed. When a knowing being remembers something from the past, the object of thought is an **expressed species** insofar as it now expressed from the being's power of memory. The same would be true of course if it stemmed from the knower's imagination. Expressed species stem from the knower.

## Foundations of Human Knowledge

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**We begin all knowledge with the obvious - first principles and sensation.** First principles are undeniable, sense experience itself is its own evidence - no argument can be more obvious than the experience itself. These are the beginning, the starting points of knowledge which one does not need to prove. To insist on proving everything one believes runs into The Problem of the Criterion. We must begin any knowledge with some "given". One cannot offer a reason for everything because that would result in an infinite regress, and if that, one could never know anything. Aristotle:

"Some indeed demand that even this [principle of non-contradiction] shall be demonstrated, *but this they do through want of education, for not to know of what things one should demand demonstration, and of what one should not, argues want of education.* For it is impossible that there should be demonstration of absolutely everything (there would be an infinite regress, so that there would still be no demonstration); but if there are things of which one should not demand demonstration, these persons could not say what principle they maintain to be more self-evident than the present one." (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*)

From first principles, the intellect apprehends the universal in an act of apprehension, and then we move on to judgments and reasoning.

**First Principles of Knowledge:** These are obvious self-evident truths (they contain their own evidence and are not in need of any outside evidence). These principles cannot be proven; to do so would be circular reasoning, because these principles are presupposed in every proof

- **The Fact of Existence:** Things exist, and I at least exist. *Cogito ergo sum* – I think therefore I am! (Descartes) *Si fallor sum* - If I am mistaken, I am (Augustine)- If I doubt or if I err, there must be someone there to do the doubting and erring! This is the primacy of existence. Before we can know what anything is, we must first know that it is. The existence of the external world is one of the most obvious facts we know. It doesn't need any proof; it is its own evidence.
- **The Principle of Non-Contradiction:** "A thing can not be and not-be at the same time in the same respect." The Principle of Non-Contradiction states that a thing cannot both be and not be at the same time and in the same sense. This is the negative formulation of the principle of identity - since everything is what it is, it is not something else. A is not not-A. A dog cannot both be a dog and not a dog at the same time and in the same sense.
- **The Fact that the Mind Can Know:** The essential capability of the mind to know the truth about both the external world and ourselves. In other words, intuitively recognizing the ability of the intellect to reason and discover truth.

If someone denies these principles, challenge them. Ask them what would suffice as a proof for them. They will not be able to formulate a coherent response without assuming the very principles they want to deny. These three principles are necessary for any knowledge whatsoever.

**Denying the first principles is the height of absurdity.** The most ridiculous and inane thing one can say is that they do not accept or believe in the laws of logic. These principles are self-evident; they are presupposed in any true statement or thought. There are so obvious that they can be proven only indirectly. Aristotle shows this by *reductio ad absurdum*.<sup>8</sup> To deny “something cannot both be and not-be at the same time and in the same way” is to think this denial is true. But if the denial is true, then it too can both be true and not be true at the same time. So even the denial of this principle is both true and false. But of course the objector does not want to say his denial of the principle is false. He wants it to be true, but only the principle of non-contradiction can allow it to be one way and not the other. If this principle were false, all words lose their meanings rendering speech useless, there can be no identity or distinction between things, it means the destruction of all truth and hence everything is equally false and equally true, there cannot even be any thought or opinion - any affirmation is also a negation, no desire and hatred, no good and evil. In short, the world becomes utterly unintelligible.

People that doubt reality or the laws of logic, are just doing so verbally. They obey these realities in every other case. They are *lived contradictions*. They still eat bread and not rat poison, they go to their jobs everyday instead of the park, etc. Aristotle correctly argues that the only other option is to make oneself a vegetable:

"And if he makes no judgment but 'thinks' and 'does not think', indifferently, what difference will there be between him and a vegetable? Thus, then, it is in the highest degree evident that neither any one of those who maintain this view nor any one else is really in this position. For why does a man walk to Megara and not stay at home, when he thinks he ought to be walking there? Why does he not walk early some morning into a well or over a precipice, if one happens to be in his way? Why do we observe him guarding against this, evidently because he does not think that falling in is alike good and not good?" (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*)

### **The Primacy of the Senses**

The intellect is in one sense passive, an original state of potentiality and void of any thoughts. Hence all understanding is initially a receiving. “Before it makes an act of understanding, the intellect is its intelligible objects potentially but not actually. It must be as with a tablet on which there is nothing actually written; and so indeed it is in the case of the intellect.”<sup>9</sup> The potential intellect then is in need of something; something needs to be written on this *blank tablet* in order to have knowledge.

### **External Senses**

All human knowledge begins in some way with the senses. So to study human knowledge we must begin with this most basic form of human awareness. Naturally sensation begins with the **external senses**. The external senses immediately inform us of the external world. (the philosopher does not limit himself to only five, but philosophically speaking the actual number is not important) Each sense power has its *proper object*, that is, each sense power has that aspect of reality which it is naturally oriented to sensing:

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<sup>8</sup> Reducing something to absurdity means proving a position false by showing that it leads to ridiculous conclusions. In other words, it is arguing like “if what you say is true then X must be true, but X is obviously ridiculous, so what you say must not be true.”

<sup>9</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima* Book 3, Lecture IX, 429b29 - 430a2

**Vision:** The proper object of vision is *color*, and there is something in say a green object that makes it appear green rather than red (given a healthy set of eyes). We do not see light *per se*, because the range of light is greater than the colors we can see. The object of sight then is color.<sup>10</sup>

**Hearing:** The object of this sense is *tone* or *noise*, and the difference in tone is a result of differing degrees of vibration in airwaves. The human ear is capable of very fine distinctions in pitch, intensity and quality in ways that sometimes surpasses the eye.

**Smell:** The object of this sense is *odor*. This is poorly developed in humans compared to the rest of the animal kingdom. It is interesting to note that much of what is regarded as taste is actually odor, as is known by the lack of taste when one holds their nose.

**Tactual:** The proper object of this sense is the tactile, and this comes in different types.. The skin is able to inform us of things that are hot, cold, smooth hard, etc. Some research has shown that sensations or say temperature are the result of not merely the contact itself but a change in contact, e.g., something will feel colder if the hand has been previously warmed.

**Taste:** The proper object of this sense is *flavor* and usually categorized as bitter, sweet, sour, and salt.

**Vestibular:** Our sense of equilibrium has much to do with our body position in relation to gravity. The inner ear is not merely for hearing, but contains liquids and tiny hair cells that inform us of starting and stopping, turning, and balance.

**Organic:** Sensations of aching within organs; i.e. a stomachache, a headache, nausea, etc.

### **Internal Senses**

There are also a variety of **internal senses**. The internal senses organize, present, and arrange the data provided by the external senses. There are four internal senses:

**Central sense:** This is the “organizing power”. Vision only gives us colors, hearing only sounds, etc. In order to know that the red color provided by vision, the round and cool texture provided by the touch of the hand, and the sweet taste provided by the tongue belongs to the one apple, there must be some power that organizes these various sensations and centralizes them. This is the work of the **central sense**.<sup>11</sup> The individual sense themselves cannot do this, for example, vision can say nothing about the cool surface of the apple. There must be a separate power to do this, because sight and touch cannot do this alone. One sense faculty cannot know the proper object of another (touch cannot know color). Since we do make such distinctions, the ability to do so must lie somewhere other than in the external senses. We are also aware of our sensing, but this does not come from the external sensory powers themselves, e.g., we don’t see our seeing nor touch our touching. We both see and are aware that we see, but not by the faculty of sight alone but by the operation of this central sense. The central sense is the organizer and “meeting place” for all the external senses.

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<sup>10</sup> For a defense of “color realism”, that is, the common sense notion that *things* are colored and that color is not just a subjective response to a “light wave”, see Chris Decean’s, “The Viability of Aristotelian-Thomistic Color Realism” in *The Thomist* 65, 2001

<sup>11</sup> Many books on Aristotle and Aquinas call this the “common sense” but we use “central sense” here to avoid confusion with common understandings of the former.

*The difference between sensation and perception:* Sensation and perception differ in the way of looking at the parts of a jigsaw puzzle and looking at the completed product. **Perception** is the total sensory awareness of an object presented to the sense organs while sensation is the action of the individual external senses.

We can see the work of the central sense clearly in images of ambiguity, contrast, and illusion that cause the same sense impression to have different results. This phenomenon is best illustrated by the use of indefinite images:



Is the first a young woman or an old lady? On the second, is this the face of a beautiful woman or a man playing a saxophone? Whether we see the object as one or the other *cannot be merely due to the external senses*, after all the same sense impression is there for both, *it must then be due to internal factors*. The case is the same with **illusion**. Illusions occur in the common sense because it is this power's job to organize and arrange the sense data. The phenomenon of an "optical illusion" is not really a result of the eye but the result of the forming of a false impression due to the distortion of the sense data by the internal senses. The sensory data is what it is, it does not change, but the error arises from an internal psychological processes. These are both quite distinct from a **hallucination**. A hallucination would be seeing a leprechaun floating at the ceiling when nothing is there. In an illusion and ambiguous image, there is some sensory data; while in a hallucination there is no sensory data at all.<sup>12</sup>

**Imagination:** The imagination is the ability to make a sensory representation of objects that are *not present*, the result being an image. Insofar as these images are removed from perceptual experience, they tend to be less distinct and washed out. This power can combine sensory images into fanciful combinations, like a Pegasus for example. It is not surprising then to realize this power can be very active when the outer senses are subdued during sleep. Moreover, this power is usually considered the ground for creativity because it allows us to be independent of present experience and "go beyond the present reality". Thus, it is an important factor for scientists, poets, artists, and inventors. Of course, this power can go too far as well and cause an erroneous intellectual conviction or **delusion**.

**Memory:** The object of memory is past experience *as past*. This is different from imagination's object that forms an image that is not present. The two powers however, are closely related. Since both play a role in habitually recalling stored images, they play a large role in learning.

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<sup>12</sup> Gestalt psychology is focused primarily on the work of the central sense in that this field is concerned with how such phenomenon create a total impression over and above the sum of its parts.

Both the imagination and memory powers aid the intellect in learning and knowing by providing it with images to work with and from which it can gather concepts.

**Estimative:** This is the *instinctual* power by which an animal knows, without prior learning, how to respond to some object insofar as to attain goods and avoid evils and all *without previous knowledge*. This power is a distinct faculty for the other sensitive powers cannot account for this ability. It is from this power that the animal has a sensitive prudence and knows to flee or fight, eat, mate, make a nest or hive, etc. It is by this power that an animal makes judgments about the beneficial and harmful, and this can be immediate or more remote. Even animals when placed in complete isolation from others of their species, operate in distinctive ways appropriate to their species; i.e., mating, knowing how to build nests, and things of this sort, and could not possibly have been learned behavior or imitation. This power in the human however is called the **cogitative power**. The reason for giving this power a different name in human beings is that for humans, the instinctual information is closely informed by the intellect and thus differs from that of animals. Because of this cooperation, the cogitative power has much more flexibility than the estimative. Yet this does not change the nature of the power itself which is still essentially animal and based upon sensations.

It should be noted that there is a large interdependence between the distinct internal powers, in both animals and humans.

## The Human Intellect

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Aristotle defines a human as a rational animal. Not that the definition makes it true, but the definition comes as a consequence, and formulates the result of, a philosophical investigation. This does not intend to deny that we all know people who behave irrationally. Yet, this distinction is set to mark off humankind from the rest of the creatures in this world. The human achievements in literature, art, music, engineering, technology, and culture clearly mark off human beings as being drastically different from the other animals, regardless of the fact that there is an undeniable similarity between the two groups as well.

How do we know the essence of human beings in order to make this definition? We have to use the philosophical methodology laid out in the beginning. We move from acts to powers to nature. Thus the starting point for investigating the nature of the human intellect is in our mental acts.

### The Process of Human Knowledge

How is it that we attain our ideas? All knowledge is acquiring something in some sort of immaterial manner. When knowing an apple, the knower “takes in” the apple while the physical apple remains the same. The object, as known, is a new existence, an existence in a different manner than that of the original object. The object known is a mental being and has **intentional existence**. This occurs when the knower sees an apple and acquires its form without the matter, all the while without the knower or the apple being physically changed. In this cognitive union, the knower acquires the form, mentally, without the matter of the thing and becomes “enriched” or “greater” as a result of this achievement. Someone becomes “well informed” with greater “information” when they acquire knowledge.

This description of course presupposes that sensation is the beginning of knowledge, as mentioned above. A man born blind has no idea of the color red. Likewise, a baby does not have a broad set of ideas already implanted in his mind upon birth. These ideas have come from sensory experience. The intellect then is in a potency to know, like a blank blackboard, and we

learn by experience with things. In this sense, there is a **potential intellect**. The mind is open to learning and receiving content from the world. In other words, all knowledge begins with perception. Yet sensation cannot be the sole explanation for knowledge. The facts demand an additional element, something spiritual, to account for our knowledge of universal natures.

Sense perception creates an internal sense image or **phantasm** that supplies the intellect with the material component of knowledge. The phantasm is not something from a fantasy novel, it is just the scholastic term for any sensory knowledge from which the intellect can work on. The phantasm is the necessary condition for any knowledge. As Aristotle writes “Hence the soul never understands apart from phantasms.”<sup>13</sup> Without it, there is nothing on which the active intellect can act. The intellect is related to phantasms as the senses are to their objects. This means that the phantasms are the “material cause” of understanding and indispensable to knowledge:

And on this account, what does not perceive by sensation acquires no knowledge or understanding at all; and when thinking occurs there must be at the same time a phantasm as its object; for phantasms are as sense objects save they are without matter.<sup>14</sup>

Maritain: “Sense delivers existence to the intellect: it gives the intellect an intelligible treasure”<sup>15</sup>

There are however, degrees of immateriality. In pure sensation, the receiver acquires the form without matter but yet still hanging on to its individual qualities. Sense perception involves just the particular thing sensed. The phantasm is of the individual apple and still exists in some matter, likely in the cerebral cortex of the brain. This phantasm then can be called “quasi immaterial” because it is a sort of immateriality, but not completely so.

There is a greater degree of immateriality when we are talking human knowing of essences and the like. As we saw, Aristotle held that the forms or essences of things are in the particular thing itself, not in an abstract world of Platonic Forms. Here the nature or universal is “embedded” in the thing itself, making it be the kind of thing it is. When the essence becomes known, it is a **concept**. The concept is the nature, form, or essence (again all synonymous) as known. As a review, let's cover again some of the chief characteristics of concepts:

**Concepts are universal:** Because the concept refers to an essence, there is a one to many relationship. You realize immediately upon experience that an apple can be on your tree in the yard, in your refrigerator, and at the store all at the same time. “Apple” is in many places at one time and the same is true for the other concepts. All of these different things share the same common essence.

**Concepts are unchanging and necessary:** The concept of “apple” does not change no matter what happens to individual apples. Even if their number doubled, or they went extinct, the concept of apple remains the same. Only the individuals change, not the concepts. From this we can see that concepts have necessary features about them. A square necessarily has four sides. There cannot be a three-sided square - that would violate the very essence of what a square is. The essence of things dictates certain necessary characteristics about them.

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<sup>13</sup> *De Anima* Book 3, Lecture XII, 431a17

<sup>14</sup> *De Anima* Book 3, Lecture XIII, 432a5-10

<sup>15</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Existence and the Existent* (New York: Image Books, 1948) p.21

So two things are clear, that we need concepts of essences in order to have knowledge, and, as Aristotle argued, there are problems with saying these essences exist in some removed realm. In order to make things be the kind of thing they are, to exert some form of causality on the particular thing, they must exist within the thing itself.

These essences then in the matter are only potentially intelligible. In order to be actually known, they need to be “pulled out” or abstracted from the individual thing. Our mind must be able to do this, because we do in fact know these essences. The intellect has the power to abstract the intelligible form from the sensible. This process is known as **abstraction** and is done by a power called the **agent intellect**. Once the phantasm is received, the agent intellect abstracts the essence from it. It considers the image apart from any particularizing characteristics, arriving at the pure universal nature of the thing. Thus we may see several different dogs, and when we receive the sense image of them *the intellect considers only that which is common to all*, the concept of “dogness”. The essence does not really exist apart from this particular; it only exists as universal in the intellect.

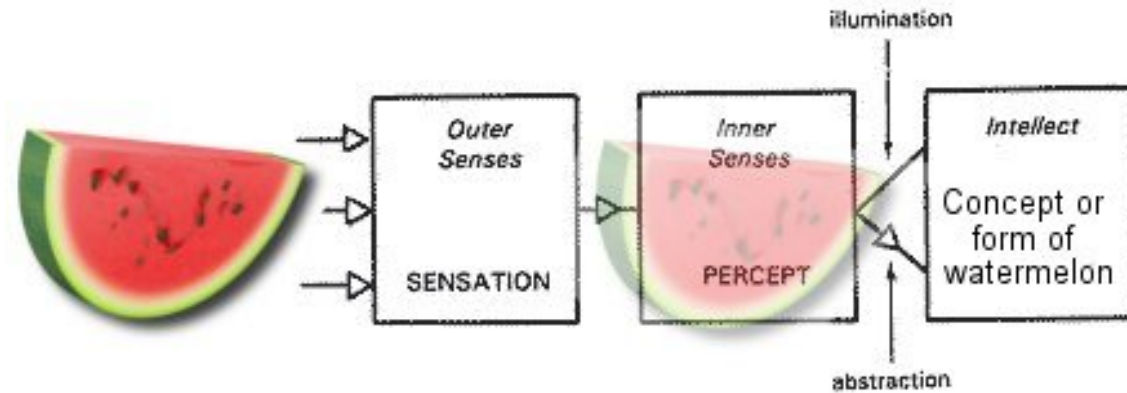
Since the very object of knowledge is embedded in things, these things are only potentially intelligible and so Aristotle needed to posit something like the agent intellect to separate it and ground the power of abstraction. Plato, who believed that essences existed on their own independently of sensible substances, had no need of it. The difference between Plato and Aristotle on the ways the essences are known is the difference between participation/remembering on one hand and abstraction on the other. St Thomas Aquinas clarifies:

The reason why Aristotle came to postulate an agent intellect was his rejection of Plato’s theory that the essences of sensible things existed apart from matter, in a state of actual intelligibility. For Plato there was clearly no need to posit an agent intellect. But Aristotle, who regarded the essences of sensible things as existing in matter with only a potential intelligibility, had to invoke some abstractive principle in the mind itself to render these essences actually intelligible.<sup>16</sup>

We can use a diagram as an example. A watermelon is apprehended by the external senses, the inner senses such as the central sense completes the picture, combing all the color, smell, taste, and feel of the watermelon and unifying the image in a percept. The intellect then can abstract the essence from the sense image and understand the concept of a watermelon.

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<sup>16</sup> Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle’s De Anima* (Notre Dame, Dumb Ox Books, 1994) p. 229



## The Process of Abstracting a Form

Since the concept is immaterial, and the object that provides the phantasm is material, both sensation and intellectual powers are needed in order to know anything. The intellect cannot provide the object, and the phantasm cannot provide the universality and immateriality. Knowledge requires both.

James Royce gives the analogy of radar being akin to the knowing process:

The agent intellect is thus likened to a radar transmitter which is always turned on and ready to impress; the potential intellect is like the screen. We are born with this equipment, so to speak. But just as there would never be a picture unless some object came across the path of the radar beam, so we would never have an idea unless sensory experience gave the intellect something from which to abstract...Conversely, just as the object by itself cannot impress the radar screen without the special beam sent out by the transmitter, so the phantasm cannot impress the spiritual potential intellect without the help of the agent intellect.<sup>17</sup>

It is important to note that it is not merely the mental concept that we know; we know the essence of the thing in question. If we only knew mental concepts, we could know nothing of the outside world. We know *things* - the essences of *things* and the concept of things is a by-product of this operation. In other words, the concepts are not *that which* we know but *that by which* we know – they are the instruments of knowing and not the objects of that which is known. What is known is not a copy, representation, or similitude but the same identical thing without its matter.

### The Three Acts of the Intellect

This process of abstracting the essence of a thing and acquiring the concept is the first step in the mind's attaining of knowledge. This process is **the first act of the intellect** or **simple apprehension**. In this first act, the essence of the thing is simply understood without anything else coming in to the picture. This is the process we have been describing above. The result here is neither true nor false (you only take in what you take in) but it can be clear or unclear.

<sup>17</sup> James Royce S.J., *Man and His Nature* (New York, McGraw Hill 1961) p. 120

The next step is **the second act of the intellect or judgment**. With an operative set of ideas the intellect can form judgments. Judgments are propositions about the way things really are. For example, by eating an apple one can arrive at the judgment “This apple is sweet”. *Judgments refer our concepts back to the source from which they came*. In the act of judging, we either unite or divide two concepts and say this is the way they are in reality: This apple is red vs. this apple is not red. *The judgment is where truth and falsity occur*.

In similar fashion, illusions occur in the central sense and not the sense powers themselves, and intellectual error occurs in the judgment and not in the simple apprehension itself. If the judgment joins two concepts that are in fact joined in reality, the judgment is true, and vice versa, while erroneous judgments that unite or divide what is not in fact united or divided are false.

**The third act of the intellect is reasoning**. Intellectual activity does not stop with the judgment. We can progress from previously known truths to unknown truths by logical reasoning and the syllogism. This is a step-by-step advance in knowledge and the proper procedure for these advances is studied by the science of logic and will not be covered here.

### **Intellectual Memory**

The intellect does not start all over every time it learns something, but retains previously stored information much like the memory power of sensation. Much of our knowledge anyway is not actually “in front of our minds” at all times but in a state of potency. We have learned these things in the past, and may know them now habitually and thus able to recall it with ease (for example the historical knowledge of a history professor). None of this would be possible of course if the intellect did not have a memory.

### **Conscience**

The judgment of conscience on a moral act is one of what St. Thomas Aquinas calls a judgment of “pure knowledge”, that is a judgment made without being inhibited by the passions. While the conclusion of a practical judgment can be maligned by the influence of a passion overcoming a weakness in virtue, the conscience remains immune from such impairments. The judgment of conscience then is “pure”.

Since we mentioned that it is in the act of judgment where truth and error occur, we bring up a very fundamental question on the nature of truth. Many today are confused or skeptical of any truth claims and so it is well worth discussing the topic of truth.

## **What is Truth?**

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“To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true” (Aristotle Meta. Book IV)

**The Correspondence Theory of Truth** This is probably the most common way in which we check to see whether or not a judgment is true. All we have to do is check our judgment with what really is the case and if our judgment corresponds to what is the case, we say the judgment is true. Basically, truth rests on the conformity or correspondence of our mind with reality, in other words truth is “telling it like it is”.

*Veritas sequitur esse rerum* (Truth follows the existence of things)

Maritain: “knowledge is immersed in existence.”<sup>18</sup>

Maritain: “The function of the judgment is an existential function”<sup>19</sup>

Truth and error arise in the process of judgment. *When we join or separate in our mind what is actually joined or separated in reality, our judgment is true.* Truth is a correspondence to reality, conformity of the intellect to the thing - *when what’s inside ones head harmonizes or squares with what is outside one’s head, the judgment is true.* Error is the lack of conformity between what is in the mind and what is in the world. Take some examples. What are the concepts being joined or divided and does this joining or division reflects reality?

Iraq is a country

George Bush was not a U.S. President

Joe is a criminal

Logic is not useful

We can checkout many fact-claims in by simple observation. Go see! Go touch! Go listen! Use your senses. In order to apply this correspondence test, we require only two things:

- The judgment we make about something, and
- Real objects or events to which the judgment corresponds.

If reality corresponds, the judgment is true; if not, the judgment is false. Remember, however, some there are some judgments about which we are uncertain. At this point it is an opinion. Judgments may be expressed as an opinion, and some opinions are more informed than others. Opinions occur because we are not certain whether or not the judgment is true or false.

### **But So Many People Disagree – Relativism Must be True, Right?**

Reality doesn’t change just because two people do not agree. In other words, *real things are what they are regardless of what anyone happens to think about it.* The Earth is round, in spite of one’s inability to convince another that it is not flat. The Earth doesn’t become flat just because someone thinks it is. So even if the flat-earther doesn’t know the Earth is round, or won’t admit the Earth is round, or even if a poll taken indicates that most people believe the Earth is flat – still *the idea that the Earth is round is the true one and anyone who thinks the Earth is flat is flat wrong.* Truth is grounded in reality, and what people happen to think about it doesn’t change what is real. To quote Paul Copan<sup>20</sup>:

**TRUTH IS TRUE – EVEN IF NO ONE KNOWS IT**

**TRUTH IS TRUE – EVEN IF NO ONE ADMITS IT**

**TRUTH IS TRUE – EVEN IF NO ONE AGREES WITH IT**

**TRUTH IS TRUE – EVEN IF NO ONE FOLLOWS IT**

**TRUTH IS TRUE – EVEN IF NO ONE GRASPS IT FULLY**

In sum, it is the actual existing thing is the ground for the verification of judgments. Things do not change just because opinions do.

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<sup>18</sup> Maritain, 21

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 22

<sup>20</sup> Paul Copan, *True for You but Not for Me* ()

There are other ideas of truth such as the **coherence theory of truth** (when something corresponds or does not correspond with what we already know) and the **pragmatic theory of truth** (what works) but both of these presuppose the coherence theory.

## Part IV: The Immateriality of the Intellect

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We must now analyze human thought more deeply and see if we can know more about the nature of the intellect. Is thinking the same thing as sensation? In other words, is the intellectual process of abstracting a concept something that can be done by a corporeal organ like the brain?

### **The Difference Between Sensation and Knowledge**

Explaining the origin of ideas has been a puzzle for philosophers since the ancient Greeks. Some materialistic philosophers have made attempts to argue that sensation is the same as knowledge. This attempt has been made since the time before Plato, and continues into the present day. Modern people are often under the idea that some form of materialism is the predominant school of human thought opposed by only the minority of the religious right. First of all, truth is not determined by taking a poll, but secondly. The spiritual nature of the human intellect has been upheld by some of the greatest thinkers in the history of the world from a wide array of philosophical schools. Greeks like Plato and Aristotle, Arabian philosophers like Averroes, medieval thinkers like Thomas Aquinas, Asian thinkers, modern giants such as Descartes, Kant, Spinoza, as well have all held that there is more to the human being than just matter. Thus, it can easily be shown that the materialist position has historically been in the minority, and it is only in our time that materialism has attained a prominent position. So this is the question; if it can be shown that the human being has certain powers that are unexplainable by physical processes, we are justified in admitting an immaterial component, a soul, to the constitution of the human person. Can philosophy tell us which view is correct? The importance of this question deserves its own section.

See the essay: *Are Human Minds Merely Computers Made Out of Meat?*

## Aquinas on Personal Identity

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Aquinas never directly addresses the question of personal identity over time, yet the issue has been one discussed in contemporary philosophical trend and we can gather what Aquinas' response would be given his understanding of the constitution of the human person. In other words, when we know what Aquinas argued the human person to be, we can infer how he would have dealt with the issue of personal identity.

Aquinas holds by faith in the resurrection of the body, and he thinks the soul must be rejoined to the numerically identical body to which it was joined in its prior state on earth.

Relationship to the human soul is important for the matter:

That which is in a man materially is not ordered to the resurrection except according as it belongs to the truth of human nature, because in this way it has a relationship to the rational soul

Super Sent., lib. 4 d. 44 q. 1 a. 2 qc. 5 co. Ad quintam quaestionem dicendum, quod illud quod est materialiter in homine, non habet ordinem ad resurrectionem **nisi secundum quod pertinet ad veritatem humanae naturae**, quia secundum hoc habet ordinem ad animam rationalem. **Illud autem totum quod est in homine materialiter, pertinet quidem ad veritatem humanae naturae quantum ad id quod habet de specie; sed non totum considerata materiae totalitate; quia tota materia quae fuit in homine a principio vitae usque ad finem, excederet quantitatem debitam speciei**, ut tertia opinio dicit, quae probabilior inter ceteras mihi videtur; et ideo totum quod est in homine, resurget considerata totalitate speciei, quia attenditur secundum quantitatem, figuram, situm, et ordinem partium; non autem resurget totum considerata totalitate materiae. Secunda autem opinio et prima non utuntur hac distinctione; sed distinguunt inter partes, quarum utraeque habent speciem vel materiam. Conveniunt autem duae hae opiniones in hoc quod utraque dicit, quod illud quod est ex semine generatum, totum resurget, etiam totalitate materiae considerata. Differunt autem in hoc quod de eo quod ex alimento generatur, nihil resurgere ponit prima opinio; secunda vero aliquid ejus resurgere ponit, et non totum, ut ex dictis patet.

The quantity of matter that will be resurrected will be the quantity required for the proper restoration of all the body parts

The matter of a man is throughout his life continuously being consumed and restored, the parts of the body “ebb and flow”:

For what is no obstacle to a man’s numerical unity while he continues to live manifestly cannot be an obstacle to the unity of one who rises. But in the body of man, so long as he is alive, it is not with respect to matter that he has the same parts, but with respect to his species. In respect to matter, of course, the parts are in flux, but this is not an obstacle to his being numerically one from the beginning of his life to the end of it. AN example of this can be taken from fire: While it continues to burn, it is called numerically one because its species persists, yet wood is consumed and new wood is applied. It is also like this in the human body, for the form and species of its single parts remain continuously through a whole life; the matter of the parts is not only resolved by the action of the natural heat, but is replenished anew by nourishment. Man is not, therefore, numerically different according to his different ages, although not everything which is in him materially in one state is also there in another. In this way, then, this is not a requirement of man’s arising with numerical unity: that he should assume again whatever has been in him during the whole time of his life; but he need assume from the matter only what suffices to complete the quantity due, and that especially must be resumed which was more perfectly consistent with the form and species of humanity. But, if something were wanting to the fulfillment of the quantity due, either because one was overtaken by death before nature could bring him the quantity due or because mutilation perhaps deprived him of some member, the divine power will supply this from another source. This however, will be no obstacle to the unity of the body of the one rising, for even the work of nature adds to what a boy has from some other source to bring him to his perfect quantity. And this addition does not make him numerically other, for the man is the same in number whether he is a boy or adult.<sup>21</sup>

This is a response to an objection to the identity of the resurrected person, if identical then, the objector says, you would not only get back all the hair and fingernails you lost during your life time, but all the other matter (like those lost pounds from exercise!) as well

The human being then is a being that straddles two worlds, the world of bodies and the world of spirit. With both a material and immaterial aspects, human beings have both animal and spiritual

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<sup>21</sup> SCG IV 81, 12

functions. Akin to the animals we eat, run, play, grow, etc., and unlike them we worship, make laws, and do calculus. These two aspects make up the essence of the human person and justify the definition of a human as a **rational animal**. The rationality comes from the spiritual functions of the soul, while the animality comes from the sensual and vegetative functions of the body.

If one argues that animals have conceptual thought but have no reason to manifest it to us, this is an admission that they do not manifest conceptual thought! We can only go on manifestations of evidence, and this admission is tantamount to settling the issue. Animals do not talk because they have nothing to say – no concepts to express but only concrete sensory experiences.

We can only use negative evidence of this; it is the burden of those who think animals have conceptual thought to produce positive arguments.

Animals have not used any tool that does not show any more than a concrete perception of spatial relations, let alone machinery.

Progress of some sort is almost infallibly some sign of intellect. Naturalists of ancient times observe exactly the same activities that we see animals doing today. If animals had intellect, why don't they transmit their learning to their followers? Even the crudest primitives have some tradition.

Animals seem to show no appreciation for beauty, art, humor, self-reflectiveness, or historicity.

Bees making a hive according to the best principles of structural design don't show they are mechanical engineers, navigation ability of homing pigeons or bat radar is amazing and seems to reveal some intellect at work, and the question is whose intellect is it? ... Masterful understanding of just one point is contrary to the nature of intellect, which has being as its object. The intellect should be able to make some progress on other things. But these animals show no ability to generalize over into even allied areas. They do the same thing for centuries, with no improvements and no application of their ability to other problems. This shows there is no real grasp of what is applied, but that they are simply following a concrete behavior pattern. They could hardly be so brilliant in one tiny area without showing it elsewhere... The automatic pilot in a modern airplane certainly manifests intelligence at work, yet nobody argues that the device itself understand why it functions." (Royce 362-363)

### **Summary on Knowledge**

Knowledge can be summarily described as the acquiring or union of a thing in an immaterial fashion. A human person begins knowledge with sense experience, and the external object impresses itself via a sensory organ onto the brain. This impressed form or phantasm is illuminated by the agent intellect, its essence abstracted, and then impressed onto the potential intellect. The knower "becomes" the object known by taking it in and making it a part of him, although always on an intentional level without the matter of the object. Knowing is also both an active and passive operation. It is passive in the sense that it relies on input from the "outside" to get it "going", and active in the sense that the agent intellect can abstract essences from sense particulars.

## **Part VI: Human Volition and Appetites**

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## **Motivation**

Why we do the things we do has always been an important question. Its not enough to know what we do, we also desire to know why we do it. As human beings, de do not merely desire to know, but we also act according to our knowledge. The philosophical term for this tendency is *appetition*, and the power that does the tending is the *appetite*. The appetite can be towards or away from some object. While the object of the knowing power is being as knowable, the object of the appetite is being as good or desirable. Another way to put it is to say that knowing differs from desiring in the sense that the end or term of knowing is in the subject, while the end or term of desiring is in the attaining of some external object. The end of knowing is intentional existence while the end of desiring is real existence and because of this difference, desire, unlike knowing, carries a notion of movement:

For the act of the apprehensive power is not so properly called a movement as the act of the appetite: since the operation of the apprehensive power is completed in the very fact that the thing apprehended is in the one that apprehends: while the operation of the appetitive power is completed in the fact that he who desires is borne towards the thing desirable. Therefore the operation of the apprehensive power is likened to rest: whereas the operation of the appetitive power is rather likened to movement.<sup>22</sup>

Insofar as an act of knowing “stops” in the knower, it is a static sort of activity, but desiring on the other hand is motivational and compels us to “move” and seek out the object which we desire.

## **Natural versus Elicited Appetites**

*Natural appetites* are what things simply do or tend towards; rocks have a tendency or appetite to fall to the ground when dropped, the eye has an appetite to see, a fire has an appetite to rise. These are simply the natural tendencies of things because they are not invoked by any kind of knowledge. *Elicited appetites* however are tendencies contingent upon knowledge or awareness, whether implicit or explicit. Elicited appetite can be vague, you know you want X but X is just a vague fuzzy notion, yet it is still evoked by some knowledge.

## **Elicited Appetition Follows Cognition**

We desire things based upon our knowledge of them. This is an obvious fact or our experience. What we choose is largely based upon what we know about it and what appears good or good to avoid. Knowledge would not be very useful if we did not act upon it. In short, knowledge provides the goal and appetite is the inclination towards it. So there is a close relation to what we know and what we desire, between cognition and appetite. This close relation between appetite and cognition gives us the basis for saying there are different kinds of appetites. For every type of cognition, there is a corresponding type of appetite.

## **Sensible versus Intellectual Appetites**

Since knowing can come about through just the senses or it can come about through the intellect. So since human cognition can be one of these two kinds, so too can appetite be either sensual or intellectual. The smell of food may evoke one’s sensory appetites as desirable while at the very same time one may know that they are allergic to that sort of food and thus the intellectual appetite will want to avoid it for the sake of health. So sense appetites and intellectual appetites may even be opposed to one another. A mother who sees her house burning will, through her sense appetites, want to avoid the flames, but since she knows her children are inside her intellectual appetite will desire to go into the burning house nonetheless.

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<sup>22</sup> ST I.81.1

An act of knowing becomes a motive when it becomes the stimulating force to the appetitive powers. Common terms such as “incentive” “goal” “purpose” and “need” all refer to what the medieval philosophers called the final cause – that for the sake of which something is done. While “drives”, “urges”, “impulses” and things of this sort are appetitive responses to these goals and belong to the realm of what the medieval thinkers called efficient causality.

One’s natural disposition or what some call “affective state” refers to the way in which some stimulus will affect them and includes one’s emotions, moods, and all around temperament (a habitual emotional disposition). People with different temperaments will tend to act in different ways. Traditionally, it was recognized that there were four basic temperaments for human beings;

The sensible appetites are divided into the concupiscible and irascible.

### **Concupiscible and Irascible Appetites**

What Aquinas called the *concupiscible appetite* is the simple desire for pleasure and the avoidance of pain. The irascible appetite is the willingness to endure danger and hardship in order to achieve a remote good. The irascible appetite has been known as the “champion” and “defender” of the concupiscible appetite. St Thomas writes:

Since the sensitive appetite is an inclination following sensitive apprehension... there must needs be in the sensitive part two appetitive powers---one through which the soul is simply inclined to seek what is suitable, according to the senses, and to fly from what is hurtful, and this is called the concupiscible: and another, whereby an animal resists these attacks that hinder what is suitable, and inflict harm, and this is called the irascible. Whence we say that its object is something arduous, because its tendency is to overcome and rise above obstacles. Now these two are not to be reduced to one principle: for sometimes the soul busies itself with unpleasant things, against the inclination of the concupiscible appetite, in order that, following the impulse of the irascible appetite, it may fight against obstacles. Wherefore also the passions of the irascible appetite counteract the passions of the concupiscible appetite: since the concupiscence, on being aroused, diminishes anger; and anger being roused, diminishes concupiscence in many cases. This is clear also from the fact that the irascible is, as it were, the champion and defender of the concupiscible when it rises up against what hinders the acquisition of the suitable things which the concupiscible desires, or against what inflicts harm, from which the concupiscible flies. And for this reason all the passions of the irascible appetite rise from the passions of the concupiscible appetite and terminate in them; for instance, anger rises from sadness, and having wrought vengeance, terminates in joy. For this reason also the quarrels of animals are about things concupiscible---namely, food and sex.<sup>23</sup>

The concupiscible appetite is the desire for pleasurable existence while the irascible is the desire to combat whatever threatens that existence. In the concupiscible it is a desire for pleasure’s sake, while in the irascible, it is the desire to fight and struggle for pleasure’s sake.

### **Passions**

What Aquinas means by **passions** are what we would call today feelings and emotions. Aquinas and other medieval philosophers used passion (*passio*) not as it means today as meaning some sort of carnal desire, but how living organisms undergo a passivity or reactive state in response to things outside the organism. When these organisms are affected by their environment, responses of emotion and feeling result. When the response is rather small, we call the response a feeling, but when larger, it is an emotion. Feelings and emotions naturally regard both the pleasant and the

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<sup>23</sup> ST I.81.2

unpleasant, and both are the act of the human person's sensitive appetites and knowledge, and often can result in bodily changes.

Aquinas says the passions arise because of our love for what is good. Goodness arouses passions of attraction while the bad arouses passions of repulsion. Because of our natural love of the good, we naturally hate evil and want to avoid it, and depending upon the proximity of the good and evil, different passions will arise:

Now, in the movements of the appetitive faculty, good has, as it were, a force of attraction, while evil has a force of repulsion. In the first place, therefore, good causes, in the appetitive power, a certain inclination, aptitude or connaturalness in respect of good: and this belongs to the passion of "love": the corresponding contrary of which is "hatred" in respect of evil. Secondly, if the good be not yet possessed, it causes in the appetite a movement towards the attainment of the good beloved: and this belongs to the passion of "desire" or "concupiscence": and contrary to it, in respect of evil, is the passion of "aversion" or "dislike." Thirdly, when the good is obtained, it causes the appetite to rest, as it were, in the good obtained: and this belongs to the passion of "delight" or "joy"; the contrary of which, in respect of evil, is "sorrow" or "sadness."

On the other hand, in the irascible passions, the aptitude, or inclination to seek good, or to shun evil, is presupposed as arising from the concupiscible faculty, which regards good or evil absolutely. And in respect of good not yet obtained, we have "hope" and "despair." In respect of evil not yet present we have "fear" and "daring." But in respect of good obtained there is no irascible passion: because it is no longer considered in the light of something arduous, as stated above. But evil already present gives rise to the passion of "anger."

Accordingly it is clear that in the concupiscible faculty there are three couples of passions; viz. love and hatred, desire and aversion, joy and sadness. In like manner there are three groups in the irascible faculty; viz. hope and despair, fear and daring, and anger which has not contrary passion.

Consequently there are altogether eleven passions differing specifically; six in the concupiscible faculty, and five in the irascible; and under these all the passions of the soul are contained.<sup>24</sup>

We can chart what Aquinas means:

### Concupiscible Passions

	Good Object	Evil Object
In General	<b>LOVE</b>	<b>HATE</b>
Not possessed	<b>DESIRE</b>	<b>AVERSION</b>
Obtained	<b>JOY</b>	<b>SADNESS</b>

<sup>24</sup> ST I-II.23.4

## Irascible Passions

	Difficulty in Obtaining Good	Difficulty in Avoiding Evil
Not Present	<b>HOPE</b> (if seen as obtainable)	<b>COURAGE</b> (if seen as avoidable)
	<b>DESPAIR</b> (if seen as unobtainable)	<b>FEAR</b> (if seen as unavoidable)
Present	<b>X</b> (A present good does not arouse the irascible)	<b>ANGER</b>

Objects can be presented as good or evil

Easy to obtain (concupiscible) = simple responses of desire and aversion. Passions of the concupiscible appetite: we apprehend something as good or evil, and it can be either present or absent. This initial love or hate persists through all other passions

Difficult to obtain (irascible) = passion response is different the good is now linked with what is evil or dangerous, an obstacle, and not a simple attainment, and thus creates a whole new set of responses. Yet the initial love/hate of the concupiscible remains. Difficult of attaining a good vs. difficulty of attaining evil

Good Beyond ones power = despair

Good Within power = hope

Evil beyond power = sorrow

Evil within power = daring

Passions can be mixed, such as joy in desiring, human passions are complicated and difficult to analyze

### **Human Volition**

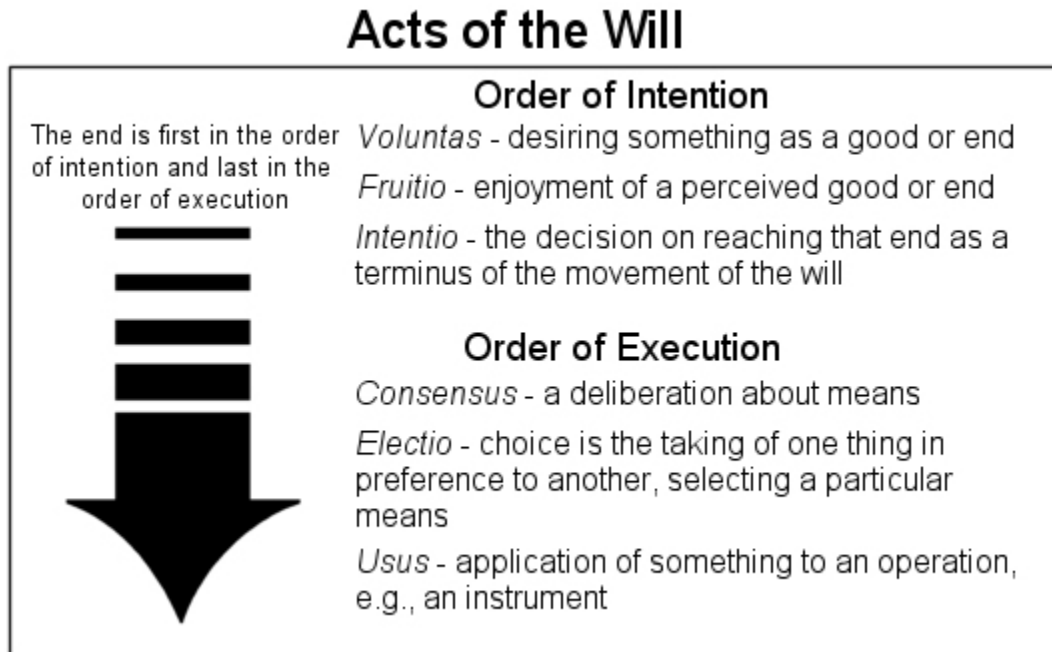
The will is the intellectual appetite, the tendency that regards an object known intellectually. The object of the will is being as good and it follows upon the object of the intellect which is being as true. So the will and the intellect are two distinct powers with formally distinct objects. As the will acts upon the knowledge provided by the intellect, we need to ask how this is so. The intellect does not act upon the will like an agent, but by providing a final cause, in other words “whooping” it. The act of the will is elicited by the intellect’s providing it with a desirable object. In other words, the intellect gives the will a goal which it naturally seeks (the good object), so there is a complementary relationship between the two powers.

Volition is *desire* if the object is absent, and enjoyment and complacency if the object is present. Volition may be called *intention* as it directs its activity towards a certain end, and *choice* if it involves selecting between alternative means.

The will is an intellectual power of the soul, and thus can also operate independently of any bodily organ.

### Will Acts of Intention and Execution <sup>25</sup>

Aquinas cites three acts of the will that bear on the *end* and three that bear on the *means*<sup>26</sup>. An act begins in the order of intention with desiring the good, and then proceeds via a series of logically prior will-acts to the fruition of the act in the order of execution:



It is in the order of execution that we begin doing what we have been thinking about doing. Aquinas does not mean that one explicitly goes through each step in something as mundane as getting a cup of coffee, but at least implicitly (and perhaps simultaneously) these acts are presupposed. The usefulness of the end-means model is designed with the idea that an action can be *arrested* at any point and given a moral appraisal. Thus, we must take particular note of Aquinas' distinction between intention (*intentio*) and choice (*electio*). It is the *intention* that motivates one to go about the order of finding a means, consent applies possibilities of means (that have been determined in the counsel of the intellect), and *choice* selects one of those means. If I *intend* to get a *venti* sized Starbucks coffee (as end), I can then go about *choosing* the means of attaining it, and perhaps may make use of an instrument (like my car) in the process.

It is important to see that the act of the will is not an uncaused act. It involves the motive (object known by the intellect as good) final causality provided by the intellect and the efficient causality of the will itself. As we will see later, this point is crucial in our understanding free choice.

<sup>25</sup> This is a very brief summary of ST I-II Q. 9-16

<sup>26</sup> "Intention is an act of the will in regard to the end. Now the will stands in a threefold relation to the end. First, absolutely; and thus we have "volition," whereby we will absolutely to have health, and so forth. Secondly, it considers the end, as its place of rest; and thus "enjoyment" regards the end. Thirdly, it considers the end as the term towards which something is ordained; and thus "intention" regards the end. For when we speak of intending to have health, we mean not only that we have it, but that we will have it by means of something else". ST I-II.12.1 ad.4

## Object of the Will

The **material object** is that which attracts the will, the actual thing itself. IT may be a material thing like a good dinner, it may be a universal such as the notion of justice, or it may be a spiritual reality like the object of religious devotion. The **formal object** (the way it is considered) is the particular aspect by which it is perceived as good. The will seeks goodness in general, and it may even be negative in the sense that something is good to avoid. Moreover, the good may be real or only apparent (someone may think a cigarette is good right now, but the goodness is only apparent if in reality the cigarette is harmful to one's health. Even the killing of someone may seem good, and thus an apparent good, but it may really be evil and not a real good after all.

## Necessity of the End

It is important to note that *the will is not free in regard to goodness in general*. The very nature of the will is to seek the good, nobody really chooses the bad as such, but if bad acts are chosen it is because some goodness is perceived to be in them. The will then desires the end of goodness out of necessity. Any action we choose is because of the goodness and happiness seen in it. As St Thomas writes:

The word "necessity" is employed in many ways. For that which must be is necessary. Now that a thing must be may belong to it by an intrinsic principle---either material, as when we say that everything composed of contraries is of necessity corruptible---or formal, as when we say that it is necessary for the three angles of a triangle to be equal to two right angles. And this is "natural" and "absolute necessity." In another way, that a thing must be, belongs to it by reason of something extrinsic, which is either the end or the agent. On the part of the end, as when without it the end is not to be attained or so well attained: for instance, food is said to be necessary for life, and a horse is necessary for a journey. This is called "necessity of end," and sometimes also "utility." On the part of the agent, a thing must be, when someone is forced by some agent, so that he is not able to do the contrary. This is called "necessity of coercion."

Now this necessity of coercion is altogether repugnant to the will. For we call that violent which is against the inclination of a thing. But the very movement of the will is an inclination to something. Therefore, as a thing is called natural because it is according to the inclination of nature, so a thing is called voluntary because it is according to the inclination of the will. Therefore, just as it is impossible for a thing to be at the same time violent and natural, so it is impossible for a thing to be absolutely coerced or violent, and voluntary.

But necessity of end is not repugnant to the will, when the end cannot be attained except in one way: thus from the will to cross the sea, arises in the will the necessity to wish for a ship.<sup>27</sup>

It is in this sense that the will is not free but *determined*. The presence of the good as a motive is indispensable for the will's operation. Even bad acts are chosen as mistaken means to happiness. Even suicide does not seek death *per se*, but the good of an ending of suffering. This determination of the will towards the good will also become important later in discussing the freedom of the will.

## Elicited and Commanded Acts of the Will

**Commanded acts** of the will are voluntary *acts that are executed by some power other than the will*. To raise my arm or to choose to think about something are examples of a commanded acts.

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<sup>27</sup> ST I.80.1

**Elicited acts** of the will are those *acts that occur within the will itself*. Desiring and choosing are examples.

Both of these acts may be considered “voluntary” since they both are seated in the will

Royce’s distinctions<sup>28</sup>:

*Actually voluntary* – A choice under the present influence of an act of volition

*Virtually voluntary* – something happens in virtue of a previous choice that no longer exists

*Habitually voluntary* – an act done without any new choice but still voluntary in the sense that it is the result of a habit that was established voluntarily

The will can only be influenced by exterior influences (excluding God) by final causality. To alter the will of another an appropriate motive needs to be provided.

### **Habits**

Habits are qualities that dispose one to something.

### **Freedom of the Will and its Limitations**

The determinants of human behavior is extremely important – philosophy and psychology overlap

Two erroneous views:

1. *Exaggerated Indeterminism* – all men’s actions are free, totally unmotivated, or uncaused behavior. This view ignores habits, organic impulses, natural preferences, etc. The will is not free in this sense. “Uncaused action is a notion of the unthinking man”. No Scholastic ever held that there was an action without a cause. Also, the motive itself is the preexisting necessary condition for free will! There is an abundance of causality in free choice.
2. *Exaggerated Determinism* – Man does not have self-determination or free choice. Forces beyond his control, either outside or within the man, determine all human activity. Hence all causes in human behavior are necessitating causes. According to this view, motives do not merely *attract*, they *determine*. This determination can be either physical or psychological.

The correct view:

*Moderate Indeterminism*: Having to choose only the above is a false dilemma. Determinism wins if that were true. This is the alternative- it is the doctrine of free *choice* rather than free *will* – man is free in his act of choice. It is also called *self-determination* in that, in contrast to the theory of uncaused act, *the self is the cause which determines that motive that will prevail*. This view recognizes the influence of motives but motives do not always determine. There must be an adequate motive, but not every sufficient cause is a necessitating cause. The question is not whether motives attract and influence, they certainly do, but whether motives necessitate. Heredity and environment are important – but moderate indeterminism still recognizes we can still determine to some extent what we do with our heredity and environment.

Freedom of choice does not mean a lack of influences – it means those influences do not force me.

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<sup>28</sup> Royce, 181

Rather than a lack of determination, freedom of choice is self-determination. It is a positive power of being able to select between influences rather than the absence of all influences.

Free choice is not a denial that influences, even unaccounted for, are present, it is rather the addition of another power of causal influence – the self. I determine if I am going to hit someone or not, in spite of the urges.

Freedom of choice also means the lack of extrinsic and intrinsic necessity. Again, freedom of choice does not mean a lack of influences, but a lack of necessity.

Freedom of choice = self- determination: we can determine whether or not we will yield to the attraction of a motive.

Freedom is the power to choose between eligible goods – not necessarily choosing to sin.

When a finite good is presented to the intellect, this good does not occupy the entire scope of the will. The aspect of non-good leaves open the possibility that the will may divert from choosing it. Thus we have freedom of specification with regard to contingent means toward an end, but not with regard to the perfect good.

**Deliberation** – The intellect’s ability to consider alternatives and a necessary prelude to choice (If you can’t consider alternatives free choice goes out the window). Considering the possibility of alternative goods or rejecting the good presented in the thing.

*Choice is an activity involving the will and intellect.* Freedom resides formally in the act of choice, but the foundation is in the unlimited scope of the intellect. The intellect is not free, but necessarily knows what it knows. If an object is good is chooseable, if it is a finite good it is rejectable.

The will cannot act unless the intellect presents motives, if it presents conflicting motives it leaves the will free to choose between them.

Proving that we are free from extrinsic necessity hardly needs proof. There are three common proofs for freedom from intrinsic necessity:

1. **From indifferent judgments** – appetite follows cognition, the will is determined only insofar as the intellect determines it with regard to finite goods, in other words the will only corresponds to the intellectual judgments that determine it and finite goods are rejectable. The intellect cannot help what it knows, but it knows this finite good is both chooseable and rejectable; leaving the last word with the will.
2. **From Direct Experience** – the act of choice is universally recognized. Our whole process of deliberation is nonsense if we are determined. We are actively conscious of determining the course to be taken. We do not experience mere lack of necessitation but positively, that we are in fact the determining factor in the decision. After a choice is made we can experience remorse or self – approval, a sense of responsibility.
3. **From Obligation** – If a person cannot do otherwise, it is absurd to hold him responsible for his actions.

## Unlimited Goodness

Human will is determined at this level

### Limited good things



These are only partial goods  
Insofar as they are good, they are desirable  
Insofar as they are bad, they can be rejected



The will considers particular goods in light  
of the overall unlimited good

### Freedom of the Will