

## Thomas Aquinas on the Grace of Knowing God: A study of judgment through inclination and through the gift of grace

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### Abstract

In the *Summa Theologiae* Thomas Aquinas mentions a kind of judgment of virtue through inclination. He uses it to explain how, through the gift of grace, a finite human being can know an infinite God. His arguments show that his negative judgment of the signficatory capacity of speculative likeness, as source of knowing God, does not have to be taken as his last word on the possibility of positive (albeit imperfect) knowledge of Him in this life. Rather, it becomes clear that Thomas thinks that, as the forming of the tendency of the will through pursuit of a natural good can be the 'remote' (to use his term), non-discursive, source of judgment of that good, so the divine good of the gift of grace in the essence of the soul can be a remote source of positive (albeit imperfect) judgment of divine things. The differences and similarities of the two kinds of judgment are discussed, and verification issues are examined in conclusion. Thomas' remarks on the two kinds of judgment deserve more study, since they challenge the almost universal acceptance of relativism as well as the extent of authority given to post-enlightenment methods of verification.

### Keywords

Aquinas, knowledge, judgment, inclination, grace

### *Introduction*

The question of whether a human being can know God is not just a philosophical aspect of theology. It is a question asked, sooner or later, by almost everyone. Christians believe that God speaks to his people and that, those things which we cannot know through our own efforts, he has revealed to us through the prophets and saints. According to the prophet Isaiah, God said, '*I am the Lord, and there*

is no other. I did not speak in secret, in some dark place, I did not say to Jacob's sons, 'seek me in vain'.<sup>1</sup> Christians also believe that divine revelation is not limited to the spoken word, it is also given in the person, life, death and resurrection of the Messiah: the Gospel of John starts by announcing that Christ has made God known to us: '*The true light that enlightens every man has come into the world . . . . No-one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known*'.<sup>2</sup> And, later in his gospel, John quotes Jesus' saying to the disciples: '*..the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things . . .*'.<sup>3</sup> It is this latter way in which God has made, and makes, himself known, through the divine gift of the Holy Spirit, that is the subject of this article.

Many Christian teachers and saints have spoken about this latter kind of knowing, but it tends to be simply accepted by them, rather than explained. Though this can even be said of Thomas Aquinas, since he does not pay exclusive attention to the subject, his remarks (taken largely from the *Summa Theologiae* in this article) about differing forms of judgment show, as I hope to make clear, why Christian tradition confidently, and rationally, holds, not only that such a divine gift can be received by mankind, but also that human cognitive capacity is not wholly described by post-Enlightenment epistemology.

Anyone who is familiar with the works of St Thomas Aquinas will also be familiar with the simplicity of his style of writing. In the *Summa Theologiae*, the clarity of his synthesis has a tranquil even-ness which flows through its depths of intricately ordered complexity. The austerity of his prose reflects the straightforwardness of his expressed intention: '*to pursue the things held by Christian theology, and to be concise and clear, so far as the matter allows*.<sup>4</sup> His rigorous pursuit of this purpose has contributed to the widely held assumption that Thomas is a wintery old rationalist; that, as one of the two greatest teachers of the Church, he supplies the cold intellect, and Augustine, the warm heart. While both are interested in the human capacity to know God, Augustine never doubts, through all his '*squandering of brains on foolish delusions*' that he can come close enough, through love, faith and prayer, to the God who is '*his Life, his holy Delight,*' to know something of the One he loves so much.

<sup>1</sup> Is. 45 v18-19 *The Holy Bible RSV Ecumenical Edition* Collins 1973.

<sup>2</sup> Jn 1 v 9-16.

<sup>3</sup> Jn 1 v 14 v 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Summa Theologiae* Blackfriars, Eyre & Spottiswoode, London 1964. Foreword Thomas expresses the wish to avoid 'pointless questions, articles and arguments'..... 'repetitiousness which breeds muddle and boredom', and to use a 'sound educational method'....in order to 'pursue the things held by Christian theology, and to be concise and clear, so far as the matter allows'. (This edition of the *Summa* is used throughout as source.)

However, even in Thomas' hymn to the Holy Eucharist, the *Adoro te devote*, it is the shadows and veils of faith that he speaks of most in the beautiful expression of his devotion. And the judgment that love, faith and prayer would not actually be enough to help towards positive knowledge of God seems to be lurking beneath his series of arguments in Question 12 of the *prima pars*. Here he dwells on the impossibility of the conceptual likenesses of the created mind ever being able to reflect the uncreated essence of God. These arguments also lie behind his remark in the prologue to the treatise on God, where he says that his discussion will be not so much about '*how God is, but about how God is not*'. So it seems that Thomas accepts without dismay that, logically, whatever emotions one may feel about God, the human mind cannot know anything positive about Him, and that our knowledge of God is necessarily confined to the shadows of the analogies we shape through our experience in the world.

As is also well-known, Thomas offers a theory of the analogical nature of theological language in Question 13 of the *prima pars* in which he explains the ways in which words signify our knowledge of things. In this series of arguments, Thomas is concerned with the words we use as signs of concepts abstracted from sense images. I want to show in this article that his argument for the cognitive failure of such likenesses with respect to positive knowledge of God concerns the specific signficatory potential of likenesses achieved through this particular discursive method of understanding. A starting point lies in the point that throughout his consideration of human being, nature and knowing, Thomas uses the term 'likeness' itself analogically. His use of the term leads from the surface patterns of discursive activity to the inner conforming of the powers of the soul through the pursuit of virtues, to the forming of the essence of the soul through grace, to the originating likeness of the soul to God's creative act. The analogical relationship of the term has its ground in Thomas' understanding that human beings are made in the image of God.<sup>5</sup> Unlike Aristotle's vision of being as a static, finished, presence, or Heidegger's opinion that the basis of human being is a bare act of existence, for Thomas, the act of existence of human being is dynamic, its essence making it the particular kind of act it is, and giving it its particular kind of potential for completeness in unity with God'.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the particular potential for closer resemblance to what is proper to God - His knowing and loving - has its source in human nature being created in the image of God. This dynamic act of likeness is, through its participative nature, the originating principle of the capacity of human beings to form likenesses in will

<sup>5</sup> ST1a 93, 1 The specific likeness of image is participative.

<sup>6</sup> ST1a 45, 3 & 44.4.

and intellect, in relation to the world and God, and it governs, thus, the ability of the whole person to progress towards perfection. So, while Thomas takes into account Aristotle's categories, he does not see the division of the material and speculative worlds in terms of Cartesian absoluteness. I intend to show how he allows room in his understanding of the relationship between the nature of human being and its powers for likeness at every level of human nature to have the potentiality to contribute, in some way, to the capacity to know God. His negative judgment of the signficatory capacity of speculative likeness, as source of knowing God, does not have to be taken as his last word on the possibility of positive (albeit imperfect) knowledge of Him in this life. This article is an examination of Thomas' scattered remarks on non-speculative formation of the soul and its powers, and how he suggests such formation can contribute to knowing God.

### *Outline*

In the very first Question of the *Summa* Thomas demonstrates his non-dualist approach to the capacity to know. In ST 1, 6 ad 3, (examined in detail below) Thomas mentions a way of judging which is based on the likeness of a habit with the nature of the virtue practiced, and he contrasts this form of judgment to that based on conceptual knowledge of a virtue. His purpose in mentioning the former way of knowing through 'inclination' born of habit' [*per modum inclinationis*] is to clarify the structure of still another way of judging – through '*the experience of undergoing divine things*' which Thomas again contrasts to '*learning about them*'. In this article, the cognitive reference of the term 'likeness' is stretched to include both a kind of formation through practical activity in pursuit of the good, and a kind of formation through the experience of the gift of the Holy Spirit. In spite of its brevity, this argument about theological judgment indicates that Thomas thinks that more than one kind of likeness can, somehow (the only clue he gives here is 'by inclination'), be cognitive, that is, supply a ground for judgment.

The context of the above remark by Thomas is important to note. He not only mentions these other forms of judgment right at the beginning of the *Summa*, but also with reference to the question of the reception and judgment of 'divine things'. Since this is a question which is central to the whole structure and purpose of his theological synthesis, it indicates that Thomas does not consider these other forms of judgment to be simply a mildly interesting side-issue. On the other hand, he does not devote a single Question in the *Summa* specifically to the topic; he simply mentions it here and there, in passing, in the context of other issues. This necessarily entails that

the work of discovering his thought on the matter has a somewhat haphazard quality since it means seeking his remarks, and following his associated references to other topics, here and there throughout the *Summa*.

Nevertheless, the two subjects concerned with his remark on these other ways of judging: the nature and effect of the practice of virtue, and the salvific working of grace, occupy far more of Thomas' attention in the *Summa* than the structure of conceptual knowledge. While the overall context and method of the *Summa* is speculative in conveying holy teaching, with respect to the subject of speculative knowing itself, Thomas breezes through an analysis of its structure in 6 Questions in the *Prima Pars*. But he takes the whole sweep of the *prima secundae* and *secunda secundae* to acquaint his readers with the nature and purpose of human activity, the nature and pursuit of virtues, and to consider the subject of the gift and effect of grace in the soul. It is not generally supposed that these questions have anything much to do with what Thomas thinks about the structure of knowing. However, there are two reasons for thinking otherwise. The first is simply that he has mentioned the practice of virtue and undergoing the gift of grace as somehow supplying grounds for judgment. The second has to do with the way in which Thomas connects his anthropology and soteriology with knowledge of God. He accepts the doctrine that man is made in the image of God, and argues that the image in man can be considered in three stages,

*'the first is man's natural aptitude for understanding and loving God...the next when man is actually or dispositively knowing and loving God, but still imperfectly, ... and the third when man is actually knowing and loving God perfectly... a threefold image, namely the image of creation, of re-creation and of likeness'.<sup>7</sup>*

The understanding Thomas expresses here (also examined in more detail below) of human cognitive development is not fixed on the development of intellectual powers alone, but connects the development of the whole being with knowing. Becoming closer in likeness to God, and the capacity to know Him, has to do with both creation and the history of salvation, i.e. with recreating the damaged image through the grace of Christ. As Thomas sees it, then, the development of our 'natural aptitude' for understanding and loving God must be connected, not only with the pursuit of the true, but also with the practical pursuit of the development of the whole of human nature through the practice of virtue, as well as with the healing effect of God's self-communication in the gift of Grace.<sup>8</sup> So, for Thomas, the subjects of the good, virtue and grace must be just as important

<sup>7</sup> ST 1a, 93, 3.

<sup>8</sup> ST1a2ae 55,1; 1a2ae 109,3.

to the question of knowledge of God as the, in comparison, fairly straightforward question of the signficatory capacity of conceptual likenesses. The connection between the development of human nature and knowing in Thomas' thought indicates that the practical pursuit of the good of virtue, and the redeeming gift of grace have to do with what may be termed the 'deep structure' of our capacity to know; that is, they have to do with the development, through life and in relationship with the world and with God, of the likeness of the image as dynamic principle of human being and intellectual nature.

From this outline, it is clear that the question of Thomas' understanding of these two other ways of arriving at judgment of divine things involves a long list of connected questions: his use of the term 'likeness', his anthropology, how he connects being, action, willing and knowing, how he connects formation of the soul and its powers by the good and the true, the relationship between the soul and its powers, the role of inclination and habit in knowing, the nature and effect of virtue, the nature and effect of grace, salvation history.

However, since this is to be as short an article as possible, after a first Chapter looking closely at ST1a 1, 6 ad 3, and one other of Thomas' remarks about judgment according to virtue and grace, I am going to abbreviate the many issues noted above under three main headings. The question of likeness will be the thread connecting an examination of Thomas' thought on, first, the image of God as source of the capacity to know, second, virtue, and third, grace. Finally, there will be a short Chapter on the question of verification.

## Chapter 1

**ST 1a 1, 6** On whether holy teaching is a wisdom.

*Contra 3 argues* (against the proposition that it is a wisdom): '... this teaching is acquired by study. Wisdom, however, is received from the outpouring of the Spirit, and as such is numbered among the seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, set forth by Isaiah. This teaching, then, is not wisdom'.

In **ad 3** Thomas replies:

*'Since having a formed judgment characterizes the wise person, so there are two kinds of wisdom according to the two ways of passing judgment. This may be arrived at from a bent that way, as when a person who possesses the habit of a virtue rightly commits himself to what should be done in consonance with it, because he is already in sympathy with it; hence Aristotle remarks that the virtuous man himself sets the measure and standard for human acts. Alternatively the judgment may be arrived at through a cognitive process, as when a person soundly instructed in moral science can appreciate the activity of virtues he does not himself possess.'*

*The first way of judging divine things belongs to that wisdom which is classed among the Gifts of the Holy Spirit; so St Paul says, “the spiritual man judges all things”, and Dionysius speaks about Heirotheus being taught by the experience of undergoing divine things, not only by learning about them. The second way of judging is taken by sacred doctrine to the extent that it can be gained by study; even so the premises are held from revelation’.<sup>9</sup>*

## Context

This text occurs in a discussion on the nature of holy teaching. Thomas is considering our capacity to judge a teaching which has its principles from the supremacy of divine wisdom – a wisdom by which all knowledge, including the possibility of knowledge, and the intelligibility of the universe, is governed. So, at the beginning of the *Summa* he establishes that scientific, speculative methods of knowing are in themselves insufficient. His thoughts, with respect to both judgment according to study and according to inclination are centered on the formed judgment of wisdom: wisdom acquired through virtue, wisdom applied in study, and wisdom given by the Holy Spirit. The virtue of wisdom is a perfection of the speculative intellect in its consideration of truth: *‘this is its good work... .it considers the highest and deepest causes and judges and orders all things’*.<sup>10</sup> It is an intellectual virtue insofar as it is the speculative capacity to weigh and judge theoretical truths. It is not, in itself, the capacity to ensure the right application of speculative habits and principles in pursuit of a good such as a virtue. In order to ensure the right application of intellectual excellence, Thomas says that a virtue which perfects the will is necessary, such as charity or justice. And, further, with respect to the Gift of wisdom, this is distinguished from the intellectual virtue precisely by an essential connection with charity – *‘From the fact that the gift is higher than the virtue of wisdom it gets closer to God by a certain union of soul’*, a union which presupposes the presence of charity. Thus, Thomas adds *‘its cause is in the will, even though its act is in the intellect’*.<sup>11</sup> So, Thomas’ comparison of these two ways of judging divine things, in specifically concerning the virtue of wisdom, also includes, in the background, the question of the role of the will in ordaining judgment to a good, either natural or divine, and the question of charity. *‘The premises are held from revelation’*. Throughout the *Summa*, faith plays a guiding role in judgment. Theological judgment is formed according to both the standards of natural reason, and according to

<sup>9</sup> The Blackfriars translation is used. ST1a 1, 6 ad 3; Quote from St Paul: 1 Cor 2, 15; Quote from Dionysius: *De Divinis Nominibus II*, 9, PG 3, 648.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*, 2.

<sup>11</sup> ST2a2ae 45, 2; 3 ad 1; 4 ad 3.

the principles of revelation through faith. Though these approaches can be separate, they are not mutually exclusive even though, because differing in formal objective, they are different in kind. The formal objective of faith is God as source of revelation. Thus, the standards and objectives of natural reason, though unchanged, do not have autonomous authority in the theology of holy teaching, but participate in the ‘hearing’.<sup>12</sup> of faith’.<sup>13</sup> Thomas’ remark on the two ways of judging is about the judgment of divine things, the premises of which are held by faith. This context introduces into the comparison, from the start, (though Thomas does not discuss it here) the ‘twofoldness’ of the nature of faith: its initial participation, through assent of the will, in the reality of revelation, and that to which the understanding gives assent.<sup>14</sup> So Thomas’ remarks on judgment according to a cognitive process and judgment through undergoing divine things is not a comparison between a judgment according to reason and a judgement according to faith, but rather a comparison of the ways in which faith has a role in forming judgement. Put another way, the difference in the forming of judgement of divine things has to do with the difference in the way in which the reality of divine truth – the medium of faith’s assent – is engaged as formal objective. The formal objective can be simply a theoretical knowledge of Christian doctrine, and it can also involve seeking to know God through, for instance, the practicality of a whole way of life dedicated to the service of God. Faith is a theological virtue, according to Thomas. Thus, the context shows that what he says elsewhere in the *Summa* about the structure of virtue, and the forming capacity of natural good, is linked to the comparison by which Thomas aims to explain judgment of divine things through the experience of undergoing them.

To go to the article itself, Thomas’ argument is brief and allusive. Though Thomas talks of two ways of passing judgment, the comparison is made in order to explain a third way. He mentions study, by which, for instance, one can have speculative knowledge of a virtue which one does not possess, the practical habit of a virtue wherein ‘*per modum inclinationis*’ is the medium by which the virtuous man himself judges, and judgment through ‘undergoing’ the gift of the Holy Spirit. Both the method of study, and that of judgment through inclination have to do, as said, with the ‘rightness’ and ‘soundness’ of the formed judgment of wisdom. However, Thomas does not spend any time on unpacking the terms he uses here.

In the second paragraph, Thomas’ comparison of the wisdom formed by the habit of virtue with that given by the Holy Spirit is very compressed. It consists almost entirely in quoting St Paul and

<sup>12</sup> Thomas refers to Paul: ST2a2ae 8, 6.

<sup>13</sup> ST1a 1, 8 ad 2.

<sup>14</sup> de Ver 14, art 2.



Dionysius. However, in making the connection with virtue, it is clear that he places the nature of *'undergoing divine things'* as opposed to *'learning about them'*, in the context of the practical causality of the good. The habit of a moral virtue, as Thomas explains elsewhere in the *Summa*,<sup>15</sup> is formed by the dedication of acts to that virtue as a desirable goal: that is, the goal, as good aimed for as end in itself, forms activity as a final causality. Thus, as Thomas argues, *'in human acts, ends are what principles are in speculative matters'*.<sup>16</sup> His comparison implies that the gift of the Holy Spirit is somehow similar in principle: the wisdom given by the Holy Spirit must form the capacity to judge finally, as a divine good.<sup>17</sup> The formation in both cases results in *'inclination'*, implying that a dynamic, rather than static, likeness is caused, by which the *'virtuous man'*, or the *'spiritual man'* can judge. So Thomas' comparison shows that he sees an analogical similarity in the way in which inclination can arise in the virtuous man through habitual practice of a virtue, and the way inclination can arise through the spiritual man's *'undergoing divine things'*. In all three kinds of judgment, there is a background assumption by Thomas about an ordering role of the will, not only overall with respect to the good sought in the virtue of wisdom, but also with respect to the formal objective of faith, that is, assent to the principles of revelation in the cognitive process of learning about divine things, in disciplining activity according to the natural good of a virtue pursued, and in assent to the supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit.

Thomas does not discuss all the issues which are evident in the underlying complexity of his comparison: whereas in moral virtue, the powers of the soul and its acts are ordered to, and formed by, a natural good, in undergoing the gift of the Holy Spirit formation is undergone through the gift of a supernatural good, and, elsewhere in the *Summa*, Thomas says that this is given to the soul prior to its powers, thus to the soul as principle through its powers, and not directly to the powers themselves. Further, whereas the natural good of a virtue can be achieved by practice, the supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit must be wholly given since it cannot be achieved by natural human means. Also, Thomas does not discuss the ways in which likeness involved in speculative formation, and likeness of inclination formed by the good sought, or by a divine good bestowed, are similar, and how they differ as ground of judgment.

Lastly, Thomas' quote from 1 Cor, 2. 15, while it is so important to understanding what he means by a wisdom which is given rather than learned, is also spectacularly brief, just a hasty pointer to the

<sup>15</sup> Thomas' handling of the question of the nature of virtue will be discussed more fully below.

<sup>16</sup> ST1a2ae 57, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas' thoughts on the nature and causality of the good is discussed below.

chapter of Corinthians where St Paul makes a comparison between *'the unspiritual man'* who does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God *'for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned'* and the *'spiritual man'* who is able to judge *'all things'* because *'we have the mind (perception) of Christ'*.<sup>18</sup> Here, Thomas' choice to quote St Paul in support of his comparison indicates that the question of knowledge of divine things – *'the hidden wisdom of God'* – is, at its deepest level, about mankind's union with Christ. He makes this view more explicit later.<sup>19</sup>

Another important aspect of the depth of Thomas' thought beneath the few words of this text is revealed in a similar comparison between judgment of virtue and of divine things which he makes in ST2a2ae 45, 2, a Question on the gift of wisdom. Here he explains that wisdom concerns a rightness in judging, and that this can come about in two ways – through the perfect use of reason, or through a certain *'connaturality'*.<sup>20</sup> with the things one is judging. *'Thus in matters of chastity, one who is versed in moral science will come to a right judgment through rational investigation, another who possesses the virtue of chastity will be right through a kind of connaturality. So it is with divine things. A correct judgment made through rational investigation belongs to the wisdom which is an intellectual virtue. But to judge aright through connaturality with them belongs to that wisdom which is the gift of the Holy Spirit. Dionysius says that Hierotheus is perfected in divine things for "he not only learns about them but suffers them as well". Now this sympathy [compassio], or connaturality with divine things results from charity which unites us to God; "he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him" (1 Cor 6, 17). So then wisdom which is the gift does have its cause in the will, namely charity, but essentially it lies in the intellect, of which the act is to judge aright, as we have said.'*<sup>21</sup>

This argument echoes ST1a 1, 6 ad 3. However Thomas adds the remark that *'it is charity which unites us to God'*, and, this time, says that the wisdom that is the gift of the Holy Spirit is given through this

<sup>18</sup> The Vulgate has, *'Nos autem sensum Christi habemus'*. *'Sensum'* also contains the meanings: *'perception'*, *'disposition'*, *'understanding'* – terms which, unlike the term *'mind'* do not tend to be immediately associated with speculative knowing.

<sup>19</sup> quoted in the following text discussed.

<sup>20</sup> ST2a2ae 45, 2 Thomas refers in various ways to this kind of forming of the soul. In other places he speaks about forming, *'per modum inclinationis'*, *'per habitum virtutis'*, as *'compassio'*, and as in this question, *'secundum quondam connaturalitatem...'*. Though the last term best describes the meaning Thomas wishes to convey, i.e. the intelligibility of a good, or divine good becomes an originating principle in the agent so that the formation becomes natural, a second nature, I have generally stuck to the term *'inclination'*.

<sup>21</sup> ST2a2ae 45, 2.

unifying principle. Charity, Thomas says, is friendship with God<sup>22</sup> caused by mutual love, made possible by God's communication of his own beatitude. Charity is a divine gift, a love of God which 'joins the soul to God by justifying it' (2 ad 3). So this text shows that the will, and love, both human and divine ('the will is so moved by the Holy Spirit to the act of love that it must itself produce it') (23,2) are essential to the one-ness with God through which the kind of likeness that Thomas here calls 'connaturality', is formed. Thomas shows clearly here that he sees love as having a fundamental role in knowledge of God, in that it results in a unity of the human soul with Him. However, it is important to note that he carefully distinguishes this source of knowing from the act of judgment itself.

## Chapter 2 Image of God

Thomas' thought on human being and its relationship with God forms a vast hinterland behind his remarks quoted in the previous Chapter. Its trig point however, is his fundamental understanding that human beings are made in the image of God, and that, because of this, they are open to, and can receive, the gift of divine grace.

There are five main aspects to the likeness of the Image of God:

- a. that it is created
- b. the specific nature of the likeness of image
- c. that it was created in grace
- d. the damage to the image in the fall
- e. the distinction between conformation of the image and its powers, and judgment

All five of these aspects belong to, and contribute to explaining, the nature of this primary likeness as source of the human capacity to know the world, self and God.

- a. That it is created

In Question 93 of the *prima pars* Thomas discusses the Christian belief that man is made to the image of God. Initially, he discusses the subject in existential terms, explaining, actually, the unlikeness of the likeness. Mankind is not a perfect image of God – he is made 'to' or 'after' the image of God 'thereby implying a kind of process tending towards completion' and he contrasts this to the

<sup>22</sup> ST2a2ae 23, 2, 1.

absolute image of the Son, who is neither *to* nor *after* but *is* the image of God.<sup>23</sup> Thus for Thomas, the likeness of image is not a static, finished, photograph-like similarity which is efficient cause of all its powers, but is a relationship which is at once originating and in potential to becoming greater in likeness – that is, to becoming closer to unity with its source.

That mankind is said to be *made* to the image of God is essential to the nature of this likeness. The three key aspects of Thomas' thought on the nature of the being of the soul are that it is made in the image of God, that its being is not its own, but derived, and that it is caused by God's direct action.<sup>24</sup> It is the directness of God's act which determines the way in which every creature has existence. It means that the existence of every creature is, '*as out of nothing*', and this directness means that it negates the implication of sequence.<sup>25</sup> The act by which a creature exists is not a process of change, but simply a '*relation diverse in the creator and in the creature*'.<sup>26</sup> Put another way, Thomas says that creation puts reality into a created thing neither by movement nor by mutation of something that already exists, but only as a relation: '*hence creation in the creature is left just as a relation to the creator as origin of its existence*'. Thomas defines relationship as '*being with reference to another*', and as a real relation of the creature to God's creative act'.<sup>27</sup> Thus, though existing through *being like* the Creator is wholly other than the essential being of the uncreated Origin, there is, at the same time, no distance at all between the given-ness of the being of the created creature, and the giving of God's creative act, which holds the creature in being. The creature's derived state of not *being* being, but *having* being from another through likeness is, in that dependence of being, a direct, real, open-ness to its origin in God's giving. It may be said, thus, that Thomas' approach to the nature of created being appears to treat the category of the relationship of likeness as a '*primordial mode of reality*'.<sup>28</sup> It can be described in dynamic terms as an essential 'fromness' and 'to-ness' of an act of being which has neither its cause, nor its end, wholly of, and in itself, but rather in another.<sup>29</sup> It

<sup>23</sup> ST 1a 93, 1, 3; 35, 2 ad 3.

<sup>24</sup> ST1a 90, 2 Thomas quotes again from Genesis: "*God created man to his own image*". Now it is by the soul that man is after God's image. So the soul emerged into being by being created'.

<sup>25</sup> ST 1a 45, 1 & ad 3.

<sup>26</sup> ST1a 45, 3.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid ad 2 However, as Thomas notes, the relationship of God to the creature is not real in God.

<sup>28</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. *Introduction to Christianity*, p 184.

<sup>29</sup> De Ver 21 art 1, ad 1 In discussing the relationship between good and being Thomas argues that .. '*from one point of view the essence (of a creature) is considered as something other than that relation to God by which it is constituted as final cause and is directed to*

is a dynamic open-ness and tendency in every creature to something outside itself – an appetivity for, or inclination towards something which, as Thomas puts it, is good for it; that is, which perfects its imperfect act of existence. Since the principle of the inclination is innate, it means that the tendency is natural.<sup>30</sup> Thus, the being of the image is not a neutral act, it has an orientation towards the sustaining source of its existence.

This brief glance at what Thomas says about the being of the image of God shows that he sees the nature of mankind's being in the dynamic terms of act. This likeness is an originating mode of being which is at once the source of potential for greater unity with its cause. As starting point for Thomas' thought about the human capacity to know and will, this participative act of being reveals that 'inclination', or 'tendency' belongs essentially to the potentiality of the being and nature of mankind. Inclination is not a non-rational, transient urge, but, on the contrary, expresses the rationality of the potentiality of the image, as principle through its powers, for completeness in unity with God.<sup>31</sup>

How this dynamic and rational principle of human being is connected with the powers of knowing and willing is shown in Thomas' thought on the following two aspects of the likeness of the image.

#### b. The specific nature of the likeness

The image of God in mankind is a greater likeness to God than that of every other creature, because it shares by created likeness in what is proper to God<sup>32</sup> (that is, the divine love and wisdom through which God created the world), and the soul expresses this most closely through its own acts. Thus the activities of knowing and loving are the ways in which human beings realize and fulfil the rationality of the potentiality of being image of God. To explain the relationship between the powers of knowing and loving to the nature of the being of the soul, Thomas turns to the terminology of procession,<sup>33</sup> and this explanation is also informative about the kind of likeness belonging

*God as its end. From another point of view a creature does not exist without a relation to God's goodness'. Relationship to God and the world is not thought of as simply accidental to a prior act of existence, like the whiteness of something, to use Thomas' favourite example. It is a different order of relationship, and, though not prior in time to a creature's act of existence, is that which gives, sustains, and contains the substantial existence of every creature.*

<sup>30</sup> De Ver 22 art 1 Reply.

<sup>31</sup> 'Each and every creature stretches out to its own completion, which is a resemblance of divine fulness and excellence'(ST1a 44,4).

<sup>32</sup> ST1a 93, 1 & 2.

<sup>33</sup> ST 1a 93, 6 & 7 Thomas says that the likeness of the image of God is in man with reference to both the divine nature and the Trinity of persons, 'for after all, that is what God actually is, one nature in three persons'. In the uncreated Trinity, the persons are distinguished in terms of the procession of a word from its utterer and of love from both.

to cognitive acts. Procession must be understood differently in God and in man however. Whereas, in God, the Word, and the Holy Spirit proceed as subsisting in the same perfect actuality, in the human soul the powers of knowing and loving proceed as belonging to the soul's nature as image, but not as one with its being. The powers are also receptive – that is, they have a passivity with respect to realization by and in the world, and with respect to God. However, even though human powers of knowing and loving are not one in substance with the soul, they follow necessarily from its essence, and so Thomas argues that, in this case, the term 'accidental', with reference to the relationship of the powers to the soul cannot be taken wholly in contradistinction to 'substance'. The powers can be seen, rather, as being '*midway between substance and accident, natural properties of the soul, as it were*'.<sup>34</sup> If knowing and loving are powers which are proper to the human soul, and 'procession' describes the '*coming forth of effect from cause*',<sup>35</sup> then the powers of knowing and loving can be understood as the modes through which the nature of the soul 'comes forth', or can fulfill its potentiality, through its acts, becoming fully realized in relation to the world and to God. They are, thus, the medium through which the soul abides in, and draws on, what it is given in its creation, and through which it can fulfil its potentiality and progress towards union with God.

Thus Thomas understands the nature of the being of the soul to be not only the source, but also the recipient and end of the powers and their acts.<sup>36</sup> While he does not think that the act of being of the image, considered purely in itself, is altered by its activities<sup>37</sup> he does think that the incompleteness of the nature of the act – its potentiality for realization and perfection, and the inclination belonging to that capacity to become closer in likeness to God - is an open-ness to being fulfilled, not only by forming through the powers which proceed from it, but also through the gift of grace. It is clear that the potentiality of the soul, in Thomas' understanding, is not the capacity to dig the utmost out of an autonomous and isolated being, cut off from the world and God by an abyss of nothingness. The

The rational creature also exhibits a word procession in regard to intelligence and a love procession in regard to the will.

<sup>34</sup> ST1a 77, 1 & ad 5 Thomas uses the example of the *quinque voces*, the five types of predicable, to show the way in which he approaches the problem of the relationship of necessity of the powers to the soul ; Also 54, 3; 27, 1&2.

<sup>35</sup> ST1a 27, 1.

<sup>36</sup> ST1a 12, 4 Thomas says: '*the way something knows depends on the way it exists*'. Also in ST1a 77,7, Thomas argues that '*the essence of the soul is related to its powers both as their active and final principle, reason for being, and also as their recipient, whether on its own or taken together with the body*'.

<sup>37</sup> ST1a 93,7 ad 4; 8 ad 3 Thomas argues that God's image remains always as source of knowing and loving.

capacity of the soul to progress lies in its *primordial mode of reality*; its participation, that is, in the sustaining communication of God's completeness, the causal and containing perfection within which, as Thomas says, '*the perfections of everything pre-exist in a higher manner*'.<sup>38</sup> It is the open-ness of the soul to the greater reality of the abyss of divine giving which is the source and ultimate horizon of human potentiality.

Finally, as '*being with reference to another*', personhood belongs to the image as originating principle of human nature. Each human being exists through its likeness to what is proper to God, His knowing and loving, which it receives through being known and loved by Him. Thomas says that personhood is '*that which subsists in an intellectual nature*', thus, though every human being comes closest in likeness to God through acts of knowing and loving, the potentiality for developing personhood must be intrinsic to the nature of the image, and is essential to the capacity for the destiny for which God made human beings - the beatitude of knowing God (St1a 1, 1).

In seeing personhood as belonging to human cognitive capacity, Thomas' understanding of the image of God is especially different from present days theories of knowledge, in which a human being can be understood as essentially isolated and groundless; personhood being seen, for instance, as an ephemeral, ever changing result of the play of chance and necessity.<sup>39</sup> For Thomas, the likeness, and dynamic tendency of the image reflects, in principle and from its conception, the personhood of God, which is not isolation, but communion. Thus the perfection of the specific likeness of image has

<sup>38</sup> ST1a 4, 2, also 44, 4: God intends '*only to communicate his own completeness, which is his goodness*'. Looking at Thomas' view from another perspective Pavel Florensky says, in *The Pillar and Ground of Truth* 23-26 - 'The truth is a sun that illuminates both itself and the whole universe. Its abyss is the abyss of power, not of nothingness'.

<sup>39</sup> For instance, the ideas of Jacques Derrida: Thomas' understanding of personhood is a very different idea to the post-modernist notion of the 'self' as a dynamic alterity - a 'place' having no origin or end, inscribed, so to speak, by the play of signs, equally without truth, fault or origin, which appear in engaging the world. Potentiality does not belong to this vision of mankind - understanding is merely an event, an essentially passive reflex occurring within the fluid and ephemeral arena of experience. Jacques Derrida argues that humans cannot ever fully recognize the self - they *are* the play of chance and necessity. The notion of such a groundlessness, intended to combat the isolated autonomy of the Cartesian/Kantian human subject, actually isolates it radically. The groundlessness is an abyss, a wholly passive, neutral zone in which any 'self', knowing or willing may fleetingly happen as signs are woven together in what must be a void. That a pattern and not chaos briefly occurs is inexplicable, so that meaningless and lawlessness 'govern' the ephemeral happenings which - for no reason - are called human. The ever-changing, transient occurrence, called a self, which briefly gains shape in the flux which characterizes the nature of both human consciousness and world cannot love, know, intend or be responsible in any way for actions. There is no reason to distinguish such a being as human. See: Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. The Johns Hopkins University press Baltimore and London, 1997).

to do with the development of the whole person, through activity, knowing and willing, towards communion with God.

c. That it was created in grace

One of Thomas' most fundamental beliefs is that, '*...by the very fact that it is made to the image of God, (the soul) is capable of or open to God by grace.*'<sup>40</sup> Though, in this particular remark, Thomas is referring to the healing effect of grace in the justification of sinners, his reference to the image of God shows that he does not consider human being and nature in separation from grace. He does not think that grace is superadded to an otherwise complete human being like a glorifying sauce. Nor does he think that human nature is destroyed, or made redundant by grace. Rather, as Thomas says, '*grace does not scrap nature, but brings it to perfection.*'<sup>41</sup> The likeness which grace effects in the soul, even though a divine gift, is intrinsic to the wholeness of the image of God, and so also to the dynamic of its tendency towards unity with Him. So Thomas' thought on the way in which grace is present in human being and nature is important to grasping the relationship between the original likeness of the image of God, and the 'second level' of image - that of recreation.

In Question 95 of the series on man created in God's image, Thomas argues that, like the angels, mankind was created in grace. He quotes Augustine, saying that "*God was (in the angels) simultaneously setting up nature and lavishing grace*". *So man was created in grace too*". . . .<sup>42</sup> Thomas explains what this means for human nature by quoting Ecclesiastes, saying: '*God made man right*'. This rightness, he explains, '*was a matter of the reason being submissive to God, the lower powers to the reason, the body to the soul*'.<sup>43</sup> However, it is important to note that grace is given to the essence of the soul, prior to its powers.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the grace of the *rightness* was not a direct ordering of the powers themselves, but given to the nature of the soul as principle through its powers. Though Thomas calls this '*rightness*' a '*state*', it is clear that he sees it as given in creation, and not as a qualification of an already existing nature. It was an original state of likeness in which the image participated through grace more closely in the divine love and goodness of God. Thomas' argument for the ordering effect of this grace connects with his view of the likeness of image as '*a process tending towards completion*'.<sup>45</sup> Grace imparted a deeper participation in God's divine love, giving the soul,

<sup>40</sup> ST1a2ae 113, 10.

<sup>41</sup> ST1a 1, 8, De Ver 10, art 7 ad 7.

<sup>42</sup> ST1a 95, 1 *sed contra* and body of article.

<sup>43</sup> ST1a 94, 1.

<sup>44</sup> ST1a2ae 110, 4.

<sup>45</sup> ST1a 95, 1.



as source of effects proceeding from it, a supernatural inclination towards unity with God.

In the question on the original state of humanity, Thomas does not treat the nature of grace. His extremely compact explanation of how it originated in mankind is mainly formulated in opposing a claim, based on Gen. 2, 7, that only Christ, as a life-giving spirit, can be created in grace (whereas) Adam is merely a living being. Thomas quotes a verse from St Paul's canticle in Col 1, 13–21<sup>46</sup> to point to the fact that mankind is not only redeemed by Christ, but was created in Him, and receives human spiritual life from him: in the beginning the grace of Christ's life-giving spirit made Adam a 'living soul'.<sup>47</sup> So the original 'state' expresses the originating participation of human nature in the grace of Christ, the Perfect Image of God, through whom both the human capacity for, and destiny of, unity with God is given. Thomas' argument also shows that even though grace originally formed the soul as principle, it did not originally, and does not, belong to powers of the soul. Rather, it is the nature of the soul to be complete as principle – not through and in itself - but through the gift of grace, and thus, in communion with God.

#### d. The damage to the image in the fall

Thomas discusses the doctrine that the original state of the soul was lost.<sup>48</sup> He describes the nature of original sin – the 'fallen state' - wholly in terms of privation, and identifies the source of original sin as the loss of the forming grace of original justice, so that that which shapes the fallen state is not a positivity, but an absence. The loss, according to Thomas' account, occurred through the *activity* of the will, that is, failure in realizing in act the soul's natural tendency towards union with God. As noted, the will is not simply a psychological power, in Thomas' view, but is, more deeply, an expression of the soul's derived nature and natural tendency, and is a mode of its progress towards union with God. Thus, though its powers cannot affect the act of being of the soul, the will, through acts of seeking goods which are inferior to the soul, can impoverish its essence; that is, weaken its natural tendency towards completeness in unity with

<sup>46</sup> '[Christ] is the first-born of creation; for in him all things were created.....he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross'.

<sup>47</sup> It is also important to note ST1a 75, 1; 76, 1: 'This matter and the intellectual soul form a unity such that the act of being of the compound whole is the soul's act of being'.

<sup>48</sup> This enormous subject is noted only briefly in this essay, only to show why mankind's capacity for God is bound up, in Thomas' view, with his salvation.

God. So, though the principles and properties of the soul remain, its tendency towards God loses its positivity. The will cannot regain by its own activity a positivity originally given by grace – a reality beyond its created capacity to acquire.<sup>49</sup> So, the original unifying effect of an overall inclination towards God's giving, producing harmony and order in the relationship of the soul and its powers, is lost.

It is this diminished likeness of the image of God which is the subject of Thomas' discussion on the cognitive capacity of human beings and their ability to judge divine things. His discussion on the 'stages' of the likeness of the image and their connection with knowledge of God show that it is because of his understanding of the effect of the fall that he connects the possibility of positive knowledge of God with the unifying effect of love, with seeking the good, and with salvation given in the recreating grace of Christ.

In Question 93, 4, as mentioned above, Thomas connects the image of God in man with his capacity to know Him. He begins his reply to the question *'Is God's image found in every man?'* by observing: *'Since man is said to be after God's image in virtue of his intelligent nature, it follows that he is most completely after God's image in that point in which such a nature can most completely imitate God. Now it does this in so far as it imitates God's understanding and loving of himself'*.

*Thus God's image can be considered in man at three stages: the first stage is man's natural aptitude for understanding and loving God, an aptitude which consists in the very nature of the mind, which is common to all men. The next stage is where a man is actually or dispositively knowing and loving God, but still imperfectly; and here we have the image by conformity of grace. The third state is where a man is actually knowing and loving God perfectly; and this is the image by likeness of glory. Thus on the text of the Psalm, "The light of thy countenance O Lord is sealed upon us", the Gloss distinguishes a threefold image, namely the image of creation, of re-creation, and of likeness. The first stage of image then is found in all men, the second only in the just, and the third stage only in the blessed'*.<sup>50</sup>

In talking about the first stage of the image of God, Thomas has in mind the natural cognitive capacity of this fallen state of human nature. This is made obvious when he turns to the second stage, to the possibility of the realization of the natural capacity to know God, where he explains that this can only happen through the grace of Christ. When Thomas refers to the second stage of image, in which *'a man is actually or dispositively knowing and loving God, but still imperfectly'*, he has in mind the *'recreation'* of the nature of the

<sup>49</sup> ST1a2ae, 82, 3.

<sup>50</sup> ST 1a 93, 4: On Psalm 4, 7.

soul. The gloss he quotes indicates that he is referring to the justifying grace of Christ's given-ness to God. That is, through the indwelling of Christ, the soul regains in its essence the gift of divine love, and participates, through its conformity to Christ, in His own given-ness to God. The human capacity to know God in this life has, thus, according to Thomas, everything to do with salvation. Thomas' approach to the problem of the human capacity for God rests on his belief that, *'the higher a creature is, the more it resembles God, the clearer is the sight of God to be obtained through it'*,<sup>51</sup> and it is summed up in his words: *'If there were in our soul a perfect image of God (as the Son is the perfect image of the Father), our mind would understand God immediately. But the image is imperfect'*.<sup>52</sup> It is only in Christ that human beings can become whole enough again to know God.

Thus, though the primordial relatedness of the created image to what is proper to God is a vital aspect of Thomas' view of the open-ness of human intellectual nature to God's giving, the history of salvation is of equal importance. He says, *'human nature can only be understood in two ways, firstly, in its intactness, as it was in our first progenitor before sin; secondly, as it is spoiled in us after the sin of our first progenitor'*.<sup>53</sup> Thus Thomas assumes that the image as principle through its powers is not just a question of natural cause and effect, but is also affected by its state in relationship to God's grace.

Thomas discusses how the human capacity to know God was damaged in the fall in the Question on the mind of Adam, and his knowledge of divine things. Here Thomas looks at the original relationship between the perfecting effect of grace and knowing. He says that, even though he was in a state of grace, Adam could not see the uncreated God in his essence. Had he been able to, he would never have fallen. However, because Adam was established in *'rightness'*, there was no impediment to his contemplation of God in his creation; he remained *'under the illumination of the first truth'*. So though he could only see God in the relative obscurity of his created effects, Adam's will and mind was not led astray by his senses, so that his perception of God's intelligible effects was not hindered.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>51</sup> ST1a 94, 1.

<sup>52</sup> ST1a 88, 3 ad 3.

<sup>53</sup> ST1a2ae 109, 2.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas' distinguishes between the obscurity belonging to anything created compared with the immensity of the divine brightness, and the obscurity which things acquired as a consequence of original sin which impedes awareness of the intelligibility of things. So, he does not think that the relative 'lowness' of the senses, and the limited 'whatness' of things, though necessarily obscure and dim, disqualifies them as such from a role in knowing God, but that, on the contrary, if the ordering of human nature is 'right', so that the formal objective of divine good is not obscured by external interest, they both serve a knowledge of God which is more immediate than that achieved by discursive methods of

Clearly, therefore, original rightness – the *'disposition to Glory'* – had a significant affect on Adam's cognitive capacity.

The original state of grace made a cognitive relationship possible which was, Thomas says, *'half way between knowledge in our present state and knowledge of the home-country, where God can be seen in his essence'*.<sup>55</sup> Adam saw God in created things *'as when a man is seen in a mirror and is seen simultaneously with the mirror'*.<sup>56</sup> So, without a necessary resort to the discursive process, Thomas says, he was aware of God himself through his effects. In this original state Adam was, Thomas says, a 'loftier' creature, through resembling God more closely. The loftier state of Adam's soul gave him the capacity for a 'clearer' sight of God.<sup>57</sup>

Thomas discussion of Adam's knowledge of God before the fall shows an essential role of the will in determining his cognitive capacity. Though it was freely given divine grace which gave Adam his 'rightness', in equally freely choosing a lesser good as ultimate goal instead of divine good, Adam fatally lowered his gaze from the *'first truth'*. Adam's formal objective<sup>58</sup> in seeking knowledge became disconnected from the ultimate goal of seeking God Himself, and this had the effect of disposing and harmonizing every power and act by, and to, lesser, and diminishing goals. Thomas' working out of the effects of the fall is grounded in his understanding, as noted above, that it is through the medium of its powers and acts, that the soul abides in, and draws on, what it is given in its creation, and it is through them that it can fulfil, or undermine, its potentiality and progress towards union with God.

The obfuscation of Adam's 'loftier likeness' to God entailed loss of a unifying *'disposition to glory'* and the capacity it gave to see the intelligibility of contingent goods in the light of the *summum bonum*. Had he freely held to the *'first truth'* as ultimate goal, every lesser act of knowing and willing, and every lesser goal would have been ordered towards, and formed by, that infinite goodness and so would have achieved their own maximum contingent goodness. So, though the tendency given through grace is an inclination prior to the powers of the soul, and is not simply in itself cognitive, Adam's original assent to the gift was the source of a closer likeness

demonstration. The *via negativa*, it seems, is the shadowy path man must stumble along because of the obscuring effect of a disordered disposition.

<sup>55</sup> ST1a 94, 1.

<sup>56</sup> ST1a 94, 1 ad 3.

<sup>57</sup> St1a 94, 1.

<sup>58</sup> ST1a 1, 1 ad 2; See ST2a2ae 1, 1: Formal objective: that by which something is known: either the medium of demonstration, or assent, or, practically speaking, the specific goal with respect to an objective which shapes activity directed to it. In the act of faith the formal object is the reality of divine truth itself, the material object the content: articles of doctrine for instance.

with God, the ordering effect of which gave his relationship with the world, and with God, the clarity of its original intelligibility. Thomas' discussion of the effect of Adam's fall, shows that, in his view, the will, in disposing intellectual powers through the pursuit of both the good and the true, and through assent to grace, plays a determining role in the intellect's capacity to discover the intelligibility of things and to know God.

It is important to note that Thomas' notion of the effect of the will on the act of cognition relies on his distinction between the conformation of the intellect and the activity of judgment. This distinction is, actually, central to his thought on the nature of judgment as a whole. So this subject will be looked at before embarking on the rest of the discussion. It concerns the last aspect of the likeness of the image of God, i.e. the conformation of the powers that proceed from it as effect from source, the conformation of the essence of the soul prior to its powers through the gift of grace, and the distinction between this transitive conformation, and the intransitive activity of conforming in the process of judgment.

e. The distinction between conformation of the image and its powers, and judgment

Thomas distinguishes between conformation of the powers of the soul, and the process of judgment, which is the perfection of knowing'.<sup>59</sup> Together with the role of the will in determining the formal objective, this distinction is important to seeing Thomas' approach to the structure of knowing, and the role of likeness, which underlies his remarks about judgment through habit or undergoing the gift of grace.

In his discussion on discursive knowing, Thomas explains that the likeness, or conformation, of abstraction is a transitive act, '*passing over into a thing outside*', and is a union with the objective according to the way in which the potentiality and intentionality of the act is formed by the intelligibility of the objective. This likeness is not that which is known, but rather, it is the medium of apprehending the reality of the objective, albeit, as Thomas stresses, imperfectly. So, what is first apprehended is the reality of which the conformation is a likeness, and only secondarily the conformation in itself.<sup>60</sup> Judgment, on the other hand, is an intransitive, reflective act, remaining within the agent. Thomas argues<sup>61</sup> that words and propositions do

<sup>59</sup> ST 1a 85, 1 ad 4 and appendix 1 of Blackfriars ed. p 167 See also De Ver 10, art 8: '*One perceives that he understands only from the fact that he understands something. For to understand something is prior to understanding that one understands.*' See also ST1a 54, 1 ad 3 '*I mean that inasmuch as a thing understood becomes one with the mind understanding it, the act of understanding follows as a sort of effect distinguishable from the one and the other.*'

<sup>60</sup> ST1a 85, particularly art 5.

<sup>61</sup> ST1a 85, 2 ad 3.

not directly signify the conformation itself, but, more directly, the formulations through which the intellect judges. Here, as discussed in an appendix to the text,<sup>62</sup> Thomas says that this internal duality of the act of understanding may be termed *species impressa* and *species expressa*. The *species impressa* is the conformation of the soul - that which forms, or actuates, the potentiality of the intellect. This is the principle of the intellectual act which is formed in the *species expressa* - which is the meaning of the thing arrived at through the activity of combining and separating, and is signified by a definition. Thus, according to Thomas, the transitive act by which the soul is conformed, and the intransitive act of judgment, are not one event, nor one likeness, but the latter, the result of the reflective activity of combining and separating, follows on the former.<sup>63</sup> This internal duality in the act of understanding is important to remember in looking at Thomas' words on the two kinds of judging. The speculative standards of the intransitive process of arriving at the *species expressa* are not where knowledge originates, but rather where it is perfected. Knowing originates in the transitive forming event of apprehension. This subject will be returned to in the coming two chapters on judgment through the likeness of habit and that given in the gift of grace.

Thomas' thought on the image of God shows that, for him, the human capacity for God is not an optional extra. Because we are made in the likeness of what is proper to God - his knowing and loving - the capacity for knowing and loving Him belongs essentially to the nature of human being. Even though damaged, the dynamic of the soul's natural open-ness to God's grace, and its tendency towards wholeness in union with God is the condition of the capacity of the powers to express and develop human nature in acts of knowing and loving.

### Chapter 3 Virtue

In this chapter, attention is centred on the likeness belonging to the conforming powers of the soul, in particular that of conformation to the good pursued.

<sup>62</sup> App 1 Vol 12 Blackfriars Translation Ed & Trans: Paul T. Durbin Quote from CG 1, 53: '*The intellect, given form (formatus) by the species of a thing, in understanding formulates (format) in itself an intention (intentio) of the thing understood which is the aspect (ratio) of the thing signified by a definition*'. Here the understood intention is referred to as *intentio intellecta*, and the form which puts the intellect in a state of actuality and is the principle of the intellectual act, though both are a similarity of the thing understood, is referred to as *species intelligibilis*.

<sup>63</sup> ST1a 16, 2 Thomas argues that '*...the perfection of the intellect is truth as known.....truth is in the intellect in its function of affirming and denying one reality of another, and not in sense, nor in intellect knowing the meaning.*

A human act is free and deliberately willed, says Thomas, and it is shaped by its formal interest, which is the intended end, or good sought.<sup>64</sup> Though last in respect to execution, an end comes first in respect to the agent's intention: it is thus that it has the force of a cause. Since this determining principle of the act is prior by intention in the will, the end, or good, sought, Thomas says, '*is not altogether extrinsic to the act, but is related to it as its origin and destination and so enters into its very nature, for as an action it is from something, and as a passion it is towards something*'.<sup>65</sup> So it is clear that Thomas does not think that the causality of a practical objective is merely metaphorical – it is actual and final. Thomas also calls final causality the causality of the good. Thus, what he says about the nature of the good explains why he thinks it can form a likeness in the will and in activity.

It is by existing that something is good. Thomas' grounds for this argument are that everything that is actual, springs from God's communication of his completeness, or perfection, which is his goodness.<sup>66</sup> In causation the good actually precedes (though neither in time nor idea) created existence, as end precedes form, because it is through God's willing the existence of things that anything exists at all.<sup>67</sup> Thomas does not follow Aristotle, for whom substance has the primary place in the classification of reality, leading to the understanding of it in terms of solitary and complete entities. And, in Thomas' view there is no post-Cartesian abyss of nothingness between subject and object and between God and man. The reality of the intelligibility of things in the world, and the human capacity to know the intelligibility of things, springs from their, and our, participating in the communication of God's perfection - the *summum bonum* - which contains, transcends, and is immanent in all things. The medium of the existence of things is, so to speak, one divine and universal formal objective. Thus nothing is isolated, inert, or entire and exclusive to itself: everything has a certain amount of affinity with everything else. However, insofar as things are in potential to fullness of being – an end to which all things tend - the good is a goal. In willing a goal, the human will seeks the good of an actuality as it is in itself – that is, it is the reality which is desired, and not

<sup>64</sup> ST1a2ae 1,1.

<sup>65</sup> ST1a2ae 1, 3 & ad 1 & 2.

<sup>66</sup> ST1a 44, 4 & 20, 2 Thomas argues that the will is not the cause of things being good but responds to that goodness as to its objective, our love in willing good for a thing is not the cause of that goodness. ....goodness, real or only imagined, evokes our love, which cherishes the goodness it possesses and wishes it to gain that which it is yet to have; to this we bend our energies. God's love, however, pours out and creates the goodness in things. Also St1a 44, 4 It is only God's love which pours out and creates the goodness of things. Also ST1a2ae 1, 4 ad 1.

<sup>67</sup> ST1a 5, 2 ad 1.

just the idea of it, so it is the rationality of the goal itself which must shape the nature of the acts directed towards it as principle.

With respect to the pursuit of the specific good of virtue, the focus of Thomas' discussion lies on the way in which the actuality of the good, as it is in itself, shapes the capacity to act – that is, not simply through the notion, or desire of that specific good (though clearly, one must have an idea of what one is seeking). Thomas defines a virtue as '*a principle of operation*',<sup>68</sup> a dynamic modification of a power, developed through practice, which produces a readiness, or disposedness to act in a certain manner. Virtue perfects a power; that is, it qualifies it in so far as it disposes a power to 'what is best': to fulfilling its potential.<sup>69</sup> Thomas uses the term '*habitus*' to refer to a dynamic state (which he defines as '*a certain relation*' between subject, modification, and goal intended),<sup>70</sup> or '*disposition*' in which the modification of a power has achieved, through repetition, some degree of permanence.<sup>71</sup>

The practical rationality of the likeness of habit to the intended goal differs from the speculative rationality of conceptual likeness insofar as the latter is not ordered to action. The modification of habit functions in terms of its degree of likeness to act. Though it remains the same in character (for instance the virtue of patience), habit functions well or inadequately according to degree of possession. That is, it can increase in intensity and possession according to appropriate exercise, or be impoverished or destroyed by opposite action, omission of practice, or false reasoning.<sup>72</sup> It is, therefore, degree of possession which must determine habit as sufficient or insufficient

<sup>68</sup> Ibid ad 1, also ST1a2ae 51, 2.

<sup>69</sup> ST1a 56, 1, ST1a 55, 1.

<sup>70</sup> ST1a2ae 49, 2 Thomas also refers here to his earlier quote from Aristotle: 49, 1 ad 3 '*A state is always a relation of the parts of a complex – either spatial, potential or formal...physical states are referred to by the world 'spatial'...'potential refers to those states which are at a preparatory and undeveloped stage....'formal refers to the fully developed states which are called 'dispositions'*'.

<sup>71</sup> Preparatory to the questions on virtue, Thomas establishes that rational powers require habit in order to achieve a state appropriate to each action ST1a2ae 49, 4 ad 1; 55, 1. The appetitive power is poised before many incompatible things, so a single judgment of reason is generally not influential enough to direct it to one particular end. Similarly, though a virtue is achieved through its activity, a single act is not sufficient to create a virtuous disposition. Thomas concludes that, '*a virtuous disposition cannot be caused by a single action, but only by many actions*', ST1a2ae 51, 3.

<sup>72</sup> ST1a2ae 52, 2; 53, 3 & 2a2ae 47, 4: With reference to the specific virtue of prudence Thomas argues '*we can speak of being good in two ways, materially and formally: materially to refer to the thing which is good; formally, to mean the very reason why it is good, and it is as such that a good is the objective of an affective or loving faculty*'. On a slightly different note, '*if a formal objective is merely an apparent good*', Thomas argues, '*then the corresponding virtue also will not be true, but a false likeness of virtue*'. Thomas quotes Augustine's example of the prudence of misers '*by which they think up all sorts of ways to make a little money*'. This is not a true virtue.



grounds of judgment on the virtue in question (rather than memory, as in judgment based on conceptual knowledge). That is, a practical principle cannot remain in the memory, and be effective in judgment as can a theoretical principle – i.e. simply by being remembered – it has to be exercised.

However, the will itself does not understand through being formed by the end sought. Habit is the principle of an act,<sup>73</sup> it is not a cognitive principle. So, as Thomas says,<sup>74</sup> habit cannot be a source of knowing in its essence. However, as he remarks here, it can be apprehended by the intellect as principle through its acts, because, by its essence, a habit is the principle of a certain kind of act.<sup>75</sup> So a disposition is inherently intelligible, but only apprehensible and distinguishable by the intellect by its act.<sup>76,77</sup> Put another way, willing something is an act, and can be understood insofar as the nature of the act is perceived, and in this, the nature of its principle, ‘*which is a habitual disposition*’.

Thomas calls this apprehension of a virtue through habit, via perception of its act, a ‘remote’ source of knowing. He explains more closely what he means in distinguishing cognitive habit from affective habit, saying that the former can be a proximate source of knowledge because it is present in the mind through its essence – ‘*A cognitive disposition is the source both of the very act by which the habit is received and also of the knowledge by which it is perceived. . .*’. but ‘*an affective disposition (as in a habit of patience or another virtue) is the source of that act from which the habit can be perceived but not of the knowledge by which it is perceived*’. It is, therefore, a remote source, for such a disposition does not have within it the cause of

<sup>73</sup> De Ver 10, art 9 reply.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> To examine more closely what Thomas has to say about the perception of a habit as principle of an act, he explains that, as we perceive that the soul exists in us only through its act, so also a disposition is unknowable in itself and has to be known by means of its actualization – that is, either by perceiving the act proper to it, or by investigating its nature by a speculative consideration of its acts (ST1a2ae 50, 5). The tendency is perceived as principle however, and he adds, in de Ver 10,9 ‘*the measure of any habit is that to which the habit is ordained, and it is according to this that judgment can be made*’.

<sup>77</sup> ST1a 87 1, 2 & 4 In order for the intellect to know itself, it must be ‘*made actual by species abstracted from sensible realities by the light of the agent intellect, which is the actuality of intelligible objects and by means of them, also of the possible intellect. Therefore our intellect knows itself, not by its own essence, but by means of its activity*’. Thomas sees two senses in which the intellect may be said to know itself. The first sense is that in which Socrates, for instance, perceives himself to have an intellectual soul from the fact that he perceives himself to be intellectually acting. The second sense is speaking universally, as when we consider the nature of the human mind from the nature of the intellect’s activity. With respect to knowledge of acts of the will, Thomas argues that the human will is an intellectual inclination (we will what we know) and so is intelligible.

*knowledge but of that from which knowledge is received*'.<sup>78</sup> Remoteness, thus means that something 'is not known by the soul through a likeness of it abstracted from sense, but through the likeness of those things which are known through the habit'. It is the nature – or the reality (not just the idea of) a virtue in itself, which, pursued as a good, enters into the activity which shapes the disposition. So, habits, gradually formed through the pursuit of a good, 'are known as the source of knowledge in the cognition of these other things'. Thomas concludes that . . . . 'act is known before habit, but habit is more a source of knowing'.<sup>79</sup> Thus, though a habit does not make abstracted sense information available to the intellect, it can be a source of judgment about a virtue through the final causality of its ordination by and to that goal. Further, even though habit is a remote source of knowing, it does not seem that it can be a vague basis of judgment since it is ultimately formed by the rationality of the goal as it is in itself.

Clearly, final causality is central to Thomas' thought on judgment through disposition.<sup>80</sup> He discusses this subject mainly with respect to practical rationality. But, in this instance, Thomas is arguing that the unabstracted inclination can be a source, albeit remote, of knowledge. The question is, in what way does the perception of an act reveal the intelligibility of the disposition, and, through that perception, understanding of the intended virtue? Thomas discusses the subject of final causality in connection with knowing only in the context of God's knowledge, and that of angels. However, his discussion is not entirely restricted to supernatural agencies but includes reference to human knowing. So it is a legitimate context in which to look for Thomas' thoughts on the connection.

In the question on the universal knowledge of angels, Thomas includes an example of human knowledge of the virtue of prudence, which, as intended goal, shapes differing acts in differing situations. The question centres on Thomas' argument that to know universally is not always to know particulars less perfectly. He states, in ad 1 of ST1a 55 3, that '*universals are not necessarily abstract; they*

<sup>78</sup> de Ver 10 art 9 reply.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid ad 4 and 5.

<sup>80</sup> Kant would argue against Thomas' claim that teleological laws can play a role in our capacity to know. He would say that since the ground of Thomas' claim is the supersensible *summum bonum*, taking 'mechanical' and teleological laws together as a principle for judging can only be used as a maxim of the reflective, not the determinate judgment (pt II, pg 72 *Critique of Judgment*). In his view, it is intrinsically impossible for a discursive mind to encounter unity or finality in nature. And, in so far as these cannot be objects of knowledge over against a knower, he is right. However, Thomas' understanding of the 'remoteness' of habit as source of knowing shows that though he is aware of this problem, he does not see it as entailing the impossibility of cognition. Finality can, in his view, be source of non-discursive knowing.

*are so only where knowing begins with the knower taking something in from the material particular.*' That is, they are abstracted when they are conceptual. However, a non-abstract universal must exist *in some way prior to things: either prior in the order of causation- as things pre-exist, in unity, in the divine Word - or at least prior in the order of nature - as things pre-exist, in unity, in the mind of an angel*'. Thomas' thought is obviously centred on supernatural forms of knowing, but his initial remark – '*prior in the order of causation*' points simply to his argument on the nature of final causality of practical rationality. In ad 2 of the article, Thomas distinguishes between universal knowledge of an object when only its general nature is known, and universal knowledge as a *medium* of knowing. In ad 3, Thomas argues that in order for one thing to adequately represent the proper nature of several different things, it must be excellent – of a higher nature to include in its unity a likeness of their diversity. And it is here that he offers the ordinary human example of the pursuit of virtue. He says: *The virtue of prudence in man is 'universal', as entering into each and every kind of virtuous action; and it offers a type and likeness through which to understand the various 'prudences' that appear in the animal world - the lion's, which appears in 'magnanimous' action, the fox's in wariness, and so forth.*' Thomas does not mention the effect of action in creating a habit here – he is only concerned with showing how the unabstracted final causality of a goal can be a medium of knowing. However, it is obvious that, in entering as universal into activities which create a habit, the goal of a virtue may be said to be prior in the order of causation, and contains the diversity of acts ordered to and by it in its unity.

In this example of the virtue of prudence, Thomas' argument shows how a habit formed by the universality of a goal, such as prudence, becomes a (remote) medium through which even widely differing actions ordered to and by that goal can be recognized and understood as kinds of prudence. The principle, therefore, which Thomas at different times, differently calls an '*inclination*' or '*affinity*' or '*sympathy*' or '*connaturality*' functions as an archetype. That is, the inclination becomes a non-abstracted reality, contained by the universality of its goal, and so it governs diverse and particular acts which are analogically related by and to the unity of the goal. So, a habit can function as an archetypal principle of both operation and judgment in the many differing situations and activities in pursuit of a virtue. Even though such a habit remains *closer to the power*, and is perceived as principle only remotely, '*the virtuous man himself can, therefore, set the measure and standard for human acts*'.

However, as indicated above, this method of judgment is not infallible. Human intention, not being angelically pure, means that a formal interest may not coincide perfectly with the reality of the goal,

so that the unity of the goal, as it is in itself, may only imperfectly enter into acts ordered by and to it, and therefore, will also form the habit imperfectly. The degree of possession of a disposition, as said, determines it as sufficient (remote) ground of judgment, and that must depend, not only on practice, but also on in how far it is intended as a thing in itself, and for its own sake.

In arriving at a judgment of virtue according to the inclination of habit, there is a certain immediacy insofar as knowledge of it is '*produced by the very presence of the disposition, since by its very presence it causes an activity in which it is immediately perceived*'.<sup>81</sup> The perception is direct non-conceptual apprehension of the intelligibility of the virtue in the act, which takes the place of reasoning. As noted, Thomas also refers to the source of this kind of judgment as 'sympathy', and 'connaturality', terms which suggest that such judgment has the immediacy of arising from a natural state of likeness in the agent to the goal, or from 'second nature', unlike the more externally directed relationship of learning. It is a kind of knowledge through inclination which has its source in, and expresses, the tendency of the soul to progress towards perfection as it modifies its powers in pursuit of the good, and fulfills its potential as image of God.

## Chapter 4

### Judgment through grace

Thomas says, it is '*by grace that we are reborn as sons of God*' and since '*birth and generation reach their term in the essence, formally speaking*', *grace must be given to the essence of the soul*'.<sup>82</sup> Thus, whereas in judgment of virtue according to habit, it is the powers of the soul which are formed through the final causality of an intended natural good, in judgment through grace, it is the essence of the soul, prior to the powers, which undergoes the gift of a divine good.<sup>83</sup> As already noted, Thomas connects the closeness of the likeness of the image of God with our capacity to know Him. So he maintains that it is through the healing and perfecting of the fallen image, that knowing God most perfectly becomes possible. Clearly, in his view, the state of likeness of the soul affects the capacity of the powers to know God, and judgment of divine things has to do, therefore, with

<sup>81</sup> ST1a 87, 3 also ST1a 87, 4 ...'Acts of the will are understood by the intellect, both inasmuch as a man perceives himself as willing things, and inasmuch as he perceives the nature of this act and, as a result, the nature of its principle, which is a habitual disposition or a power'.

<sup>82</sup> ST1a2ae 110, 4.

<sup>83</sup> 'The gift of grace is an expression of divine love in the essence of the soul' which qualifies it as principle through its powers. ST1a2ae 110, 1.

the ‘re-creation’ Thomas speaks of in the ‘second stage’ of the image of God. It is through the justifying grace of Christ that human nature can become close enough in likeness to God to know him.<sup>84</sup>

The kind of grace Thomas is concerned with in judgment of divine things is sanctifying grace – i.e. the justifying grace by which ‘*man himself is united to God*’.<sup>85</sup> Thomas first talks about how such a gift can be present in the soul in theological terms. With reference to the effects of the New Law, Thomas says that ‘*..men obtain this grace (the grace of the Holy Spirit) through the Son of God made man; grace first filled his humanity, and thence was brought to us. So it says in John, ‘The Word was made flesh’, and then goes on, ‘full of grace and truth’; and later, ‘Of his fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace*’.<sup>86</sup> So, grace is not some kind of alien ‘force’ expanding the powers of an autonomous being – it is essentially communion with the person of Christ, sharing in the gift of his own fullness of truth and love.<sup>87</sup>

The chief place where Thomas talks about the effect in the soul of the grace is in the question on the missions of the divine persons. Here he argues that it is through the sending of the Son that someone may have knowledge or perception of Him.<sup>88</sup> Thomas begins by saying that the expression ‘being sent’ in reference to the persons of the Holy Trinity ‘*indicates the beginning of a presence, in the sense either that the one sent was not previously there at all or not present in this new way*’.<sup>89</sup> The term ‘sending’, or ‘giving’ also indicates a term in time, Thomas says, because when something is sent in order to be present somewhere, and given in order that it be possessed by a creature, it is an event in time, thus, ‘Mission’ means not just the coming forth from a principle, but the term in time as well.<sup>90</sup> In the following question Thomas argues that the Holy Spirit proceeds temporally to make creatures holy. ‘*Since no creature is made holy except through sanctifying grace, through it alone is there any mission of a divine person. . . . Though God is in everything by his essence, power and presence, over and above this there is a*

<sup>84</sup> ST1a2ae 109, 2, ST1a 94 1, and ST1a2ae 68, 1 Thomas argues that there are two principles of movement in man: one which is intrinsic to him, namely reason; the other extrinsic, namely God. For mankind to be moved by God, however, he needs to be able to receive the prompting – ‘*the higher the mover, the more perfect must be the disposition by which the moved is proportioned to it*. Thus, as virtues perfect mankind in disposing him to act according to reason, and conform him to the natural good, so the Gift of the Holy Spirit disposes mankind to be moved by God, and conforms him to Christ.

<sup>85</sup> ST 1a2ae 111, 1.

<sup>86</sup> ST1a 2ae 108, 1.

<sup>87</sup> ST1a2ae 112, 1 & ad 2.

<sup>88</sup> ST1a 43, 5 ad 2.

<sup>89</sup> ST1a 43, 1.

<sup>90</sup> ST1a 43, 2 & ad 3.

*special presence consonant with the nature of an intelligent being, in whom God is said to be present as the known in the knower and the loved in the lover- a kind of presence known as ‘indwelling’.*<sup>91</sup> Thus, grace ‘prepares the soul to possess the divine person’ and it is the Holy Spirit who is the source of the gift of grace.<sup>92</sup>

In 1a 43,5, a question on the sending of the Son, Thomas quotes St Augustine saying: ‘*whenever someone has knowledge or perception of the Son, then the Son is being sent to him*’. By grace the soul takes on a God-like form. That a divine person be sent to someone through grace, therefore, requires a likening to the person sent through some particular gift of grace. Since the Holy Spirit is Love, the likening of the soul to the Holy Spirit occurs through the gift of charity . . . . . The Son in turn is the Word; not, however, just any word, but the Word breathing Love; ‘The Word as I want the meaning understood is a knowledge accompanied by love’ . . . . Consequently not just any enhancing of the mind indicates the Son’s being sent, but only that sort of enlightening that bursts forth into love . . . So Augustine says pointedly, the Son is being sent whenever someone has knowledge or perception of him, for ‘perception’ points to a kind of experiential awareness and this precisely is what wisdom is, a knowing that, as it were, is tasted; thus the text, *The wisdom of doctrine is according to her name*’,<sup>93</sup> (and so, not manifest to many). In ad 3 Thomas adds that, speaking with respect to the grace given, the two missions – of the Son and of the Holy Spirit – have grace as their common root, but they are distinct as to the effects grace has, i.e. the enlightenment of the mind and the enkindling of the affections. ‘Plainly, then’, Thomas concludes, ‘one effect cannot take place without the other; since neither occurs without sanctifying grace nor can one person be present without the other’.

In the background of this question, there are aspects which show why Thomas indicates in ST1a1, 6 ad 3 that there is a similarity between judgment through inclination and judgment through the gift of grace: it is not abstracted knowledge, but caused by a union of ‘things in themselves’, (though in this case it is the union of the human soul with the presence of God), it is a knowledge not acquired by study, but is caused by the good (in this case, a divine good). It is also a knowledge which is ‘tasted’: it does not consist in conceptual representation but has its source in an ‘awareness’. The awareness of grace, however, arises from a union caused by charity, which Thomas says, is the cause of the Gift of wisdom, though it lies essentially in the intellect. The all important aspect of this source of knowing, and judging divine things is that its cause lies in union with the person

<sup>91</sup> ST1a 43, 3.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid ad 3.

<sup>93</sup> ST1a 43, 5, ad 2 & 3.

of Christ – ‘*present as the known in the knower and the loved in the lover*’. Since it is a union of persons in themselves, given by God, it is, albeit imperfect, the positive knowledge of God which Thomas mentions in his article on the three stages of image – the knowledge given to the soul recreated through the grace of Christ.

However, even a wisdom caused by an experiential awareness of the presence of God can be lost. As noted above, such a union causes a ‘*likening of the soul to the Holy Spirit*’ and ‘*occurs through the gift of charity*’. Thomas adds, ‘*the wisdom of which we are speaking presupposes charity and, as already shown, charity cannot coexist with mortal sin*’. Thomas’ reason for saying this is that mortal sin is against the essential character of charity, ‘*for it is the nature of charity to love God above all things, subjecting oneself entirely to him, by referring to him all that one has . . . obeying him in everything and keeping his commandments in their entirety; whatever is contrary to these is clearly contrary to charity, and so, of its nature, excludes it*’.<sup>94</sup> Being an infused disposition (given and not acquired) charity does not depend on the strength of the agent to keep, but on the action of God preserving it. Any act which impedes God’s action means that charity ceases to exist in the agent. So the loss of the disposition of charity follows immediately on choosing sin instead of obedience to God’s commandments. Thomas quotes St Augustine: ‘*God’s presence gives light, but if he is absent man immediately falls into darkness and is separated from God, not by any distance of place, but by the aversion of his own will*’.<sup>95</sup> Thomas even goes so far as to say that there can be no genuine scientific or discursive knowledge, ‘*where right judgment as to the first and indemonstrable principle is lacking, so, strictly speaking, there can be no true justice or true chastity if the due reference to the end by means of charity is lacking, however rightly disposed one may be about other things*’.<sup>96</sup> His argument indicates that mortal sin will equally darken judgment of divine things through a cognitive process, since its premises are held from revelation.

Thomas discusses metaphysical aspects of the question of the gift of divine grace in the soul in ST1a2ae 110 – 113. In St 1a2ae 110 Thomas argues that grace, being in itself higher than human nature, cannot become a substantial form of the soul, but must be accidental, that is, a quality.<sup>97</sup> However, Thomas does not mean that grace is accidental in the soul in the purely Aristotelian sense. It is in *de*

<sup>94</sup> ST2a2ae 24, 12.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid* and *Super Gen. Ad litt. Viii, 12 PL 34, 383*.

<sup>96</sup> ST2a2ae 23, 7 ad 2.

<sup>97</sup> ST1a2ae 110, 2 ad 2. ‘*..since the soul participates in the divine goodness imperfectly, that participation in the divine goodness which constitutes grace has a more imperfect mode of being in the soul than the being in which the soul subsists in itself*’.

*Veritate* that Thomas explains that, in spite of being a quality of the soul, grace is not like *‘the accidents which the philosophers knew, because the philosophers knew only those accidents of the soul which are directed to acts proportioned to human nature*. Grace is not a state directed to an act, but *‘to a certain spiritual existence which it causes in the soul, and it is like a disposition in regard to glory . . .’*. Whereas the accidents that the philosophers knew are dependent for their existence on the being or extinction of their subject, the gift of grace belongs to God, and *‘men are created modally . . . that is, are established in a new being, out of nothing, not by their merits, but . . . . Created in Christ Jesus in good works’*.<sup>98</sup> So grace *‘is an accidental form of the soul itself’*,<sup>99</sup> that is, it modifies the soul in its essence, increasing the soul’s likeness to God through unifying it more closely with God: it *‘draws the rational creature above its natural condition to have a part in the divine goodness’*.<sup>100</sup> It does this, Thomas says, *‘. . . in the manner of a formal cause’*.<sup>101</sup> So, grace forms the soul through a deeper, closer, participation of the human soul in God’s divine goodness and love. Thomas’ approach to the open nature of the relationship between human nature and divine grace rests on his understanding that God has destined humanity for beatitude. Therefore, ultimately, the horizon of the soul’s capacity for Him lies not in its own powers, but in God’s own giving.

As noted, grace is given prior to the powers of the soul. Therefore, it does not, in itself, make God knowable through the likenesses of ideas, or as an object of love (as the created goods of the world are loved). In his question on how grace is present in the soul, Thomas explains that, God *‘infuses supernatural forms or qualities into those whom he moves towards obtaining an eternal, supernatural good, whereby they may be moved by him sweetly and promptly towards obtaining the eternal good’*.<sup>102</sup> So grace prepares the soul for union with Christ, not by forming the soul as the intellect forms a concept, but by causing an inclination in the essence of the soul, a *disposition which has the function of an originating principle*. It disposes the soul, as principle through its powers, towards a union with God which is perfecting’.<sup>103</sup> Thus, the gift of sanctifying grace recreates

<sup>98</sup> ST 1a2ae 110, 2 ad 2 & 3.

<sup>99</sup> Thomas argues that *‘by grace we were reborn as sons of God. But birth and generation reach their term in the essence, formally speaking, prior to the powers. Therefore grace, formally speaking, is in the essence of the soul prior to the powers’* sed contra 1a2ae 110, 4.

<sup>100</sup> ST1a2ae 110,1.

<sup>101</sup> The accidental presence of grace *‘is of a higher order than the nature of the soul, so far as it is the expression of the divine goodness or its participation, though not as regards mode of being’* (ST1a2ae 110, 2 ad 2).

<sup>102</sup> ST1a2ae 110, 2.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid ad 1& 2 ST 1a2ae, 110, 4.



the soul by giving back to it its natural inclination towards union with God through ‘*conformation to Christ*’.<sup>104</sup> It does not enhance the powers of the soul, but opens it as principle through its powers to ‘*be moved by God*’.<sup>105</sup> Sanctifying grace heals the soul, raising it up to a closer likeness to God, and giving it the capacity to receive the gift of the sending of the Son. Thus, though the act of judgment of divine things must lie in the intellect, it has its source in the soul’s being united to God through Christ.<sup>106</sup> This principle is similar to that in which a habit of virtue is source, but not cause of judgment of that virtue. In both, the source does not lie in an abstracted representation, but, in the former, in the divine good of union of the essence of the soul with Christ, and in the latter, in the union of the will (habit) with the actuality of the natural good intended insofar as it has entered as origin and destination into the practice of the agent. Another common factor is the transitive nature of the relationship between the practice of virtue with the natural good sought, and in the reception of the divine gift of grace. The unabstracted formation in both forms of judgment can be understood in terms of the ‘*species impressa*’, that is, as prior to and medium, or source, of the ‘*species expressa*’, arrived at in the process of judgment.

Thomas’ closest explanation of what he means by the experiential awareness of the presence of the Son is that it is wisdom, and, as it were, ‘tasted’. Elsewhere Thomas speaks of experiential awareness as imperfect.<sup>107</sup> However, in discussing knowledge of grace in the essence of the soul, Thomas says that, ‘*what is in the soul by essential presence is known by experiential knowledge, in the sense that man experiences his inner originating principles by their activity; thus we perceive the will in the act of willing, and life in vital activity*’.<sup>108</sup> This remark shows the similarity of his thought on the structure of knowledge of virtue through habit and knowledge of grace: that perception occurs through activity. However, though the imperfection of such experiential knowledge of grace is acknowledged by Thomas, at the same time he says, using unusually passionate language, that the ‘*enhancing of the mind is a kind of enlightening that bursts forth into love*’ and, quoting Psalm 38, 4, ‘*In my meditation a fire shall come forth*’.

<sup>104</sup> ST1a2ae 68, 1.

<sup>105</sup> ST1a2ae 68, 1.

<sup>106</sup> ST2a2ae 45, 3.

<sup>107</sup> ST1a2ae 112, 5 Reply and ad 1. *What is known by essential presence is known by experiential knowledge, in the sense that man experiences his inner originating principles by their activity.* In note a, and also in Reply, Thomas does not rate knowledge by experience highly – but he says that such imperfect knowledge of God is greater than knowledge of the world (in De Ver 10, 7 reply 5) because through knowledge of God the mind becomes more conformed to God.

<sup>108</sup> ST1a2ae 112, 5.

In the communication of God's grace, clearly, goodness and truth are one: it is '*a knowledge accompanied by love*'. So the essential presence in the soul is an originating principle in both cognitive and affective powers, and as such can be the source, not only of practical acts by which it can be perceived but also of acts of knowledge by which it can be perceived. Thomas also indicates, by these expressions of the one-ness of knowledge and love, that such experiential awareness cannot be contained by the powers of the soul, but rather overflows them. The grace of Christ's indwelling contains the soul, both entering into every aspect of its being, nature and powers, and transcending them. This explains Thomas' choice in quoting St Paul in his first mention of this kind of knowing: he is the saint who describes his experience of the indwelling of the Son as '*it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me*' (Gal 2, 20). Through the grace of Christ's indwelling, the soul is lifted up beyond its own natural powers to share in His own love of the Father so that the horizon of its potentiality for God is '*in Christ*'. So the final principle of archetypal governance, or 'containing', though differently present in the essence of the soul, is again shown to belong to Thomas' thought on judgment through inclination. The grace of Christ in the soul is of a higher nature than the representations of the mind, and because of its eminent unity, enters as universal into the essence of the soul, assimilating it to Christ prior to every act. The personal nature of such an unabstracted assimilation can become an intersubjectivity through which the soul may judge, albeit imperfectly, divine things. To use Thomas' quote of St Paul, through '*the captivity of every understanding in obedience to Christ*',<sup>109</sup> the powers of the soul are contained and perfected by the higher actuality and universality of the perfect Image of God. This is the re-creation, or '*true reality*'<sup>110</sup>, of human nature which Thomas mentions in his article on the three stages of the image, and may be said to be what Christ prays for in the High Priestly prayer '*for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth*'.<sup>111</sup> The truth of the image is, as noted earlier, the originating principle of the powers through which the soul abides in and draws on what it is given in its creation, and through which it can fulfil its potentiality and progress towards union with God. It is likeness at every level of human nature that contributes, in some way, to the capacity to know God.

<sup>109</sup> ST1a. 1, 8 'St Paul speaks of *bringing into captivity every understanding unto the service of Christ...*' 2 Corinthians 10,5.

<sup>110</sup> William of St Thierry calls the union with Christ the '*true reality*' of the soul, in which it shares, by likeness, in the way appropriate for a human creature, in the processions of the Holy Trinity.

<sup>111</sup> Jn 17, v 19.

### Verification

In judgment by inclination, if looked at in the light of the duality which Thomas sees in the act of discursive knowing, the intransitive *species expressa* is not arrived at through the combining and separating of concepts. Rather, the transitive *species impressa* is formed by the unabstracted universality of the willed good, which forms the inclination through activity. Thus, unlike the extrinsic and demonstrable nature of speculative truth standards, judgment by inclination can be verified neither through observation nor demonstration. In conformation to a virtue, the reality in knower and known is not diverse, as it is in conceptual knowledge of the same. The actuality of the virtue as objective is, proportionately, that which determines the character of the disposition and act. Judgment through connaturality or inclination is, therefore, seeing the objective proportionately in its own light, that is, intersubjectively. So, in spite of the remoteness of disposition as source of judgment, judgment through inclination has a special immediacy. Because the principle of unity is intrinsic to the *species impressa*, the *species expressa* does not look to theoretical standards. Verification of judgment through inclination is, therefore, clearly not possible according to speculative standards, but must be according to the practical rationality of pursuit of the good. In being caused by the will, the relationship of habit and act is a union of ‘things in themselves’. This point is important to Thomas’ thought on judgment through the gift of grace, and is at the centre of his comparison of this kind of judgment with that of virtue. As mentioned above, judgment of divine things is, at its deepest level, according to Thomas, about mankind’s union with Christ, the principle of unification being love. Thomas discusses the unifying effect of love in his treatment of the nature and causality of love.

Thomas argues that every virtue is the ‘*order of love, both in the general sense or of the love of charity, and love . . . is the root cause of every affection*’.<sup>112</sup> Love is the motive force of virtuous activity and the dynamic of inclination towards it. It causes a sense of affinity with the object in question. It is nevertheless a passion because it is caused by the good which is desired. So union is an effect of love. In belonging to the appetitive aspect of human nature, love does not seek simply an idea of a thing, but seeks unity with the objective as it is in itself. Because of this, Thomas thinks that love is a more powerful unifying force than knowledge, which comes

<sup>112</sup> ST1a2ae 62,3; 27, 4; 28, 1 ad 3. Thomas argues that ‘*In knowledge the object known is united with the person who knows it by means of a representation; but in love it is the object itself which is united with the person who loves it. Love is therefore a more powerful unifying force than is knowledge*’.

no closer than a representation.<sup>113</sup> He says that ‘*when the thing in which goodness exists is nobler than the soul itself in which the thought of that thing exists, then in relation to such a thing will is superior to understanding*’. But *when the thing in which the goodness exists is of less worth than the soul, then in relation to that thing understanding is superior to will*’. The superiority of love in this instance lies in its capacity to allow the understanding to undergo formation by the final causality of something greater than the soul, i.e. grace.

Thomas argues that the nature of love determines the nature of the union with the object(ive). He makes a distinction between love-of-desire (*amorem concupiscentiae*) and love-of-friendship (*amorem amicitiae*). He says that love has a two-fold object: the object of love-of-friendship is loved for its own sake, and in the primary sense of love, it is a love that consists in wanting and seeking the welfare of someone. The object of love-of-desire is loved for the sake of something other than itself, and not in the primary sense of love.<sup>114</sup> It consists in loving a thing in so far as it contributes to another goal, for instance, someone else’s welfare. This distinction has a role in the effect of love, that is, in the kind of unity created. In love-of-desire the unity has an extrinsic aspect. In love-of-friendship, however, there is no extrinsic cause – there is a common will, mutual identification and reciprocity. Thomas explains that in effect one both ‘contains’ the other, and is ‘contained’ by the other. Another expression of this relationship is ‘mutual indwelling’.<sup>115</sup> In its effect, thus, love, in its primary sense, unifies the intentionality of an agent with the intelligibility of the objective as it is in itself, and is formed by its principle of unity - even if that completeness is not entirely knowable - whereas in love of desire the union is incomplete or fractured through pursuit of an external goal. As is clear, Thomas conducts this argument in personal terms. However, the effect of these two different kinds of love in the will with respect to inclination formed through pursuit of virtue, has a significant effect in the practical rationality of the intersubjective union of ‘things in themselves’.

<sup>113</sup> Thomas argues that love is a more powerful unifying force than is knowledge because ‘*in love it is the object itself which is united with the person who loves it*’, while in knowledge ‘*the object know is united with the person who knows it by means of a representation*’. Also ST 1a 82, 3 Thomas argues that, ‘*when the thing in which goodness exists is nobler than the soul itself in which the thought of that thing exists, then in relation to such a thing will is superior to understanding. But when the thing in which the goodness exists is of less worth than the soul, then in relation to that thing understanding is superior to will*’.

<sup>114</sup> ST1a2ae 26, 4.

<sup>115</sup> ST1a2ae 28, 2.

Thomas argument shows that *'rightness of loving'* is necessary in order to aim for a good as formal objective – that is, aiming for it for the reason why it is good. He uses the example of the virtue of prudence because *'its activity is caused by love . . . it moves the mind to discriminate.'*<sup>116</sup> Quoting Augustine, Thomas adds that *'prudence is the love which well discerns between the helps and the hindrances in our striving towards God.* Thus it is love in the primary sense which Thomas associates with 'rightness' in loving and, crucially for his thoughts on judgment through inclination, with access to truth, both of natural and divine good.

Thomas' distinction between love- of- friendship and love- of- desire shows that it is the kind of love which, in determining the formal objective, decides in how far the agent can achieve unity with the completeness, or universality of a goal.<sup>117</sup> As noted, Thomas calls this effect of love –of-friendship, 'rightness', a term which he also uses to describe the nature of wisdom, i.e. right judgment, and the original harmony of powers in Adam. Dispositions inclining the mind to make judgments regardless of the *'rightness of loving'* will possess, Thomas says, less of the nature of virtue, since it bears on a thing which is good, *but not under the aspect of being right'*. A habit of virtue cannot be fully possessed and become a basis of judgment if it is not intended as it is in itself. Thus, unlike a theoretical principle which, so long as it is correctly learned and remembered, is not subject to alteration, a practical principle can increase or diminish in intensity of possession, not only according to exercise or omission, as noted above, but also according to the kind of love determining the union of agent and goal. This kind of principle, having its source in the unity of the good, and ultimately in divine perfection, cannot be fully grasped as though mankind could stand outside it. Nor can any creature wholly reveal such a containing and eternal principle in its successive existence and activity. This means that, though the truth content of judgment of a virtue through inclination can be said to be according to proportionate participation of the good as it is in itself – and so, according to the rightness of love, it must necessarily be incomplete knowledge. The objective standards of logical principles which are used to judge the truth of propositions about reality cannot apply in this case because the knower is not wholly over against the object(ive). Nevertheless, the lack of accuracy in this kind of judgment as compared with syllogistic methods is not a sign of meaninglessness. It only indicates that the perfection participated in

<sup>116</sup> ST2a2ae 47, 1.

<sup>117</sup> ST2a2ae 47, 4. Previously to this remark, Thomas says that *'we can speak of being good in two ways, materially and formally. Materially to refer to the thing which is good; formally, to mean the very reason why it is good, and it is as such that a good is the objective of an affective or loving power'*.

exceeds absolute determination in a defining concept. However the proportionate participative likeness of a disposition in an intended good, or in a gift of divine grace, can be a more accurate pointer to the nature of the virtue or ‘divine thing’ as it is in itself because the perfection participated is an actual source of unity in the knower. Knowledge through inclination, unlike the ‘objectivity’ belonging to speculative standards, is a question of the state of the agent, that is, how he or she is proportioned to, and by, the objective, as well as the nature of the object(ive). The greater the integrity of the love of the agent for the good as it is in itself as formal objective, the more intensely present as immanent universal the good sought can be in the disposition it forms through acts. And because the source of knowing, even though remote, is formed by the thing as it is in itself, it is, in essence, a more intense ground of knowing than abstracted knowledge. A lack of clarity in judgment can actually be said to exist more in the logical restrictions of ‘subject-object’ propositions which rely on conceptual representation.

With reference to Jean-Luc Marion’s notion that in, ‘*giving pure giving to be thought*’, a way will be found of talking about God in the way in which he gives himself to be known,<sup>118</sup> I hope that the above goes some way to showing that, far from Thomas being a wintery old rationalist, it may be argued that his work is an outstanding example of how love allows thought to be given to God’s pure giving in Christ. Thomas’ briefly expressed thoughts on judgment through inclination give room for thought about the effect of intentionality on every and any kind of judgment. His arguments show that he sees an analogical relationship between the structures of intentionality and likeness in discursive thought, in seeking the good, and in the nature of our being. Because of this, his arguments also indicate that when the good is intended for its own sake, and, indeed, when the heart is open to the grace of God, the transitive relationship in gaining the *species impressa* is open to a greater extent to the intelligibility of, not only the objective in question, but also to our relationship with the world and with God. Thus greater access to intelligibility as a whole, and the wholeness of intelligibility, becomes available to the work of forming the *species expressa* – the activity of judgment.

<sup>118</sup> J-L Marion. *God without Being*, Trans Thomas A. Carlson. University of Chicago Press, 1995, preface to the English Edition.

*'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God'*

Matt. 5 v 8

*'Happy is he whom truth teacheth by itself,  
not by figures and words that pass, but as it is in itself'.*

The Imitation of Christ

Thomas van Kempen

*'And if senses fail to see,*

*Faith alone the true heart waketh*

*To behold the mystery'.*

Adoro te Devote

Thomas Aquinas

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