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Contemplation and the Human Animal in the Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

CONTEMPLATION AND THE HUMAN ANIMAL
IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN PHILOSOPHY

BY

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CHICAGO IL

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| ST | <i>Summa theologiae</i> |
| SCG | <i>Summa contra gentiles</i> |
| QDV | <i>Quaestiones disputatae de veritate</i> |
| QDA | <i>Quaestiones disputatae de anima</i> |
| In Boetii de Trin. | <i>In Librum Boetii de Trinitate Expositio</i> |
| In DA | <i>Sententia libri De anima</i> |
| In NE | <i>Sententia libri Ethicorum</i> |
| In Met | <i>Commentarium in XII libros Metaphysicorum</i> |
| In Ph | <i>Commentarium in VIII libros Physicorum</i> |
| SENT | <i>Commentarium in quatuor libros Sententiarum</i> |

INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation I examine the manner in which – according to Thomas Aquinas - the operations of the sensitive soul contribute to contemplation. Aquinas scholars writing about contemplation have traditionally focused their attention on the role of the intellect in contemplation. That is understandable, because contemplation is primarily an intellectual activity. However, contemplation also involves the operations of the sensitive soul, albeit in a secondary way. The act of contemplation is accompanied by phantasms¹ and the passions of love and delight. The acquisition of knowledge - which ordinarily precedes contemplation - requires the involvement of the outer and inner senses and of the sensitive appetite. This is so because a human being is an integrated and a composite being, made of body and soul, and all our faculties participate in contemplation, not to mention in the acquisition of knowledge, which typically precedes contemplation.

The sensitive soul is the soul characteristic of us qua animals. Examining how the operations of the sensitive soul contribute to contemplation shows us what difference being animal makes to contemplation; how the contemplation of a rational animal differs from contemplation of a being who is rational, but not animal. Since, according to Aquinas, human happiness consists of contemplation, I argue that the operations of the

¹ In Aquinas's terminology phantasms represent a given thing as sensed and perceived.

sensitive soul are necessary for the attainment and the enjoyment of human happiness qua contemplation.

Contemplation Is a Neglected Topic

No other commentator on Aquinas has approached the question in the way I approach it. There is hardly anything in the literature written about the role played by our animality in human contemplation. There is very little written about our animality in connection with any problems of Thomas's philosophy. Thomas Hibbs notes that contemplation is one of the topics neglected by Aquinas scholars. He says: "Given Thomas's emphasis on the crucial role of contemplation in the good life, it is surprising how little attention has been devoted to the topic or to the role of the intellectual virtues. I might list the topic of contemplation and intellectual virtues among those features of Aquinas's moral thought that remain neglected in the literature."² It is interesting to note that Hibbs mentions contemplation along with intellectual virtues, apparently not even considering the possibility that one would discuss it in connection with animality. Even in connection with the intellectual virtues, which belong to the rational part of the soul, the topic of contemplation has been neglected; discussion of contemplation in connection with the sensitive soul is non-existent in the literature today.

Hibbs mentions Josef Pieper's book *Happiness and Contemplation*³ as a conspicuous exception to the dearth of books on the topic of contemplation. Pieper writes about contemplation and happiness in *Happiness and Contemplation* and in *Leisure the*

² Hibbs, Thomas, S. "Interpretations of Aquinas's Ethics Since Vatican II" in *Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope, Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002, pp. 412-425.

³ Pieper, Josef, *Happiness and Contemplation*, 1958, tr. Richard and Clara Winston, South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 1998.

Basis of Culture.⁴ These are classic works. However, his project is to defend the value of contemplation in the world of work and constant distractions; he does not closely examine what happens in the human soul when we contemplate, or when we engage in research leading to contemplation. He certainly is not interested in the role of the operations of the sensitive soul in contemplation. Furthermore, he does not analyze what Aquinas said about contemplation, but rather discusses contemplation as an essential component of a good life from the perspective of Aquinas's philosophy. More recent works on the subject of contemplation also focus on the importance of contemplation for living a good life,⁵ rather than on the way we engage in the contemplation.

Types of Contemplation

There are two sides to contemplation: the object of contemplation, and the subject who contemplates. The ultimate object of contemplation is God,⁶ who cannot be known in the way material objects are known to us, and who, in fact, cannot be fully known.⁷ As far as the object of contemplation is concerned, the animal side of human nature is irrelevant, since we cannot study God the way we study other objects. Aquinas tells us that we may also contemplate truth about God's creation.⁸ Created things of this world

⁴ Pieper, Josef, *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*, 1948, tr. Gerald Malsbary, South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 1998.

⁵ For example, Dewan, Lawrence, "Truth and Happiness: Presidential Address", *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, 67, 1-20, 1993.

⁶ Aquinas, Thomas St., *Summa Theologica*, II-II 180, 4, translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Allen, Texas: Christian Classics, 1948. Latin text: Aquinas, Thomas St., *Summa Theologiae*, Roma: Alba-Editioes Paulinae, 1962. Part One of Part Two, Question 3, article 8. Hereafter referred to as ST.

⁷ ST I 12, 7.

⁸ ST II-II 180, 4.

are material objects, but the truths about them are not material. Thus, from the perspective of the object of contemplation, the operations of the sensitive soul, i.e., sensory perceptions or passions, are not relevant.

However, as far as the subject is concerned, namely, a human being, all aspects of human nature pertain to contemplation, for the subject who contemplates is a rational animal. A human being is able to engage in contemplation, because a human being is a rational creature.⁹ But a human being depends on the operations of the sensitive soul, namely, sensory perceptions and the passions, for the acquisition of knowledge, because a human is an animal. Senses and passions guide us in the study which precedes contemplation. The inner sense of phantasia and passions of love and delight assist the intellect in the very act of contemplation. Thomas Aquinas also considered the role of the senses in contemplation in the afterlife. He believed that there will be a resurrection at which time the souls of the dead will be reunited with their bodies. After the resurrection, the whole human being is to experience delight in the contemplation of God, and that experience of delight requires the participation of the sensitive soul and the body, as well as the intellective soul. From the perspective of the human being who contemplates, the operations of the sensitive soul are necessary for the acquisition of knowledge and for the enjoyment of contemplation.

A comprehensive work on the subject of contemplation is Garrigou-Lagrance's *Christian Perfection and Contemplation*.¹⁰ Garrigou-Lagrance distinguishes two kinds of contemplation: ordinary and mystical. "Ordinary contemplation" is a term used by him to

⁹ According to Thomas, angels are also able to contemplate God, but angelic contemplation is not the subject of this work.

¹⁰ Garrigou-Lagrance, R., O.P. *Christian Perfection and Contemplation* B. Herder Book Co. 1951.

describe the kind of contemplation to which a person may be led as a result of study of the world around us. Mystical contemplation is beyond the powers of unaided human reason, for it requires God's grace.¹¹ Most of Garrigou-Lagrange's work is devoted to the discussion of the mystical type of contemplation. On the other hand, this dissertation treats of the ordinary contemplation, and specifically, it examines the role of the sensitive soul in the ordinary contemplation. Aquinas himself does not explicitly stress these distinctions in his discussion of contemplation, but he mentions them. It is up to Aquinas scholars to retrieve from his writings all that he has to say about different types of contemplation.

Aquinas's discussion of contemplation is two-fold: there is contemplation in this life on earth and contemplation in heaven. I shall focus on the earthly contemplation, but I will discuss briefly the heavenly kind of contemplation, because there is continuity between the two kinds of contemplation. Contemplation of God in heaven is the perfect kind of contemplation and the final end towards which we all, according to Thomas, tend. Thus, the ordinary contemplation should be considered against this ultimate standard and the final end. The other reason to consider it is that, when we do find discussion of contemplation in the literature, it is generally a discussion of contemplation in relation to our final end, which is heavenly contemplation. I shall briefly discuss that "standard view" of contemplation before proceeding to the examination of the role of the sensitive soul in contemplation. In earthly life, we may engage in an ordinary contemplation, or in a mystical contemplation. The latter is possible through God's grace. In this dissertation I will discuss the ordinary contemplation, not the mystical kind. Furthermore, I will not

¹¹ Garrigous-Lagrance, pp. 221-222.

discuss all the aspects of contemplation, only the role of the sensitive soul. Because there is continuity between earthly contemplation and the heavenly one, some consideration will be given to the way our animal nature may continue to function in our contemplation of God in heaven.

Contemplation Constitutes Human Happiness

When we do find a discussion of contemplation in the literature, it is usually in relation to Aquinas's view of human happiness, because, according to Aquinas, contemplation is an activity which constitutes the essence of human happiness.¹² Finding out what Aquinas says about contemplation helps us to better understand what he tells us about the essence of human happiness. Human happiness may be perfect, which is contemplation of God in heaven, or it may be imperfect, which is contemplation in this life on earth. Aquinas says that ultimate human happiness is contemplation of God in heaven: "Final and perfect happiness can consist in nothing else than the vision of the Divine Essence."¹³ The "vision" is the intellectual vision of God as the essence of the First Cause,¹⁴ and that means the contemplation of God in heaven: "Consequently happiness consists principally in such an operation, viz., in the contemplation of Divine things... Therefore the last and perfect happiness, which we await in the life to come, consists entirely in contemplation."¹⁵ This is perfect happiness. On earth the greatest happiness available to us is also contemplation of God: "But imperfect happiness, such as

¹² ST I-II 3, 5.

¹³ Dicendum quod ultima et perfecta beatitudo non potest esse nisi in visione divinae essentiae. ST I-II 3, 8.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Unde in tali operatione, scilicet in contemplatione divinorum, maxime consistit beatitudo... Et ideo ultima et perfecta beatitudo, quae expectatur in futura vita, tota principaliter consistit in contemplatione. ST I-II 3, 5.

can be had here, consists first and principally in contemplation,”¹⁶ albeit on earth, contemplation and therefore, happiness, cannot be perfect.¹⁷

Contemplation of God in heaven, Aquinas tells us, is an act of the intellect.¹⁸ In general, contemplation, Aquinas tells us, is simply “gazing upon the truth”, which we know.¹⁹ Contemplation of God in heaven is possible only by God’s grace, not by the human intellect’s own powers.²⁰ In earthly life, we reach the level of contemplation after study, for we do not immediately grasp the truth.²¹ In either mode, contemplation itself is a rational activity. For that reason, Aquinas scholars tend to talk about human happiness as a rational activity, and ultimately as a Beatific Vision.

For example, Georg Wieland’s article “Happiness”²² is a short but careful study of Aquinas’s treatment of the problem of happiness. It is also a typical presentation of what might be called the “Standard View” of happiness. According to this “Standard View”, human happiness is essentially the Beatific Vision of God in heaven, which is possible only through grace. In order to attain it we have to live virtuous lives on earth. We may also speak of earthly happiness, but it is a happiness of an imperfect kind. Even on earth, the greatest happiness is found in contemplation of God. But contemplation of

¹⁶ Beatitudo autem imperfecta, qualis hic haberi potest, primo quidem et principaliter consistit in contemplatione. Ibid.

¹⁷ ST I-II 3, 2.

¹⁸ ST I-II 3, 4.

¹⁹ ST II-II 180, 3.

²⁰ ST I 12, 4.

²¹ ST II-II 180, 3-6.

²² Wieland, Georg, “Happiness (Ia IIa, qq. 1-5)”, tr. By Grant Kaplan, in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope, Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002, pp.57-68.

God on earth cannot be continuous, and can be only indirect since our knowledge depends on the senses. These impediments to contemplation and the fact that we cannot avoid suffering in this life make our earthly happiness less than perfect. The focus of “The Standard View” is on the intellectual or the theological aspects of human happiness, and not on the role of the sensitive part of the soul in that happiness.

Discussion of Thomas’s notion of happiness and contemplation often focuses on the problems associated with the happiness beyond this world. When writing about human happiness, many authors stress the theological perspective.²³ Different aspects of perfect and imperfect happiness are considered but almost all discussions of happiness focus on the role of the speculative intellect and barely mention the rest of a human being. This is well supported, but one could say that it gives us a somewhat unbalanced picture of what Aquinas says about human happiness and about contemplation. Since we are rational animals and not merely rational beings – like angels – our happiness and our way of contemplating God should possess aspects which are characteristic of animals. Granted human contemplation is essentially an intellectual activity, yet our way of contemplation ought to differ from that of incorporeal, non-animal rational beings. The study of that difference, as Aquinas understood it, has been, up to now, neglected by scholars.

²³ “The sovereign happiness of man here below is to anticipate, in however confused a fashion, the face-to-face vision of God in the quiet of eternity.” Gilson, Etienne, *The Christian Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, tr. L.K. Shook, C.S.B.; Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994, p.25.

Composite Nature of Human Beings

A human being who contemplates is a creature of body and soul, not merely an intellect.²⁴ A human being is defined by Thomas Aquinas as a “rational animal”.²⁵ According to Aquinas, humans are composite creatures, made of body and a tripartite soul.²⁶ We are able to engage in contemplation, because we have a rational soul. But being animals, we also have sensory perceptions and passions, which belong to the sensitive part of the soul. Given our composite nature, one would expect that even the nonrational side of human nature, i.e., the operations of the sensitive soul, is involved in human contemplation, as it must be involved in any human activity. Thomas says that the operations of the sensitive soul do belong to human happiness (and therefore contemplation), albeit in a secondary way. They belong to happiness because in earthly life the senses and passions guide and assist us in the acquisition of knowledge and in the act of contemplation; while in heaven they will enhance our enjoyment of heavenly contemplation.

Aquinas scholars remind the reader of the importance of the body for happiness,²⁷ since Aquinas explicitly tells us that the body is necessary for human happiness,²⁸ and that we cannot think of ourselves as disembodied souls. However, this point tends to be

²⁴ ST I 75, 4.

²⁵ ST I 75, 3; ST I 76, 3.

²⁶ ST I 76, 3; ST I 78, 1.

²⁷ Copleston, F. C. *Aquinas*, Penguin Books, 1991, pp.156-178; Pasnau, Robert, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature. A Thomistic Study of Summa Theologiae Ia 75-89*, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp.73-99, 380-393; Stump, Eleonore, *Aquinas*, New Yor: Routledge, 2003, pp.191-216; Davies, Brian, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992, pp.211-220; McInerny, Ralph, *St. Thomas Aquinas*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1982, pp.38-50; Wieland, p.62; Gilson, pp. 187-199.

²⁸ ST I-II 4, 5.

undeveloped. According to Aquinas, humans have a composite nature, which persists even in heaven and which must be taken into account in any discussion of human endeavors. However, nobody has examined what that means with respect to the activity of contemplation. Operations of the sensitive soul are necessary for human happiness – and thus, contemplation – because it is the happiness of a whole human being, not merely of a part of a human soul.

If we wish to investigate the role of the operations of the sensitive soul in human happiness, the text to consider is ST I-II 3, 3. In it, Thomas Aquinas asks “Whether Happiness is an Operation of the Sensitive Part, or of the Intellective Part Only?”²⁹ He answers that human happiness essentially consists of a person’s mind being united with God, and therefore it is essentially the operation of the intellective soul. However, operations of the sensitive soul are required for the imperfect happiness on earth, and they will enter, though not essentially, into the enjoyment of our happiness in heaven.

Since ultimate happiness in heaven is contemplation of God,³⁰ and the activity especially connected with happiness on earth is contemplation of divine truth,³¹ and contemplation is rational activity, it follows that happiness essentially consists of the operations of the intellective soul.³²

However, in I-II 3, 3 Thomas devotes more space to the explanation that, despite contemplation being essentially a rational activity, the operations of the sensitive soul are necessary for an imperfect happiness on earth and for a complete happiness after the

²⁹ *Utrum Beatitudo Sit Operatio Sensitivae Partis Aut Intellectivae Tantum* ST I-II 3, 3.

³⁰ ST I-II 3, 8.

³¹ ST II-II 182, 1; ST II-II 180, 4.

³² ST I-II 3, 4.

resurrection of the body. Although happiness essentially pertains to the intellectual soul, other parts of the soul are also important for the attainment of happiness, even if they play a lesser role by comparison with that of the intellectual part.

Now the operation of sense cannot belong to happiness essentially. For man's happiness consists essentially in his being united to the Uncreated Good, which is his last end...to Which man cannot be united by an operation of his senses....Nevertheless the operations of the senses can belong to happiness, both antecedently and consequently: antecedently, in respect of imperfect happiness which can be had in this life, since the operation of the intellect demands a previous operation of the sense; - consequently, in that perfect happiness which we await in heaven; because at the resurrection.³³

Happiness as contemplation of God is also called "perfect happiness". Contemplation of God in heaven is possible for the souls separated from their bodies, and therefore, no operations of the sensitive soul are required. After the resurrection of the body, the whole human being will experience happiness, and since the whole human is an embodied creature, the experience of perfect happiness will include the feelings, i.e. the operations of the sensitive soul. Because of their contribution to happiness Thomas says that these operations belong to the happiness "consequently".³⁴ In perfect happiness of the resurrected human being the operations of the sensitive soul will contribute to the full enjoyment of that happiness.

Before we attain perfect happiness we have to live on earth, where we can be happy in an imperfect way. Thomas Aquinas points towards three ways in which the

³³ Essentialiter quidem non potest pertinere operatio sensus ad beatitudinem. Nam beatitudo hominis consistit essentialiter in coniunctione ipsius ad bonum increatum, quod est ultimus finis, ...cui homo coniungi non potest per sensus operationem....Possunt autem operationes sensus pertinere ad beatitudinem antecedenter et consequenter. Antecedenter quidem, secundum beatitudinem imperfectam, qualis in praesenti vita haberi potest; nam operatio intellectus praeexigit operationem sensus. – Consequenter autem, in illa perfecta beatitudine quae expectatur in caelo, quia post resurrectionem. ST I-II 3, 3.

³⁴ ST I-II 3, 3.

operations of the sensitive soul are necessary for imperfect happiness.³⁵ First of all, we need sensory perception in order to think, and so the operations of the intellect depend on the operations of the sensitive part of the soul. Secondly, a certain measure of sensible goods is necessary for living a good, virtuous life on earth. Thirdly, in earthly life, we have to proceed from the “perfection of the lower part” to the perfection of the higher part.³⁶ Thus, the operation of the sensitive soul may belong to the happiness antecedently – because we need our senses for the intellectual operations - and consequently – because of the resurrection of the bodies.

We need the operations of the sensitive soul for earthly happiness. In the Reply to Objection 3 of the same question ST I-II 3, 3 Aquinas says this: “In perfect happiness the entire man is perfected, in the lower part of his nature, by an overflow from the higher. But in the imperfect happiness of this life, it is otherwise; we advance from the perfection of the lower part to the perfection of the higher part.”³⁷ The perfection of the intellective part of the soul – the part of the soul which engages in contemplation – depends on the perfection of the lower part of the soul, i.e. the vegetative and the sensitive parts of the soul.³⁸ We cannot attain the imperfect happiness unless the lower part of the soul is perfected. Our animality, i.e. the body and the operations of the sensitive soul, play a significant role in the pursuit of human happiness.

³⁵ ST I-II 3, 3.

³⁶ ST I-II 3, 3 ad 3.

³⁷ Dicendum quod in perfecta beatitudine perficitur totus homo, sed in inferiori parte per redundantiam a superiori. In beatitudine autem imperfecta praesentis vitae, e converso a perfectione inferioris partis proceditur ad perfectionem superioris. ST I-II 3,3 ad 3.

³⁸ The operations of the vegetative part of the soul are: digestion of food, growth and reproduction. The operations of the sensitive part of the soul are: sensory perceptions, passions and locomotion.

The achievement of perfection “of the lower part” refers to the actualization of our potency, inasmuch as it is possible in this life. According to Aquinas, all beings, including human beings, act for an end,³⁹ which is their perfection,⁴⁰ and towards which they are guided by their natural appetites.⁴¹ In the case of human beings, the guidance of the appetites natural to humans involves all aspects of human nature, including the operations of the sensitive soul. When Aquinas says that the perfection of the higher part requires the perfection of the lower part, he means that the perfection of the intellectual part of the soul depends on the perfection of the sensitive and even the vegetative part of the soul, and the achievement of that perfection is guided by natural inclinations. I shall examine the way intellectual operations, and especially contemplation, depend on the operations of the sensitive soul.

There are two kinds of operations which belong to the sensitive soul: sensory perception and passions. Since operations of the sensitive soul participate in the activity of contemplation, then either sensory perceptions or passions, or both, ought to be involved. It is easy to see that sensory perceptions would be necessary at least in the early stages of knowledge acquisition. I will argue that senses and passions are necessary to guide us in our study which would lead us to learn some truth. I will also argue that we cannot contemplate without the use of phantasms, and that there is a sensual component to the delight of contemplation.

³⁹ ST I-II 1, 2.

⁴⁰ ST I-II 1, 5.

⁴¹ ST I-II 1, 2.

Sensory Perception and Phantasms

There is, of course, a basic kind of dependence of the intellect on the senses: thinking has to begin with *phantasms*,⁴² which are not possible without sensory perception.⁴³ As was mentioned above, Thomas pointed to that basic dependence as the reason why the operations of the sensitive soul belong to earthly happiness antecedently. Aquinas tells us that on earth we cannot have a direct apprehension of God's essence; we must learn about God through His effects.⁴⁴ Aquinas says:

Since the human intellect in the present state of life cannot understand even immaterial created substances, [angels] ... much less can it understand the essence of the uncreated substance [God]. Hence it must be said simply that God is not the first object of our knowledge. Rather do we know God through creatures... while the first object of our knowledge in this life is the quiddity of a material thing, which is the proper object of our intellect.⁴⁵

Thus, in earthly life, contemplation of God is preceded by the study of the created world.

Learning about the world around us requires sensory perception. In order to acquire knowledge about its world the animal has to receive the sensory data and process it in a way which enables the animal to sense things, and to know them as useful or harmful. Being animals, humans also need sensory perception for the acquisition of

⁴² ST I 85, 2.

⁴³ ST I 84, 7 and 8.

⁴⁴ ST I 88, 3.

⁴⁵ Dicendum quod cum intellectus humanus secundum statum praesentis vitae non possit intelligere substantias immateriales creatas... multo minus potest intelligere essentiam substantiae increatae. Unde simpliciter dicendum est quod Deus non est primum quod a nobis cognoscitur; sed magis per creaturas in Dei cognitionem pervenimus... Primum autem quod intelligitur a nobis secundum statum praesentis vitae, est quidditas rei materialis, quae est nostri intellectus obiectum. ST I 88, 3.

knowledge. And without acquiring knowledge, we are not able to engage in the ordinary contemplation.⁴⁶

Aquinas scholars often remind us that the senses are important for our thought processes,⁴⁷ but how that affects human contemplation has not been examined. In discussing contemplation, scholars usually emphasize its intellectual and non-sensory features.⁴⁸ That is understandable since contemplation is essentially a rational activity. Indeed, Aquinas says that happiness, qua contemplation, is an operation of the speculative intellect.⁴⁹ Of course, given Aquinas's holistic view of human nature, the whole person must be somehow involved in contemplation; and so, the scholars sometimes mention that happiness, which is ultimately contemplation of God in heaven, must include the involvement of the body and the senses.⁵⁰ When the scholars do mention the involvement of the body and the senses, it is usually in discussing happiness after the resurrection. However, if the body and the sensitive part of the soul are somehow involved in contemplation, then they ought to be involved in earthly contemplation, as well as the post-resurrection contemplation. In fact, one would expect that the operations of the sensitive soul would be needed more in earthly life than in the life in heaven. I will

⁴⁶ I am writing about the ordinary, not a mystical contemplation.

⁴⁷ Copleston, pp.178-184; Gilson, pp.200-206; Pasnau, pp.267-329; Stump, pp. 244-276; et al.

⁴⁸ O'Reilly Kevin, "Efficient and Final Causality", *The Modern Schoolman*, LXXXII, November 2004; Kenny Anthony, "Aquinas on Aristotelian Happiness", in *Aquinas's Moral Theory*, Scott MacDonald and Eleonore Stump eds., Cornell University Press, 1999; Pinckairs Servais, Th. OP, *Les source de la morale chretienne*, Editions Universitaires Fribourg, Editions du Cerf Paris, 1985, p.431; Wieland, p. 64.

⁴⁹ ST I-II 3, 5.

⁵⁰ Bonino Serge-Thomas, "Charisms, Forms, and State of Life" in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, Stephen J. Pope ed., pp.340-354; Wieland p.62; Hoye William J. *Actualitas Omnium Actuum: Man's Beatific Vision of God as Apprehended by Thomas Aquinas*, Verlag Anton Hain KG – Meisenheim am Glan, 1975, pp. 206-232.

show that these operations are necessary for earthly contemplation, while after resurrection, operations of the sensitive soul are necessary for our perfection, and consequently enhance the delight of heavenly contemplation.

We must note that in all rational the beings intellect functions only within the limits of their nature. Angels can contemplate God only in accordance with their specific nature (which is different for each angel).⁵¹ It follows that humans can contemplate God only within the limits of their specific nature, and that nature includes animal body's ability to experience sensations and passions. That shall be our nature for eternity, else we would cease to exist.⁵² I will show that, according to Aquinas, we use *phantasms* in all our intellectual acts, even in contemplation. Furthermore, the perfection of our nature requires that phantasms figure even in heavenly contemplation, after the resurrection of the body.

I shall examine the way our dependence on sensory perceptions manifests itself in our pursuit of knowledge and even in contemplation of truth. Human beings never cease to be animals, even when they engage in rational activities.

Passions

The cognitive aspect of human nature qua animal is constituted by the senses, while passions constitute the affective aspect of human nature qua animal. Happiness essentially consists of contemplation. But human happiness cannot be independent of senses and passions. Happiness which is not dependent on passions or sensory

⁵¹ ST I 50, 4; ST I 55, 3; ST I 56, 3.

⁵² Thomas Aquinas St., *Summa Contra Gentiles*, IV 79, 81, and 84, Book Four translated by Charles J. O'Neil, University of Notre Dame Press, 1975. Latin text: S. Thomae de Aquino, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Editio Leonina Manualis, Romae, An. Tip. Editrice Laziale, 1934. Hereafter referred to as SCG; See also: ST I-II 4, 5; ST Supplement, 80.

perceptions is the angelic kind of happiness, since angels do not have passions or senses. Humans are composite beings, possessing animal bodies, and their happiness has to include those bodies and the appropriate sensations and passions. I shall argue that Thomas Aquinas also tells us – though not always explicitly – that all aspects of our nature, and particularly passions, which are in the sensitive soul, guide us in our pursuit of happiness and enhance our enjoyment of happiness, and that is because we can be happy only as complete and integrated beings. A human being, according to Aquinas, is a creature that possesses an intellectual soul – a trait of rational creatures - and also possesses a sensitive soul - a trait of animals. The sensitive soul is the seat of passions. Passions influence our choices, including those choices which lead us to study and contemplation.

Aquinas scholars do not pay much attention to the role of passions in contemplation. In the literature, passions are often discussed in relation to the practice of virtues, or in relation to human psychology in general. For example, Ralph McInerny⁵³ gives us a standard view of human happiness according to Aquinas, stressing the development of virtue as necessary for the attainment of happiness, and contrasting perfect happiness in heaven with the imperfect one on earth. He argues for the complementarity of the philosophical and the theological view of human happiness. But he does not discuss contemplation, of which the happiness consists. In discussing morality, or practical reasoning, Aquinas scholars tend to focus on the role of the intellect. Passions are supposed to be appropriately cultivated in a virtuous person, and for that reason passions are noticed in those works which discuss the development of

⁵³ McInerny “Ethics” in *Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, Kretzman and Stump eds., Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp.196-216.

virtues in relation to happiness. For example, Gilson, despite his frequent mentioning of the importance of the body, speaks of passions as “the matter on which the virtues are exercised.”⁵⁴

Often the passions are discussed as something which may distract one from the practice of virtue. Yet Aquinas has a positive view of passions as helping us in our development of virtues,⁵⁵ and in the pursuit of our happiness. Animals are capable of certain passions, in accordance with natural inclinations proper to their natures. Passions must enter into our pursuit of the final end, which is happiness. I will show how passions guide us in the research which ultimately may lead us to contemplation. Among the scholars writing more recently, there is tendency to discuss passions in a more positive light. For example, Robert Pasnau in his book *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature* is of the opinion that Thomas Aquinas ascribed a positive role to animal passions and inclinations in our moral acts;⁵⁶ however, he only hints at such a possibility and does not examine it in sufficient detail to give us a full picture of the role played by animal passions in our moral acts, not to mention contemplation.

A good analysis of the relationship between passions and reason is given by Uffenheimer-Lippens.⁵⁷ Her article appeared in 2003, which is quite recent, and perhaps is an indication of a growing awareness of the importance Aquinas ascribed to passions in moral acts. However, there is lack of research on the relationship between passions and

⁵⁴ Gilson, p.285-286.

⁵⁵ ST I-II 59, 5 ad.3.

⁵⁶ Pasnau, chapter 8, especially pp. 262-264.

⁵⁷ Uffenheimer-Lippens, Elisabeth, “Rationalized Passions and Passionate Rationality: Thomas Aquinas on the Relation Between Reason and the Passions”, *The Review of Metaphysics* 56, March 2003: 525-558.

the intellectual activities, like research or contemplation. The closest approach to it is found in Robert Miner's book *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions*.⁵⁸ Miner touches upon several topics which I discuss in detail in my dissertation. Those topics deal with the way sensual love, desire, delight and natural appetites affect, or are affected by the rational part of the soul. He mentions that love (*amor*) as a passion is what draws us to God,⁵⁹ the fact that the rational desire somehow influences the sensitive part of the soul;⁶⁰ the relationship between intellectual joy and the sensual delight;⁶¹ and he refers to the fact that, according to Thomas, natural appetites orient us to the good, which includes the rational kind of good.⁶² However, Miner does not discuss these issues, for he devotes only several sentences to each of the above, in the context of a broader discussion of Thomas's treatment of passions. Furthermore, Miner draws the reader's attention to the fact that our rationality ennobles the passions, rather than to the fact that the passions enter into our intellectual activities or learning and contemplation. What Miner mentions, I closely examine in my dissertation.

Thus, there are no works that examine how the passions contribute to contemplation. I will show that passions are crucial to our acquisition of knowledge, that we contemplate what we love and that delight accompanies contemplation. It is so, because passions guide us in our pursuit of the good. According to Aquinas, sentient

⁵⁸ Miner, Robert, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions*, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p.121.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p.159.

⁶¹ Ibid. pp.165-170.

⁶² Ibid. pp.13-28 and pp.171-172.

beings – which include humans and other animals - are motivated to act by passions.⁶³

Our pursuit of study and contemplation likewise is motivated by passions. Since I am examining how passions figure in contemplation, which is the essence of human happiness, I shall focus on the passions of love, desire and pleasure, because these orient us to our good directly. Passions which helps us to avoid harm, for example, fear, orient us to our good indirectly, through avoidance of evil rather than through the pursuit of the good.

Natural Inclinations

The sensitive soul is relevant to human contemplation also because our natural inclinations, and thus our appetites, guide us towards our good, and our greatest good is contemplation of truth.⁶⁴ According to Thomas’s metaphysics, our natural appetite for knowledge is on a continuum with other natural appetites, such as our appetite for food or sex, or even stone’s “appetite” for the ground.⁶⁵ What kinds of appetites we have depend on what we are, for every kind of a being has certain behavioral tendencies, i.e. inclinations, characteristic of its kind.⁶⁶ According to Thomas, in the order of creation, all beings are oriented towards the good. They pursue their own good, and also contribute to the good of others and the common good. The way all beings are oriented towards the good is through their inclinations.⁶⁷ This is not a moral sense of “the good”, but a

⁶³ ST I 80, 1 and 2.

⁶⁴ ST II-II 180, 1.

⁶⁵ ST I-II 28, 6; ST I-II 1, 2.

⁶⁶ ST I 78, 1 ad 3; ST I 80, 1 ad 3; ST I-II 8, 1.

⁶⁷ SCG III 3, 16, 22.

metaphysical notion of the good relating to the goodness of creation. A human being, like all created things, is a thing naturally oriented towards its good, its final end, and the greatest good of human beings is contemplation of God. Every being is equipped with natural inclinations which direct it to the achievement of its final end. Humans are no exception and are likewise equipped with natural inclinations which direct them to their ends. We naturally turn our attention to things because of our desires. But we have certain desires, because of our natural inclinations. The inclinations are what the desires are based on. We humans contemplate because we have a natural desire for knowledge,⁶⁸ because of our natural inclination to truth.⁶⁹ Natural desires point us towards the good. Our desire for truth is also the desire for the good, since the truth is convertible with the good.⁷⁰ All natural desires which belong to a given creature must function within the context of that creature as a whole. Our animal desires direct us to preserve our lives or to preserve our species, and that is good for us qua animals.⁷¹ Our desire for knowledge directs us to search for the first cause that is God, and that is good for us qua rational beings.⁷² We might expect that our contemplation can only be practiced in a way which is integrated with everything else about us, including the sensitive soul, the vegetative soul and the body. All our natural desires taken together help us to achieve perfection and happiness. Thomas says this about our natural love of truth: “Each individual delights in

⁶⁸ ST II-II 180, 7.

⁶⁹ ST I-II 94, 2.

⁷⁰ ST I 6, 4.

⁷¹ ST I-II 31, 7.

⁷² ST I-II 3, 8; ST I-II 31, 7.

the operation which befits him according to his own nature or habit. Now contemplation of the truth befits a man according to his nature as a rational animal the result being that *all men naturally desire to know*, so that consequently they delight in the knowledge of truth.”⁷³

Some authors note that, according to Aquinas, human happiness is a fulfillment, a self-realization or actualization of a human being. Copleston writes: “In every particular choice [of the will] the object is chosen because it contributes to or is thought of as contributing to the attainment of the supreme good for man, the possession of which is happiness or beatitude in the subjective sense.”⁷⁴ He goes on to say that that supreme good for man is God. That is, of course, what Aquinas says. However, I will argue that Aquinas says more about our choices as contributing to our happiness.

Jean Porter is the author who stresses the importance of natural inclinations for human happiness and the fact that happiness is the fulfillment proper to our nature.⁷⁵ She acknowledges that natural inclinations guide us towards our perfection, and therefore happiness: “The inclinations of the human person similarly provide the intelligible principles in terms of which she attains her perfection, thus attaining union with God in the way connatural to her as a specific kind of creature.”⁷⁶ She discusses how natural

⁷³ Quia unicuique delectabilis est operatio sibi conveniens secundum propriam naturam vel habitum. Contemplatio autem veritatis competit homini secundum suam naturam, prout est animal rationale. Ex quo contingit quod omnes homines ex natura scire desiderant: et per consequens in cognitione veritatis delectantur. ST II-II 180,7.

⁷⁴ Copleston, p.187.

⁷⁵ Porter, Jean, *Nature as Reason*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999, p.169.

⁷⁶ Porter, p.266.

inclinations dispose us to be virtuous and, vice-versa, how virtues perfect us so that we can follow natural inclinations in a correct way.⁷⁷ She considers the way rationality influences how human beings act on their inclinations, while I will stress how the natural inclinations guide us in our pursuits. Porter says more than most authors about the corporeal and animal aspects of human happiness, yet in her conclusions she downplays the importance of animal inclinations and desires and focuses on rationality instead. She emphasizes rationality and her aim is to show how our pursuit of happiness through the pursuit of various proximate ends is informed by reason. And ultimately she looks at the problem of human happiness from a theological perspective. But she does not discuss the topic of contemplation. She considers the way rationality influences how human beings act on their inclinations, while I will stress how the natural inclinations guide us in our pursuits.

Many authors mention natural inclinations when writing about ethics, human nature, or about Aquinas's metaphysics in general. For example, Miner explains how passions follow from natural inclinations,⁷⁸ and Pasnau writes about inclinations,⁷⁹ but neither of them discusses contemplation.

Lawrence Feingold in *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters*⁸⁰ discusses the desire to see God in the context of human natural desires. However, his approach is different than mine in two ways. First, he

⁷⁷ Porter, p.176.

⁷⁸ Miner, pp.13-28.

⁷⁹ Pasnau, pp. 201-209.

⁸⁰ Feingold, Lawrence, *The Natural Desire to See god According to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters*, Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2010.

focuses on the act of the will, whereas I focus on the act of the intellect. Second, he shows how the desire for God differs from other natural desires, while I examine what our desire for knowledge – ultimately for the knowledge of God – shares with other natural desires.

Pinckairs is an author who connects our natural inclination to truth to other natural inclinations.⁸¹ However, he writes about the inclination to truth in relation to moral problems, not in relation to animal nature.

In my discussion of contemplation I will look at contemplation from the perspective of the actualization or fulfillment proper to a human being. I will examine the way our acquisition of knowledge is guided by and stems from our desires, which in turn arise from our natural inclinations.

Perfection According to Our Nature

According to Aquinas's metaphysics, all creatures tend to actualize their potency, to fulfill their natural capacity and thus to achieve perfection. Human beings likewise have a natural tendency to achieve that fulfillment, and that is the metaphysical meaning of human "happiness". Thus, happiness, metaphysically speaking, is the fulfillment of human nature.

All creatures are endowed with natural inclinations, and in the case of humans, those inclinations are inclinations of a being that is corporeal, living, sentient, and rational, thus reflecting the complexity of human nature. Since we are rational, our happiness, our fulfillment requires the satisfaction of our desire for knowledge. That desire will be completely satisfied in heaven, and imperfectly satisfied in earthly life.

⁸¹ Pinckairs, pp.400-431.

But the fulfillment of inclinations which we share with animals is also necessary for the attainment and the enjoyment of human happiness in this world, because our desire for knowledge, although of a rational kind, is interconnected with the desires of the animal kind. Furthermore, perfection of the sensitive soul, as well as the perfection of the rational soul, is necessary for the perfect human happiness in heaven. It is so, because according to Thomas's metaphysics, happiness is the achievement of our final end,⁸² and is comparable to any other kind of being's achievement of its final end, and that being's actualization, and thus, perfection. If human happiness is the actualization of a human being, it must be actualization of a whole human being, not a divided one. Thus, human happiness must involve the sensitive as well as the intellectual soul.

Perfection can be understood as the fulfillment of our nature, that is the achievement of our proper ends. In my discussion of human happiness I am adopting the perspective of happiness as a fulfillment or actualization of potency, because from that perspective we can see what role the sensitive soul plays in the attainment and the enjoyment of happiness. From that perspective we can understand why the perfection of the lower part of the soul is necessary for the perfection of the higher part in earthly life, and why in heaven the higher part in turn perfects the lower part by overflow.⁸³

Perfection of the lower part, i.e the sensitive soul, is necessary for the attainment of the perfection of the rational soul, because our senses, our passions and our natural appetites guide us towards our good, including the rational good, which is knowledge. Without their guidance, we would not be able to achieve that good (or any other good, for that

⁸² ST Prologue I-II.

⁸³ ST I-II 3, 3 ad 3 "Overflow" is the influence of the rational part of the soul on the sensitive part.

matter). Without the guidance of the senses and passions, we would not be able to achieve our final end, which is contemplation of God in heaven. On the other hand, the perfection of the higher part, i.e. the rational soul, causes the perfection of the sensitive soul, after the resurrection. Happiness is the fulfillment of our nature. Contemplation, in which human happiness essentially consists, is the fulfillment of our nature as rational beings. But since we are not merely rational beings, but rational animals, our perfection must include the perfection of the animal side of our nature. And so, in perfect happiness of a perfected human being, not only the rational soul, but also the sensitive soul must be perfected.

Delight

Ordinary contemplation is preceded by study. Study of anything begins with sensory perceptions and with desires. Desires include sensual as well as rational desires with respect to a given object. Study ends in contemplation, which also corresponds to the satisfaction of a desire, i.e. desire for truth, and thus a delight. Aquinas defines pleasure as “the repose of the appetite in some good”⁸⁴ - when we acquire some knowledge we also acquire something good, and thus we experience pleasure,⁸⁵ as our desire for knowledge is satisfied. Thus, contemplation of truth is delightful.⁸⁶ This is not only true of our earthly contemplation, but also, of heavenly contemplation, which is our ultimate fulfillment. I will show that the delight of contemplation has a sensual as well as an intellectual component. Participation in the delight of heavenly contemplation is also

⁸⁴ Delectatio est quies appetitus in bono ST I-II 34, 2.

⁸⁵ ST I-II 32, 8 “Whether Wonder is a Cause of Pleasure [*delectationis*]?” Utrum Admiratio Sit Causa Delectationis.

⁸⁶ ST I-II 32, 8; ST II-II 180, 7.

the way in which the sensitive part of the soul belongs to human happiness “consequently”.⁸⁷ Aquinas scholars do mention the delight of contemplation when they write about contemplation, but nobody has examined the nature of that delight.

Summary

In this dissertation I examine what Aquinas tells us about the way in which the operations of the sensitive soul participate in contemplation. I focus on earthly, ordinary contemplation, however, I also briefly consider heavenly contemplation. The comparison between the earthly and the heavenly modes of contemplation helps us to better understand the role of the operations of the sensitive soul in human contemplation.

In the first chapter I look at the nature of human contemplation and the way our natural appetites direct us towards contemplation. I discuss what we contemplate, how we contemplate it, and why.

In chapter two I examine the way contemplation depends on the production of *phantasms*. I will show that *phantasms* accompany human contemplation both in earthly life, and in heaven, after the resurrection of the body.

In chapter three I investigate the role of passions in contemplation, especially the passions of love and desire. Passions are necessary for human happiness because we must be happy as whole beings, because our natural inclinations and passions which arise from them are necessary for the achievement of happiness, and because our nature determines that we cannot be completely happy without experiencing some passions. The passions are necessary for human happiness qua contemplation both antecedently, on earth, and consequently, in heaven.

⁸⁷ ST I-II 3, 3.

In chapter four I consider the nature of delight experienced in contemplation. I will show that the delight of contemplation includes sensual as well as intellectual delight. It is so, not only in earthly life, but also in heaven, after the resurrection.

According to Aquinas humans have a composite nature, which persists even in heaven and which must be taken account of in discussion of any human endeavors; however, nobody has so far examined what that means with respect to the activity of contemplation.

We are animals because we possess bodies and sensitive souls. I will show that the very act of contemplation and also the pursuit of knowledge, which may lead us to contemplation, depends not only on operations of the intellective part of the soul, but also on the operations of the sensitive part of the soul, which we share with other animals. Being animal implies being dependent on sensory perception for the acquisition of knowledge, and being directed by sensitive appetite and passions towards objects which one might know anything about. Those features of human nature also manifest themselves in the way humans contemplate, not to mention in the way humans acquire knowledge. Furthermore, I will show that phantasms and passions are necessary for the enjoyment of contemplation, both in earth and in heaven. Given the composite nature of a human being, the operations of the sensitive soul belong to human happiness, for they must be involved in any activity of a composite being.

Aquinas does not tell us explicitly what the role of the sensitive soul is in contemplation, or even in the acquisition of knowledge; instead, one has to retrieve that information from his texts and interpret it. That information is found in his theory of

knowledge, in the discussion of passions, in the discussion of contemplative life, and in the discussion of happiness.

I will examine the difference that being animal makes to human contemplation. I am writing from the perspective of a human being contemplating, not from the perspective of the object contemplated. As far as the object is concerned, only the intellect is needed for the contemplation; but as far as the contemplating human being is concerned, the nature of the whole human being ought to be considered. Even though the animal powers of a human being play only a secondary role in human contemplation, the examination of their role can give us a more complete picture of that contemplation. In this work, I will consider only the animal side of human nature.

CHAPTER ONE

CONTEMPLATION AND NATURAL APPETITES

In this chapter I consider what contemplation is and discuss how our desire for knowledge, which ought to lead us to contemplation, is embedded in our nature. I look at the nature of human contemplation and the way our natural appetites direct us towards contemplation. Although this dissertation focuses on the ordinary contemplation, it is necessary to briefly consider the ultimate in human contemplation, that is, the Beatific Vision. To begin with, we need to consider what contemplation is, what we contemplate, how and why we do it.

The Nature of Contemplation

What we contemplate

Contemplation of God in heaven is the vision of God, the seeing of the essence of God in the Beatific Vision and contemplating what one sees. On earth, imperfect happiness is also identified with contemplation, especially contemplation of truths pertaining to God, although Thomas recognizes that we may also contemplate truths concerning creatures.¹ Contemplation is an act of beholding the truth. It is an act of intellect, but different from other acts of the intellect, namely formation of a concept, formation of a proposition, or reasoning.² Contemplation goes beyond reasoning.³

¹ ST II-II 180, 4.

² ST I 85, 5.

³ ST II-II 180, 3.

Thomas says: “But contemplation regards the simple act of gazing on the truth.”⁴

That might be accepted as a definition of contemplation. It is an act of knowing the truth, simply knowing it and regarding it. When we contemplate, we see the truth, and we are past the point of discussing it, trying to discover it, or wondering about it. What we contemplate is what we recognize as the truth, and all we need to do is simply to behold it and delight in it.⁵ Thomas says: “Accordingly, then, the contemplative life has one act wherein it is finally completed, namely the contemplation of truth, and from this act it derives its unity.”⁶

Following Aristotle, Thomas limits the kinds of objects which can be contemplated to those of theology, metaphysics, physics and mathematics.⁷ Thomas asks whether the contemplative life consists in the contemplation of God Himself, or also in contemplation of any truth.⁸ He answers that principally, contemplative life is devoted to the contemplation of God: “That which belongs principally to the contemplative life is the contemplation of the divine truth, because this contemplation is the end of the whole human life.”⁹ Although contemplation ultimately is supposed to be contemplation of God, Aquinas does allow for the contemplation of other objects also. Thomas tells us that

⁴ Sed contemplatio pertinet ad ipsum simplicem intuitum veritatis. ST II-II 180, 3 ad 1.

⁵ ST II-II 180, articles 3, 6 and 7.

⁶ Sic igitur vita contemplativa unum quidem actum habet in quo finaliter perficitur, scilicet contemplationem veritatis, a quo habet unitatem. ST II-II 180, 3.

⁷ In NE X 10, 2097; In Met I 1, 35 ; In Met I 2, 47-51 See also: *Commentary on the “De Trinitate” of Boethius*, Questions V and VI.

⁸ ST II-II 180, 4.

⁹ Principaliter quidem ad vitam contemplativam pertinet contemplatio divinae veritatis; quia huiusmodi contemplatio est finis totius humanae vitae. ST II-II 180, 4.

even though principally contemplative life is devoted to the contemplation of God, in a secondary way contemplation of God's effects, i.e. created things around us, also belongs to the contemplative life, for it guides us to the knowledge of God. Thomas says: "Since, however, God's effects show us the way to the contemplation of God Himself...it follows that the contemplation of the divine effects also belongs to the contemplative life, inasmuch as man is guided thereby to the knowledge of God."¹⁰ This should not be interpreted as meaning that we have to practice contemplation on earth in order to do it well in heaven. (What we need to do in order to attain heavenly happiness is to develop virtues, and especially to love one another.) What Thomas means is that when we study and contemplate created things, if we do it right, we will eventually be led to discovery of truths about God. He says:

Now in itself the very order of things is such, that God is knowable and lovable for Himself, since He is essentially truth and goodness itself, whereby other things are known and loved: but with regard to us, since our knowledge is derived through the senses, those things are knowable first, which are nearer to our senses, and the last term of knowledge is that which is most remote from our senses.¹¹

¹⁰ Sed quia per divinos effectus in Dei contemplationem manuducimur ... inde est quod etiam contemplatio divinorum effectuum secundario ad vitam contemplativam pertinet, prout scilicet ex hoc manuducitur homo in Dei cognitionem. ST II-II 180, 4.

Also: "Our natural knowledge begins from sense. Hence our natural knowledge can go as far as it can be led by sensible things. But our mind cannot be led by sense so far as to see the essence of God; because the sensible effects of God do not equal the power of God as their cause. Hence from the knowledge of sensible things the whole power of God cannot be known; nor therefore can His essence be seen. But because they are His effects and depend on their cause, we can be led from them so far as to know of God whether He exists, and to know of Him what must necessarily belong to Him, as the first cause of all things, exceeding all things caused by Him."

Dicendum quod naturalis nostra cognitio a sensu principium sumit; unde tantum se nostra naturalis cognitio extendere potest, in quantum manuduci potest per sensibilia. Ex sensibilibus autem non potest usque ad hoc intellectus noster pertingere quod divinam essentiam videat; quia creaturae sensibiles sunt effectus Dei virtutem causae non adaequant. Unde ex sensibilibus cognitione non potest tota Dei virtus cognosci et per consequens nec eius essentia videri. Sed quia sunt eius effectus a causa dependentes, ex eis in hoc perducimus ut cognoscamus de Deo an est; et ut cognoscamus de ipso ea quae necesse est ei convenire secundum quod est prima omnium causa, excedens omnia sua causata. ST I 12, 12.

And he concludes that we come to know God through learning about created things. God is knowable, but the acquisition of knowledge depends on the nature of the knower¹² and since humans have to gain their knowledge by learning about the sensible things, it is that human way of gaining knowledge that would eventually lead humans to the knowledge of God, in earthly life. Thus in earthly life, we may contemplate other objects, besides God.

Thomas also considers the claim that contemplation of any truth and not only divine truth perfects the human intellect.¹³ Thomas says that indeed knowledge of any truth makes the human intellect more perfect: “The ultimate perfection of the human intellect is the divine truth: and other truths perfect the intellect in relation to divine truth.”¹⁴ Thus, while it is best to contemplate divine truth, contemplation of any truth is good. And in view of the fact that on earth what we know of divine truth we can know only in a vague way, “through a glass and in a dark manner”,¹⁵ it follows that contemplation of divine effects on earth is very helpful in trying to learn more about the causes of these effects, which eventually leads us to the first cause (provided that a given person would continue her reflections that far).

¹¹ Est autem ipse ordo rerum talis secundum se quod Deus est propter seipsum cognoscibilis et diligibilis, utpote essentialiter existens ipsa veritas et bonitas, per quam alia et cognoscuntur et amantur. Sed quoad nos, quia nostra cognitio a sensu ortum habet, prius sunt cognoscibilia quae sunt sensui propinquiora; et ultimus terminus cognitionis est in eo quod est maxime a sensu remotum. ST II-II 27, 4.

¹² ST II-II 27, 4 ; See also: ST I 12, 4 and 11; ST I 85,1.

¹³ ST II-II 180, 4 Obj. 4.

¹⁴ Dicendum quod ultima perfectio humani intellectus est veritas divina: aliae autem veritates perficiunt intellectum in ordine ad veritatem divinam. ST II-II 180, 4 ad 4.

¹⁵ Per speculum et in aenigmate ST II-II 180, 4.

Furthermore we learn about God by reflecting about the material objects, by considering their characteristics and their causes. Thus, even if we are one day to engage in the most exalted contemplation, we must begin humbly by gaining some knowledge about the things around us. Some objects might be attractive to us and cause us to wonder. We say that we find those things interesting. By reflecting about them and by learning more about them, we might also come to understand some truth which we might contemplate. Thus, we may also contemplate the truths of created things.

Therefore, Aquinas tells us that although strictly speaking we ought to contemplate the ultimate truth, which is God,¹⁶ we may also contemplate truths about created things which are God's effects and thus be led to the contemplation of their First Cause.¹⁷ As the ultimate Truth is God, the object to which all our contemplation eventually leads is God. One could say that all objects of contemplation converge on God.

How we contemplate

Our perfect happiness, according to Aquinas, is the Beatific Vision, that is, the intellectual vision of God in heaven.¹⁸ The human intellect cannot attain the Beatific Vision by its own power, but only by the grace of God.¹⁹ In our earthly life, the Beatific Vision, and thus perfect happiness, is not possible at all.²⁰ On earth we may enjoy

¹⁶ ST I 16, 5; ST II-II 180, 4.

¹⁷ ST II-II 180, 4.

¹⁸ ST I-II 3, 8.

¹⁹ ST I 12, 11.

²⁰ ST I 12, 11; ST II-II 180, 5.

imperfect happiness, which would principally consist of contemplation.²¹ That imperfect happiness of earthly contemplation we can attain by the use of our own powers.

The human way of gathering knowledge involves the use of senses and arriving at understanding through reasoning. On earth our intellectual operations depend on our bodies, and in particular our senses and the phantasms produced on the basis of sensory perception. Whatever we contemplate, our contemplation on earth involves the use of phantasms.²² On earth, we can contemplate God only indirectly, in a mediated way.

On earth, we may contemplate truths about created things. And it must be noted that since we cannot contemplate God as He is seen in heaven, we must always begin our contemplation with something found in this world, in fact, with some sensible object. And that is so because we are animals and not merely rational creatures. Thomas says: “The proper object of the human intellect, which is united to the body, is a quiddity or nature existing in corporeal matter; and through such natures of visible things it rises to a certain knowledge of things invisible.”²³ Since a human being is a kind of animal, it is designed to know corporeal objects. But as a rational creature, a human being can use the knowledge of material things to learn something about the immaterial ones.²⁴

Because we are a certain kind of animal, contemplation of any truth in this life requires us to go through a lengthy process of perceiving, learning, reasoning and finally,

²¹ ST I-II 3, 5.

²² ST I 84, 7; ST I-II 5, 1; ST II-II 180, 5 ad 2.

²³ Intellectus autem humani, qui est coniunctus corpori, proprium obiectum est quidditas sive natura in materia corporali existens; et per huiusmodi naturas visibilium rerum etiam in invisibilium rerum aliqualem cognitionem ascendit. ST I 84, 7.

²⁴ ST I 88, 2; ST I 84, 7 ad 3.

arriving at understanding of some truth. Thomas contrasts our manner of contemplation with that of angels²⁵ Angels perceive the truth immediately by a simple act of apprehension.²⁶ We must arrive at the perception of truth by ratiocination. And, as was said above, even before we can start deducing any conclusions from any premises, we must go through a process which begins with sensory perception of material objects and ends with the formation of concepts, which we can then use to formulate premises. This laborious way of arriving at the understanding of truth is necessary for us because of our animality, which requires sensory input in order to make thinking possible. Formulation of concepts and reasoning is necessary for us because we are boundary beings, both, rational and animal, endowed with an immaterial, incorporeal intellect and an animal body and the sensitive soul. Angels contemplate God uniformly and unceasingly,²⁷ while humans in this life can engage in contemplation only for limited intervals of time, during which we withdraw our attention from any external objects, stop thinking discursively, and concentrate on the simple truth which is the object of our contemplation. And even that simple truth cannot be God as such, as we would see Him in heaven, for we cannot see God in our present life.

As was mentioned above, in the life to come, we will be able to gaze upon God directly and to do so unceasingly, but that will be because of God's grace,²⁸ not by our own powers. Our own powers are those of a rational animal. Because of our animality,

²⁵ ST II-II 180, 3 and 6.

²⁶ ST II-II 180, 6.

²⁷ ST II-II 180, 6 ad 2.

²⁸ ST I 12, 4; ST I-II 5, 5 and 6.

we do not have the capacity for simple apprehension of truth, and that puts us at a disadvantage next to angels. However, we should note that when that impediment is removed by God's grace in heaven, we will be able to apprehend truth without recourse to discursive reasoning. We will be able to enjoy God on the level of intellect, and to experience contemplation as delightful even with our senses and our bodies.²⁹ Enjoying contemplation in a sensual way in addition to rational enjoyment is a delight of which angels are not capable, but we are, because we are animals, albeit rational animals.

We cannot ever fully understand what we contemplate

In heaven, we are able to contemplate God directly, in the Beatific Vision, while on earth we are able to contemplate God indirectly by the power of the human intellect only. The Beatific Vision is not possible in this life.³⁰ That is because "the mode of knowledge follows the mode of the nature of the knower."³¹ and human nature is such that the soul is joined to the body and because of that we must begin with knowing material, sensible things, and then derive certain conclusions from the knowledge of those things. Thomas says: "But our soul, as long as we live in this life, has its being in corporeal matter; hence naturally it knows only what has a form in matter, or what can be known by such a form."³² We cannot know the essence of God through the natures of material things.³³

²⁹ ST I-II 4, 5 and 6.

³⁰ ST I 12, 11; ST I-II 5, 3.

³¹ Modus cognitionis sequitur modum naturae rei cognoscentis. ST I 12, 11.

³² Anima autem nostra, quamdiu in hac vita vivimus, habet esse in materia corporali; unde naturaliter non cognoscit aliqua nisi quae habent formam in materia, vel quae per huiusmodi cognoscit possunt. ST I 12, 11.

³³ ST I 88, 1 and 2.

Thus, we cannot know the essence of God on earth; we can only know various attributes of God.

In heaven, the beatified contemplate God. But even in heaven the human intellect by itself is not able to comprehend God. No creature is able to comprehend God. God is infinite and the Creator of all, and as such cannot be comprehended by any of His finite creatures. Thomas says: “It is impossible for any created intellect to comprehend God.”³⁴ It is impossible to comprehend God even for those who are enjoying the Beatific Vision. It is impossible to comprehend God even for the angels. It is impossible to comprehend God for any created intellect because a creature is finite and dependent on the Creator, whereas the Creator is infinite and is the source of all creatures.

Comprehension has two meanings, according to Thomas. In a strict sense, to comprehend something means that we know that something perfectly i.e., that we know it “as far as it can be known.”³⁵ Since every creature is finite, while God is infinite, no finite creature can comprehend the infinite God, no creature can know God as fully as God can be known. But comprehension also may mean that we attain something, that we “catch” something. In that sense, created intellects may be said to comprehend God, that is they may see God and thus possess God as present.³⁶ In that second sense of comprehension as attainment, human intellect comprehends God in the Beatific Vision in heaven. However, it does not attain Beatific Vision by its own powers.

³⁴ Dicendum quod comprehendere Deum impossibile est cuicumque intellectui creato. ST I 12, 7.

³⁵ And that is perfectly known which is known as far as it can be known.

Perfecte autem cognoscitur, quod tantum cognoscitur, quantum est cognoscibile. Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

It is beyond the power of any created intellect to know God in the absence of grace.³⁷ “It is impossible for any created intellect to see the essence of God by its own natural power.”³⁸ That is because the mode of knowledge depends on the nature of the knower, as was mentioned above. Only God is capable of knowing Godself, of knowing fully God’s essence. Only divine intellect can know itself by its own power.³⁹ No created intellect is able to know the essence of God by its creature powers.

Nevertheless, created intellects – angels and the saints in heaven – can see the essence of God, thanks to God’s grace. (God’s grace allows even a human intellect to possess knowledge of God.)⁴⁰ It is not full comprehension, but knowledge in a sense of grasping, understanding the essence of God. Thomas says: “Therefore, he who sees God’s essence, sees in Him that He exists infinitely, and is infinitely knowable; nevertheless, this infinite mode does not extend to enable the knower to know infinitely.”⁴¹

Knowing the essence of God becomes possible for the human intellect, because by the grace of God, the divine essence itself becomes the intelligible form, which informs a human intellect: “But when any created intellect sees the essence of God, the essence of God itself becomes the intelligible form of the intellect.”⁴² Human intellect has

³⁷ ST I 12, articles 4, 5 and 7.

³⁸ *Dicendum quod impossibile est quod aliquis intellectus creatus per sua naturalia essentiam Dei videat.* ST I 12, 4.

³⁹ ST I 12, 4; See also: SCG III 52.

⁴⁰ ST I 12, articles 5 and 13; ST I-II 5, 5.

⁴¹ *Qui igitur videt Deum per essentiam, videt hoc in eo, quod infinite existit et infinite cognoscibilis est: sed hic infinitus modus non competit et ut scilicet ipse infinite cognoscat.* ST I 12, 7 ad 3.

to be informed by the intelligible species of things it comes to know; in the Beatific Vision, human intellect is informed by the intelligible form which is the essence of God.⁴³

In order to receive that intelligible form which is the essence of God, the human intellect has to be changed in its disposition, it has to be made fit for the reception of God's essence. "Again, nothing is receptive of a more sublime form unless it be elevated by means of a disposition to the capacity for this form, for a proper act is produced in a proper potency."⁴⁴ The power of a human intellect must be strengthened. But it cannot be strengthened merely by intensification, because the knowledge of God is a knowledge of a different type than the knowledge of things for which human intellect has a natural disposition. Therefore, the human intellect must acquire a new disposition.⁴⁵ This supernatural, higher than natural disposition can be received only by divine grace. Thomas calls this new, higher than natural disposition "the light of glory": "Therefore, this disposition whereby the created intellect is raised to the intellectual vision of divine substance is fittingly called the light of glory; not because it makes some object actually intelligible, as does the light of the agent intellect, but because it makes the intellect actually powerful enough to understand."⁴⁶ The divine grace by which a human intellect

⁴² Cum autem aliquis intellectus creatus videt Deum per essentiam, ipsa essentia Dei fit forma intelligibilis intellectus. ST I 12, 5.

⁴³ ST I 12, 4 ad 2; SCG III 52 and 53.

⁴⁴ Adhuc. Nihil est susceptivum formae sublimioris nisi per aliquam dispositionem ad illius capacitatem elevetur: proprius enim actus in propria potentia fit. SCG III 53, 3.

⁴⁵ SCG III 53, 5.

⁴⁶ Illa igitur dispositio qua intellectus creatus ad intellectualem divinae substantiae visionem extollitur, congrue lux gloriae dicitur: non propter hoc quod faciat intelligibile in actu, sicut lux intellectus agentis; sed per hoc quod facit intellectum potentem actu intelligere. SCG III 53, 6 See also: ST I 12, 5.

is enabled to attain the Beatific Vision is called “the light of glory”. The Beatific Vision is the immediate intellectual vision of the essence of God.

Not all people will possess equal knowledge of God in heaven. The saints are not equally knowledgeable, or equally happy in a sense that there are grades of knowledge, happiness and perfection among them.⁴⁷ “Now, that one man enjoys God more than another, happens through his being better disposed or ordered to the enjoyment of Him. And in this sense one man can be happier than another.”⁴⁸ However, each receives according to his/her nature and his/her merit and in that sense each possesses the fullness of happiness when he/she is admitted to the enjoyment of the Beatific Vision.⁴⁹ “Hence the intellect which has more of the light of glory will see God the more perfectly; and he will have a fuller participation of the light of glory who has more charity”⁵⁰ As was explained above, the light of glory is the supernatural disposition by which a human intellect is enabled to see, to know God. Those who will receive more of the light of glory will be those who have more charity, which is the love of God. Those who love God more, will be also allowed to know more of God in his essence. In heaven our potential for knowing God will be fulfilled with respect to our capacity, although no creature can ever know God completely.

⁴⁷ ST I 12, 6; ST I-II 5, 2.

⁴⁸ Contingit autem aliquem perfectius frui Deo quam alium, ex eo quod est melius dispositus vel ordinatus ad eius fruitionem. Et secundum hoc potest aliquis alio beatior esse. ST I-II 5, 2.

⁴⁹ ST I 12, 6; ST I-II 5, 2.

⁵⁰ Unde intellectus plus participans de lumine gloriae, perfectius Deum videbit. Plus autem participabit de lumine gloriae, qui plus habet de caritate. ST I 12, 6.

Because the object worthy of our contemplation exceeds our capacity for comprehension, contemplation is accompanied by admiration (*admiratio*).⁵¹ “Admiration is a kind of fear resulting from the apprehension of a thing that surpasses our faculties: hence it results from the contemplation of the sublime truth.”⁵² This admiration (also translated sometimes as “wonder”, or as “amazement”), which occurs in the face of something which surpasses our capacity for comprehension, applies to both the perfect contemplation in heaven and the imperfect contemplation in earthly life.⁵³ Admiration or wonder is felt by us when we come upon something which is unknown, or which surpasses our capacity for understanding.⁵⁴ What we can find out about God through our reason alone is very little, for we can only know that God is, but not what God is.⁵⁵ Those who, through grace receive the vision of God while they are still living on earth cannot know God fully, although their knowledge exceeds what human reason can know about God naturally.⁵⁶ And even those who contemplate God in heaven cannot know God in

⁵¹ Pieper, Josef, *Happiness and Contemplation*, tr. Richard and Clara Winston, South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine’s Press, 1998, p.75.

⁵² Dicendum quod admiratio est species timoris consequens apprehensionem alicuius rei excedentis nostrum facultatem. Unde admiratio est actus consequens contemplationem sublimis veritatis. ST II-II 180, 3 ad 3.

⁵³ This contemplation will be perfect in the life to come, when we shall see God face to face, wherefore it will make us perfectly happy: Whereas now the contemplation of the divine truth is competent to us imperfectly, namely *through a glass* and in a *dark manner*.

Quae [contemplatio] quidem in futura vita erit perfecta, quando videbimus eum facie ad faciem: unde et perfecte beatos faciet. Nunc autem contemplatio divinae veritatis competit nobis imperfecte, videlicet per speculum et in aenigmate. ST II-II 180, 4.

⁵⁴ Est autem admiratio desiderium quodam sciendi, quod in homine contingit ex hoc quod videt effectum et ignorat causam, vel ex hoc quod causa talis effectus excedit cognitionem aut facultatem ipsius. ST I-II 32, 8.

⁵⁵ ST I 12, 12.

⁵⁶ ST I 12, 13; ST II-II 175, 1 and 180, 5.

His whole being, because no finite intellect can comprehend the infinite God, as was explained above. Thus, the contemplation of God is always accompanied by admiration, or wonder, or amazement.

Those who engage in ordinary contemplation on earth and contemplate God can know God only through the power of their reason, and that is not sufficient to know God's essence. Aquinas tells us that using natural reason to study the created world, we can come to understand that God exists and to know His attributes, but we cannot know what God is.⁵⁷ But even to get some knowledge of God by natural reason, we need God's help. Aquinas tells us: "The knowledge which we have by natural reason contains two things: images derived from the sensible objects; and the natural intelligible light, enabling us to abstract from them intelligible conceptions. Now in both of these, human knowledge is assisted by the revelation of grace."⁵⁸ Human reason derives its knowledge from sensible objects, through the formation of phantasms and intelligible concepts and those are impediments to seeing the Divine Essence, because God is not a sensible object.⁵⁹ Thus, we may come to know something about God, but we cannot know what God is. Those who contemplate God on earth are aware that their object of contemplation far exceeds their capacity for comprehension. As they try to learn more about God, they also realize better their own limitations, and thus amazement and admiration attach to the contemplation of God.

⁵⁷ ST I 12, 12.

⁵⁸ *Cognitio enim quam per naturalem rationem habemus, duo requirit: scilicet, phantasmata ex sensibilibus accepta, et lumen naturale intelligibile, cuius virtute intelligibiles conceptiones ab eis abstrahimus. Et quantum ad utrumque iuvatur humana cognitio per revelationem gratiae.* ST I 12, 13.

⁵⁹ ST I 3; ST II-II 175, 4 and 5; ST II-II 180, 5.

But at least we could hope that those who engage in the study of metaphysics, mathematics, or natural philosophy, and contemplate truths concerning created things rather than God may fully comprehend the object of their contemplation. Aquinas does allow that the contemplation of God's effects counts as contemplation, for the effects ought to lead us to their Cause.⁶⁰ Aquinas does not address this particular question, but it seems to me that he would say that even these contemplatives would feel amazement and know that they could not fully understand the object of their contemplation. For as they would contemplate some truth about things of this world, they would realize that there is still something they do not know about it, they would wonder.⁶¹ They could never get to understand the first cause of the object they contemplate until they arrive at the First Cause, who is God, and nobody can fully comprehend God. Thomas says:

“Consequently, when man knows an effect, and knows that it has a cause there naturally remains in man the desire to know about that cause, what it is. And this desire is one of wonder, and causes inquiry... Consequently, for perfect happiness the intellect needs to reach the very Essence of the First Cause.”⁶² Thus, even those who contemplate objects belonging to physics or metaphysics, rather than theology, would not be able fully satiate their desire for knowledge until their wondering led them to God. Then their desire to

⁶⁰ ST II-II 180, 4.

⁶¹ ST I-II 32, 8.

⁶² Et ideo remanet naturaliter homini desiderium, cum cognoscit effectum, et scit eum habere causam, ut etiam sciat de causa quid est. Et illud desiderium est admirationis, et causat inquisitionem... Ad perfectam igitur beatitudinem requiritur quod intellectus pertingat ad ipsam essentiam primae causae. ST I-II 3, 8.

know the cause would be fulfilled, but the object of their contemplation would forever remain not completely known.⁶³

Thus, contemplation, whether on earth or in heaven, whether centering on God or on God's creation, is necessarily accompanied by admiration caused by the limitations of human capacity for knowing, by the fact that human knowledge has to be derived from the knowledge of sensible objects, and by the fact that humans are finite beings and therefore unable to fully comprehend the First Cause who is God. The object of our contemplation is always beyond our full comprehension.

Why contemplation makes us happy

Aquinas tells us that contemplation is the essence of our happiness, both here on earth and in heaven. Aquinas says that the reason why the vision of God, contemplation of God in heaven, makes us happy is because then we shall know the essence of the First Cause: "For perfect happiness the intellect needs to reach the very Essence of the First Cause."⁶⁴ The object of the intellect is the quiddity, or the essence of material things,⁶⁵ and so, our knowledge has to be derived from material things in the sense that we must begin with the study of material things around us. The pursuit of knowledge begins with wonder.⁶⁶ Wonder leads to inquiry about the causes of things. According to Aquinas, to know something is to know it through its causes, to know why it is so and not

⁶³ ST I 12.

⁶⁴ Ad perfectam...beatitudinem requiritur quod intellectus pertingat ad ipsam essentiam primae causae. ST I-II 3, 8.

⁶⁵ ST I 84, 7.

⁶⁶ ST I-II 32, 8.

otherwise.⁶⁷ To attain perfect knowledge, the intellect has to penetrate beyond sensible qualities to the essence of the cause itself.⁶⁸ When the intellect grasps the essence of the cause of things, the intellect attains its completion.⁶⁹ Everything desires its own perfection, and so does the intellect, and achieves it when it knows the essence of the cause. The very First Cause is God. Knowing that God is the First Cause is an imperfect knowledge. Knowing God and thus knowing the very essence of that First Cause is a perfect knowledge. In attaining perfect knowledge, the intellect achieves its own perfection.

Thus, contemplation of God in heaven makes us happy because in attaining the knowledge of the essence of the First Cause we attain perfect knowledge, and we achieve the perfection of our intellect. Earthly contemplation involves less than perfect knowledge. Aquinas distinguishes between perfect and imperfect happiness, corresponding to the heavenly and earthly contemplation.⁷⁰ Even though the object of our contemplation – whether God Himself, or even some truth about creation – always eludes our understanding, contemplation is the essence of our happiness, because it perfects our intellect.

⁶⁷ ST I-II 3, 8; ST I 2, 2.

⁶⁸ ST I-II 3, 8.

⁶⁹ ST I-II 3, 2 and 8.

⁷⁰ ST I-II 3, 5.

Traits of happiness

Aquinas says that we all want happiness and we always act for the sake of that end, which is our final end.⁷¹ All creatures always act for an end⁷² and all their actions ultimately are guided by their final end and their greatest good,⁷³ which in case of human beings is called “happiness”. Thomas says: “Happiness means the acquisition of the last end”.⁷⁴ Thus, all we ever do we do because we want to attain happiness.

Thomas was familiar with Aristotle’s writings on happiness and often refers to them in his texts.⁷⁵ He agrees with Aristotle’s view of the traits of happiness. Happiness is our greatest good, self-sufficient and complete, a good we pursue for its own sake.⁷⁶ Happiness is a self-sufficient good, i.e., a happy person has everything she needs and does not need anything else. If they needed something else they would not yet be happy.⁷⁷ Happiness is the attainment of our greatest and our final good, since if there were something we might add to what we possess, we would not yet possess happiness.⁷⁸ Since, according to Aquinas and Aristotle, we always act for the sake of some good and

⁷¹ ST I-II 1, 6.

⁷² ST I-II 1, 2; SCG III 2.

⁷³ ST I-II 1, 6.

⁷⁴ Beatitudo nominat adeptioem ultimi finis. ST I-II 1, 8.

⁷⁵ He did write a *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, he often refers to the *Nicomachean Ethics* in his own writings, and he often implicitly refers to it, writing in the spirit of Aristotle, as he does in his own *Treatise on Happiness* in I-II ST. See: Aquinas, Thomas St., *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, tr. C.I. Litzinger, O.P., Notre Dame, Indiana: Dumb Ox books, 1993. Latin text: Thomas Aquinas, “Sententia Libri Ethicorum”, in *Opera Omnia*, Parma, reprinted in New York: Musurgia Publishers, 1949. Hereafter referred to as: In NE.

⁷⁶ In NE I, 109, 111; ST II-II 182, 1.

⁷⁷ In NE I, 9, 112, 115 and 116.

⁷⁸ In NE I, 9, 106.

ultimately we act for the sake of the greatest good,⁷⁹ it follows that we always act for the sake of happiness. (We shall see later that Aquinas provides a metaphysical explanation of why this is so when he talks about inclinations proper to each kind of a being.) Thomas says:” Therefore, that is absolutely perfect which is always desirable for itself and never for another. But happiness appears to be of this nature, for we never seek it for something else but always for itself.”⁸⁰ We seek other things because we think they will bring us closer to happiness. Even honor, knowledge and virtue, Aquinas says, we choose because we believe that by possessing them we will be happy. But happiness as such we seek for its own sake. Happiness, then, is something for the sake of which we do other things.⁸¹

Thomas, in agreement with Aristotle, concludes that human happiness consists essentially of contemplation. Contemplation as an intellectual activity is an activity of a rational being, and so becomes humans qua rational beings. Rationality is the supreme trait of a human being, it is what differentiates us from other animals. Human happiness ought to be an activity which is characteristic of humans⁸² and therefore the activity of the rational kind. Such an activity is contemplation of truth,⁸³ for two reasons: first, because rationality is the supreme trait of a human being, and second, because the objects

⁷⁹ In NE I, 1, 7 – 11, 17.

⁸⁰ Et ita simpliciter perfectum est, quod est semper secundum se eligibile et nunquam propter aliud. Talis autem videtur esse felicitas. Quam nequamquam eligimus propter aliud, sed propter se-ipsa. In NE I IX, 111.

⁸¹ In NE I 9, 109, 111.

⁸² In NE I, X, 119.

⁸³ But the highest of human activities is contemplation of truth. Optima autem operatio inter operationes humanas est speculatio veritatis. In NE X 10, 2087; NE X 1177a19-21.

of contemplation are the highest of all the objects that can be known. Furthermore, according to Aristotle, rationality is that which is most divine in us.⁸⁴ Thomas agrees, but with respect to “something divine” he adds that humans possess rationality because they are made in the image of God.⁸⁵ Thus, contemplation is the supreme activity a human being is capable of, and the activity of which human happiness consists.⁸⁶

Thomas and Aristotle also point out that contemplation can be the most continuous of activities.⁸⁷ Happiness is something in which we wish to continue forever, so the activity of which happiness consists must be the kind of activity which may be continuous, and that is contemplation. Contemplation is also the most pleasant of all activities, for intellectual pleasures are greater than bodily ones.⁸⁸ Self-sufficiency is found in contemplation, and that is another trait of happiness.⁸⁹ Aristotle also points out that contemplation requires leisure, and since we labor in order to enjoy leisure, contemplation belongs to that better part of life which is rest and leisure.⁹⁰ Finally, contemplation is something in which we engage for its own sake and not because it is useful for something else: “Now happiness is so desirable in itself that it is never sought for the sake of anything else...But this is evident only in the contemplation of wisdom

⁸⁴ In NE X 10, 2083-2084; NE X 1177a12-17.

⁸⁵ ST I 93, 1 and 6.

⁸⁶ ST II-II 182, 1; In NE X 10, 2080 and 2097; NE X 1177a12 and X 1177b1-4.

⁸⁷ ST II-II 182, 1; In NE X 10, 2088-2089; NE X 1177a21-22.

⁸⁸ ST II-II 182, 1; In NE X 10, 2090-2092; NE X 1177a22-27.

⁸⁹ ST II-II 182, 1; In NE X 10, 2093-2096; NE X 1177a27-1177b1.

⁹⁰ ST II-II 182, 1; In NE X 11, 2098; NE X 1177b4-6.

which is loved for itself and not for something else.”⁹¹ That, above all, shows that contemplation must be what human happiness consists of.

Thus, we know general characteristics of happiness, and we know that the highest happiness is contemplation. Aquinas, again following Aristotle, also shows that nothing else but contemplation could be our happiness. He gives us a negative analysis through which we find out what happiness must be because of what it cannot be.

Happiness is contemplation of God

All people want happiness and all pursue it. Many people search for happiness in the form of wealth, power, or pleasure. Thomas considers whether they are searching for happiness in the right places. He does not think that these goods can be the essence of happiness, although they may be helpful for the attaining of happiness. In the case of external goods, like wealth, power or glory, Thomas observes that they can be used for good or evil, while the supreme good – which is happiness – excludes all evil.⁹² Also, external goods cannot completely satisfy us, for we may want still more of them and more of many other goods. In this way, they do not fulfill the self-sufficiency requirement of happiness.⁹³ Thomas also points out that wealth has only instrumental value,⁹⁴ and that honor or glory, if accorded to a deserving person, are only a testament to that person’s excellence and thus one would have to pursue excellence as an end, rather

⁹¹ ST II-II 182, 1; Felicitas est ita per se appetibilis, quod nullo modo appetitur propter aliud. Hoc autem apparet in sola speculatione sapientiae, quod propter seipsam diligatur, et non propter aliud. IN NE X 10, 2097; NE X 1177b1-4; See also: ST II-II 182, 1.

⁹² ST I-II 2, 4.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ ST I-II 2, 1.

than honor or glory. But the most excellent activity is contemplation of truth, of which happiness consists, and which may only incidentally bring us honor or glory.⁹⁵ That brings us to the next group of candidates for happiness, which are the goods of the body and soul, such as health, beauty or virtue.

Some people may pursue happiness as their own excellence, thus treating themselves as the supreme good and the final end. Thomas objects to this on metaphysical grounds. Our actions are directed to an end, towards some object, and through our actions and through that object we actualize ourselves. But those objects are exterior to ourselves, and thus we are not able to make ourselves happy by ourselves without the help of something external to us. Therefore, something external to us must be the object which makes us happy. According to Thomas that object is God.⁹⁶

Through their actions human beings, like any created beings, actualize their potency. That actualization of potency is the attainment of perfection. Creatures may attain perfection in some respect and not in others, and there may be gradations of perfection.

In the case of bodily perfection, that is bodily goods such as health or strength, Thomas notes that in a human being, the body exists for the good of the soul, and not vice-versa, and thus bodily goods cannot be the supreme good and the final end of a human being.⁹⁷ Bodily perfection is good, but it cannot be our greatest good.

⁹⁵ ST I-II 2, 2 and 3.

⁹⁶ ST I 103, 2; ST I-II 2, 5; ST I-II 2, 7; ST I-II 3, 2.

⁹⁷ ST I-II 2, 5.

Perfection of a human soul, i.e. becoming an excellent, virtuous person, is considered by some to be the ultimate end worthy of pursuing for its own sake. But according to Thomas, we pursue our happiness through our souls (and for that we need to have excellent souls), but the soul itself cannot be its own final end, because it cannot actualize itself by itself. (As was mentioned above, one actualizes oneself through actions directed towards external objects.) Actualization means attainment of perfection. The soul achieves its perfection only when it sees God in the Beatific Vision.⁹⁸ No created soul can attain the Beatific Vision by its own powers.⁹⁹ Therefore, we cannot perfect ourselves by ourselves, for we are actualized only when we behold God. Thomas says: “Happiness is something belonging to the soul; but that which constitutes happiness is something outside of the soul”¹⁰⁰ That something outside is God.

To say that things try to get actualized means that they try to attain their proper goodness according to their nature or that they try to achieve their perfection. In case of rational beings, perfection means happiness. Thomas says: “Happiness is man’s supreme perfection.”¹⁰¹ And he continues: “Now each thing is perfect in so far as it is actual”¹⁰² Thus, happiness implies perfection, which implies actualization.

For creatures, actualization requires actions and operations characteristic of them, as certain kinds of beings.¹⁰³ Only God who is being itself can be happy simply because

⁹⁸ ST I-II 3, 8.

⁹⁹ ST I 12, 4.

¹⁰⁰ Beatitudo est aliquid animae; sed in quo consistit beatitudo, est aliquid extra animam. ST I-II 2, 7.

¹⁰¹ Beatitudo ultima hominis perfectio. ST I-II 3, 2.

¹⁰² Unumquodque autem intentum perfectum est, in quantum est actu. Ibid.

He is, and he does not attain happiness by any action or operation. The perfection of a human being is primarily the perfection of the rational soul, for it is rationality which makes us different from other animals.¹⁰⁴ Thus, human happiness ultimately consists in an operation of the speculative intellect.¹⁰⁵ Aquinas defines happiness as an intellectual activity.¹⁰⁶ That operation of the speculative intellect which constitutes our ultimate happiness is direct contemplation of God i.e., the Beatific Vision.

If happiness is an operation of the speculative intellect, then one could ask whether happiness consists in the consideration of speculative sciences. Thomas considers that question¹⁰⁷ and answers that we are led to the speculative sciences by the knowledge we acquire through our senses, the knowledge of material things. But the human intellect cannot be perfected by something lower than itself, namely, material things. The human intellect must attain perfection through knowledge of something above it: “For a thing is not perfected by something lower, except in so far as the lower partakes of something higher.”¹⁰⁸ The human intellect must be ultimately perfected by that which is the highest, i.e. God, and so, the study of speculative sciences cannot be the essence of human happiness. However, Thomas acknowledges that to a certain extent we may find happiness in the study of speculative sciences; to the extent that our thinking

¹⁰³ ST I-II 5, 7.

¹⁰⁴ ST I-II 3, 5; In NE I 10, 126.

¹⁰⁵ ST I-II 3, 2; 3, 2 ad 4; 3, 5.

¹⁰⁶ ST I-II 3.

¹⁰⁷ ST I-II 3, 6.

¹⁰⁸ Non enim aliquid perficitur ab aliquo inferiori, nisi secundum quod in inferiori est aliqua participatio superioris. ST I-II 3, 6.

about God may be similar to the contemplation of God: “However, just as in sensible forms there is a participation of the higher substances, so the consideration of speculative sciences is a certain participation of true and perfect happiness.”¹⁰⁹

Thus, according to Aquinas, what makes us happy must be something outside the soul, and something uncreated, which can perfect human intellect.¹¹⁰ God obviously is not a created good, and it is through God that we can be perfected. Thus, God must be what makes us happy. According to Thomas, happiness is found only in the Beatific Vision of God in heaven.¹¹¹ Although some people seek happiness in earthly goods, Thomas says again and again that they are mistaken. No created good constitutes human happiness: “Now the object of the will, i.e., of man’s appetite, is the universal good; just as the object of the intellect is the universal true. Hence, it is evident that naught can lull man’s will, save the universal good. This is to be found not in any creature, but in God alone.”¹¹² Universal good, according to Aquinas, is God. Goodness is what created beings like us desire, since they desire being and perfection.¹¹³ Thus, the final end of our actions is goodness.¹¹⁴ Every created being possess goodness only by participation,¹¹⁵ therefore

¹⁰⁹ Sed sicut in formis sensibilibus participatur aliqua similitudo substantiarum superiorum, ita consideratio scientiarum speculativarum est quaedam participatio verae et perfectae beatitudinis. Ibid.

¹¹⁰ ST I-II 3, 1 and 2.

¹¹¹ ST I-II 3, 8.

¹¹² Obiectum autem voluntatis, quae est appetitus humanus, est universale bonum; sicut obiectum intellectus est universale verum. Ex quo patet quod nihil potest quietare voluntatem hominis, nisi bonum universale. Quod non invenitur in aliquot creato, sed solum in Deo. ST I-II 2, 8.

¹¹³ ST I 4, 2 (perfection); ST I 5, 4 (desire for good).

¹¹⁴ ST I 5, 4.

¹¹⁵ ST I 6, 3 and 4.

no created good can fully satisfy human longing, and thus no created good can be our final end or constitute our happiness. The supreme good, and therefore our final end, is God.¹¹⁶ Therefore, we want God, because God is Good Itself.

As the good is what the appetite tends to, truth is what the intellect tends to.¹¹⁷ Truth itself is God. Thomas says: “For His being is not only conformed to His intellect, but it is the very act of His intellect; and His act of understanding is the measure and cause of every other being and of every other intellect, and He Himself is His own existence and act of understanding. Whence it follows not only that truth is in Him, but that He is truth itself, and the sovereign and first truth.”¹¹⁸ Thus, we want God because we want truth, good and perfection that is the fullness of being, and those we find in the highest degree in God. Thomas concludes that only God can be our happiness.¹¹⁹

Yet even that happiness in heaven is only a participation in God’s happiness. Only God Himself is happy simply because He is. We are happy by participation in God’s happiness.¹²⁰ We participate in God’s happiness when we contemplate God. We can find

¹¹⁶ ST I 6, 2.

¹¹⁷ ST I 16, 1.

¹¹⁸ Nam esse suum non solum est conforme suo intellectui, sed etiam est ipsum suum intelligere; et suum intelligere est mensura et cause omnis alterius esse, et omnis alterius intellectus; et ipse est suum esse et intelligere. Unde sequitur quod non solum in ipso sit veritas, sed quod ipse sit ipsa summa et prima veritas. ST I 16, 5.

¹¹⁹ ST I-II 2, 8.

¹²⁰ God is happiness by His Essence: for He is happy not by acquisition or participation of something else, but by His Essence. On the other had, men are happy ... by participation.

Dicendum quod Deus est beatitudo per essentiam suam; non enim per adeptionem aut participationem alicuius alterius beatus est, sed per essentiam suam. Homines autem sunt beati...per participationem. ST I-II 3, 1 ad.1 See also: ST I-II 3, 2 ad 4.

happiness only in the Beatific Vision of God in heaven: “Final and perfect happiness can consist in nothing else than the vision of Divine Essence”.¹²¹

Rational animal in heaven

The purpose of the above discussion was to present, very briefly, the standard view of human happiness as contemplation of God in heaven, and of the imperfect happiness as contemplation of God on earth. I do not argue with that standard view. But I will now add to it what Aquinas says about the role which the operations of the sensitive soul play in our contemplation.

According to Thomas Aquinas, our animal bodies will be resurrected in a glorified state, but still as material bodies, identical with our earthly bodies but without any imperfections.¹²² Thus after the resurrection, the saints who contemplate God will be complete, embodied human beings. As far as the object of their contemplation is concerned, i.e., God, the enjoyment of God in heaven does not depend on the sensory input and thus, does not depend on the possession of the body.¹²³ However, as far as the people who contemplate are concerned, the body is necessary for human happiness even in heaven, because as composite creatures, composed of souls and bodies, we cannot be fully ourselves and thus cannot be completely happy unless we are embodied.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Dicendum quod ultima et perfecta beatitudo non potest esse nisi in visione divinae essentiae. ST I-II 3, 8.

¹²² SCG IV 85 and 86.

¹²³ ST I-II 3, 3; ST I-II 4, 5.

¹²⁴ ST I-II 4, 5; ST I-II 3, 3.

Since we are animals, knowing something theoretically – through the operations of the speculative intellect – is not as completely enjoyable for us as knowing that thing theoretically and at the same time being able to experience it sensually. The object of our contemplation, God, is not a sensible object and so cannot be sensed. But we who are human subjects contemplating God, have such a nature that we need to experience passions in addition to our having an intellectual vision of God, in order to be completely happy as complete human beings, in order to experience our happiness to the fullest extent.¹²⁵ That is why Thomas claims that we need bodies for complete heavenly happiness.¹²⁶ In heaven, we shall retain our identity, and after the resurrection, we will have our bodies again. Being reunited with our bodies will make it possible for us to experience delight of contemplation of God, both on a rational and on a sensual level.

There are disadvantages and advantages to being the kind of creature that the human being is, a boundary creature possessing characteristics of an animal and of a rational kind of being. The disadvantage lies in our dependence on sensory perception and discursive reasoning which do not allow us to apprehend the truth directly, as angels do. This disadvantage stays with us throughout our earthly life, making our earthly experience of contemplation quite imperfect, while in heaven we can enjoy the perfect

¹²⁵ SCG IV 86, 4; ST Supplement 82, 3 & 4.

¹²⁶ And thus it is that separation from the body is said to hold the soul back from tending with all its might to the vision of the Divine Essence. For the soul desires to enjoy God in such a way that the enjoyment also may overflow into the body, as far as possible. And therefore, as long as it enjoys God, without the fellowship of the body, its appetite is at rest in that which it has, in such a way, that it would still wish the body to attain to its share.

Et sic separatio animae a corpore dicitur animam retardare, ne tota intentione tendat in visionem divinae essentiae. Appetit enim anima sic frui Deo, quod etiam ipsa fruitio derivetur ad corpus per redundantiam, sicut est possibile. Et ideo quandiu ipsa fruitur Deo sine corpore, appetitus eius sic quiescit in eo, quod tamen adhuc ad participationem eius vellet suum corpus pertingere. ST I-II 4, 5 ad 4.

contemplation only by God's grace. However, being an animal gives us the advantage of enjoying contemplation in more ways that a mere rational creature would.

As rational creatures, we can know God and can have the delight which belongs to the intellectual enjoyment of God. But as rational animals, we can feel the delight of the Beatific Vision even on a sensual level. (I shall discuss the sensual component of the delight of contemplation in chapter 4.)

Earthly happiness

Thomas asks: "Whether one can one be happy in this life?"¹²⁷ He answers that, strictly speaking, we cannot be happy in this life. The Beatific Vision is not possible in this life.¹²⁸ Thus, perfect and true happiness is not possible in earthly life. Furthermore, happiness by definition must exclude all suffering and it is not possible to avoid suffering in this life.¹²⁹ However, in earthly life, we may have an imperfect kind of happiness.¹³⁰ Thus, people who look for supreme happiness on earth are going to be disappointed, but those whose expectations are adjusted to earthly possibilities may reasonably hope for happiness.

Earthly happiness requires some external goods, and goods of the body. First of all, earthly happiness depends in many ways on the body. One cannot be really happy if one is sick or in pain. So bodily goods, although they do not constitute the essence of happiness,¹³¹ are nevertheless of great importance for the achievement of earthly

¹²⁷ ST I-II 5, 3.

¹²⁸ ST I 12, 11.

¹²⁹ ST I-II 5, 3.

¹³⁰ ST I-II 3, 3 and 5; ST I-II 5, 3.

happiness. And since the body needs to be fed and otherwise cared for, external goods also are needed for earthly happiness. Furthermore, such goods are useful for the performance of virtuous deeds. Thus Aquinas says: “For man needs in this life, the necessities of the body, both for the operation of contemplative virtue, and for the operation of active virtue, for which latter he needs also many other things by means of which to perform its operations.”¹³² For example, good health allows us to do useful work which may benefit others, while surplus of material goods makes almsgiving possible.

Goods of the soul, i.e. virtues, which were rejected as the essence of happiness, nevertheless, are needed for earthly happiness, for only a virtuous person can attain true perfection. Human beings cannot achieve eternal happiness without the moral virtues. God, who is Being Itself, is happy without performing any actions or operations.¹³³ Creatures (whether humans or angels) cannot attain happiness without some actions or operations, for only through actions and operations do created beings actualize themselves.¹³⁴ Rational creatures, endowed with reason and will, are the origin of their actions, and their actions may be meritorious and be rewarded with happiness. For that reason, people need to perform good works, for which the development of virtues is necessary.¹³⁵ The achievement of happiness requires the development of the virtues.¹³⁶

¹³¹ ST I-II 2, 5.

¹³² Indiget enim homo in hac vita necessariis corporis tam ad operationem virtutis contemplativae, quam etiam ad operationem virtutis activae, ad quam etiam plura alia requiruntur, quibus exerceat opera activae virtutis. ST I-II 4, 7.

¹³³ ST I-II 5, 7.

¹³⁴ ST I-II 5, 7; ST I-II 3, 2; ST I 77, 2.

¹³⁵ ST I-II 5, 7.

However, while virtues and even external goods are needed for earthly happiness, they do not constitute the essence of that happiness, for they are only instrumental goods. Even the development of virtues is only instrumentally good. Development of virtues is directed by the practical intellect. But happiness –whether perfect or imperfect - consists primarily in the operation of the speculative intellect, as was mentioned above, because a human being as a rational creature is perfected through the operation of the speculative intellect.

Aquinas tells us that earthly happiness consists of contemplation: “Therefore the last and perfect happiness, which we await in the life to come, consists entirely in contemplation. But imperfect happiness, such as can be had here, consists first and principally in contemplation, but secondarily in an operation of the practical intellect directing human actions and passions, as stated in *Ethics*. X. 7, 8.”¹³⁷ Thus, earthly happiness has this in common with heavenly happiness: it consists primarily in the activity of contemplation. That befits a creature that is rational.

Contemplation follows from our desire for knowledge. Desire for knowledge is natural to us qua rational beings. As children, we begin observing the world around us and asking “Why?” and we continue wondering about things as long as we live. The answer to our final “Why?” can be found only beyond this world, when we attain union with God. Then we shall know the essence of the First Cause. Our desire for truth and

¹³⁶ According to Aquinas, virtues are connected with one another. There cannot be moral virtues without intellectual ones (ST I-II 58, 4), there cannot be prudence without moral virtues (ST I-II 58, 5), and there cannot be moral virtues without charity (ST I-II 65, 2) Thus, we need to develop all the virtues in order to attain happiness.

¹³⁷ Et ideo ultima et perfecta beatitudo, quae expectatur in futura vita, tota principaliter consistit in contemplatione. Beatitudo autem imperfecta, qualis hic haberi potest, primo quidem et principaliter consistit in contemplatione: secundario vero in operatione practici intellectus ordinantis actiones et passiones humanas, ut dicitur in X Eth. ST I-II 3, 5.

knowledge will be ultimately satisfied when we meet the First Cause, that is, God in heaven. When we know the essence of the First Cause, we shall achieve perfection qua rational creatures, and we shall also achieve our greatest happiness. On earth, we may attain to some knowledge of God's creation.¹³⁸ That measure of truth, which is available to us on earth, can satisfy us to some extent and thus make us happy to some extent.¹³⁹ Desire for knowledge leads us to the practice of contemplation of the created world and ultimately of God, who is the cause of this world.

Contemplation and the complex human being

And thus we have a brief description of what Thomas Aquinas said about contemplation as our ultimate happiness. Our ultimate happiness consists in the Beatific Vision of God in heaven, and it is an operation of the speculative intellect. It is not possible for the human intellect to enjoy the Vision of God by its own power, but only with the help of God's grace, i.e., the light of glory. On earth, some measure of happiness may be found in earthly contemplation. People who look for supreme happiness on earth are doomed to disappointment, and those who try to find happiness through the pursuit of such things like wealth or sensual pleasures are definitely mistaken.

Human happiness is principally contemplation of God, and as such it is the operation of the speculative intellect. But given human nature, even though contemplation is essentially the operation of speculative intellect, all the other aspects of human nature are also involved, although non-essentially. Earthly contemplation would be impossible without previous operations of the sensitive soul, and even of the

¹³⁸ ST I 88, 3.

¹³⁹ ST II-II 180, 4 and 5.

vegetative soul. While in heaven, perfection according to our nature requires also perfection of our bodies. Thus, Aquinas tells us that the perfection of the body is necessary for happiness, both on earth and in heaven.¹⁴⁰ He tells us that operations of the sensitive soul belong to happiness consequently, after the resurrection of the body, because they help us to achieve our complete perfection.¹⁴¹ While on earth operations of the sensitive soul belong to happiness antecedently, because in earthly life thinking requires input from the sensitive soul.¹⁴² In heaven, the “lower” parts of the soul (the vegetative and the sensitive soul) will be perfected by the “overflow” from the rational part of the soul,¹⁴³ while on earth, our advancement in spiritual development is either helped or hindered by the body and the “lower” parts of the soul.¹⁴⁴

Contemplation is the essence of happiness, and it is a rational activity, and so it might follow that our happiness is a rational activity without the admixture of other kinds of activities. However, this view gives us an incomplete picture of what Thomas said about happiness that is found in contemplation. Thomas concludes that happiness must be contemplation of God, or at least of some truth, following a negative analysis, which parallels the analysis presented in Aristotle’s Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and which shows what happiness must be after we eliminate all that happiness cannot be. But there is also a way of showing that contemplation is our happiness, not because it is

¹⁴⁰ ST I-II 4, 6 “Whether Perfection of the Body is Necessary for Happiness?”

Utrum ad Beatitudinem Requiritur Aliqua Perfectio Corporis.

¹⁴¹ ST I-II 4, 5 & 6.

¹⁴² ST I-II 3, 3.

¹⁴³ ST I-II 3, 3; 4, 6.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

leftover after everything else has been eliminated, but because contemplation is what completes us after other kinds of goods are possessed. To get this more complete picture of happiness and contemplation we have to consider Aquinas's view of the role of passions - which are the movements of sensitive appetites - in human happiness, and also look closely at the role of sensory perception. Although the activity of the rational soul is of primary importance, the non-rational side of our nature, which we share with other animals, is also needed for the practice of contemplation, and especially for learning which must precede contemplation. According to Thomas, the human activity of contemplation reflects our animal nature as well as our rational nature, and our animality affects the manner of our contemplation. That would be expected, given that we engage in contemplation as whole beings, composed of body and soul.

Contemplation is our fulfillment. It was already mentioned above that contemplation perfects human intellect. It is worthwhile, though, to consider in what sense contemplation is the fulfillment of a human being as a composite being, a whole rational animal. For that we need to consider the nature of a human being and to look at a human being from the perspective of Aquinas's teleology. Aquinas's teleology is a topic which cannot be fully discussed in this dissertation, but a very brief discussion of the nature of human fulfillment in the context of Aquinas's teleology is needed in order to provide us with a better understanding of the place of a human being as a rational animal among other kinds of beings.

Teleology

Aquinas sees the world as an orderly structure, and because it is orderly, it is a work of a wise being. According to Aquinas, the world is governed, and it is governed in a way that helps all things to achieve their perfection, their proper good.¹⁴⁵ According to Aquinas, God created the world and governs it. God is the creator and the First Cause of all things that exist.¹⁴⁶ And God is also their Final Cause¹⁴⁷

According to Thomas, all agents act for an end.¹⁴⁸ Even non-rational agents always act for an end, while human beings, who are rational agents, act for an end and

¹⁴⁵ Certain ancient philosophers denied the government of the world, saying that all things happened by chance. But such opinion can be refuted as impossible in two ways. First, by observation of things themselves: for we observe that in nature things happen always or nearly always for the best; which would not be the case unless some sort of providence directed nature towards good as an end; which is to govern. Wherefore the unfailing order we observe in things is a sign of their being governed ... Secondly, this is clear from a consideration of Divine goodness ... For as it belongs to the best to produce the best, it is not fitting that the supreme goodness of God should produce things without giving them their perfection. Now a thing's ultimate perfection consists in the attainment of its end. Therefore it belongs to the Divine goodness, as it brought things into existence, so to lead them to their end: and this is to govern.

Dicendum quod quidam antique philosophi gubernationem mundo subtraxerunt, dicentes omnia fortuito agi. Sed haec positio ostenditur esse impossibilis ex duobus. Primo quidem, ex eo quod apparet in ipsis rebus. Videmus enim in rebus naturalibus provenire quod melius est, aut semper aut in pluribus; quod non contingeret, nisi per aliquam providentiam res naturales dirigerentur ad finem boni, quod est gubernare. Unde ipse ordo certus rerum manifeste demonstrat gubernationem mundi... Secundo autem apparet idem ex consideratione divinae bonitatis... Cum enim optimi sit optima producere, non convenit summae Dei bonitati quod res productas ad perfectum non perducatur. Ultima autem perfectio est uniuscuiusque in consecutione finis. Unde ad divinam bonitatem pertinet ut sicut produxit res in esse, ita etiam eas ad finem perducatur. Quod est gubernare. ST I 103, 1.

¹⁴⁶ ST I 44, 1.

¹⁴⁷ Every agent acts for an end: otherwise one thing would not follow more than another from the action of the agent, unless it were by chance... But it does not belong to the First Agent, Who is agent only to act for the acquisition of some end; He intends only to communicate his perfection, which is His goodness; while every creature intends to acquire its own perfection, which is the likeness of the divine perfection and goodness. Therefore the divine goodness is the end of all things.

Dicendum quod omne agens agit propter finem; alioquin ex actione agentis non magis sequeretur hoc quam illud, nisi a casu... Sed primo agenti, qui est agens tantum, non convenit agere propter acquisitionem alicuius finis; sed intendit solum communicare suam perfectionem, quae est eius bonitas. Et unaquaeque creatura intendit consequi suam perfectionem, quae est similitudo perfectionis et bonitatis divinae. Sic ergo divina bonitas est finis rerum omnium. ST I 44, 4.

direct themselves to an end that they cognize.¹⁴⁹ All beings naturally tend to their ultimate end, which is their fulfillment, the actualization of their potency, and thus all their proximate ends are subsumed under that final end.¹⁵⁰ For human beings, their final end is their eternal happiness in heaven. According to Thomas, all human beings want happiness¹⁵¹ and all humans always act for the sake of their last end, their happiness.¹⁵² It follows that all human actions ultimately tend to that final end which is the eternal happiness in heaven, which is contemplation of God in heaven.¹⁵³ Or rather, all our acts would tend to eternal happiness if we always pursued the real good, though in case of humans, who often mistake the apparent for the real good, that is not always the case. Nevertheless, people always try to attain happiness. We all pursue happiness, though with varied success, and we, like all beings, are naturally endowed with inclinations which orient us towards that goal. The idea that all our actions aim at happiness and that our ultimate happiness is the vision of God in heaven follows from Aquinas's overall scheme of how the created world operates.

¹⁴⁸ ST I-II 1,2; SCG III, 2 omne agens agit propter finem.

¹⁴⁹ ST I-II 1, 1 and 2. Therefore it belongs to man to do everything for an end.

Ergo homini convenit omnia agere propter finem. ST I-II 1, 1 sed contra.

¹⁵⁰ ST I-II 1, 2,5 and 8.

¹⁵¹ ST I-II 5, 8.

¹⁵² ST I-II 1, 6.

¹⁵³ ST I-II 6.

Fulfillment, actualization, perfection

Only God is Being Itself.¹⁵⁴ All created things have their being from God, by participation in God who is Being Itself, and achieve actualization of their potency only through God.¹⁵⁵ God is the principle of being of all things which exist and without God nothing can exist, nothing can continue to exist.¹⁵⁶ All things created exist because they participate in God's being.¹⁵⁷ Only God is Goodness; created things possess being and goodness by participation.¹⁵⁸ Created things exist and are good insofar as they are actualized, and they are actualized by participation in God's being and goodness.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ ST I 3, 4.

¹⁵⁵ ST I 8, 1.

¹⁵⁶ ST I 104, 1.

¹⁵⁷ ST I 8, 1; ST I 103, 2.

¹⁵⁸ ST I 6, 4.

¹⁵⁹ It is absolutely true that, there is first something which is essentially being and is essentially good, which we call God...and Aristotle agrees with this. Hence from the first being, essentially such, and good, everything can be called good and a being, inasmuch as it participates in it by way of a certain assimilation which is far removed and defective... Everything is therefore called good from the divine goodness, as from the first exemplary effective and final principle of all goodness. Nevertheless, everything is called good by reason of the similitude of the divine goodness belonging to it, which is formally its own goodness, whereby it is denominated good. And so of all things there is one goodness, and yet many goodnesses.

Tamen hoc absolute verum est, quod aliquid est primum, quod per suam essentiam est ens et bonum, quod dicimus Deum...Huic etiam sententiae concordat Aristoteles. A primo igitur per suam essentiam ente et bono, unumquodque potest dici bonum et ens, in quantum participat ipsum per modum cuiusdam assimilationis, licet remote et deficienter...Sic ergo unumquodque dicitur bonum bonitate divina, sicut primo principio exemplari, effectivo et finali totius bonitatis. Nihilominus tamen unumquodque dicitur bonum similitudine divinae bonitatis sibi inhaerente, quae est formaliter sua bonitas denominans ipsum. Et sic est bonitas una omnium; et etiam multae bonitates. ST I 6,4;

Also: Now, all things get their being from the fact that they are made like unto God, Who is subsisting being itself, for all things exist merely as participants in existing being. Therefore, all things desire as their ultimate end to be made like unto God.

Secundum hoc autem esse habent omnia quod Deo assimilantur, qui est ipsum esse subsistens: cum omnia sint solum quasi esse participantia. Omnia igitur appetunt quasi ultimum finem Deo assimilari. SCG III 19 par. 3 Also: QDV 22 aa.1 and 2, Aquinas, Thomas St., *Truth*, tr. James V. McGlynn, S.J., Hackett

All beings strive to achieve their final end. Achieving their final end, things achieve their perfection, actualization of their potency and goodness proper to their natures. To achieve the final end and actualization means that a given thing has attained its perfection: “For a thing is perfect in proportion to its state of actuality, because we call that perfect which lacks nothing of the mode of its perfection.”¹⁶⁰ It means having the fullness of being according to one’s nature.

All things are oriented to God as their greatest good. God is being itself, and being is equivalent to the good. “Goodness and being are really the same, and differ only in idea...But goodness presents the aspect of desirableness, which being does not present.”¹⁶¹ Goodness therefore is the final cause, because it is what all things desire.¹⁶² To say that all things “desire” goodness, and ultimately “desire” God (or “love” God) is not a statement of any thing’s emotional state, but refers to the natural tendencies of all beings to achieve their actualization, which is also their perfection. And hence, created things naturally “desire” to exist and possess goodness proper to their natures. Created things strive to fully actualize their being, to achieve their perfection. Thus, every thing is moved towards some end and ultimately every thing tends to good which would be its perfection and, according to Aquinas, an imitation of divine goodness.¹⁶³

Publishing company, Inc. 1994. Latin text: Thomas Aquinas, “Quaestiones disputatae de veritate”, in *Opera Omnia*, Parma, reprinted in New York: Musurgia Publishers, 1949, Hereafter referred to as: QDV.

¹⁶⁰ Hoc enim dicitur aliquid esse perfectum, secundum quod est actu, nam perfectum dicitur, cui nihil deest secundum modum suae perfectionis. ST I 4, 1.

¹⁶¹ Dicendum quod bonum et ens sunt idem secundum rem: sed differunt secundum rationem tantum...sed bonum dicitur rationem appetibilis, quam non dicitur ens. ST I 5, 1.

¹⁶² ST I 5, 4; ST I 103, 2.

¹⁶³ Hence, it becomes obvious that even things which lack knowledge can be made to work for an end, and to seek the good by a natural appetite, and to seek the divine likeness and their own perfection. ... For, by

Human beings, like all other beings, naturally strive to achieve fullness of their being, their perfection, “since everything desires its own perfection, a man desires for his ultimate end, that which he desires as his perfect and crowning good.”¹⁶⁴ That perfection, in case of humans, would be called “happiness”, and it would consist of the Beatific Vision.

Beatific vision as the final end

Since human beings are the image of God,¹⁶⁵ we can most fully participate in God’s goodness when we see God in heaven. That is why when we meet our First Cause,¹⁶⁶ who is our origin, our will is satisfied.¹⁶⁷ We achieve our perfection and fulfillment in an intellectual way because the most important aspect of our nature is the fact that we are rational beings.

the fact that they tend to their own perfection they tend to the good, since a thing is good to the extent that it is perfect. Moreover, by virtue of tending to be good it tends to the divine likeness, for a thing is made like unto God in so far as it is good. And this or that particular good thing becomes an object of desire according as it is a likeness of prime goodness. So, too, for this reason it tends to its own good, because it tends to the divine likeness and not conversely. Hence, it is clear that all things desire the divine likeness as an ultimate end.

Planum igitur fit quod ea etiam quae cognitione carent, possunt operari propter finem; et appetere bonum naturali appetitu; et appetere perfectionem....Nam per hoc quod tendunt per suam perfectionem, tendunt ad bonum: cum unumquodque in tantum bonum sit in quantum est perfectum. Secundum vero quod tendit ad hoc quod sit bonum, tendit in divinam similitudinem: Deo enim assimilatur aliquid in quantum bonum est. Bonum autem hoc vel illud particulare habet quod sit appetibile in quantum est similitudo primae bonitatis. Propter hoc igitur tendit in proprium bonum, quia tendit in divinam similitudinem, et non e converso. Unde patet quod omnia appetunt divinam similitudinem quasi ultimum finem. SCG III 24, 6; Also: ST I 103,4.

¹⁶⁴ Quia cum unumquodque appetat suam perfectionem, illud appetit aliquis ut ultimum finem, quod appetit ut bonum perfectum et completivum sui ipsius. ST I-II 1, 5.

¹⁶⁵ ST I 93, 1.

¹⁶⁶ ST I-II 3, 8.

¹⁶⁷ ST I-II 5, 8.

Human happiness is human perfection. What is perfect must be actualized. A living being that acts is ultimately actualized through an activity. Thus, a human being is actualized through some kind of activity. Since humans are rational beings, their ultimate actualization is the activity of the intellective part of the soul. In heaven, when we achieve the state of perfection, our minds are united to God by “continual, everlasting operation”¹⁶⁸ It will be an operation of the intellective part of human soul,¹⁶⁹ and specifically, it will be an operation of an intellect,¹⁷⁰ for it is an act of intellect to apprehend the end, which in case of the Beatific Vision is God Himself. Our greatest happiness will consist in the contemplation of God¹⁷¹ in the vision of Divine Essence.¹⁷² “Final and perfect happiness can consist in nothing else than the vision of the Divine Essence.”¹⁷³ Then we shall know the essence of the First Cause, and in this way the human intellect will achieve its perfection.

Comprehensive vision of divine essence is possible only for God Himself, as was discussed above. Only God fully understands His own essence. We, the creatures, can only participate in that knowledge, as we can only participate in being and in goodness. But when we fully participate, according to our nature, in God’s being, goodness and knowledge, we achieve our fulfillment, our final good, our happiness.

¹⁶⁸ Continua et sempiterna operatione ST I-II 3, 2 ad 4.

¹⁶⁹ ST I-II 3, 3.

¹⁷⁰ ST I-II 3, 4.

¹⁷¹ ST I-II 3, 5.

¹⁷² ST I-II 3, 8.

¹⁷³ ST I-II 3, 8.

When beings achieve their final good, they rest. Thus, human beings rest when they return to God in heaven. Delight is defined as the rest in the good attained.¹⁷⁴

Delight, Thomas says, attaches to the attainment of our final end and our perfection, which we find in the Beatific Vision.¹⁷⁵

Non-rational beings achieve their end, their good, but it is not called happiness. Only for rational creatures, like human beings, that rest is happiness. For non-rational beings, the rest in the good follows their fulfillment and the attainment of their ends, but it is not what Aquinas calls “happiness”.¹⁷⁶ Happiness is the fulfillment proper to one’s nature, but only in the case of rational natures, who are capable of understanding it. Happiness, according to Aquinas is “knowing and loving God”¹⁷⁷ which is possible only for rational creatures, who are capable of contemplation of the Divine Essence.

Thus, happiness can be described as fulfillment in accordance with human nature. That also means that human nature is perfected, and that our potency is actualized, because we have attained our good. There may be gradations of perfection, for a being may attain some good, but not all the good proper to it, and thus, it may actualized with respect to some aspects of its nature, but not with respect to others.

‘Actualization’, ‘perfection’ and ‘fulfillment’ are terms which can be used when we talk of created beings attaining their good. But only in case of rational creatures, like

¹⁷⁴ ST I-II 25, 2; ST I-II 32, 1.

¹⁷⁵ ST I-II 4, 1.

¹⁷⁶ ST I-II 1, 8.

¹⁷⁷ For man and other rational creatures attain to their last end by knowing and loving God. *Nam homo et aliae rationales creaturae consequentur ultimum finem cognoscendo et amando Deum.* ST I-II 1, 8.

humans, can we also say that they have attained happiness. Human beings may be perfected in some respects and may be happy to some extent in this life. Only in heaven will the beatified achieve full perfection and complete happiness.

Form and Natural Inclination

Although in the governance of the world God is the first and the final cause, He also allows intermediary causes.¹⁷⁸ And all things are disposed toward their last end and to the order of the whole creation through all their actions, not only through those which lead to the final end.¹⁷⁹ God is not the immediate cause of all effects. God has created the world in such a way that created things are also endowed with powers to be secondary causes. Thomas says: “Secondary causes are the executors of divine providence.”¹⁸⁰ These secondary causes are living and non-living entities, found in the world of nature, which we ordinarily observe as causes of various events. For example, water may be the cause of the erosion of rocks, bees may be the cause of pollination of flowers, etc.

¹⁷⁸ ST I 22, 2 ; 104,2; 105,5.

¹⁷⁹ But an agent does not move except out of intention for an end. For if the agent were not determinate to some particular effect, it would not do one thing rather than another: consequently in order that it produce a determinate effect, it must, of necessity, be determined to some certain one, which has the nature of an end.

Agens autem non movet nisi ex intentione finis. Si enim agens non esset determinatum ad aliquem effectum, non magis ageret hoc quam illud; ad hoc ergo quod determinatum effectum producat, necesse est quod determinetur ad aliquid certum, quod habet rationem finis. ST I-II 1, 2;

Also: If an agent did not incline toward some definite effect, all results would be a matter of indifference for him.

Si agens non tenderet ad aliquem effectum determinatum, omnes effectus essent ei indifferentes. SCG III 2, 8.

In the next paragraph Aquinas answers the objection that some actions seem to be aimless and their effects indifferent, for example, absent-minded scratching of a beard. He points out that if we look at the whole picture we find that even such actions do serve some purpose.

¹⁸⁰ *Sunt igitur secundae causae divinae providentiae executrices. SCG III 77, 2.*

Aquinas's teleological view of the world demands that there be purpose in the operations of created things.¹⁸¹ And he also tells us that the Creator as the cause endows beings with certain powers, powers to act for ends for which they are designed. Aquinas would not say that divine providence causes erosion of rocks, but that divine providence gave water the power to erode rocks, and that divine providence is manifested in the power of water. Aquinas says: "God works in things in such a manner that things have their proper operation."¹⁸² According to Thomas, God works in every agent by being the end of action, by being the primary agent, and by giving things their form and power. First of all, nothing is good except insofar as it participates in the goodness of God. In this way God, as the good, is the end of every action. Secondly, when there are several agents, the second one, acts in virtue of the first agent. In this way God, as the primary agent, is the cause of every action. Finally, God gives created beings their form and preserves their powers and their existence. In this way also God is the cause of every action. Thus, God is the primary agent, but created things are secondary agents, and the secondary agents have purposes and powers to cause things.

Created things strive to actualize themselves and to achieve their perfection according to their natures and through their natural appetites. Actualization of any particular thing depends on what kind of a thing it is, and that is determined by its form.¹⁸³ How a given thing acts or is acted upon depends on its form, which is the

¹⁸¹ Indeed, all things created would seem, in a way, to be purposeless, if they lacked an operation proper to them; since the purpose of everything is its operation.

Quinimmo omnes res creatae viderentur quodammodo esse frustra, si propria operatione destituerentur; cum omnes res sint propter suam operationem. ST I 105, 5.

¹⁸² Deum operari in rebus, quod tamen ipsae res propriam habeant operationem. ST I 105, 5.

principle of action.¹⁸⁴ Every being has a determined nature, essence, form, which governs its operations.¹⁸⁵

Human beings also have a certain nature, which governs their operations, including such activities as study or contemplation. To better understand how the operations of the sensitive soul may participate in contemplation, we need to consider what kind of creatures humans are, what is our nature. There is no space in this dissertation to fully discuss all that Aquinas said about human nature, but a few points must be noted because of their relevance to the present argument.

The concept of nature

Thomas follows Aristotle in his definition of “nature” of things: “He says that those things which have in themselves a principle of their motion have a nature. And such are all subjects of nature. For nature is a subject insofar as it is called matter, and nature is

¹⁸³ Everything is said to be good so far as it is perfect; for in that way only is it desirable...But since everything is what it is by its form...in order for a thing to be perfect and good it must have a form, together with all that precedes and follows upon that form...But the form itself is signified by the species; for everything is placed in its species by its form...Further, upon the form follows an inclination to the end, or to an action, or something of the sort; for everything, in so far as it is in act, acts and tends towards that which is in accordance with its form.

Dicendum quod unumquodque dicitur bonum, in quantum est perfectum; sic enim est appetibile...Cum autem unumquodque sit id quod est, per suam formam...Ipsa autem forma significatur per speciem, quia per formam unumquodque in specie constituitur...Ad formam autem consequitur inclinatio ad finem, aut ad actionem, aut ad aliquid huiusmodi; quia unumquodque, in quantum est actu, agit. ST I 5, 5. Also: SCG III 20 & 21.

¹⁸⁴ The end, the agent, and the form are principles of action, but in a certain order. For the first principle of action is the end which moves the agent; the second is the agent; the third is the form of that which the agent applies to action (although the agent also acts through its own form); as may be clearly seen in things made by art.

Et agens et forma se habent ut actionis principium, se ordine quodam. Nam primum quidem principium actionis est finis, qui movet agentem; secundo vero agens; tertio autem forma eius quod ab agente applicatur ad agendum quamvis et ipsum agens per formam suam agat; ut patet in artificialibus. ST I 105, 5.

¹⁸⁵ Inclination follows every form. Quamlibet formam sequitur aliqua inclinatio. ST I 80,1.

in a subject insofar as it is called form.”¹⁸⁶ Thomas contrasts things which “have a nature,” i.e. natural things, with artificial things, such as a bed or clothing. Natural things, whether animate or inanimate, have certain natural tendencies and certain patterns of behavior, and thus they have in themselves a “principle of their motion”. That principle of motion may cause things to tend to a certain place, for example, to fall downwards, or it may regulate the increase and decrease, which pertains to plants and animals, or it may regulate various alterations, which can be observed in chemical reactions. By contrast, artificial things can be moved in various ways only by an agent.

According to Thomas (in agreement with Aristotle) all things on earth are composed of matter and form. Thomas notes that “nature” is a subject with respect to matter, because what can be altered is matter, however “nature” is in a subject with respect to form, for the way things are altered depends on the form.¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, Thomas explains that “according to nature” may refer both, to the thing which is a natural kind of a thing, and to the phenomena caused by it or adhering to it as accidents.¹⁸⁸ Here Thomas (after Aristotle) gives an example of fire – a natural kind of thing – which has the property of being carried upwards, and which property is not itself a “nature”, but is “according to nature”. Thus if Aquinas refers to “human nature” it implies that a human

¹⁸⁶ Et dicit quod habentia naturam sunt illa quae habent in seipsis principium sui motus. Et talia sunt omnia subjecta naturae: quia natura est subjectum, secundum quod natura dicitur materia: et est in subjecto, secundum quod natura dicitur forma. In Ph II 1, 146, Aquinas, Thomas, St. *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics*, tr. Richard J. Blackwell, Richard J. Spath, and w. Edmund Thirlkel, Notre Dame, Indiana: Dumb Ox Books, 1999. Latin text: Thomas Aquinas, “Commentarium in VIII libros Physicorum,” in *Opera Omnia*, Parma, reprinted in New York: Musurgia Publishers, 1949. Hereafter referred to as: In Ph.

¹⁸⁷ In Ph II 1, 146; In Ph II 2, 151 and 152.

¹⁸⁸ In Ph II 1, 147.

being is a natural being, endowed with its characteristic principles governing its development and behavior, and possessing characteristic powers.

The human soul

Humans are composite beings, composed of body and soul.¹⁸⁹ The soul is the form, while the body is the matter.¹⁹⁰ Soul itself is not a person.¹⁹¹ Humans are corporeal and ensouled creatures. Humans are not the only creatures composed of soul and body, for all living beings on earth are such composites. However, different kinds of earthly creatures possess different kinds of souls. All of them must possess a vegetative soul.¹⁹² This is the soul which causes the living thing to grow, to change nourishment into the substance of its body, and to reproduce.¹⁹³ Animals possess the vegetative soul, since they, like plants, grow and reproduce, but animals also possess the sensitive soul. Animals, unlike plants, have to maintain their life through their actions, such as foraging for food or defending themselves from danger. For that purpose, animals need the ability to gain knowledge about their environment and to react to that environment, and those abilities belong to the sensitive the soul.¹⁹⁴ Human beings are living and sentient beings, and thus they possess both the vegetative and the sensitive soul.¹⁹⁵ But human beings are

¹⁸⁹ ST I 75, 4.

¹⁹⁰ ST I 76, 1.

¹⁹¹ ST I 75, 4.

¹⁹² ST I 78, 1.

¹⁹³ ST I 78, 1 and 2.

¹⁹⁴ ST I 78, 1; ST I 80, 1 and 3.

¹⁹⁵ ST I 78, 1.

also rational creatures, possessed of reason and will.¹⁹⁶ Reason and will belong to the rational soul.¹⁹⁷

Thus, a human being is a creature possessed of a tripartite soul.¹⁹⁸ The development and physical functioning of a human being is governed by the vegetative part of the soul, as is the case with all living things, sensory perception, locomotion and some cognitive operations are governed by the sensitive part of the soul, as is the case with all animals, and the rational thinking and willing is governed by the intellectual part of the soul. The powers of each part of the soul, separately and together, regulate our behavior.

Natural inclinations

According to its nature, every being possesses certain inclinations, also called natural appetites, which are steady dispositions to act in certain ways, and which help it to pursue its ends. Thus, all created things have natural inclinations to operate in ways characteristic of their kind, in accordance with their nature. Inclination is a kind of appetite.¹⁹⁹ Inclination is a general tendency to behave in a certain way, for example, to fall towards the ground, or to search for nourishment, etc. The object of an inclination (or

¹⁹⁶ ST I 78, 1; ST I 76, 4; ST I-II Prologue.

¹⁹⁷ ST I 79, 1; ST I 80, 2.

¹⁹⁸ ST I 77, 4; ST I 78, 1.

¹⁹⁹ The appetite is nothing else than an inclination of a person desirous of a thing towards that thing.

Appetitus nihil aliud est quam quaedam inclinatio appetentis in aliquid. ST I-II 8, 1.

In some passages Aquinas also uses the word love (*amor*) in ways synonymous with inclination or appetite. Love is defined as the principle of movement towards the end loved. ST I-II 26, 1.

appetite) is good.²⁰⁰ Every being loves and seeks what is suitable to it, and thus, what is good for it. Inclination follows form and so everything is inclined to its proper good in a way characteristic to it: “The natural appetite is that inclination which each thing has, of its own nature, for something; wherefore by its natural appetite each power desires something suitable to itself.”²⁰¹

Things may move themselves or be moved by other agents, but all agents act for the sake of their good, and what that good is depends on the nature of the agent that moves.²⁰² Natural desires follow from natural inclinations.²⁰³ For example, the fact that

²⁰⁰ Natural inclinations always orient a given being towards its proper good, according to its nature. So called “bad desires” may be caused by environmental disturbance, by illness, or, in case of humans, by error in judgment and bad habits.

²⁰¹ Dicendum quod appetitus naturalis est inclinatio cuiuslibet rei in aliquid ex natura sua; unde naturali appetitu quaelibet potentia desiderat sibi conveniens. ST I 78, 1 ad. 3; See also: ST I 80, 1 ad. 3;

See also: In the natural appetite the principle of this movement is the appetitive subject’s connaturalness with the thing to which it tends, and may be called natural love.

In appetitu autem naturali principium huiusmodi motus est connaturalitas appetentis ad id in quod tendit, quae dici potest amor naturalis. ST I-II 26,1;

See also: Nature so understood seems to express essence as what underlies a thing’s characteristic behavior. “Essence and Existence (*De Ente et Essentia*),” in *Thomas Aquinas. Selected Philosophical Writings*. selected and translated by Timothy McDermott, New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.1993, p.92; Latin text:

Tamen nature nomen hoc modo sumpte uidetur significare essentiam rei secundum quod habet ordinem ad propriam operationem rei. *De Ente et Essentia* In *Le “De Ente et Essentia” de S. Thomas D’Aquin*. M.-D. Roland-Gosselin, O.P. , LeSaulchoir, Kain (Belgique), 1926, p.4.

²⁰² But it must be noted that, since every inclination results from a form, the natural appetite results from a form existing in the nature of things: while the sensitive appetite, as also the intellectual appetite or rational appetite, which we call the will, follows from an apprehended form.

Sed considerandum est quod cum omnis inclinatio consequatur formam in natura existentem; appetitus autem sensitivus, vel etiam intellectivus se rationalis, qui dicitur voluntas, sequitur formam apprehensam. ST I-II 8, 1;

See also: Now, the good that is proper to a thing may be received in many ways. One way depends on what is appropriate to the essential character of the individual. It is thus that an animal seeks his good, when he desires the food whereby he may be kept in existence. A second way depends on what is

humans experience desire for food follows from natural inclination to self-preservation. And the fact that humans experience a desire for knowledge follows from an inclination to truth natural to all rational beings.²⁰⁴

Human actions, like the actions of all beings, aim at some end. Humans are possessed of reason and will and thus, have the power to judge and to make their choices.²⁰⁵ However, before we get to the point at which we can make choices – choices regarding contemplation, for example - we are guided by natural inclinations, like all other created beings.²⁰⁶ We share many aspects of our nature with non-rational creatures, and so we are also moved in analogous ways.

Inclinations proper to each kind

All things, according to Aquinas, are disposed to fulfill their ends and seek their good.²⁰⁷ All the proximate ends therefore are subordinated to the final end: “For a thing is

appropriate to the species. It is in this way that an animal desires his proper good, inasmuch as he desires the procreation of offspring... A third way depends on the essential character of his genus. It is in this way that an equivocal agent seeks its proper good by an act of causation, as in the case of the heavens. And a fourth way depends on the analogical likeness of things produced, in relation to their source. And it is in this way that God, Who is beyond genus, gives existing being to all, because of His own goodness.

Bonum autem suum cuiuslibet rei potest accipi multipliciter. Uno qui proprium ratione individui. Et sic appetit animal suum bonum cum appetit cibum, quo in esse conservatur. Alio modo, secundum quod est eius ratione speciei. Et sic appetit proprium bonum animal in quantum appetit generationem prolis... Tertio vero modo, ratione generis. Et sic appetit proprium bonum in causando agens aequivocum: sicut caelum. Quarto autem modo, ratione similitudinis analogiae principiatorum ad suum principium. Et sic Deus, qui est extra genus, propter suum bonum omnibus rebus dat esse. SCG III 24, 7.

²⁰³ ST I-II 26, 2; ST I 81, 1.

²⁰⁴ ST I-II 94, 2; In Met I 1, 2-4, Aquinas, Thomas St., *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*. Tr. John P. Rowan, Notre Dame Indiana: Dumb Ox Books, 1995. Latin text: Thomas Aquinas, “Commentarium in XII libros Metaphysicorum,” in *Opera Omnia*, Parma, reprinted in New York: Musurgia Publishers, 1949. Hereafter referred to as: In Met.

²⁰⁵ ST I-II Prologue.

²⁰⁶ ST I-II 1, 2.

not moved toward a proximate end unless for the sake of a last end.”²⁰⁸ And they are disposed to fulfill their ends, whether they move themselves or are moved.²⁰⁹ According to Thomas, all things are moved towards their last end, their fulfillment, completion and perfection. This is in accordance with the will of God, the creator and the First Cause. Even things which lack reason, and even inanimate things move towards their last end, not because they know it, but because they are designed that way. “But those things that lack reason tend to an end, by natural inclination, as being moved by another and not by themselves... For the entire irrational nature is in comparison to God as an instrument to the principal agent.”²¹⁰

Different kinds of things operate in different ways, according to their nature. As was mentioned above, all things are endowed with natural inclinations or appetites. Aquinas distinguishes three kinds of inclinations or appetites: natural, sensitive and rational.²¹¹

Natural inclination is the kind of attraction which a stone has for the earth. That kind of inclination is the principle by which all beings seek what is proper to them. Inclinations possessed by inanimate things are studied today (although not under that name) by physicists and chemists, for example that tendency of stones to fall to the

²⁰⁷ Therefore, the end of all things is a good. *Finis igitur omnium est bonum.* SCG III 16, 4. See also: SCG III, 3 ; ST I 5 and 4; ST I 103, 2.

²⁰⁸ *Non enim movetur aliquid in finem proximum nisi propter finem postremum.* SCG III 17, 9. See also: ST I-II 1, 6.

²⁰⁹ SCG III,2; ST I-II 1,2.

²¹⁰ *Illa vero quae ratione carent, tendunt in finem propter naturalem inclinationem, quasi ab alio mota, non autem a seipsis. Nam tota irrationalis natura comparatur ad Deum sicut instrumentum ad agens principale.* ST I-II 1, 2.

²¹¹ ST I-II 28, 6.

ground, or tendency of various materials to react with certain chemical agents.

According to the Aristotelian system of physics with which Aquinas was familiar, inclinations of inanimate things were studied by natural philosophers and what these philosophers studied was the motion of objects, according to Aristotelian philosophy.²¹²

According to Thomas, all created things, even things devoid of knowledge, and even inanimate ones are made to act for some end²¹³ All things possess natural appetites, because ultimately all things are oriented towards their First and Final Cause that is God, who is the source of their being.²¹⁴

Living things like plants possess the kind of inclinations which in the modern world are studied by biologists, such as inclination to grow or to nourish itself.²¹⁵

Animals possess more complex kinds of inclinations to behave in ways affected by their sensory perceptions and in response to the perceived situations. Animals have natural inclinations of the type found in any sensible objects and of the type found in any living objects, but in addition to that, animals also have sensitive appetites, which are in the sensitive soul.²¹⁶ What is characteristic of animal nature are the movements of those

²¹² ST I 80, 1; ST I-II 26, 1; SCG III 24, 6; In Ph III 1, 276.

²¹³ Hence, it becomes obvious that even things which lack in knowledge can be made to work for an end, and to seek the good by a natural appetite, and to seek the divine likeness and their own perfection.

Planum igitur fit quod ea etiam quae cognitione carent, possunt operari propter finem; et appetere bonum naturali appetitu; et appetere divinam similitudinem; et propriam perfectionem. SCG III 24, 6; See also ST I 103, 2 and 4.

²¹⁴ SCG III 17 & 24.

²¹⁵ ST I 78, 1 and 2; In DA II 7 and 9.

²¹⁶ Therefore, just as the natural appetite tends to good existing in a thing; so the animal or voluntary appetite tends to a good which is apprehended.

sensitive appetites.²¹⁷ These movements are responses of an animal to situations it encounters and are called “passions”²¹⁸ Desire Aquinas regards as one of the passions.²¹⁹

Natural Desires

From natural inclinations follow natural desires.²²⁰ Natural inclinations orient a given being towards its good.²²¹ In case of a sentient being, that good affects the power of sensitive appetite of the animal.²²² The good which is the appetible object causes the animal’s sensitive appetite to become adapted to it, which adaptation is called love.²²³ The sensitive appetite is a power which allows the animal to react appropriately to whatever is either useful or harmful to it, but it is not oriented towards particular objects. That particular orientation towards particular objects is called love (*amor*). For example, I as a human being have a natural inclination to preserve my life, and that requires, among other things, eating. The power of the sensitive appetite causes me to move towards food,

Sicut igitur id in quo tendit appetitus naturalis, est bonum existens in re; ita id in quod tendit appetitus animalis vel voluntaries, est bonum apprehensum. ST I-II 8,1; See also: ST I 80, 1; QDV 22, 3;

See also: In DA III 15, Aquinas, Thomas, St. *Commentary on Aristotle’s De Anima*, tr. Kenelm foster, O.P. and Silvester Humphries, O.P., Notre Dame, Indiana: Dumb Ox Books, 1994. Latin text: Thomas Aquinas, “Sententia libri De anima,” in *Opera Omnia*, Parma, reprinted in New York: Musurgia Publishers, 1949. Hereafter referred to as: In DA.

²¹⁷ ST I-II 28, 6.

²¹⁸ ST I-II 22, 2 and 3; ST I-II 26,1.

²¹⁹ ST I-II 30.

²²⁰ The natural appetite is that inclination which each thing has, of its own nature, for something; wherefore by its natural appetite each power desires something suitable to itself.

Dicendum quod appetitus naturalis est inclinatio cuiuslibet rei in aliquid ex natura sua; unde naturali appetitu quaelibet potentia desiderat sibi conveniens. ST I 78, 1 ad 3; See also: ST I-II 26, 2.

²²¹ ST I-II 94, 2.

²²² ST I 80, 1.

²²³ ST I-II 26, 2.

generally speaking. But I have to move towards a particular food item in order to feed myself, for example towards a loaf of bread. My particular orientation towards bread is technically called love of bread. Because I have that love of bread, I desire bread.²²⁴ Here one must note that, while my love for bread may be constant, my desire for bread may come and go, depending on the level of hunger. My desire for bread follows from my love for bread, which is possible because I possess sensitive appetite, which causes me to pursue food, because I have a natural inclination to self-preservation, and to preserve my life I need nourishing food, according to my nature. Thus natural desires, like desire for food, follow from natural inclinations.

When it comes to natural desires of sentient beings, and especially of humans, one has to contrast them with non-natural desires. Thomas distinguishes between “natural”, “non-natural”, and “unnatural”, and in case of humans the word “natural” can be understood in three ways. One can speak of something being “natural” to humans as rational beings, since reason is what makes us different from other animals. One can speak of something being “natural” to humans by contrasting it with reason and denoting desires which pertain to us qua animals.²²⁵ Finally, one can speak of something being “natural” to humans qua corporeal beings, or qua living beings and contrast it with that which is natural to us qua sentient beings, or animals.²²⁶ We have to judge from the context which meaning of “natural” is the correct one.

²²⁴ ST I-II 25, 2; ST I-II 26, 2.

²²⁵ ST I-II 31, 7; ST I-II 30, 3.

²²⁶ ST I 80, 1.

Our natural desires are those which are, generally speaking, characteristic of humans. By contrast, there may be desires which are unnatural, which are not in accordance with human nature. And here Thomas notes the distinction between the specific and the individual nature. He says: “For it happens in an individual that some one of the natural principles of the species is corrupted, so that something which is contrary to the specific nature, becomes accidentally natural to this individual.”²²⁷ Thus, a given individual’s nature may be such that by some accident, with respect to certain traits, it is contrary to the specific human nature. Unnatural desire may be caused by an illness, but in case of human beings who are endowed with reason, imagination and free will, such desires may be also developed at will. In this dissertation, we shall only consider natural desires. Natural desires then are desires which accord with the nature of a given animal, when that animal is in good health.

The sensitive soul

Aquinas contrasts natural inclinations which all natural things possess, with the inclinations which reflect the special needs of sentient beings. Sentient beings have some knowledge of their environment, and of other things besides themselves. Depending on what kind of beings they are, their knowledge may be more or less advanced, but all sentient beings are capable of knowing. And as they know something of their environment, they also react and move towards or away from to the things they know.

²²⁷ Contingit enim in aliquot individuo corrumpi aliquod principiorum naturalium speciei; et sic id quod est contra naturam speciei, fieri per accidens naturale huic individuo. ST I-II 31, 7.

There are two kinds of operations which belong to the sensitive part of the soul, namely, perceptions and passions. In order to survive and thrive an animal needs to know its environment through perceiving things, and the animal needs to react to the things it perceives and those reactions are called passions.

The sensitive appetite

In order to react to things in their environment animals need to desire - in a positive sense of attraction, or a negative sense of aversion – what they perceive. Thus, they need the appetitive power in their souls, which is the source of desires. That power is the sensitive appetite. Thomas says:

Therefore, as forms exist in those things that have knowledge in a higher manner and above the manner of natural forms; so must there be in them an inclination surpassing the natural inclination, which is called the natural appetite. And this superior inclination belongs to the appetitive power of the soul, through which the animal is able to desire what it apprehends, and not only that to which it is inclined by its natural form. And so it is necessary to assign an appetitive power to the soul.²²⁸

The sensitive appetite is a passive power, moved by things the sense apprehends.²²⁹

Through this power, the animal experiences passions in response to the various phenomena happening around it. And the animal's sensitive appetite is capable of coordinating and selecting those occurrences which are important to a given animal:

“Natural appetite is the animal appetite, which follows the apprehension, and by which something is desired not as suitable to this or that power, such as sight for seeing, or

²²⁸ Sic igitur formae altiori modo existunt in habentibus cognitionem supra modum formarum naturalium, ita oportet quod in eis sit inclinatio supra modum inclinationis naturalis, quae dicitur appetitus naturalis. Et haec superior inclinatio pertinet ad vim animae appetitivam, per quam animal appetere potest ea quae apprehendit, non solum ea ad quae inclinatur ex forma naturali. Sic igitur necesse est ponere aliquam potentiam animae appetitivam. ST I 80, 1.

²²⁹ ST I 80, 1.

sound for hearing; but simply as suitable to the animal.”²³⁰ The sensitive appetite allows the animal to respond to and to choose whatever is suitable to that animal. The sensitive appetite is divided into the concupiscible and the irascible powers, corresponding to attractions and aversions.

Passions

Operations of the sensitive part of the soul which allow the animal to react to its environment are called passions.²³¹ Passions are the reactions of an animal to the things it perceives in the environment and the reactions are experienced as feelings such as attraction or aversion, fear, anger, delight etc. Aquinas distinguishes two appetitive powers in the sensitive part of the soul, each power being the seat of certain kinds of passions. The two powers are the concupiscible appetite and the irascible appetite.²³² To the irascible appetite, whose object is the good difficult to obtain, belong those feelings which allow the animal to defend itself from danger, for example, fear or anger. To the concupiscible appetite, whose object is the good of a given animal, belong those feelings which allow the animal to pursue the pleasurable goods. Passions of love, desire or delight belong to the concupiscible power of the sensitive part of the soul. Passions guide the animal to pay attention to certain things and not others, and to choose certain things and not others. Those three kinds of passions, i.e. love, desire and delight, are of particular importance to human pursuit of knowledge and the practice of contemplation.

²³⁰ *Appetitus animalis consequens apprehensionem, quo appetitur aliquid non ea ratione qua est conveniens ad actum huius vel illius potentiae, utpote visio ad videndum et auditio ad audiendum; sed quia est conveniens simpliciter animali.* ST I 80, 1 ad 3.

²³¹ ST I-II 22,1; ST I-II 25, 1 and 2.

²³² ST I 81, 2.

Love

All created things are endowed with natural appetites, which orient them to their proper good, and human beings are not an exception to that. All of a creature's natural appetites help that creature to attain its ends, and especially its final end, which is the actualization of its potency.

Aquinas uses the term "love" to describe creature's natural attraction to certain objects. He sometimes uses the word "love" to denote attraction in general terms, which makes it synonymous with "natural appetite", but sometimes he uses it to denote attraction to a particular good. Love as a passion is an attraction to a particular good, a particular object. That object belongs to a class of objects which accord with a given animal's natural appetite, but it is a particular object, which is perceived by the animal and which is then recognized as useful, as an appetible good.

An appetible good is desirable and may be desired at a given time. We do not desire what we love at every moment, but what we desire, must be something we love. For example, one may love chocolate, but one would not desire to eat it all the time, only sometimes. However, one would not want to eat chocolate at all, if one did not love it.²³³

Desires

In sentient beings, desires follow from natural appetites, and more precisely, they follow from love. All desires of a given creature altogether are supposed to help that creature to attain its final end. Human beings experience desires of several kinds, which arise in different parts of the soul. We do not speak of desires originating in the

²³³ The word "love" is used here in a technical sense; in a conversation it may be better to say that one likes chocolate.

vegetative part of the soul, since that soul is the origin of nutritive and generative powers, which are not under control of intellect and will and so there is no possibility of pursuit.²³⁴ Nevertheless, the physical processes controlled by the vegetative soul may be the direct cause of the kind of desires which originate in the sensitive soul and which motivate an animal to act. For example desire for food, i.e. hunger, is caused by the physiological phenomenon of the low level of sugar in the blood. A healthy animal would then feel hunger and that animal would be motivated to search for food. The sensitive part of the soul is the origin of the desires which follow from the the irascible appetite – such as the desire to flee danger - and of those which follow from the concupiscible appetite, - such as the desire for food.²³⁵ Desire for knowledge is a rational desire, originating in the rational soul.²³⁶

Desires are needed to make us act. It is obvious that the reason why we desire food, for example, is because our body needs nourishment, and so the fundamental cause of our desire for nourishment is found in the vegetative soul, even prior to the sensitive soul. It is the sensitive soul which makes it possible for us to be aware of the need for food, so that we can go and find it. Desire for knowledge causes us to wonder about things and search for answers.

Desires which animals possess are necessary if they are to survive and thrive. We humans qua animals also possess desires that motivate us to feed ourselves, to flee danger

²³⁴ ST I-II 17, 8.

²³⁵ ST I 81, 2; ST I-II 23, 1.

²³⁶ ST I 80, 2 ad 2; ST I-II 94, 2; ST I-II 3, 8; ST II-II 180, 7.

etc. In sentient beings, desires follow from natural appetites,²³⁷ and all desires of a given creature, together help that creature to attain its final end. All created things, including humans, are endowed with natural appetites which orient them to their proper good.²³⁸ All of a creature's natural appetites help that creature to attain its ends, and especially its final end, which is the actualization of its potency. Any and all our desires direct us to the end which is happiness.

According to Aquinas, all human desires, those of the rational part of the soul and those of the sensitive part, belong to a human being as a whole, as a particular kind of creature, i.e. a rational animal. Humans are endowed with certain kinds of desires, because all beings are endowed with desires proper to their kind. Furthermore, those desires incline each being to pursue its proper ends. Thus, human beings, like all animals, pursue what is good for them, according to their nature. Like all natural beings, they are endowed with natural inclinations, and like all sentient beings, they have natural desires which follow from these inclinations. They share with other animals passions, which derive from natural appetites. They share with other animals desires for food, for safety etc. which all animals possess, because in this way they can pursue what is good for them. Since humans are also rational beings, they have a desire for knowledge, which is natural to rational beings. Desire for knowledge, for truth, is natural to us qua rational beings. But it would be wrong to assume that desire for knowledge therefore functions separately from the other, obviously animal, desires. According to Thomas's philosophy, desire for knowledge is but one of our natural desires and is interconnected with the rest

²³⁷ ST I 78, 1 ad 3.

²³⁸ ST I-II 1, 2.

of our nature. Human desire for knowledge is interwoven with other kinds of desires, including animal desires, whose seat is the sensitive part of the soul. Our desire for knowledge is embedded among our other desires. And all our desires together orient us towards our good, our happiness.

Delight

When we obtain our good, when our desire is satisfied, we experience delight.²³⁹ Thomas says: “Pleasure [*delectatio*] is the repose of the appetite in some good.”²⁴⁰ He does distinguish between intellectual and sensible goods, and between their corresponding delights.²⁴¹ Intellectual delights are greater than those of the sensible kind, he says. Thomas also identifies intellectual delight, which is not a passion.²⁴² A human being is a creature composed of body and soul, a rational animal, and so even as we experience intellectual delight the animal side of our nature has to be somehow involved. Accordingly, a careful reading of what Thomas says about delight and contemplation reveals that the intellectual kind of delight is accompanied by the sensual kind of delight even when we engage in contemplation.²⁴³ One reason why sensual delight accompanies contemplation is the delight associated with study which leads to contemplation; another reason is the influence of the rational soul on the sensitive one. Even in heaven, after souls are reunited with their bodies, complete human beings will experience both

²³⁹ Latin *delectatio* is translated as ‘pleasure’ or as ‘delight’. ‘Pleasure’ and ‘delight’ are treated as synonymous.

²⁴⁰ *Delectatio est quies appetitus in bono.* ST I-II 34, 2.

²⁴¹ ST I-II 31, 5.

²⁴² ST I-II 31, 4.

²⁴³ ST I-II 4, 1; ST II-II 180, 7; ST I-II 31, 3; ST I-II 35, 2; SCG IV 85, 7 etc.

intellectual and sensual delight, according to Thomas.²⁴⁴ Delight of contemplation as experienced by humans is the delight felt by a rational animal, and not merely by a rational soul.

Cognitive powers of the sensitive soul

In order to desire anything, an animal must notice it and somehow judge its usefulness. For that, animals are endowed with sensory powers and with the inner senses, among which the estimative power allows them to judge the usefulness of things.

According to Thomas, without sensory perceptions, an animal would not be able to possess any knowledge about its surroundings. Human beings likewise would not be able to possess any knowledge if they were deprived of sensory input.²⁴⁵ From sensory perception we derive the basic data which can be later processed, and which we humans may think about, argue about, and after reflecting on it arrive at understanding of some truth. But before we can contemplate, and even before we can form any concepts, we must have some data we receive via sensory perception. So, the operations of the rational part of the soul depend in the most basic way on sensory perceptions, which belong to the sensitive part of the soul.

The animal must also recognize whether something is useful or dangerous. The irascible and concupiscible powers are to some extent moved by reason. In animals, the sensitive appetite is moved by the estimative power,²⁴⁶ which is an interior sense whose

²⁴⁴ SCG IV 85, 7; SCG IV 84, 14; ST I-II 4,1; ST Supplement 82, 4; ST I-II 3, 3 ad 3.

²⁴⁵ ST I 84, 8.

²⁴⁶ ST I 81, 3.

function is “the apprehension of intentions which are not received through the senses”,²⁴⁷ and which allows the animals to “estimate” the importance of what they meet with. Aquinas’s favorite example is that of a sheep who immediately and without any previous experience can recognize the wolf as a danger to itself.²⁴⁸ When Aquinas says that the sensitive appetite is moved by reason in the sense that it is moved by the estimative power he is not referring to the animal’s reasoning powers, but to the rational order found in the Order of Nature whose origin is the mind of God.²⁴⁹ So, an animal’s passions, which allow the animal to navigate through the world of useful or dangerous things, are part of the whole Order of Nature, and like the natural appetites of non-sentient things, orient the animal towards its proper good and ultimately to its final end.

In a human being, the estimative power is replaced by the cogitative power, since humans are able to judge and decide whether to act on their passions or not.²⁵⁰ In the case of humans, the sensitive appetite is moved not only by the reason found in the Order of Nature, but also by human reason. The cogitative power is correlate of the estimative power,²⁵¹ but in a human being it is influenced by the intellect which other animals do not possess.²⁵² Human passions and the cogitative power serve the same function as they do

²⁴⁷ Ad apprehendendum autem intentiones quae per sensum non accipiuntur. ST I 78, 4.

²⁴⁸ ST I 78, 4; ST I 81, 3.

²⁴⁹ ST I 103, 1.

²⁵⁰ ST I 81, 3; ST I 78, 4 ad 5.

²⁵¹ ST I 78, 4 and 4 ad 5.

²⁵² Ibid.

in other animals, i.e., they move humans towards their proper good, and ultimately towards their final end.

Desire for Knowledge

Thus, all natural beings are moved towards their ends, which are ordered according to their final end²⁵³ Non-rational agents - inanimate natural objects, and all living things, like plants and animals - are moved by their natural inclinations. Thomas repeatedly stresses that even those non-rational things seek the good.²⁵⁴ Everything has an inclination to its proper end which is its proper good.²⁵⁵ An important distinction exists, however, between the non-rational and rational agents. Rational agents (human beings and angels) are characterized by rational appetite, which is the will.²⁵⁶ Will is the appetite for good that is apprehended by the intellect.²⁵⁷ Rational agents seek their good using their powers of intellect and will. The will is free in a sense that nothing can force it to will, yet even the will is oriented to will in accordance with the natural inclination.²⁵⁸

²⁵³ ST I-II 1, 2 and 6.

²⁵⁴ He mentions it in many places and devotes a whole chapter of *Summa Contra Gentiles* (Chapter 24 of Book III) to that argument. See also: QDV 22,1.

²⁵⁵ Natural love is not only in the powers of the vegetal soul, but in all the soul's powers, and also in all the parts of the body, and universally in all things...since each single thing has a connaturalness with that which is naturally suitable to it.

Dicendum quod amor naturalis non solum est in viribus animae vegetativae, sed in omnibus potentiis animae, et etiam in omnibus partibus corporis, et universaliter in omnibus rebus...unaquaeque res habeat connaturalitatem ad id quo est sibi conveniens secundum suam naturam. ST I-II 26, 1 ad. 3.

²⁵⁶ ST I-II 26, 1; ST I-II 8, 1; QDV 22, 4.

²⁵⁷ ST I-II 8, 1; ST I-II 9, 1; QDV 22, 4.

²⁵⁸ It is therefore evident that the will does not will anything necessarily with the necessity of force, yet it does will something with the necessity of natural inclination.

Rational beings who possess reason and free will also possess an inclination to seek the truth.²⁵⁹ Because of that inclination to truth, they have a natural appetite for knowledge, and a tendency to engage in contemplation. “Now contemplation of the truth befits a man according to his nature as a rational animal: the result being that all men naturally desire to know”²⁶⁰ Note that Aquinas mentions our animality when he says that it is natural for us to desire knowledge, even though it is in virtue of being rational, not in virtue of being animal that human being desires knowledge. But Aquinas refers here to human nature, and hence to a complete human being, not merely an intellect. Aquinas also lists the inclination to truth, which causes us to have desire for knowledge, among other inclinations, including those to preserve our lives and to procreate.²⁶¹ So, Aquinas does not separate different aspects of our nature, except conceptually.

“All men naturally desire to know” is the opening statement of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* and Thomas, who wrote a commentary²⁶² on that work clearly refers to that statement in this article, as he does in several other places in his writings, although in this place he does not explicitly cite Aristotle. The way Thomas explains that particular statement of Aristotle shows again how this desire for knowledge is embedded in human nature and in the Order of Nature, in which every thing is endowed with natural

Et ita non potest contingere ut voluntas aliquid coacte vel violenter velit, si aliquid naturali inclinatione velit. QDV 22,5.

²⁵⁹ ST I-II 94, 2. See also: ST I-II 2, 8 (what we desire is a universal truth and a universal good) and ST I 16, 4 (truth is prior to good).

²⁶⁰ Contemplatio atuem veritatis competit homini secundum suam naturam, prout est animal rationale. Ex quo contingit quod omnes homines ex natura scire desiderant. ST II-II 180, 7.

²⁶¹ ST I-II 94, 2.

²⁶² Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, Latin text: “Commentarium in XII libros Metaphysicorum,” in *Opera Omnia*, Parma, reprinted in New York: Musurgia Publishers, 1949.

inclinations by which it tends to its fulfillment. Thomas says that there are three reasons why people desire knowledge. First, each thing desires its perfection. Intellect actualizes itself and attains perfection through knowledge. Therefore, a human being, a creature endowed with an intellect, desires knowledge.²⁶³ Second, each thing has a natural inclination to perform its proper operation. The proper operation of an intellect is to understand. Therefore, a human being as an intellectual kind of being, is naturally inclined to pursue knowledge.²⁶⁴ Third, each thing desires to be united to its source, because in this way it can reach its perfection.²⁶⁵ By means of the intellect a human being can be – ultimately - united with God, who is the source of the human intellect. In the union with God, the human intellect will be perfected, as was discussed above. Therefore, it is natural for a human being to desire knowledge.

According to Aquinas, we are endowed with natural inclination to pursue knowledge because in that way we can achieve our perfection and happiness in accordance with our nature. The emphasis here is on the intellectual side of our nature and the animal side is ignored. However, after giving us the three general reasons for pursuing knowledge, Aquinas compares our way of knowing to those of other animals. Not surprisingly, he concludes: “Therefore, just as the life of animals is ruled in a perfect way by memory together with activity that has become habitual through training, or in any other way whatsoever, in a similar way man is ruled perfectly by reason perfected by

²⁶³ In Met I 1, 2.

²⁶⁴ In Met I 1, 3; The claim that the natural operation of a human being is understanding is also found in Aristotle’s Function Argument in the *Nichomachean Ethics* and in Thomas’s *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nichomachean Ethics*: In NE Book I 10, 127.

²⁶⁵ In Met I 1, 4.

art.”²⁶⁶ But he gets to this conclusion only after careful comparison between our type of sensory perception, our type of memory, and our type of prudence and those of various kinds of animals. Aquinas stresses our belonging to the genus animal, even as he points out our specific difference as the rational kind of an animal.

Our pursuit of knowledge, our desire for knowledge and truth, while characteristic of us qua rational beings, is not separated from our animality. Since we are by nature animals, nothing which is natural to us could be separated from our animality, even though it might not primarily depend on it. Human intellectual activities do not primarily depend on our animal features, yet secondarily they do, because humans have to function as integrated beings, not disconnected intellects. As we can see from the above discussion of natural inclinations, our natural appetite for knowledge is on a continuum with other natural appetites, such as our appetite for food, or for sex, or even our natural tendency to fall downwards. It is true that the human tendency to contemplate is the appetite which follows from our being rational creatures. Thomas does tell us that “tending to wisdom refers to the rational love”.²⁶⁷ However, he also says that “natural love is not only in the powers of the vegetal soul, but in all the soul’s powers, and also in all the parts of the body, and universally in all things...since each single thing has a connaturalness with that which is naturally suitable to it.”²⁶⁸ As it is natural for us to seek knowledge and to contemplate truth, our tendency to seek knowledge can be also regarded as a natural kind of appetite. Our appetite for knowledge which underlies our tendency to contemplate

²⁶⁶ Ideo sicut perfectum vitae regimen est animalibus per memoriam, adjuncta asuefactione ex disciplina, vel quomodolibet aliter, ita perfectum hominis regimen est per rationem arte perfectam. In Met I 1, 16.

²⁶⁷ ST I-II 26, 1 ad.1.

²⁶⁸ ST I-II 26, 1 ad.3.

cannot be regarded as something separate from other appetites, even those which we share with the simplest of beings.

Human beings are corporeal, living, sentient and rational. Therefore, humans possess appetites characteristic of beings which are corporeal (for example the inclination to fall down towards the center of the earth), living (for example the nutritive powers of the vegetative part of the soul), sentient (for example the passions belonging to the sensitive part of the soul) and rational, namely the appetite for knowledge. Since the reason is what differentiates us from other animals, we are defined as “rational animals”. And among the animals we are the only ones who have an inclination to truth and thus a tendency to contemplate.

Contemplation as Fulfillment in Accordance With Our Nature

We achieve our fulfillment, our perfection in the vision of Divine Essence, and that makes it seem that the animal aspects of our nature, such as the body or the passions or various animal kinds of appetites, are not essential to our pursuit of happiness and have little if anything to do with our desire for knowledge. But that would be true only if we were by nature separated intellects. Aquinas stresses our rationality when he talks about our achievement of perfection because rationality is what differentiates us from other animals and what constitutes the most important aspect of our nature. But it does not follow that rationality constitutes our whole nature, or that the animal aspects of our nature can be ignored in our pursuit of happiness. Rationality is our most important trait and desire for knowledge is characteristic of us qua rational beings, but qua animals we have other kinds of desires which also lead us towards fulfillment and perfection. Those desires lead us to attain perfection qua living or sentient beings, but they also move us

towards the acquisition of knowledge that perfects us qua rational beings. Even in heaven our perfect, eternal happiness includes the resurrection of our bodies and perfect functioning of all the parts of the soul, not only the intellective part.²⁶⁹ That is so, because otherwise we would not achieve the perfection proper to our nature.

A human being is an integrated being in which the body and all three parts of the soul interact with one another, need one another, and influence one another. The rational part of the soul depends on the other parts and the body, for without them reason would not receive any information which allows it to make judgments, and there would be nothing to will.²⁷⁰ On the other hand, the rational part of the soul influences the sensitive part so that the operations of the sensitive soul in a human being i.e., perceptions and feelings, assume a different quality, a more noble quality than the same operations in other animals.²⁷¹ Aquinas refers to that influence of the rational part on the “lower” parts as the “overflow.”²⁷²

The “lower” parts also influence one another. The sensitive part of the soul is influenced by what happens in the body, ruled by the vegetative soul. The sensitive soul likewise can influence what happens in the body, since feelings are not just feelings in the soul but also physiological reactions.²⁷³

²⁶⁹ ST I-II 4, 5; SCG IV 81, 84, 86; ST Supplement 82, 3 and 4.

²⁷⁰ ST I-II 9, 1.

²⁷¹ ST I-II 24, 1 and 3.

²⁷² ST I- II 3, 3 ad 3; ST I 78, 4 ad 5; ST I-II 30, 1 ad 1; ST I-II 31, 5; ST I-II 32, 8.

²⁷³ ST I-II 22,1; ST I-II 28, 5; ST I-II 33,1; ST I-II 35, 4 ad 2 and 8; ST I-II 37, 2 and 4; ST I-II 44, 1,3 and 4; ST I-II 48 2 and 4.

The rational part of the soul is also affected by the physiological processes of the body and thus, the vegetative soul. Aquinas often notes such connections. For example, he observes that perfection of the body is needed for happiness and specifically for success in contemplation²⁷⁴ That is so because bodily indisposition affects intellectual operation.²⁷⁵ And in general, Aquinas tells us that bodily perfection is necessary for happiness simply because we are composite creatures. Here he even disagrees with St. Augustine who claimed that “for the soul to be happy it must be severed from everything corporeal” and replies: “But this is unreasonable. For since it is natural to the soul to be united to the body; it is not possible for the perfection of the soul to exclude its natural perfection.”²⁷⁶ Aquinas was an Aristotelian, and Aristotle’s hylomorphic theory would not allow him to dissociate mind from the body. Thus, according to Aquinas, a well functioning body is necessary for our proper moral and intellectual development and thus for the achievement of happiness, because what happens to the body influences the sensitive and even the rational part of the soul.

If the interaction between the vegetative part of the soul and other parts is important, interaction between the sensitive and the rational part of the soul is of even greater importance. In the pursuit of knowledge, we are guided by senses and by passions, both of which are traits of animal nature. Without sensory perception, we could

²⁷⁴ ST I-II 4, 6.

²⁷⁵ ST I-II 4, 6 ad 2.

²⁷⁶ Augustinus *De Civit. Dei XXII...* “sit beata anima, omne corpus fugiendum est” – Sed hoc est inconveniens. Cum enim naturale sit animae corpori uniri, non potest esse quod perfectio animae naturalem eius perfectionem excludat. ST I-II 4, 6. Perhaps translating “inconveniens” as “unreasonable” is a little too strong, but it may be that the Dominican Fathers who have given us this translation thought that Aquinas really felt like that even if he chose a more polite expression. I would like to think that.

never acquire any knowledge. Without the cogitative power and without passions we could never recognize or focus our attention on things which are good, desirable and pleasant. Such things are suitable to us qua animals, but they are also suitable for studying, which studying might perhaps lead us to contemplation of some truth. Thus contemplation would be impossible for humans if they were not able to use their senses and were not led by animal appetites. On the other hand, Thomas says that there is also “overflow” from the rational part of the soul towards the “lower” parts,²⁷⁷ and thus through the perfection of the rational part, the lower parts are also perfected.²⁷⁸

Operations of the sensitive soul designate the animal kind of a soul. These operations arise from animal inclinations and are designed to help the animal to pursue its proper good. Animal inclinations in turn follow upon the natural inclinations of living things and simply corporeal things, and are designed to help such things to achieve their proper good. All these underlie human activities, for we must function as corporeal, living and sentient beings if we are to function as rational human beings.

Pursuit of our good as corporeal, animate and sentient creatures precedes and is necessary for the pursuit of our good as rational creatures. That is why Aquinas says that perfection of the body is needed for human perfection and happiness. That is why he says that some external goods are necessary for human happiness. Our feelings of attraction, our loves, desires and delights guide us towards what is good for us qua animals. What we study and contemplate must be something we find pleasant and desirable, and so our

²⁷⁷ ST I-II 3, 3 ad 3; ST I 78, 4 ad 5; ST I-II 30,1 ad 1; ST I-II 31,5; ST I-II 32, 8; ST II-II 175, 4 ad 1; ST I-II 4, 5 ad 4.

²⁷⁸ ST I-II 3, 3 ad 3.

animal attractions may be also necessary for our pursuit of knowledge, which is a good of a rational kind.

In order to gain knowledge and truth, we must first possess some good proper to us qua animals. Humans, like all beings, are moved towards their ends through their natural inclinations. Our natural inclinations mark us as corporeal, animate, sentient beings and rational beings. As rational beings, we possess reason and free will which allow us to make our own choices. But as corporeal, animate and sentient beings we are moved by our natural inclinations, from which follow all our natural desires except for the desire for knowledge. Desire for knowledge marks us as rational beings. But to pursue knowledge, we must first acquire some good, attain some ends, proper to us qua animals. Then we can also possess some knowledge.

Thus, for the pursuit of knowledge and the practice of contemplation we depend on our senses and desires, which in turn depend on the proper functioning of the body. The pursuit of knowledge depends on the possession of the goods proper to us qua animals. Human desire for knowledge follows from our natural inclination to truth, which is the highest of our inclinations. But it is obvious that one cannot indulge in the pursuit of truth, unless one physically survives and thrives and thus, we need many other goods before we can pursue the good which is truth. Our natural inclinations direct us to acquiring all the goods which we need for our happiness, including truth. Contemplation is our fulfillment not in opposition to, but following the acquisition of other goods. In that way, operations of the sensitive part of the soul are necessary for happiness “antecedently”. At least, that is the case in earthly life.

In heaven, Thomas tells us, we shall be perfected by an “overflow” from the higher parts to the lower. He means by this that the perfection and delight of the intellectual part of the soul will affect the sensitive soul and even the body. The resurrected body will reflect the glory of the soul.²⁷⁹ Desires of a resurrected person will be perfectly ordered.²⁸⁰ The resurrected person will experience delight of a sensual nature as well as intellectual kind of joy.²⁸¹ Even the cognitive powers of a human being will be perfected in accordance with our nature as rational animals.²⁸² The glory and perfection of the intellectual part of the soul will “overflow” into the lower parts and perfect them, but not change their natural traits. Then, our fulfillment as rational beings will precede our perfection as animals. In that way operations of the sensitive part of the soul will be necessary for human happiness “consequently”. Even in heaven, according to Aquinas, our animal nature will be preserved, and so, our fulfillment, our happiness, will be the happiness of a composite being, a rational animal.

Conclusion

Human happiness, which is strictly defined as contemplation of God – whether here or in heaven – and which is therefore regarded as a rational activity is nevertheless not merely a rational activity. At every step, we are reminded of our animality. Thomas tells us that our happiness as complete human beings in heaven will be achieved after our bodies are resurrected. On earth, we cannot even begin to contemplate without sensory

²⁷⁹ SCG IV 86 1-3.

²⁸⁰ SCG IV 86, 5.

²⁸¹ SCG IV 86, 4; ST I-II 4, 5 ad 4.

²⁸² ST I 89, 3; ST II-II 175, 4 ad 1.

input, for we cannot think without phantasms and without receiving some data from our senses.

But the reason why we begin to contemplate is that we are creatures who possess a desire for truth and thus, for the pursuit of knowledge. Desire for knowledge is but one of many desires characteristic of us as humans, and together, with those other desires, it helps us to pursue and to achieve our final end, which is contemplation of God in heaven.

Desires follow from natural inclinations, and all beings possess natural inclinations appropriate to them. Natural inclinations orient creatures towards their proper good and make it possible for them to achieve their perfection. Humans likewise possess a number of natural inclinations among which there is an inclination to truth. The achievement of our earthly happiness depends primarily on our pursuit of and contemplation of truth, but secondarily, it depends on the pursuit of various other goods, to which we are also naturally inclined. Again, we are reminded of our animality, our sensitive soul, and our passions.

The achievement of our perfect happiness in heaven depends on the development of moral virtues, which perfect our passions, and for which we even need some external goods. The enjoyment of our perfect happiness in heaven requires our animal bodies and sensations, not because contemplation of God requires such apparatus, but because we who would be contemplating God would need our bodies, senses and passions in order to be ourselves.

According to Aquinas's view of human nature, all our natural inclinations orient us towards the achievement of our proper good, and that would include those natural tendencies to behave which are below the threshold of rational control. That would

include the acts of our vegetative soul, and most certainly, the acts of the sensitive soul, that is passions.

In the chapters that follow, I shall examine more closely how the operations of the sensitive soul are necessary for human contemplation, how the sensitive soul participates in contemplation.

CHAPTER TWO

SENSATION AND CONTEMPLATION

In ST I-II q. 3 a. 3, Thomas Aquinas tells us that, while happiness is essentially an operation of the intellectual soul, operations of the sensitive soul belong to happiness in two ways.¹ First, in this life, the intellect is dependent on the sensitive soul for the acquisition of knowledge. Second, in heaven, the sensitive soul will be perfected by the influence of the intellectual soul. In the body of the article Thomas says:

Nevertheless the operations of the senses can belong to happiness, both antecedently and consequently: antecedently, in respect of imperfect happiness, such as can be had in this life, since the operation of the intellect demands a previous operation of the sense; consequently, in that perfect happiness which we await in heaven; because at the resurrection ... *the body and the bodily senses will receive a certain overflow, so as to be perfected in their operations.*²

Since the ultimate happiness is contemplation of God in heaven and for that no senses are required, happiness cannot be said to essentially consist in the operation of the senses. However, in earthly life contemplation does require the operations of the senses as is noted in the Objection 1 to ST I-II 3, 3: “But in us the intellectual operation depends on the sensitive: since we cannot understand without a phantasm.”³ Thomas’s answer to it is:

¹ ST I-II 3, 3.

² Possunt autem operationes sensus pertinere ad beatitudinem antecedenter et consequenter. Antecedenter quidem, secundum beatitudinem imperfectam, quails in praesenti vita haberi potest; nam operatio intellectus praeexigit operationem sensus. – Consequenter autem, in illa perfecta beatitudine quae expectatur in caelo, quia post resurrectionem, fiet quaedam refluencia in corpus et in sensus corporeos, ut in suis operationibus perficiantur. Ibid.

“This objection proves that the operation of the senses is required antecedently for imperfect happiness, such as can be had in this life.”⁴ Furthermore, Objection 3 to the same ST I-II 3, 3 and the answer to it point to the attainment of perfection of the whole human being, which in this life proceeds from “the lower part” to the “higher part”, while in the life to come the “lower part” will be perfected by an overflow from the “higher part”.⁵ What that means is that in this life we need the operations of the sensitive soul in order to achieve the perfection of the “higher part”, i.e., the intellect, while in the life after resurrection perfection of the intellectual soul will be the cause of the perfection of the sensitive soul. Thus, the operations of the sensitive soul, while not essentially belonging to human happiness, nevertheless belong to it in a secondary way.

We know that happiness, whether the perfect or imperfect one, consists chiefly in the activity of contemplation.⁶ In order to engage in contemplation, we must first acquire some knowledge of the thing we are going to contemplate. It is obvious that in order to get to the point of contemplating something, we must go through a process of learning, for which the operations of the sense are necessary. This means that the operations of the sensitive soul, in this case, the operations of the senses, are necessary in order to attain earthly happiness. Aquinas also tells us that in heavenly contemplation of God, our senses will be engaged again, although not because their operations are necessary for the

³ Sed operatio intellective dependet in nobis ab operatione sensitive, quia ‘non possumus intelligere sine phantasmate’ ST I-II 3, 3 ob. 1.

⁴ Dicendum quod obiectio illa probat quod operatio sensus requiritur antecedenter ad beatitudinem imperfectam, quails in hac vita haberi potest. ST I-II 3,3 ad 1.

⁵ Dicendum quod in perfecta beatitudine perficitur totus homo, sed in inferiori parte per redundatiam a superiori. In beatitudine autem imperfecta praesentis vitae, e converse a perfectione inferioris partes proceditur ad perfectionem superioris. ST I-II 3, 3 ad 3.

⁶ ST I-II 3, 5.

contemplation of God, but because of the “overflow”, or the influence, from the higher (i.e. the rational) part of the soul. In this way even the senses shall be perfected.

In Objection 1 and the Reply to it, cited above, Aquinas refers to phantasms, i.e. similitudes of material things, which are necessary to enable us to think at all. Phantasms are produced in the sensitive part of the soul and are produced by all animals, making possible the animal kind of cognition. Aquinas thus points to our animality, in this case represented by the operations of the senses and the production of phantasms, as something required for earthly happiness, that is earthly contemplation and the steps leading to that contemplation.

Aquinas’s reply to Objection 3 shows the overall dependence on the attainment of the intellective soul’s perfection on the operations of the sensitive soul, and vice-versa, the attainment of the sensitive soul’s final perfection through the influence of the intellective soul. All parts of the human soul are but the parts of the whole soul. The sensitive part of the soul helps the intellective part to achieve its perfection in this world, and in turn it is perfected by the “overflow” from the higher part, in heaven. In Aquinas’s discussion of human nature, we are always reminded of the unity of that nature. Because of that unity, not only the rational part of the soul, but also the animal aspects of human nature are necessary for the attainment and the enjoyment of happiness, both in this life and the next.

In this chapter, I shall examine how the operations of the senses belong to contemplation “antecedently” in this world, and how they belong to contemplation “consequently” in the next world, insofar as human nature’s perfection demands it. I shall particularly focus on the inner sense of imagination or *phantasia*. Sensory perceptions

are, of course, necessary in the early stages of knowledge acquisition. I argue that phantasms, which are derived from sensory perceptions, function in all the intellectual operations, and particularly, in the act of contemplation itself. I will show that because we are animals, we have to rely on phantasms in our earthly learning and contemplation, and that even the saints in heaven will experience phantasms after their bodies are resurrected. Thus, aside from the fact that being animal implies dependence on sensory perception for the acquisition of knowledge, animal features of human nature also manifest themselves in the way humans contemplate. In this chapter I shall examine the way contemplation depends on sensory perception – or more precisely on the production of phantasms – whereas in the next chapter I shall examine the role of passions in contemplation.

How the Rational Animal Progresses Towards Contemplation

Being animals we have to rely on our senses and passions in our efforts to acquire knowledge and in our approach to contemplation. Although contemplation strictly speaking is the operation of the speculative intellect⁷ and in heaven contemplation of God will not require senses,⁸ on Earth intellection of God does require sense perception. That is so, because on earth, acquisition of knowledge begins with material things:

Since the human intellect in the present state of life cannot understand even immaterial created substances, much less can it understand the essence of the uncreated substance. Hence it must be said simply that God is not the first object of our knowledge. Rather do we know God through creatures...while the first object of our knowledge in this life is the quiddity of a material thing, which is the proper object of our intellect.⁹

⁷ ST I-II 3, 5.

⁸ ST I-II 3, 3.

Thus, before we can contemplate God on earth, we have to learn something about God through the study of created, material things. We learn about material things through our senses and we are guided in the pursuit of knowledge by our passions.

When Thomas writes about our contemplating yet not comprehending God while we still live on earth, he stresses the dependence of thinking on the operations of the sensitive soul, i.e. perception, sensation, and emotion. Although contemplation is an intellectual activity, we who are rational animals must rely on our animal capacities, i.e. the senses and the sensitive part of the soul, in order to acquire knowledge and to understand things clearly. The human intellect (unlike the angelic intellect) acquires intelligible truth from sensible objects: “The intellect of the soul acquires intelligible truth from sensible objects, and understands it by a certain discoursing of the reason.”¹⁰ In earthly life, in order to arrive at some truth we might contemplate (whether it be some truth about God, or truth of metaphysics) we have to follow a laborious process of knowledge acquisition. We are equipped with the desire for knowledge, natural to us humans, so that we may arrive at a truth about God, or at least about God’s creation, which makes wonder about God. We may contemplate truth we have learned about God on earth and wish to contemplate God in heaven. That process of knowledge acquisition is complex and at every step it requires not only the operations of the intellective part of the soul, but also those of the sensitive part.

⁹ Dicendum quod cum intellectus humanus secundum statum praesentis vitae non possit intelligere substantias immateriales creatas, ut dictum est, multo minus potest intelligere essentiam substantiae increatae. Unde simpliciter dicendum est quod Deus non est primum quod a nobis cognoscitur; sed magis per creaturas in Dei cognitionem pervenimus... Primum autem quod intelligitur a nobis secundum statum praesentis vitae, est quidditas rei materialis, quae est nostri intellectus obiectum. ST I 88, 3.

¹⁰ Intellectus vero animae a sensibilibus rebus accipit intelligibilem veritatem; et cum quodam discursu rationis eam intelligit. ST II-II 180, 6 ad 2.

Progress from sensing objects to contemplation of abstract truths can be described in six steps. The first step is the operation of our senses in response to sensible objects, namely, abstraction of the sensible species,¹¹ the second step is the formation of the intelligible species, the third is formulation of propositions, the fourth is engagement in an argument, the fifth step is grasping the conclusion. Finally, the sixth is contemplation of some truth we behold. Let us look at each step briefly and consider what if any role sensitive appetite plays at each step.

Sensing and formation of phantasms

The first thing we have to do is to observe¹² the sensible objects in the world around us. Our acquisition of knowledge has to begin with the sensory perception. As was already mentioned, Aquinas tells us that the operation of the senses can belong to happiness antecedently because “the operation of the intellect demands a previous operations of the senses”.¹³ And he elaborates on that in his discussion of contemplation¹⁴ and of powers of the soul.¹⁵ A person deprived of the function of her senses would be deprived of the possibility of thinking.¹⁶ There is the obvious evidence that persons whose sensory organs are not functioning properly have difficulty understanding things

¹¹ One could also distinguish operations of the external senses, from the operations of the internal sense responsible for the abstraction of the sensible species, but for the purposes of my argument I treat those as one step.

¹² I am using the word ‘observe’ as if we are to observe various objects by sight, but, of course, our acquisition of knowledge involves any of the senses and their combined operations. The first step of contemplation does not preclude any mode of sensory perception.

¹³ ST I-II 3, 3.

¹⁴ ST II-II 180.

¹⁵ ST I 84, 85, 86 and 88.

¹⁶ ST I 84, 8; ST I 84, 6.

which relate to the function of these organs. For example, a blind person cannot understand colors. According to Thomas, the explanation is that a person who has never seen colors cannot imagine them and thus cannot understand them. According to Aquinas, without sensory input a human being would be unable to acquire knowledge. He says:

As we have said above our intellect's proper and proportionate object is the nature of a sensible thing. Now a perfect judgment concerning anything cannot be formed, unless all that pertains to that thing's nature be known... But in the present state of life whatever we understand, we know by comparison to natural sensible things. Consequently it is not possible for our intellect to form a perfect judgment, while the senses are suspended, through which sensible things are known to us.¹⁷

Thomas compares sensible objects to the tools used in making things, giving an example of a smith who cannot form a judgment about a knife unless he knows what a knife actually is. In the same way – Thomas says – a natural philosopher cannot form judgments about natural things, unless she knows sensible things.

Thus, we begin our pursuit of knowledge with the senses. Our senses receive the sensible species of the objects which affect them.¹⁸ A sensible species is the configurational state representing the object one is sensing, which object is a composite of matter and form.¹⁹ The sensible species is the intentional form of a matter-form composite,²⁰ which we might perhaps compare to a code signifying a given object. Our

¹⁷ Dicendum quod, sicut dictum est, proprium obiectum intellectui nostro proportionatum est natura rei sensibilis. Iudicium autem perfectum de re aliqua dari non potest, nisi ea omnia quae ad rem pertinent cognoscantur... Omnia autem quae in praesenti statu intelligimus, cognoscuntur a nobis per comparationem ad res sensibiles naturales. Unde impossibile est quod sit in nobis iudicium intellectus perfectum cum ligamento sensus, per quem res sensibiles cognoscimus. ST I 84, 8.

¹⁸ In DA II, 24, 555 and 24, 553.

¹⁹ ST I 85, 2 ; ST I 78, 4.

senses are characteristically affected by certain objects. For example, skin is affected by objects which have texture, temperature and weight; the ear is affected by sound, the eye by color etc. To say they are affected means that they undergo a certain change, which may be a physical change (for example the skin may become hot), but which must also be a formal change, meaning that the configurational state of the object will be registered by the sense organ. The form is received by the senses in a way that Aquinas calls “spiritual”, like a kind of a code. The senses are affected in a characteristic way because it is the form of a given sensible object which causes a change in the sensory power.²¹

In order to perceive an object, however, it is not enough that animal’s sense-organ be stimulated; the received stimulation must be further processed. This is the step of the formation of phantasms. Phantasms preserve the sensible form, the sensible species, of a matter-form composite.²² Phantasms are similitudes, the immaterial representations of material things.²³ Thomas locates production of the phantasms in the brain, which is a corporeal organ, and thus, part of animal body.²⁴ Phantasms are produced by the inner sense called *phantasia* (also called imagination), which belongs to the sensitive part of the soul.²⁵ Phantasms make the sensible species available to consciousness, that is to say

²⁰ Stump, Eleonore, *Aquinas*, New York: Routledge, 2003, p. 249.

²¹ For an extensive discussion of the relationship between the form of a sensible object and the organs of sense see Macdonald, Paul A. Jr., *Knowledge and the Transcendent An Inquiry into the Mind’s Relationship to God*. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009, Part II, chapter 3, especially p.86.

²² ST I 79, 4; ST I 84, 7 ad 2; ST I 85, 1 ad 3.

²³ ST I 79, 4.

²⁴ ST I 85, 1 ad 3.

that without phantasms, we would not be able to realize what we are sensing.

Phantasms, along with appropriate physiological mechanisms, make it possible for an animal to experience sensation.²⁶

All animals derive phantasms from the sensible species and thus come to know something about the objects in their environment. The power to produce phantasms is common to humans and to other animals,²⁷ and belongs to the sensitive part of the soul. Phantasms need not be visual, though, given the fact that for humans the most important sense is sight, many of our phantasms are visual. However, according to Aquinas, all animals' souls produce phantasms.²⁸ Thus, we begin our acquisition of knowledge with sensory perception of material objects, and our souls produce phantasms which are the basis of our knowledge of the world. Aquinas often repeats that the higher form encompasses what belongs to the lower form,²⁹ and here we see that in our acquisition of

²⁵ There are two operations in the sensitive part. One, in regard of impression only, and thus the operation of the senses takes place by the senses being impressed by the sensible. The other is formation, inasmuch as the imagination forms for itself an image of an absent thing, or even of something never seen.

Dicendum quod in parte sensitiva invenitur duplex operatio. Una secundum solam immutationem, et sic perficitur operatio sensus per hoc quod immutatur a sensibili. Alia operatio est formatio, secundum quod vis imaginativa format sibi aliquod idolum rei absentis, vel etiam nunquam visae. ST I 85, 2 ad 3

Also: If there is any movement caused by actual sensation it must resemble sensation, and imagining is the only activity of this kind.

Quia si aliquis motus fit a sensu secundum actum, similes est motui sensus, et nihil aliud nisi phantasia invenitur esse tale. In DA III 6, 659 See also: ST I 78, 4.

²⁶ For more detailed discussion of that see Stump pp. 256-262.

²⁷ ST I 84, 2 ad 1.

²⁸ Aquinas writes: All animals have imagination in some sense.

Omnia animalia habent quodammodo phantasiam. In DA III 5, 644.

Aquinas says that there is "imagination of sense" possessed even by the "imperfect animals," i.e., animals generally lacking locomotion like oysters. In DA III, 16, 836-842.

knowledge, in the beginning we have to rely on the senses and on the production of phantasms. Our acquisition of knowledge begins with sensory perception because we are animals.

Phantasms are retained in memory³⁰ from which they can be retrieved, and they can be also produced by the power of imagination.³¹ According to Aquinas, both memory and imagination are animal senses (so-called inner senses) and belong to the sensitive part of the soul.³² Although humans, who are rational animals, can use phantasms, memory and imagination in ways in which no other animal can, they must produce and store phantasms like any other animal, and can use only those which they have stored. Even new things we imagine must be put together from our already stored phantasms.³³

Thus, our learning, our acquisition of knowledge, begins, according to Thomas, with the observation of things using our senses. The human intellect has to derive knowledge from sensible objects.³⁴ The external senses affect the internal ones, all of which are the powers of the sensitive part of the soul, which we share with other animals. Thus, we sense objects, form appropriate phantasms, store them in memory, and when needed, retrieve them through the power of *phantasia* (imagination).³⁵ That gives us the

²⁹ The more perfect form virtually contains whatever belongs to the inferior forms.

Forma perfectior virtute continet quicquid est inferiorum formarum. ST I 76, 6 ad 1. See also ST I 77, 2, 4 and 7; ST I 79, 8 ad 3; ST I 84, 2 ad 3.

³⁰ ST I 78, 4; ST I 79, 6.

³¹ ST I 78, 4.

³² ST I 79, 6; SCG II, 74, 1528; QDV 10, 2.

³³ Aquinas's example is that of a gold mountain. See: In DA III, 4, 6333; ST I 12, 9 ad 2 and 78, 4.

³⁴ ST I 84, 2; ST I 55, 3.

material for further mental processing. Up to that moment, according to Thomas, we are doing only what other animals are doing, for we are using the powers of the sensitive part of the soul. Should any of these powers seriously malfunction, we would not be able to think.

Phantasms are also used by the estimative power – the correlate of which in humans is the cogitative power - which is cognitive in nature and which, like memory and *phantasia*, is an inner sense, a power of the sensitive soul. All inner senses allow an animal to acquire some knowledge about its environment. What a given animal may know depends on the nature of that animal. The senses of each animal are affected by those forms of sensible objects to which they are suited and these forms are processed by the inner senses in ways characteristic of each kind of animal. All these powers help the animal to achieve its proper ends.

Abstraction of intelligible species

The next step after the production of phantasms is the abstraction of the intelligible species from the phantasms. An intelligible species is analogous to the sensible species in that it is the immaterial form and a similitude of a given thing. But the intelligible species does not preserve the various accidents, various particular material characteristics of the thing it represents. The intelligible species only represents the thing's nature. An intelligible species is the quidditative form of a material thing, i.e. that form which puts a thing in a given species or genus.³⁶ That gives us the “quiddity” of that

³⁵ ST I 78, 4.

³⁶ ST I 85, 1 See also: Stump p. 264.

thing, the understanding of what kind of a thing we are dealing with, or the nature of that thing. It is the function of the active intellect to abstract the intelligible species.³⁷

That abstraction of the intelligible species is, according to Aquinas, peculiarly human and not shared with other animals. It is not shared with other animals because it is an operation of the intellectual part of the soul, which other animals do not possess. It is not shared with other rational creatures either, because they do not derive their knowledge from the senses.³⁸ This operation of the intellect marks us as boundary creatures, both rational and animal in nature.

The active intellect abstracts the intelligible species from phantasms and presents it to the passive intellect, which receives and preserves it. The intelligible species is preserved in the passive intellect, and analogously to the way phantasms enable us to sense things, the intelligible species enables the intellect to understand things. The intelligible species actualizes the passive intellect's potentiality for understanding.

To abstract an intelligible species from a phantasm, the active intellect considers the universal nature of the particular represented by the phantasm by discarding any individual qualities represented in the particular.³⁹ For example, the phantasm may represent Socrates, but the intelligible species signifies a human being, one of whom happens to be Socrates. A human being is corporeal and animal, and normally, possesses such features as face, four limbs, etc, but does not have particular body of Socrates. Thomas notes that: "The intellect...abstracts the species of a natural thing from the

³⁷ ST I 84, 6.

³⁸ ST I 57, 1 ad 3.

³⁹ ST I 85, 1 ad 1.

individual sensible matter, but not from the common sensible matter.”⁴⁰ He means that while the intellect abstracts from a particular body, the species of a human being has to include corporeality. The intelligible species represents the nature of a human being, but not the accidents which may belong to a particular human being.

That is important, because Thomas says that in order to think, the intellect must turn to phantasms,⁴¹ and so there would be formed (by the imagination) a phantasm corresponding to our understanding of what is a human being and that phantasm would represent a corporeal, animal creature that is a human being. Thomas says: “Even after abstracting the intelligible species, the intellect, in order to understand, needs to turn to phantasms in which it understands the species.”⁴² Thus, to understand what a human being is, we need to have in the mind a phantasm which represents a ‘human being’ and which represents it as a corporeal being. But the intelligible species is not a phantasm.

Intelligible species represents a universal nature, not a particular thing. So, in order to understand a particular thing, the intellect must turn to a phantasm. This is done in three steps. The intellect reflects on its own act of understanding, then on the intelligible species, and then on the origin of that intelligible species. Thomas explains it like this: “Thus, the mind knows singulars through a certain kind of reflection, as when the mind, in knowing its object, which is some universal nature, returns to knowledge of its own act, then to the species which is the principle of its act, and, finally, to the

⁴⁰ Intellectus igitur abstrahit speciem rei naturalis a materia sensibili individuali, non autem a materia sensibili communi. ST I 85, 1ad 2.

⁴¹ ST I 84, 7.

⁴² Etiam postquam species intelligibiles abstraxerit, non potest secundum eas actu intelligere nisi convertendo se ad phantasmata in quibus species intelligibiles intelligit. ST I 86, 1.

phantasms from which it has abstracted the species. In this way, it attains to some knowledge about singulars.”⁴³ First, the intellect understands that it understands.⁴⁴ Then, the intellect knows that it understands something universal, for example, a human being.⁴⁵ That universal idea corresponds to the intelligible species. But the universal idea of a human being is vague and confused: “Now it is evident that to know an object that comprises many things, without a proper knowledge of each thing contained in it, is to know that thing confusedly.”⁴⁶ This is the way the intellect knows things at first, for at first we know the universal whole before we know something in greater detail. For example, Thomas says, the intellect knows what the animal is before it knows a human being, and that, before it knows Socrates. What the intellect abstracts is the intelligible species, which gives us the specific nature of a thing, for example, human, but not the nature of a given individual, for example Socrates. What the intellect knows is the universal, not the particular. In order to proceed from the universal to the particular, the intellect must recover the phantasm from which that intelligible species was abstracted. The intellect cannot know singulars directly, for they are the objects of sense knowledge, while the objects of the intellect’s knowledge are universals. The intellect then must

⁴³ Et se mens singularis cognoscit per quamdam reflexionem, prout scilicet mens cognoscendo objectum suum, quod est aliqua natura universalis, redit in cognitionem sui actus, et ulterius in speciem quae est actus sui principium, et ulterius in phantasma a quo species est abstracta; et sic aliquam cognitionem de singulari accipit. QDV 10, 5.

⁴⁴ ST I 87, 3.

⁴⁵ ST I 85, 3.

⁴⁶ Manifestum est autem quod cognoscere aliquid in quo plura continentur, sine hoc quod habeatur propria notitia uniuscuiusque eorum quae continentur in illo, est cognoscere aliquid sub confusione quadam. Ibid.

communicate with the interior senses of the sensitive part of the soul⁴⁷ and together form a combination of the intelligible species and phantasm.⁴⁸ Through that combination of the intelligible species and phantasm, the knowledge of a singular thing existing in the real world becomes possible. In the real world the natures of things exist in the actual things. For example, there is no nature of a stone separated from actual stones, and that is why phantasms of particular things are needed in order to understand material objects. When the phantasm representing a particular thing is retrieved, the knowledge of that particular thing is made possible. Still, the intellect cannot know a singular thing directly, only indirectly as represented by a phantasm, and thus, it cannot know it completely.⁴⁹

When the intellect possesses the intelligible species, by which it can understand the universal nature, and the phantasm which is associated with that intelligible species, then the intellect forms a mental concept of that thing - for example 'human being' – which concept may be expressed by a word.⁵⁰

Aquinas tells us that we have to understand things through phantasms,⁵¹ because as rational animals we share some traits with both: the purely rational creatures (angels) and with other animals. We share with other rational creatures the ability to understand truths, for the understanding of which we need the intelligible species. We share with other animals the dependence on phantasms, even though we are capable of intellectual

⁴⁷ QDV 10, 5 ad 2.

⁴⁸ Klubertanz, George P., S. J. *The Philosophy of Human Nature*, New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1953, p.182.

⁴⁹ ST I 86, 1.

⁵⁰ ST I 85, 2 ad 3.

⁵¹ ST I 85, 1 ad 5; ST I 85, 7; ST I 86, 1; In DA III 12, and III 13, 791-794.

acts like contemplation.⁵² Perhaps this quote is the best summary of that dependence of human intellect on phantasms: “Our intellect both abstracts the intelligible species from the phantasms, inasmuch as it considers the natures of things in universal, and, nevertheless, understands these natures in the phantasms, since it cannot understand even the things of which it abstracts the species without turning to the phantasms.”⁵³

Thomas repeats again and again that in the present life at least we cannot understand anything without turning to phantasms, we cannot think without phantasms.⁵⁴ We need to turn to phantasms in order to understand and to explain things.⁵⁵ Thomas appeals to our own experience of thinking and the way we form phantasms, that is examples of things we are trying to understand. He also appeals to our experience of learning and teaching: “For this reason it is that when we wish to help someone to understand something, we lay examples before him, from which he forms phantasms for the purpose of understanding.”⁵⁶ Our thinking depends on the formation of phantasms, because to form concepts, any concepts, we have to rely on phantasms. To form concepts of material things we find in the world around us, we need phantasms first in order to abstract the intelligible species, and then in order to understand to what the abstracted species refers. Even in forming the concepts of mathematics or metaphysics we need to

⁵² ST I 85, 1.

⁵³ Dicendum quod intellectus noster et abstrahit species intelligibiles a phantasmatis, in quantum considerat naturas rerum in universali; et tamen intelligit eas in phantasmatis, quia non potest intelligere ea quorum species abstrahit, nisi convertendo se ad phantasmata. ST I 85, 1 ad 5.

⁵⁴ ST I 84, 7; ST I 85, 1; ST I 86, 1.

⁵⁵ ST I 84, 7.

⁵⁶ Et inde est etiam quod quando aliquem volumus facere aliquid intelligere, proponimus ei exempla, ex quibus sibi phantasmata formare possit ad intelligendum. ST I 84, 7.

use phantasms.⁵⁷ The phantasms may be direct representations of material objects, or they may be formed by the imagination to represent the objects we have never experienced.⁵⁸ The intellect abstracts the intelligible species from a phantasm, and then it commands the power of imagination to form the phantasm corresponding to the concept the intellect has formed.⁵⁹ It may be said that our concepts are carried by phantasms.

Formation of propositions

After we have formed concepts, we may proceed to the operation of “composition and division”, that is, formation of propositions. As was explained above, the intellect knows things first in a general way, gradually refining its understanding of the nature of a given thing. First, the intellect knows generally, what a given object is, for example, that it is a man. Then the intellect gradually understands some of the object’s properties and accidents, for example, details of a given man’s appearance. As Aquinas tells us, we first apprehend the quiddity of the object, then, come to understand some of its properties and

⁵⁷ ST I 85, 1 ad 2; ST I 86, 2.

⁵⁸ ST I 78,4; ST I 84,7 ad 3; ST I 86, 2.

⁵⁹ Hence, the possible intellect, before possessing the intelligible species, is related in one way to the phantasm which it needs, and in another way after receiving that species; before, it needs that phantasm in order to receive from it the intelligible species, and thus the phantasm stands in relation to the possible intellect as the object moving the latter; but, after the species has been received into the possible intellect, the latter needs the phantasm as the instrument or foundation of its species, so that the possible intellect is then related to the phantasm as efficient cause. For by the intellect’s command there is formed in the imagination a phantasm corresponding to such and such an intelligible species, the latter being mirrored in this phantasm as an exemplar in the thing exemplified or in the image.

Alio ergo modo se habet intellectus possibilis ad phantasma quo indiget, ante speciem intelligibilem: et alio modo postquam recepit speciem intelligibilem. Ante enim, indiget eo ut ab eo accipiat speciem intelligibilem: unde se habet ad intellectum possibilem ut obiectum movens. Sed post speciem in eo receptam, indiget eo quasi instrumento sive fundamento suae speciei: unde se habet ad phantasmata sicut causa efficiens; secundum enim imperium intellectus formatur in imaginatione phantasma conveniens tali speciei intelligibili, in quo resplendet species intelligibilis sicut exemplar in exemplato sive in imagine.
SCG II 73, 38.

then the relations between these properties and the essence.⁶⁰ We do it by comparing and contrasting things. That comparing and contrasting is what Thomas calls “composition and division,” and we call “formation of propositions.”

But, as Thomas keeps reminding us, to understand the quiddity of things, we must have phantasms which are derived from sensory experience. Even as we are already thinking in abstract terms and noting relations between whole classes of objects, we are still thinking by using phantasms. It takes time to form a proposition, it is not instantaneous, because we have to use phantasms. Thomas says: “Although the intellect abstracts from the phantasms, it does not understand actually without turning to the phantasms ... And forasmuch as it turns to the phantasms, composition and division of the intellect involve time.”⁶¹ And so, again we find that we cannot think without phantasms, even at the stage at which we are forming propositions.

Reasoning

The next step is the phase in which we engage in reasoning, i.e., syllogizing, and also in further abstraction. Thomas calls it “discursive reasoning”.⁶² We have formed propositions using the concepts we have acquired, and we know the First Principles.⁶³ Using our knowledge of both, we can derive certain conclusions, which we can use as

⁶⁰ ST I 85, 5.

⁶¹ Dicendum quod intellectus et abstrahit a phantasmatibus; et tamen non intelligit actu nisi convertendo se ad phantasmata ... Et ex ea parte qua se ad phantasmata convertit, compositioni et divisioni intellectus adiungitur tempus. ST I 85, 5 ad 2.

⁶² ST I 85, 5; ST I 90, 1; ST II-II 180, .6 ad 2.

⁶³ ST I 79, 12 c. and 12 ad 3; QDV10, 6 c. and 6 ad 6.

premises of the next argument, etc. In the process of reasoning we formulate judgments,⁶⁴ for example, “Human being is a rational animal.”

The process of reasoning through which we arrive at conclusions involves abstract thinking. It is a process fraught with danger of mistakes. There are many ways in which we can be mistaken in our conclusions, or in the formulation of propositions used in the argument.⁶⁵ For example, we might be mistaken in our understanding of the various accidents of things and their relations. To use the example mentioned above, we might be mistaken regarding the height of the man we meet or the shape of his nose. Then our judgment that he looks like Socrates would be false. Even before we get to the step of forming propositions, our senses might be deceived regarding some accidental sensible properties. The intellect may be also mistaken with respect to the definition of the object. Aquinas here gives an example of a definition which includes incompatible features, i.e. *a rational winged animal*. Thus, we may go astray in the process of reasoning. However, Aquinas tells us that when it comes to understanding the quiddity of objects we cannot be deceived, for the proper object of the intellect is the quiddity of sensible things. Also we cannot be deceived with regard to the First Principles, because we understand them as soon as we understand the terms involved.

We engage in discursive reasoning because we are the lowest ranking of rational creatures. Angels understand everything at once; angels understand all the conclusions

⁶⁴ ST I 16, 2.

⁶⁵ ST I 85, 6.

and the reasons for them, without the laborious process of reasoning.⁶⁶ We humans have to syllogize, and before that, we need to form propositions, acquire concepts and receive data from our senses because our rational intellect is joined to the animal body and the non-rational parts of the soul. Because of that we depend on our senses to get the initial information about things, and we depend on phantasms in our thinking.

We need phantasms not only at the beginning of the intellective process, as the material from which to abstract the intelligible species, but also at the end, to represent the judgment we have arrived at. There has to be unity in the judgment. Aquinas says:

Many things, in so far as they are distinct, cannot be understood at once; but in so far as they are comprised under one intelligible concept, they can be understood together. Now everything is actually intelligible according as its image is in the intellect. All things, then, which can be known as one intelligible species, are apprehended as one intelligible object, and therefore are understood simultaneously.⁶⁷

What he means by that is that we cannot focus on several intelligible concepts at once, but only on one at a time. We may, of course, turn our attention from one intelligible concept to another, but we cannot hold all of those concepts in the mind and see each one of them distinctly at the same time. What we understand can be expressed in words, in a form of judgment, for example, “Human being is a rational animal.”⁶⁸ That notion of a human being as a rational animal is a single idea and must correspond to an intelligible species. Aquinas also says: “Now everything is actually intelligible according as its

⁶⁶ ST I 58, 3.

⁶⁷ *Multa secundum quod sunt distincta, non possunt simul intelligi; sed secundum quod uniuntur in uno intelligibili, sic simul intelliguntur. Unumquodque autem est intelligibile in actu, secundum quod eius similitudo est in intellectu. Quaecumque igitur per unam speciem intelligibilem cognosci possunt cognoscuntur ut unum intelligibile; et ideo simul cognoscuntur.* ST I 58, 2 See also: ST I 85, 2.

⁶⁸ ST I 16, 2; ST I 85, 2.

image is in the intellect.”⁶⁹ What is in the intellect is the intelligible species, and that intelligible species, in turn, has to correspond to a phantasm. In this life, we cannot understand anything unless we turn to phantasms which correspond to the ideas we understand.⁷⁰ The phantasms corresponding to what we have come to understand and also, what we have contemplated, are produced by the imagination (*phantasia*),⁷¹ but this time not as a result of sensation, but as a result of a command of the intellect.

Thus, our process of reasoning brings us to the understanding of something, to the formulation of a judgment. The intellect produces the intelligible species, by which we understand something. The inner sense of *phantasia*, in turn, produces a phantasm, which represents the idea we have come to understand. Whatever is understood has to be represented by a phantasm. Thus the intellect needs to be assisted by the operation of the sensitive soul in order to understand. We need phantasms in order to understand.

⁶⁹ Unumquodque autem est intelligibile in actu, secundum quod eius similitudo est in intellectu. ST I 58, 2.

⁷⁰ In the present state of life in which the soul is united to a passible body, it is impossible for our intellect to understand anything actually, except by turning to the phantasms.

Dicendum quod impossibile est intellectum secundum praesentis vitae statum, quo passibili corpori coniungitur, aliquid intelligere in actu, nisi convertendo se ad phantasmata. ST I 84, 7.

Also: We do not understand the things whose species are in the possible intellect without the presence of phantasms disposed for this purpose.

Non intelligimus ea quorum species sunt in intellectu possibili nisi adsint phantasmata ad hoc disposita. SCG II 73, 40 See also: SCG II 73, 3.8.

⁷¹ The inner sense of *phantasia* functions in a human being not only as a power producing phantasms in response to sensation, but also as a creative imagination, in response to the command of the intellect. See: ST I 78, 4.

Arriving at conclusions

The next step is the understanding of some truth which we have discovered through the process of reasoning.⁷² If we reason correctly, we would arrive at the understanding of truth about something. We reach a conclusion and know that it is so. Only a rational creature may possess that kind of understanding.

It might seem at first that reaching the conclusion is identical with contemplation of that truth, but according to Thomas it is not. As was explained at the beginning of this chapter, contemplation goes beyond reasoning, for contemplation is “gazing upon” the truth we came to understand.

Contemplation

The final step is the contemplation in which we become aware that the truth we are contemplating lies beyond our powers to comprehend. As was discussed in chapter 1, when we contemplate, we also realize that the object of our contemplation is always beyond our full comprehension, and this applies not only to God, but also to objects which belong to the created world. As for God, Thomas says:

Now the contemplation of the divine truth is competent to us imperfectly, namely through a glass in a dark manner ... hence it bestows on us a certain inchoate beatitude, which begins now and will be continued in the life to come; wherefore the Philosopher places man's ultimate happiness in the contemplation of the supreme intelligible good.⁷³

Aquinas, of course, interprets Aristotle's “supreme intelligible good” as God. In this life, we can contemplate only truths about God, not God's essence, and thus we are

⁷² ST I 79, 8; ST II-II 180, 4.

⁷³ Nunc autem contemplatio divinae veritatis competit nobis imperfecte, videlicet per speculum et in aenigmate: unde per eam fit nobis quaedam inchoatio beatitudinis, quae hic incipit ut in futuro terminetur. Unde et Philosophus...in contemplatione optimi intelligibilis ponit ultimam felicitatem hominis. ST II-II 180, 4.

able to contemplate divine truth only imperfectly. Even so, earthly contemplation of divine truth gives us a foretaste of the divine beatitude.

As was mentioned above, Aquinas also says that we may contemplate objects other than God himself; that we may contemplate the created world because such contemplation eventually leads us to contemplation of God. As was discussed in chapter 1, we cannot comprehend God, and even contemplation of metaphysical subjects other than God brings us to the limit of our understanding.

When we reach contemplation, the soul, Thomas tells us, has to withdraw its attention from external objects, reasoning must be laid aside, and all the soul's operations must be concentrated upon the simple contemplation of truth, grasped by the speculative intellect.⁷⁴ In contemplation, there is no error. Thomas also refers to contemplation as being "uniform," by which he means that, unlike in the case of abstracting intelligible species from phantasms, and unlike reasoning in which we move from one step to another, contemplation is a uniform concentration on the truth.⁷⁵ In saying that in contemplation there is no discursive reasoning and no error, Aquinas follows Dionysius and says: "Discursing must be laid aside and the soul's gaze fixed on the contemplation of one simple truth. In this operation of the soul there is no error, even as there is clearly no error in the understanding of first principles which we know by simple intuition."⁷⁶ Dionysius compares contemplation to the understanding of the first principles; however,

⁷⁴ ST II-II 180, 6 ad 2.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Cessante discursu, figatur eius intuitus in contemplatione unius simplicis veritatis. Et in hac operatione animae non est error: sicut patet quod circa intellectum primorum principiorum non erratur, quae simplici intuitu cognoscimus. ST II-II 180, 6 ad 2.

that understanding is necessary at the beginning of the process of our coming to know something, whereas the contemplation comes at the end. Knowledge of the first principles is necessary if we are to correctly proceed with reasoning.⁷⁷ Contemplation goes beyond discursive reasoning. In the steps leading to contemplation, we study the causes of the effects we observe. In contemplation, we do not engage in discursive reasoning, in connecting causes and effects. In contemplation we already understand the effects in relation to their cause.⁷⁸ In the act of contemplation, we no longer engage in reasoning, for we know the truth.⁷⁹ In contemplation we have an immediate grasp of the truth, we understand it. When we understand something, we know it for certain.⁸⁰ We contemplate what we understand, and thus contemplation goes beyond reasoning and admits no error. In contemplation, we simply regard what we already know to be truth.⁸¹

The truth we contemplate we may know because we have arrived at it after lengthy research, or we may know it because of a sudden realization of truth, or we may know it by God's grace, but no matter by which path we have gained this truth, we just know it.⁸² At this point, we also become aware that we cannot fully understand the object we contemplate.⁸³

⁷⁷ ST I 79, 12.

⁷⁸ ST II-II 180, 3 ad 2.

⁷⁹ ST I 79, 10 ad 2.

⁸⁰ ST I 79, 10.

⁸¹ ST II-II 180, 3 ad 1, and 6 ad 2.

⁸² ST II-II 180 3, 5 and 6. See also Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*, p.74.

⁸³ ST II-II 180, 3 ad. 3.

Contemplation goes beyond study, reasoning, or judgment. Contemplation becomes possible only when we have come to understand the cause of something. Ultimately, the cause of causes is God, thus ultimately contemplation ought to be contemplation of God. But on earth, as was explained above, we cannot contemplate God directly, in an unmediated way, so, on earth, we must learn about God through His creatures.⁸⁴ Hence, on earth, our object of contemplation is not God Himself, i.e., God's essence, but some truth about God.

What makes contemplation different from all other acts of the intellect is the fact that we go beyond any reasoning and are simply gazing upon the truth, which we know for certain.⁸⁵ However, it is the whole human being who engages in contemplation, not only a separated intellect. A human being is a kind of an animal, and human way of contemplating also reflects our animal nature. Because qua animals we possess a sensitive soul, human thought processes require the use of phantasms.⁸⁶ Phantasms figure in all our intellectual acts, including the formation of concepts, formulation of propositions, and reasoning. According to Aquinas, phantasms are also used by us when we contemplate:

In the present state of life human contemplation is impossible without phantasms, because it is connatural to man to see the intelligible species in the phantasms... Yet intellectual knowledge does not consist in the phantasms themselves, but in our contemplating in them the purity of the intelligible truth: and this not only in natural knowledge, but also in that which we obtain by revelation.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ ST I 88, 3.

⁸⁵ ST II-II 180, 6 ad 2.

⁸⁶ ST I 84, 7.

⁸⁷ Dicendum quod contemplatio humana, secundum statum praesentis vitae, non potest esse absque phantasmatibus: quia connaturale est homini ut species intelligibiles in phantasmatibus videat... Sed tamen

Of course, we do not contemplate phantasms; in contemplation, we concentrate on the truth we understand. However, while we do not focus on phantasms, we still need to use them as mental tools to help us to focus on the truth we are contemplating. Undoubtedly, those phantasms are different for each person, and reflect that person's lifetime of experience and powers of imagination.⁸⁸ According to Aquinas, humans are not capable of imageless thinking, because we are animals.⁸⁹ Thus, in all acts of human intellect, even in contemplation, phantasms are used. In this way the sensitive soul participates in the acts of intellect, even in contemplation.

Our Knowledge of Immaterial Things

Objects fit for contemplation, according to Thomas Aquinas, are the truths of physics, mathematics, metaphysics and, above all, theology. While we begin our progression towards contemplation with the sensing of material objects, the truths we finally contemplate are theoretical ideas. The question arises what role the operations of the sensitive soul plays in our coming to know those truths.

In order to contemplate being, goodness, etc. we have to derive those concepts from our knowledge of material things, which begins with the operations of the senses and the sensitive soul. As was mentioned before, according to Thomas, mathematical concepts such as infinity, and some metaphysical concepts, are derived from our

intellectualis cognitio non sistit in ipsi phantasmatibus, sed in eis contemplatur puritatem intelligibilis veritatis. Et hoc non solum in cognitione naturali, sed etiam in eis quae per revelationem cognoscimus. ST II-II 180, 5 ad 2.

⁸⁸ Wilhelmson, Frederick D., *Man's Knowledge of Reality*, Prentice-hall, Inc. 1956, pp.114-117.

⁸⁹ Among rational creatures only humans are animals. Angels are also rational creatures and they, of course, do not use phantasms, since they are not embodied. ST I 57, 1 and 2.

experience of material things.⁹⁰ We learn about goodness on the basis of experience and our understanding of first principles.⁹¹ What we know of such concepts like ‘being’ or ‘unity’ we need to derive by reflection on various features of material things, even though we can consider immaterial beings.⁹² Concepts of physics, mathematics or metaphysics not only derive from but also pertain to material things. However, some notions, according to Aquinas, such as ‘soul’, ‘angel’, or ‘God’ pertain to immaterial entities.

According to Aquinas, we do not know the quiddities of immaterial things. We cannot know them because the human intellect acquires knowledge by sensing and then abstracting the quiddity of material things, and it cannot do so with immaterial things. What we can know in this life we can only know by means of sense perception and the formation of phantasms: “But in Aristotle’s opinion, which experience corroborates, our intellect in its present state of life has a natural relationship to the natures of material things; and therefore it can only understand by turning to the phantasms ... thus it clearly appears that immaterial substances which do not fall under sense and imagination, cannot first and per se be known by us, according to the mode of knowledge which experience proves us to have.”⁹³ So, we cannot know the quiddities of immaterial substances,

⁹⁰ ST I 85, 1 ad 2. Also, as was mentioned above, we form the concept of infinity empirically by considering that we can always add more to however many things there are. ST I 86, 2.

⁹¹ ST I 77,1 2 ad 3 and ST I-II 94, 2.

⁹² ST I 85, 1.

⁹³ Sed secundum Aristotelis sententiam quam magis experimur, intellectus noster secundum statum praesentis vitae naturalem respectum habet ad naturas rerum materialium; unde nihil intelligit nisi convertendo se ad phantasmata ... Et sic manifestum est quod substantias immateriales, quae sub sensu et imaginatione non cadunt, primo et per se secundum modum cognitionis nobis expertum, intelligere non possumus. ST I 88, 1.

because their quiddity is entirely different from the quiddity of material things, and it is the quiddity of material things that the human intellect is designed to know.⁹⁴ And yet, Thomas is of the opinion that we may know something about immaterial things.

Thomas says that we can have some knowledge of immaterial things on the basis of what we know of material ones. He says:

Incorporeal things, of which there are no phantasms, are known to us by comparison with sensible bodies of which there are phantasms. Thus we understand truth by considering a thing of which we possess the truth; and God, as Dionysius says...we know as cause, by way of excess and by way of remotion. Other incorporeal substances we know, in the present state of life, only by way of remotion or by some comparison to corporeal things.⁹⁵

And again he says: “But we may have a scientific knowledge of them [immaterial things] by way of negation and by their relation to material things.”⁹⁶ We may learn about immaterial substances by considering how they must differ from the material substances, i.e., what they are not. Immaterial things have no bodies, no size or shape etc. Thus, we realize that they are not composed of matter, that they have no extension, that they cannot be sensed. That does not tell us what they are (what is their quiddity), but it does tell us something about them, by way of negation. Thomas calls it the method of “remotion” or “negation”.

⁹⁴ ST I 88, 2.

⁹⁵ Dicendum quod incorporea, quorum non sunt phantasmata, cognoscuntur a nobis per comparisonem ad corpora sensibilia, quorum sunt phantasmata. Sicut veritatem intelligimus ex consideratione rei circa quam veritatem speculamur; Deum autem, ut Dionysius dicit, cognoscimus ut causam, et per excessum, et per remotionem; alia etiam incorporeas substantias in statu praesentis vitae cognoscere non possumus nisi per remotionem vel aliquam comparisonem ad corporalia. ST I 84, 7 ad 3.

⁹⁶ Sed de eis nobis in scientiis documenta traduntur per viam remotionis et alicuius habitudinis ad res materiales. ST I 88, 2 ad 2 See also SCG I, 14.

What we know about God, aside from revelation, we know by considering what God is not, or by considering that God must be the most perfect of all things, or by reflection about causality. Those are the methods of “remotion” or “negation”, “preeminence” and “excess”. We gain some knowledge about God by the method of “remotion”, that is by considering what God is not and thus removing those features of corporeal objects we know, forming by this process an idea of God. He explains this in more detail in *Summa Contra Gentiles*,⁹⁷ where he writes that: “Furthermore, we approach nearer to knowledge of God according as through our intellect we are able to remove more and more things from Him.”⁹⁸ Thus, we can start by removing such features like corporeality, diversity, etc., and arrive at the conclusion that God must be a spirit, that He must be one, etc. We also learn something about God when we realize that in God there is a preeminence of goodness, being or beauty.⁹⁹ For, if we consider that among all the things which are good there must be something which is absolute goodness, we realize that that ultimate good is God: “So that here is something which is truest, something best, something noblest, and, consequently, something which is uttermost being... Therefore there must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness, and every other perfection; and this we call God.”¹⁰⁰ This is the method of “preeminence”. The third method is that of “excess” and this refers to the

⁹⁷ SCG I 14.

⁹⁸ Tantoque eius notitiae magis appropinquamus, quanto plura per intellectum nostrum ab eo poterimus remove. SCG I 14, 2.

⁹⁹ ST I 1, 3.

¹⁰⁰ Est igitur aliquid quod est verissimum, et optimum, et nobilissimum, et per consequens maxime ens; ... Ergo est aliquid quod omnibus entibus est causa esse et bonitatis et cuius libet perfectionis, et hoc dicimus Deum. ST I 2, 3.

demonstration of God's existence on the basis of causality. We consider God as the cause of being and goodness. Thomas gives us five ways in which we can prove God's existence¹⁰¹ and all of them present God as the First Cause. To arrive at the conclusion that God is the First Cause and the Creator, we must reflect on the causes and effects we observe and by regress arrive at the conclusion that there must be a First Cause. Showing that God is the cause of being and goodness is, according to Thomas, the most important of our methods of gaining knowledge about God.¹⁰² Thus, although we are not capable of knowing God's essence in this life, we can know something about Him.

In the process of forming concepts, we must begin with sensory perception and phantasms. Thomas says: "And, therefore, when we understand something about these things, we need to turn to phantasms of bodies, although there are no phantasms of the things themselves."¹⁰³ To form a concept of immateriality, we have to start by considering material things to realize that there is the First Cause, we must reflect on causality of things observable to us. We can try to understand something about immaterial things only by reflecting on how they differ from the material ones, and how they relate to the material ones. In those reflections, we necessarily use our knowledge of sensible things, and thus, we also use phantasms, because, as was explained above, we cannot think without phantasms. To come to any knowledge about immaterial things, we must rely on our knowledge of sensible ones, and the laborious process of acquiring that knowledge. Again, our animality manifests itself in our dependence on the senses and the

¹⁰¹ ST I 1, 3.

¹⁰² ST I 1, 3.

¹⁰³ Et ideo cum de huiusmodi aliquid intelligimus, necesse habemus converti ad phantasmata corporum, licet ipsorum non sint phantasmata. ST I 84, 7 ad 3.

fact that the human intellect is designed to know the quiddity of material things, the kind of things we can sense.

Contemplation of God

As was explained above, we cannot actually comprehend God. And as I argued, we cannot fully comprehend even those truths we may contemplate which pertain to God's creation, and therefore indirectly, to God. So, what do we actually contemplate? It must be that in our earthly life, in ordinary contemplation, we can only contemplate some truths which we discover by the process of knowledge acquisition described above.

Thomas says that in this life we cannot know God directly, but only in a mediated way, through the knowledge we gain about the created world: "Hence it must be said simply that God is not the first object of our knowledge. Rather do we know God through creatures."¹⁰⁴ As was discussed above, according to Thomas, we can find out some facts about God, just like we find out some facts about immaterial substances, by the method of "remotion", i.e. by considering what God is not,¹⁰⁵ by reflecting on the relative perfection of things and realizing that God must be perfection itself¹⁰⁶ or by considering causes and effects.¹⁰⁷

God is not material. As was mentioned above, the human mind cannot know immaterial substances, although it can derive some knowledge of them through the

¹⁰⁴ Unde simpliciter dicendum est quod Deus non est primum quod a nobis cognoscitur; sed magis per creaturas in Dei cognitionem pervenimus. ST I.88, 3.

¹⁰⁵ SCG I 14; ST I 84, 7 ad 3.

¹⁰⁶ ST I 1, 3.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

knowledge of material substances.¹⁰⁸ Thus, it follows that when we try to learn some truth about God, we must study some material substances, some phenomena of this world, and by the process of reasoning arrive at the knowledge of some truth about God. In this way, what we learn about God are the attributes of God.

Thus, in order to contemplate God, we must first learn about the world in which we live, and for that, we are equipped with the desire for knowledge which follows from the basic inclination to truth and leads us to explore the world around us. The acquisition of knowledge, i.e. learning and studying, is the first step to contemplation. As Thomas says: “Man reaches the knowledge of truth in two ways. First, by means of things received from another. In this way, as regards the things he receives from God, he needs prayer... while as regards the things he receives from man, he needs hearing, in so far as he receives from the spoken word, and reading, in so far as he receives from the tradition of Holy Writ. Secondly, he needs to apply himself by his personal study, and thus he requires meditation.”¹⁰⁹ Thus, we are told that in regard to things received from man, we attain truth by the study of texts, and by personal study and meditation. A serious contemplative would have to study learned texts, and especially the Holy Writ. However nobody, not even the greatest philosopher, is born knowing how to read, or even knowing what these words mean. Before we can contemplate what the Bible can teach us, there is a lot more we need to learn. Also, whatever we learn about the world, we may use it in

¹⁰⁸ ST I 89, 2.

¹⁰⁹ Dicendum quod homo ad cognitionem veritatis pertingit dupliciter. Uno modo, per ea quae ab alio accipit. Et sic quidem, quantum ad ea quae homo a Deo accipit, necessaria est oratio ... Quantum vero ad ea quae accipit ab homine, necessarius est auditus, secundum quod accipit ex voce loquentis; et lectio, secundum quod accipit ex eo quod per scripturam est traditum. Alio modo, necessarium est quod adhibeat proprium studium. Et sic requiritur meditatio. ST II-II 180,3 ad 4.

our meditations and relate that knowledge to God. The study of any truth perfects human intellect.

Contemplation of God and the Use of Phantasms

In our studies, we search for causes, and that should eventually bring us to the consideration of the First Cause, which is God. We can know something about God only after we have done some investigation that leads us to conclusion that God is immaterial or that God is the First Cause, etc. By learning the attributes of God, we also come to realize that we cannot sense or comprehend God, and that there is no such thing as a phantasm of God. This presents us with a problem in the investigation of how humans contemplate God. Humans have to rely on phantasms for their thinking processes, yet there is no phantasm of God. The question is whether we need to use phantasms even at the stage of contemplation, even when we are contemplating God.

Aquinas explicitly says that we do use phantasms while we are contemplating: “In the present state of life human contemplation is impossible without phantasms, because it is connatural to man to see the intelligible species in the phantasms.”¹¹⁰ We need phantasms in order to abstract the intelligible species and in order to use it for thinking. But he explains that we do not concentrate our attention on those phantasms, only on the intelligible truth we are contemplating. The phantasms are there, used like mental tools which make it possible for us to have thoughts.

Aquinas’s texts reveal that our contemplation of God, while we are still living earthly life involves the use of phantasms, not in the sense that God is represented by a

¹¹⁰ Dicendum quod contemplatio humana, secundum statum praesentis vitae, non potest esse absque phantasmatis: quia connaturale est homini ut species intelligibiles in phantasmatis videat. ST II-II 180, 5 ad 2.

phantasm, but in the sense that we use phantasms in our thinking about God. Our contemplation of anything, including God, must involve phantasms, because being animals we must use phantasms in our thinking processes.

In earthly life, when we say that we contemplate God, we really contemplate truths about God, which we express as judgments.¹¹¹ For example, we might contemplate such truths like: “God is incorporeal,” or “God is powerful.” What we know about God we know by reflecting about causes, by reflecting about the highest degree of perfection and by reflecting about what God is not. Some of these ideas are expressed in negative judgments such as: “God is not corporeal,” or “nothing on earth is as perfect as God.” However, Aquinas says that we can also make claims about God, which are expressed in affirmative statements: “God is the First Cause,” or “God is powerful.” When we consider these truths about God, just like in all our intellectual acts, we have to use phantasms. In the process of forming a judgment, for example, “God is omniscient,” we have to use phantasms.¹¹² When we formulate a complete judgment, that judgment is also represented by a phantasm. Any affirmative statement, for example “God is powerful,” is represented by a phantasm.¹¹³ Aquinas also thought that negative judgments would likewise be represented by phantasms. He says:

An image is the starting point of our knowledge, for it is that from which the operation of the intellect begins; not that it passes away, but it remains as the foundation of the intellectual activity, just as the principles of demonstration must remain throughout the whole process of science. This is because images are related to the intellect as objects in which it sees

¹¹¹ ST I 13, 12; ST I 16, 2.

¹¹² ST I 85, 5 ad 2.

¹¹³ ST I 84, 7; SCG II 73.

whatever it sees, either through a perfect representation or through a negation. Consequently, when our knowledge of images is impeded, we must be completely incapable of knowing anything with our intellect even about divine things. Clearly, we cannot know that God causes bodies, or transcends all bodies, or is not a body, if we do not form an image of bodies; but our judgment of what is divine is not made according to the imagination. Consequently, even though in our present state of life the imagination is necessary in all our knowledge of the divine, with regard to such matters we must never terminate in it.¹¹⁴

Here Thomas says clearly that we must hold some image in the mind if we are to understand anything and that we must hold images in the mind even when we try to understand something about divine things. Then he gives us as the example the claim that God is not a body and says that we need image of bodies if we are to understand that claim. Aquinas warns us, however, that our knowledge of divine things goes beyond images, even though we must use images to advance in that knowledge.

We use phantasms while we, creatures composed of soul and body, contemplate God. Since phantasms are produced by the sensitive soul, the operations of the sensitive soul must participate even in our contemplation of God by providing us with appropriate phantasms. Contemplation is an intellectual operation, but is supported by the operations of the sensitive part of the soul. Thomas does say that in contemplation the soul needs to withdraw itself from external objects¹¹⁵ and all the soul's powers must be concentrated

¹¹⁴ Dicendum quod phantasma est principium nostra cognitionis, ut ex equo incipit intellectus operatio non sicut transiens, sed sicut permanens, ut quoddam fundamentum intellectualis operationis: sicut principia demonstrationis oportet manere in omni processu scientiae, cum phantasmata comparentur ad intellectum ut objecta, in quibus inspicit omne quod inspicit vel secundum perfectam repraesentationem, vel secundum negationem. Et ideo quando phantasmatum cognition impeditur, oportet totaliter impediri cognitionem intellectus in divinis. Patet enim quod non possumus intelligere Deum causam corporum esse, sive supra omnia corpora, sive absque corporeitate, nisi imaginemur corpora, non tamen iudicium divinorum secundum imaginationem formatur. Et ideo quamvis imaginatio in qualibet divinorum cognitione sit necessaria secundum statum viae, numquam tamen ad eam deduci oportet in divinis. In Boetii de Trin.6, 2 ad 5.

¹¹⁵ ST II-II 180, 6 ad 2.

on the object of the contemplation.¹¹⁶ What he means by that is that we lay aside reasoning and simply concentrate on the truth we have come to understand. That is the act of the intellect. However, in a composite creature that is a human being, the sensitive soul cannot be “turned off” even when we concentrate all our powers on the contemplation of truth, even when we contemplate truth about God. Since we are animals, the operations of the sensitive soul must assist in all our intellectual acts, even contemplation by the production of phantasms.

Aquinas also discusses the use of images and our understanding of God in relation to visions which people can have only by God’s grace. In these texts we find more evidence of human intellectual operations’ need for the assistance of the operations of the sensitive soul, especially the production of phantasms. Aquinas discusses our knowledge of God in Part I Question 12 of *Summa Theologica*, and also in the parallel texts in the *Summa Contra Gentiles* and in *Truth*. He tells us, as was mentioned before, that no created intellect can comprehend God,¹¹⁷ and that there is no similitude of God.¹¹⁸ Since God is incorporeal, God cannot be seen by the senses or the imagination.¹¹⁹ That much is obvious. But then Thomas considers whether there is some kind of imaginary vision of God. He says this: “The essence of God is not seen in a vision of the imagination; but the imagination receives some form representing God according to some mode of similitude; as in divine Scripture divine things are metaphorically described by means of sensible

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ ST I 12, 1.

¹¹⁸ ST I 12, 2.

¹¹⁹ ST I 12, 3

things.”¹²⁰ He seems to be saying that while we cannot have an image of God as such, we do form some kind of an image representing God, or perhaps an image representing some truth about God, just like we use images of sensible things to describe various divine things. The way we represent angels is a good example of that metaphorical use of the images of sensible things, since angels are typically imagined as beautiful people in flowing robes and possessing wings, while we know that angels have no bodies, no robes and certainly no wings. But imagining them as winged people helps us to think about them. Likewise people use images to help themselves think about God and His attributes.

The reason why someone may need to form imaginary figures either in contemplation, or in the imaginary vision, is because human thought processes naturally depend on phantasms, i.e. images. Thomas says: “In the present state of life in which the soul is united to a passible body, it is impossible for our intellect to understand anything actually, except by turning to the phantasms.”¹²¹ The reason for it, he says, is that the power of knowledge is always proportional to the knower.¹²² Since the human intellect is naturally united to a body, it must derive its knowledge of incorporeal things from its knowledge of the corporeal ones.¹²³ In Reply 3 of the same article Thomas says: “Incorporeal things, of which there are no phantasms, are known to us by comparison

¹²⁰ Dicendum quod in visione imaginaria non videtur Dei essentia, sed aliqua forma in imaginatione formatur, repraesentans Deum secundum aliquem modum similitudinis, prout in Scripturis divinis divina per res sensibiles metaphorice describuntur. ST I 12, 3 ad 3 See also: SCG III 47, 3.

¹²¹ Dicendum quod impossibile est intellectum secundum praesentis vitae statum, quo passibili corpori coniungitur, aliquid intelligere in actu, nisi convertendo se ad phantasmata. ST I 84, 7.

¹²² ST I 12, 11; ST I 84, 7; ST I 85, 1.

¹²³ ST I 84, 7 ad 3.

with sensible bodies of which there are phantasms.”¹²⁴ Here he mentions again the methods of remotion and of excess by which we learn something about God or about any incorporeal things, and then he says: “And, therefore, when we understand something about these things, we need to turn to phantasms of bodies, although there are no phantasms of the things themselves.”¹²⁵ As was already discussed before, according to Thomas, we begin with gaining some knowledge of sensible things, then, by comparison with them or by reflecting about causality we figure out certain features of incorporeal things, or even of God, and then we turn to phantasms again, in order to use the images of sensible things to represent to ourselves what we have figured out.¹²⁶ We would need to do it because as animals we need phantasms in order to think. That is the difference between us and other rational creature, i.e. angels, who do not need phantasms.¹²⁷

We may learn something about God by the use of natural reason, but higher knowledge of God is obtained by grace.¹²⁸ Thomas mentions image-forming in Objection 2 and Reply 2, of ST I 12, 13 where he considers whether we can know God as well by natural reason as by grace. He answers – as might be suspected – that we know God much better with the aid of grace. He mentions, however, the formation of images through which we come to know God. These images are used in both cases, when we

¹²⁴ Dicendum quod incorporea, quorum non sunt phantasmata, cognoscuntur a nobis per comparationem ad corpora sensibilia, quorum sunt phantasmata. ST I 84, 7 ad 3.

¹²⁵ Et ideo cum de huiusmodi aliquid intelligimus, necesse habemus converti ad phantasmata corporum, licet ipsorum non sint phantasmata. ST I 84, 7 ad 3.

¹²⁶ ST I 84, 7.

¹²⁷ ST I 84, 7.

¹²⁸ ST I 12, 13.

learn about God through our own efforts, and when our efforts are aided by grace. He says: “From the images either received from sense in the natural order, or divinely formed in the imagination, we have so much the more excellent intellectual knowledge, the stronger the intelligible light is in man; and thus through the revelation given by the images a fuller knowledge is received by the infusion of the divine light.”¹²⁹

Thomas tells us that when we receive knowledge of divine things by revelation, by grace, then images are formed in our minds. Sometimes, he says, those images are simply improved versions of what we ourselves might form on the basis of our knowledge of material things, while at other times, such images are formed not by us, but for us: “For the intellect’s natural light is strengthened by the infusion of gratuitous light; and sometimes also the images in the human imagination are divinely formed, so as to express divine things better than those do which we receive from sensible objects, as appears in prophetic visions.”¹³⁰ Yet at other times, no mere images, but sensible things are miraculously provided for our education: “While sometimes sensible things, or even voices, are divinely formed to express some divine meaning; as in the Baptism, the Holy ghost was seen in the shape of a dove, and the voice of the Father was heard.”¹³¹ This

¹²⁹ Dicendum quod ex phantasmatis vel a sensu acceptis secundum naturalem ordinem, vel divinitus in imaginatione formatis, tanto excellentior cognitio intellectualis habetur, quanto lumen intelligibile in homine fortius fuerit. Et sic per revelationem ex phantasmatis plenior cognitio accipitur ex infusione divini luminis. ST I 12, 13 ad 2.

¹³⁰ Nam et lumen naturale intellectus confortatur per infusionem luminis gratuiti. Et interdum etiam phantasmata in imaginatione hominis formantur divinitus, magis exprimentia res divinas quam ea quae naturaliter a sensibilibus accipimus; sicut apparet in visionibus prophetalibus. ST I 12, 13.

¹³¹ Et interdum etiam aliquae res sensibiles formantur divinitus, aut etiam voces, ad aliquid divinum exprimentum; sicut in baptismo visus est Spiritus Sanctus in specie columbae, et vox Patris audita est; ST I 12, 13.

situation, of course, refers to miracles. Miracles are presented to us in the form of sensible things, to which we can relate as corporeal creatures.

Another time when Thomas mentions imaginary forms is when he considers exalted states of prophetic visions and contemplation. He says: “A man is said in the Scriptures to see God in the sense that certain figures are formed in the senses or imagination, according to some similitude representing in part the divinity. So when Jacob says, “I have seen god face to face”, this does not mean the divine essence, but some figure representing God. ... We may also say that Jacob spoke thus to designate some exalted intellectual contemplation, above the ordinary state.”¹³² Jacob’s “exalted intellectual contemplation” involved formation of images. In this case, God is communicating with Jacob by showing him these images. Prophetic vision goes beyond contemplation since we can reach a contemplative state by our own powers, but we can have prophetic visions only by God’s grace. However, the fact that even in such an exalted state of religious contemplation a person might see images shows that God’s

¹³² In Scripturis dicitur aliquis aliqua figurae, vel sensibiles vel imaginariae, secundum aliquam similitudinem aliquod divinum representantes. Quod ergo dicit Iacob: “Vidi Deum facie ad faciem” referendum est, non ad ipsam divinam essentiam, sed ad figuram in qua representabatur Deus.... Vel hoc dicit Iacob ad designandam quondam eminentiam intelligibilem contemplationis, supra communem statum. ST I 12, 11 ad 1.

Another text in support of the use of images in prophetic visions is this one from *Summa Contra Gentiles*: “But that some men are spoken of in Sacred Scripture as having seen God must be understood either in reference to an imaginary vision, or even a corporeal one: according as the presence of divine power was manifested through some corporeal species, whether appearing externally, or formed internally in the imagination; or even according as some men have perceived some intelligible knowledge of God through His spiritual effects.”

Quod autem in Sacra Scriptura aliqui Deum vidisse dicuntur, oportet intelligi hoc fuisse vel per aliquam imaginariam visionem; seu etiam corporalem, prout scilicet per aliquas corporeas species, vel exterius apparentes vel interius formatas in imaginatione, divinae virtutis praesentia demonstrabatur; vel etiam secundum quod aliqui per spirituales effectus aliquam cognitionem de Deo intelligibilem ceperunt. SCG III 47, 3.

grace works with nature and not against it.¹³³ As it is natural to us to use images in our thinking, so even in prophetic visions such images may be experienced.

The closest a human may come to the vision of God while still living on earth is through rapture: “Consequently the highest degree of contemplation in the present life is that which Paul had in rapture, whereby he was in a middle state between the present and the life to come.”¹³⁴ Rapture, according to Thomas, is a state in which a human being is so carried away by divine power as to attain the vision of God while still in a mortal body.¹³⁵ This is contrary to our natural inclinations, and can be done only by the power of God (or by demons).¹³⁶ Since God cannot be seen through the use of our senses, and in fact, our sensory perception, the formation of phantasms and the formation of intelligible species are impediments to seeing God as He is, so, in rapture, just like in the Beatific Vision, our intellect must receive the knowledge of the Divine Essence directly from God.¹³⁷ And since phantasms are an impediment to seeing God, in rapture, a person is withdrawn from his senses: “Yet, this state remaining, actual conversion to phantasms and sensible objects is withdrawn from the soul, lest it be hindered from being uplifted to that which transcends all phantasms... Therefore it was not necessary that his [St. Paul’s] soul in rapture should be separated from the body as to cease to be united thereto as its form; and yet it was necessary for his intellect to be withdrawn from phantasms and the

¹³³ ST I-II 109, 1.

¹³⁴ Unde supremus gradus contemplationis praesentis vitae est qualem habuit Paulus in raptu, secundum quem fuit medio modo se habens inter statum praesentis vitae et futurae. ST II-II 180, 5.

¹³⁵ ST II-II 175, 1.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ ST II-II 175, 3; ST I 12, 5 and 9; ST I-II 5, 5.

perception of sensible objects.”¹³⁸ Even imagination is “turned off” in the state of rapture.¹³⁹ Here we finally have a state of contemplation which does not rely in any way on phantasms. However, it is not natural.

It is natural for a human being to use phantasms as well as intelligible species in all intellectual operations. That is so because a human being is a creature made of body and a tripartite soul. All the parts of the soul (and the body also) participate in all human actions and operations.¹⁴⁰ If it were possible to dissociate various parts of a person, then we would have to say that by nature a human being is an accidental collection of parts which might be differently assembled and perhaps replaced with different parts. That would be a departure from the hylomorphic view of human nature, which Thomas adopted from Aristotle. Furthermore, if we allowed for the intellectual part of the soul to function independently of the other parts, that might imply that the soul is only accidentally associated with a given body (and perhaps could get another body) and also that the soul does not really need the body. But Thomas explicitly states that the body soul needs the body, because human intellect needs the assistance of the operations of the

¹³⁸ Manente autem hoc statu, aufertur ab anima actualis conversio ad phantasmata et sensibilia, ne impediatur eius elevatio in id quod excedit omnia phantasmata... Et ideo in raptu non fuit necessarium quod anima sic separaretur a corpore ut ei non uniretur quasi forma: fuit autem necessarium intellectum eius abstrahi a phantasmatis et sensibilibus perceptione. ST II-II 175, 5.

¹³⁹ ST II-II 180, 5.

¹⁴⁰ When one operation of the soul is intense it impedes another, which could never be the case unless the principle of action were essentially one.

Una operatio animae, cum fuerit intensa, impedit aliam. Quod nullo modo contingeret, nisi principium actionum esset per essentiam unum. ST I 76, 3.

sensitive soul in in the process of the acquisition of knowledge.¹⁴¹ Thomas also explicitly states that it is natural for the intellective part of the soul to rely on the phantasms:

Hence it is as natural for the soul to understand by turning to the phantasms as it is for it to be joined to the body; but to be separated from the body is not in accordance with its nature, and likewise to understand without turning to the phantasms is not natural to it; and hence it is united to the body in order that it may have an existence and an operation suitable to its nature.¹⁴²

In rapture, there is no use of phantasms and no sensory perception. In rapture, the intellective soul's natural interaction with the sensitive soul is blocked. That is what makes rapture unnatural.

To make things more complicated, Thomas says that there are three ways in which someone may be rapt and one of those ways may involve "imaginary pictures" and still be a state of rapture.¹⁴³ But the rapture of Paul did not involve any images. Paul saw God through His essence, and yet

Nevertheless, by reason of the vision of the Word, certain likenesses of the things which he saw were imprinted on his understanding. And with these likenesses he could see afterwards the things which he had previously seen through the essence of the Word. Later, by applying these intelligible species to the individual intentions or forms which were stored in his memory or imagination, he could remember the things which he had seen previously, and this even through the activity of memory, which is a sensitive power.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ ST I 76, 5.

¹⁴² Unde modus intelligendi per conversionem ad phantasmata est animae naturalis, sicut et corpori uniri; sed esse separatam a corpore est praeter rationem suae naturae, et similiter intelligere sine conversione ad phantasmata est ei praeter naturam. Et ideo ad hoc unitur corpori, ut sic operetur secundum naturam suam. ST I 89, 1.

¹⁴³ ST II-II 175, 3 ad 1.

¹⁴⁴ Tamen ex ipsa aspersione Verbi imprimebantur in intellectu quaedam rerum visarum similitudines, quibus post modum cognoscere poterat ea quae prius per essentiam Verbi viderat; et ex illis speciebus

Thus according to Thomas Aquinas, although there are some states of rapture in which a person may see God in His essence, afterwards things which that person has come to know would be in a manner of speaking translated into the way of thinking which is natural to a human being, and so involve phantasms. And we must remember that rapture is not natural. Ordinarily we would contemplate God without violating our nature as rational animals.

There is one more passage to corroborate the claim that according to Aquinas we use images when we are contemplating things divine. He says:

In the Scriptures, transport of mind, ecstasy, and rapture are all used in the same sense and indicate some raising up of the mind from sensible things outside of us toward which we naturally turn our attention, to things which are above man. This takes place in two ways. For at times, this transport from things outside is taken to refer to attention only, as when someone makes use of the external senses and things about him, but his whole attention is engaged in contemplating and loving things divine.... Ecstasy or rapture or transport of the mind take place in another way.¹⁴⁵

Aquinas says here that, while in rapture we may be deprived of the use of senses and the imagination so as to be enabled to see God in his essence, in ordinary contemplation we continue sensing and using our imagination, but our attention is focused on some divine truth. In this way, when the powers of the intellectual soul are

intelligibilibus per quamdam applicationem ad particulares intentiones vel formas in memoria vel in imaginatione conservatas, postmodum poterat memorari eorum quae prius viderat, etiam secundum actum memoriae quae est potentia sensitiva. QDV 13, 3 ad 4.

¹⁴⁵ Dicendum quod excessus mentis, extasis, et raptus, omnia in Scripturis pro eodem accipiuntur; et significant elevationem quamdam ab exterioribus sensibilibus, quibus naturaliter intendimus ad aliqua quae sunt super hominem. Sed hoc dupliciter contingit. Quandoque enim intelligitur abstractio ab exterioribus quantum ad intentionem tantum, ut scilicet cum quis exterioribus sensibus et rebus utitur, sed tota sua intentio divinis inspiciendis et diligendis vacat... Alio modo... fit extasis aut raptus aut excessus mentis. QDV 13, 2 ad 9.

concentrated on the contemplation of divine truth, the lower powers must assist the intellect.¹⁴⁶ And that is appropriate to a creature composed of many faculties. Thus, in ordinary contemplation, the intellect and the sensitive soul, both participate in the activity of contemplation. Contemplation is primarily the intellectual activity, but in a secondary way the sensitive soul also has to be involved. That is so, because a human being is by nature both, a rational and an animal.

Thus there is textual evidence that Aquinas thought that contemplation of God by a human being involves phantasms. And it is not surprising, in view of everything else Aquinas tells us. We contemplate truths about God, or about the created world. Even if the object of our contemplation is not a corporeal object, we cannot empty our minds of phantasms, for we cannot think without phantasms.¹⁴⁷ The things we think about or things we contemplate may themselves go beyond phantasms, but they can be formed, understood and thought about only through the use of phantasms.¹⁴⁸ We can use our power of imagination to help ourselves to form or understand abstract concepts,¹⁴⁹ to help ourselves to learn something about incorporeal entities¹⁵⁰ and to help ourselves to learn something about God.¹⁵¹ We use phantasms because we have to think as composite creatures, not as separate intellects. Aquinas tells us that animals have cognitive powers

¹⁴⁶ ST I-II 4, 6; ST I-II 37, 1.

¹⁴⁷ ST I 84, 7.

¹⁴⁸ ST I 88, 2; ST I 84, 7 ad 3; ST I 89, 3 and 4.

¹⁴⁹ ST I 85, 1 ad 2; ST I 86, 2; ST I 84, 7.

¹⁵⁰ ST I 84, 7 ad 3.

¹⁵¹ ST I 12.

and that they engage in a sort of thinking.¹⁵² Since we are animals, we possess animal powers, and they do not cease to function just because we also use our intellectual part of the soul. Thus, it would make sense that the sensitive part of the soul must be also involved in our thought processes even though it does not dominate those processes. Aquinas does not regard the body or the sensitive part of the soul as a burden to the intellectual soul or as superfluous to its operations.¹⁵³ Likewise, he never says that we “disconnect” any of our parts, no matter what we might be doing. Aquinas’s view of human nature is that of a fully integrated being, in whom all the parts of the soul and the body are always influencing one another and working with one another. Thus, it is plausible to interpret what Aquinas says about phantasms and contemplation of God as the situation in which the formation of phantasms by the imagination helps us to contemplate God.

We cannot form any phantasms of God, because we cannot sense or comprehend God. But we form phantasms which we use to represent our ideas of God. For that we turn to some objects which we perceive, remember, or imagine. For example, “God is good” is a truth about God which somebody might contemplate. That truth itself is not something of which there is a phantasm, but a human being cannot engage in imageless thinking.¹⁵⁴ So, someone contemplating the idea that God is good, would need to use her power of imagination to produce some phantasms associated with that notion. In fact, one

¹⁵² ST I 78, 4; SCG III 35, 5; QDA 13, Aquinas, Thomas St., *Questions On the Soul*, tr. James H. Robb, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 1984. Latin text: Thomas Aquinas, “Quaestiones disputatae de anima,” in *Opera Omnia*, Parma, reprinted in New York: Musurgia Publishers, 1949. hereafter referred to as: QDA.

¹⁵³ ST I 76, 5.

¹⁵⁴ ST I 84, 7.

would probably have groups of phantasms associated with such notion, phantasms which would represent all of that person's reflections on the subject of God and goodness.¹⁵⁵ Thus, when we contemplate God we must be in fact looking at something else, which we use to help us know something about God. While we say that we contemplate God, in fact we have to focus on images derived from some objects we know from experience.

It is interesting that, according to Aquinas, rapture is so unnatural that it does not correspond to the kind of experience which the blessed in heaven will enjoy for eternity. After death and before resurrection, since separated souls will be deprived of phantasms, they will "see" God, through grace, as the spirit.¹⁵⁶ But that is not a natural condition for a human being. According to Thomas, these souls will be eventually reunited with their bodies and as complete human beings, they will attain their complete and eternal happiness. Then complete humans will experience phantasms again, even in connection with the vision of God, who is a spirit. Thomas says:

After the resurrection, in the blessed who see God in His essence, there will be an overflow from the intellect to the lower powers and even to the body. Hence it is in keeping with the rule itself of the divine vision that the soul will turn towards phantasms and sensible objects. But there is no such overflow in those who are raptured.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Wilhelmssen, pp.112-117.

¹⁵⁶ ST I 89, 1; ST I-II 4, 5.

¹⁵⁷ Post resurrectionem in beatis Dei essentiam videntibus fiet redundantia ab intellectu ad inferiores vires, et usque ad corpus. Unde, secundum ipsam regulam divinae visionis, anima intendet et phantasmatis et sensibilibus. Talis autem redundantia non fit in his qui rapiuntur. ST II-II 175, 4 ad 1.

Thus, it seems that even the Beatific Vision will somehow produce phantasms in us, not because there is a phantasm of God, but because it is natural for us to use phantasms in our intellectual acts.

After the resurrection, we need phantasms not for seeing God in the Beatific Vision, for God is not a sensible object, but we need phantasms in order to attain perfection according to our nature. And while we are living on earth our contemplation of God has to involve phantasms because we are animals.

What We Know as Separated Souls

In his discussion of the human soul Aquinas also considers the condition of separated souls. According to Aquinas, the human soul is immortal.¹⁵⁸ During the time between the death and the resurrection of the body the human soul exists as a “separated soul”. Separated souls are to be reunited with their bodies at the resurrection.¹⁵⁹ The resurrection of bodies takes place on the day of the Last Judgment. On the Day of Judgment¹⁶⁰ bodies will be resurrected by the power of God.¹⁶¹

Naturally, Aquinas can only speculate about the condition of separated souls, since this is not something we can know while we are in this world. A complete discussion of this topic is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, a quick look at what Aquinas says about the knowledge available to the separated souls, and also about the capacities returned to them after the resurrection, helps us to understand better the

¹⁵⁸ ST I 75, 2 and 6 See also Pasnau, p.49.

¹⁵⁹ Aquinas believed in and argued for the resurrection of the bodies. See: SCG IV 79-81.

¹⁶⁰ SCG IV 96.

¹⁶¹ Resurrection is not natural, it is only possible through Divine power. See: SCG IV 81,4.

emphasis he puts on the fact that we are composite beings, and that we are not merely separated intellectual souls encased in bodies.

As was quoted above, Thomas says that the operations of the sensitive part belong to human happiness “consequently,” that is after the resurrection.¹⁶² But he does not say that the separated souls, before resurrection, are unhappy, because happiness is essentially a Beatific Vision, for the enjoyment for which we do not need senses. Thomas says: “Now the operation of sense cannot belong to happiness essentially. For man’s happiness consists essentially in his being united to the Uncreated Good, which is his last end ...to which man cannot be united by an operation of his senses.”¹⁶³ Since we do not need and cannot use the senses for the enjoyment of the Beatific Vision (because God is not a sensible object), one might wonder if in the next world we might be altogether free from dependence on our senses and on phantasms. According to Thomas, we are never completely free from dependence on our senses, for even beyond this world, we need them in order to obtain knowledge of natural things like other human beings,¹⁶⁴ and thus we need sensory perception in order to enjoy our happiness as complete human beings. However, the sensitive part of the soul is not functional without the body, with the consequence that the separated soul cannot have a clear knowledge of natural things.

¹⁶² ST I-II 3, 3.

¹⁶³ Essentialiter quidem non potest pertinere operatio sensus ad beatitudinem. Nam beatitudo hominis consistit essentialiter in coniunctione ipsius ad bonum increatum, quod est ulltimus finis...cui homo coniungi non potest per sensus operationem. ST I-II 3,3.

¹⁶⁴ ST I 89, 3 and 4.

He considers what kind of knowledge is possessed by a soul separated from its body after death and not yet reunited with it by resurrection.¹⁶⁵ In the separated soul only the intellectual part of the human soul, consisting of the intellect and the will, remains functional. The intellect is incorporeal,¹⁶⁶ and thus, incorruptible.¹⁶⁷ The operations of the sensitive and the vegetative parts depend on the body. So, after the body is destroyed, they are rendered inoperative.¹⁶⁸ The human soul, as a whole, is the soul of a composite being: “Not the soul alone, but the composite, is the species.”¹⁶⁹ The nature of human soul is such that it can be said to consist of three parts, all of which together constitute the principle of life, which is the act of a human body. Death of the body does not change the nature of the soul. However, the sensitive and the vegetative parts of the soul cannot operate until the time of the resurrection when their powers are restored again.¹⁷⁰ The intellectual part of the soul, which continues to operate, retains its nature as a part of a human being, not as a whole human being, not even as a human soul with all its powers, for obviously some of its powers are in abeyance until resurrection.

Thomas considers whether after death the soul would gain complete knowledge of all natural things, whether it would know what is happening on earth, or perhaps, instead of gaining knowledge, it would lose all the knowledge it had acquired on earth. In

¹⁶⁵ ST I 89.

¹⁶⁶ ST I 75, 2.

¹⁶⁷ ST I 77, 8.

¹⁶⁸ ST I 77, 8; QDA 13.

¹⁶⁹ Unde nec proprie anima est in specie, sed compositum. ST I 75,7 ad 3.

¹⁷⁰ SCG IV 84 and 86.

answering such questions, he tells us more about the importance of the sensitive part of the soul. Separated human souls understand by the influence of the Divine light, by God's grace.¹⁷¹ In fact, all intellectual creatures have intellective powers by the influence of the Divine light.¹⁷² With the help of the Divine light, separated souls understand by using the intelligible species, without the need to turn to phantasms.¹⁷³ Separated souls have a perfect knowledge of other souls, because souls can be understood without turning to phantasms.¹⁷⁴ The knowledge of natural corporeal things, however, requires the use of phantasms, while the separated souls cannot produce phantasms. In case of knowing corporeal things, the separated human soul knows by receiving intelligible species from the influence of Divine light and thus, it can acquire some knowledge about those things. Since there is nothing which could deceive or confuse the separated soul, its understanding is better and more clear compared with that on earth: "The separated soul is, indeed, less perfect considering its nature in which it communicates with the nature of

¹⁷¹ The separated soul does not understand by way of innate species, nor by species abstracted then, nor only by species retained...but the soul in that state understands by means of participated species arising from the influence of the Divine light, shared by the soul as by other separate substances; though in a lesser degree. Hence as soon as it ceases to act by turning to corporeal [phantasms], the soul turns at once to the superior things; nor is this way of knowledge unnatural, for God is the author of the influx both of the light of grace and of the light of nature.

Dicendum quod anima separata non intelligit per species innatas; nec per species quas tunc abstrahit; nec solum per species conservatas...sed per species ex influentia divini luminis participatas, quarum anima fit particeps sicut et aliae substantiae separatae, quamvis inferiori modo. Unde tam cito cessante conversione ad corpus, ad superiora convertitur. Nec tamen propter hoc cognitio, non est naturalis: quia Deus est auctor non solum influentiae gratuiti luminis, se etiam naturalis. ST I 89, 1 ad 3.

¹⁷² ST I 89, 1 ad 3.

¹⁷³ ST I 89, 1; ST I 89, 2 ad 2 and ad 3; QDA 15.

¹⁷⁴ ST I 89, 2.

the body; but it has a greater freedom of intelligence, since the weight and care for the body is a clog upon the clearness of its intelligence in the present life.”¹⁷⁵

However, it is not natural for the human soul to acquire knowledge only through the intelligible species. Normally, the human soul understands by turning to phantasms. Given that, Aquinas asks whether, after the death of the body and the destruction of sensory organs, the separated soul can know anything at all.¹⁷⁶ His answer, in general, is that the separated soul can know many things since it understands whatever it understands through the intelligible species which belong to the intellect, and in that way, our thinking may be independent of sensory perception. Yet the separated soul is deprived of phantasms which belong to the sensitive part of the soul, and thus, the soul’s knowledge of things is limited. He says that because it is not natural for a human soul to gain knowledge through the intelligible species alone, that knowledge will be indistinct: “The soul apart from the body through such species does not receive perfect knowledge, but only a general and confused kind of knowledge. Separated souls, therefore, have the same relation through such species to imperfect and confused knowledge of natural things as the angels have to the perfect knowledge thereof.”¹⁷⁷ By “confused and general”¹⁷⁸ Thomas means that a soul deprived of sensory input and phantasms is able to

¹⁷⁵ Anima separata est quidem imperfectior, si consideretur natura qua communicat cum natura corporis: sed tamen quodammodo est liberior ad intelligendum, in quantum per gravitatem et occupationem corporis a puritate intelligentiae impeditur. ST I 89, 2 ad 1.

¹⁷⁶ ST I 89, 1.

¹⁷⁷ Anima separata per huiusmodi species non accipit perfectam rerum cognitionem, sed quasi in communi et confusam. Sicut igitur se habent angeli ad perfectam cognitionem rerum naturalium per huiusmodi species, ita animae separatae ad imperfectam et confusam. ST I 89, 3.

¹⁷⁸ ST I 89, 1; QDA 18.

know a given thing's generic or even specific nature, for example, 'a cat', but it would not be able to know that particular thing, for example that particular kitty, orange on top and white underneath, which is purring softly. If the person whose soul it is never met a cat in his/her life (perhaps because he/she lived in the arctic), then he/she might only be able to understand that it is an animal, or at most that it is some kind of small and furry animal. For a separated soul cannot see, hear or touch a cat. Without that sensory input, a person could acquire only a vague and general knowledge of the cat. Thus, a separated soul has a confused and general knowledge of particular natural things because it can use only the intellective part of the soul, and is missing the capacities of the sensitive part.

Thomas compares us here to the angels in order to stress that it is not in our nature – as opposed to the angelic nature - to understand things without mediation of senses and phantasms, and therefore, when we are deprived of the senses, our knowledge must be vague and confused, in accordance with the Order of Creation. As was discussed in chapter 1, we hold a certain place in the Order of Creation, in accordance with which we possess a certain nature. That Order and our human nature do not cease, but continue even beyond this world. And so, the separated human soul is still the soul of a rational animal, not simply a rational being. That is why the rational soul deprived of its animal body is missing certain capabilities, for example, the ability to clearly understand natural things which normally we would investigate with our senses.¹⁷⁹

It is noteworthy that even as separated souls we can understand some kinds of things better than other kinds of things, namely, those towards which we had some

¹⁷⁹ ST I 89, 4.

relation on earth, or towards which we have some natural aptitude: “whereas separated souls by these species know only those singulars to which they are determined by former knowledge in this life, or by some affection, or by natural aptitude, or by the disposition of the Divine order; because whatever is received into anything is conditioned according to the mode of the recipient.”¹⁸⁰ Thus, the kinds of things we already knew something about are also more clearly understood by the separated souls, and likewise the kinds of things we loved or liked while in this life. Furthermore, it is interesting that Thomas mentions the natural aptitude, which indicates that we preserve our individual nature and aptitudes even beyond this world. That means that, for example, the separated soul of an engineer understands more clearly things like physical structures and mechanisms, and the separated soul of a musician understands more clearly music, even though the soul of an engineer does not see, and the soul of a musician does not hear.¹⁸¹ Nevertheless, the souls of engineers, musicians and others retain their nature as souls of certain individuals, possessing certain abilities and affections, and also naturally possessing bodies and senses. In the case of someone who was a cat lover in life, that someone would have a better understanding of cats as a separated soul than someone who did not care for cats and did not learn much about them.

¹⁸⁰ Animae vero separatae non possunt cognoscere per huiusmodi species nisi solum singularia illa ad quae quodammodo determinatur vel per praecedentem cognitionem, vel per aliquam affectionem, vel per naturalem habitudinem, vel per divinam ordinationem: quia omne quod recipitur in alique, recipitur in eo per modum recipientis. ST I 89, 4.

¹⁸¹ Separated souls cannot see, hear or touch. See: QDA 19 ad 11.

In view of the above, we can better understand why Thomas says that we retain much of the knowledge we have acquired on earth.¹⁸² Even though the sensitive part of the soul is destroyed with the body, most of our knowledge resides in the intellect, and the intellect survives the death of the body. And as far as memory is concerned, while simple memory of past events is in the sensitive part of the soul and is destroyed with it, intellective memory through which we retain the intelligible species is in the intellective part and is not destroyed.¹⁸³ And thus, knowledge acquired on earth remains with us even while we are separated souls.¹⁸⁴ Thomas notes that it is regrettable that those who are most knowledgeable are not necessarily the most saintly. Nevertheless, even though the more saintly will receive a greater reward in heaven, generally speaking, knowledge acquired on earth by the less worthy souls will remain with them.¹⁸⁵ Otherwise, the Order of Creation would be violated.

Natural things that separated souls have trouble knowing are generally found in this world (we do not know if there are any natural things in heaven). Therefore, Thomas asks whether the separated souls know what takes place on earth.¹⁸⁶ They do not, or at least not by natural knowledge since to acquire knowledge of things on earth they need the senses. However, as was mentioned above, souls receive knowledge by the influence of Divine light and they have better understanding of those things to which they are

¹⁸² ST I 89, 5 and 6.

¹⁸³ ST I 79, 6.

¹⁸⁴ ST I 89, 5 and 6.

¹⁸⁵ ST I 89, 5 ad 2.

¹⁸⁶ ST I 89, 8.

determined by some previous knowledge, affection or aptitude. Thus, they may receive some information about happenings on earth, if it be the will of God.

Sensory Perception After the Resurrection

Separated souls are, in a way, handicapped without bodies. Fortunately, according to Aquinas, they will be eventually reunited with their resurrected bodies. According to Aquinas, our bodies will be resurrected at the Last Judgment¹⁸⁷ and for the rest of eternity we shall exist as embodied persons. When Thomas says that we will be embodied he does not mean something which has the appearance of our bodies but is spiritual in nature. Thomas says that our resurrected bodies will be animal bodies:

Again, in the definition of a natural thing which signifies the essence of the species, one includes the matter; necessarily, then, whenever the matter is varied in species, the species of the natural thing is varied. But man is a natural thing. If, therefore, after the resurrection he is not to have a body consisting of flesh and bones and parts of this kind as he has now, he who rises will not belong to the same species, but will be called man only equivocally.¹⁸⁸

Later in the same chapter, Thomas says: “There is more. The body of man when he rises must have the capacity to touch, for without touch there is no animal. But that which rises must be animal if it is to be man.”¹⁸⁹ Thus, Aquinas clearly tells us that our resurrected bodies will be animal bodies, not some misty, spiritual kind, and that they will be composed of flesh and bone just like they are on earth. He also tells us that we

¹⁸⁷ SCG IV, 79.

¹⁸⁸ *Amplius. Cum in definitione rerum naturalium, quae significat essentiam speciei, ponatur materia, necessarium est quod, variata materia secundum speciem, varietur species rei naturalis. Homo autem res naturalis est. Si igitur post resurrectionem non habebit corpus consistens ex carnibus et ossibus et huiusmodi partibus, sicut nunc habet non erit qui resurget eiusdem speciei, sed dicetur homo tantum aequivoce.* SCG IV 84, 5.

¹⁸⁹ *Praeterea. Corpus hominis resurgentis oportet esse tactivum: quia sine tactu nullum est animal. Oportet autem ut resurgens sit animal, si sit homo.* SCG IV 84, 14.

shall possess sensory perception, and especially a sense of touch, because without it we could not be animals, and whoever is human is generically an animal. We will continue to be animals in the afterlife.

This claim that our resurrected bodies will be animal bodies is consistent not only with Thomas's religious beliefs, but also his hylomorphic theory, which he adopted along with other features of Aristotelian philosophy. Aquinas reminds us that:

The soul is, furthermore, united to the body as form to matter. Of course, every form has its determined matter, for there must be proportion between act and potency. Since, therefore, the soul is the same in species, it appears that its matter must be the same in species. Therefore, the body will be the same in species after the resurrection as before. And so it has to consist of flesh and bones and other parts of this kind.¹⁹⁰

Aquinas follows Aristotle in saying that the human soul is the form and the act of the body.¹⁹¹ In composite creatures, like humans, matter is what determines individual bodies, while the soul determines what kind of creatures they are, i.e. humans.¹⁹² The human soul is that of a rational animal, and because it is rational, it is also a self subsistent.¹⁹³ Because it is rational, it is individual and immortal.¹⁹⁴ But it is also the soul of a kind of an animal, and as such it is the form of animal body. And since the soul and its body form a unity,¹⁹⁵ there can be only one body associated with any given soul.

¹⁹⁰ Adhuc. Anima unitur corpori sicut forma materiae. Omnis autem forma habet determinatam materiam: oportet enim esse proportionem actus et potentiae. Cum igitur anima sit eadem secundum speciem, videtur quod habeat eandem materiam secundum speciem. Erit ergo idem corpus secundum speciem post resurrectionem et ante. Et sic oportet quod sit consistens ex carnibus et ossibus, et aliis huiusmodi partibus. SCG IV 84, 4.

¹⁹¹ ST I 75, 1,5; In DA II 1; In DA II 2, 241, 242.

¹⁹² ST I 76,1; In DA II 4.

¹⁹³ ST I 75, 2, 3, 6; Pasnau, p.49.

¹⁹⁴ ST I 75, 6.

Thus, the resurrected bodies of human beings will be animal bodies, made of flesh and bone, and with their characteristic organs, i.e. hearts and livers and such, just as they were in earthly life. They will be material and will take up space too.¹⁹⁶ Since the human body has to be an animal body, it has to be material and passible, and has to possess a characteristic shape and cannot assume the traits of something like air or become a celestial body.¹⁹⁷ Thus, the resurrected body will be an animal body.

Since the operations of the sensitive soul depend on the body, when that body is restored, so will be the operations of the sensitive part of the soul. Before the resurrection, separated souls in heaven are happy because they already enjoy the Beatific Vision, but they are somewhat dysfunctional. After the resurrection of the body, we shall feel sensations again,¹⁹⁸ phantasms will be produced again, and the intellect will again understand things clearly and perfectly, in accordance with its nature.¹⁹⁹ Thomas says:

A soul which is separated from its body does not possess the same mode of knowing that it had when it was in its body. A separated soul retains knowledge of things that it knows in a way proper to it, that is, without phantasms; but after it returns to its original state by being once again united with a body, it now knows these things in a way suitable to the union, that is, by turning to phantasms. And therefore those things which souls have seen intelligibly, they speak about imaginatively.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁵ ST I 76; In DA II 1, 234.

¹⁹⁶ SCG IV 87.

¹⁹⁷ SCG IV 84, 12-14.

¹⁹⁸ SCG IV 86,4 and IV 90; ST Supplement 82, 3 and 4.

¹⁹⁹ QDA 19 ad 18; ST II-II 175,4 ad 1.

²⁰⁰ Anima separata a corpore non eundem modum habet cognoscendi et cum est in corpore. Eorum igitur quae apprehendit anima separata secundum modum sibi proprium absque phantasmatis, remanet cognitio in ea postquam ad pristinum statum redit, corpori iterato conjuncta, secundum modum tunc sibi convenientem, scilicet cum conversione ad phantasmata. Et ideo quae intelligibiliter videntur, imaginabiliter narrant. QDA 19 ad 18.

As complete human beings, we will be able to understand particular natural things, like cats, flowers, or mountains,²⁰¹ because we will be able to sense them, because the capacity for sensation will be restored with the body.²⁰² Of all the natural things, the most important for a human being are other human beings. There would be presumably many people in heaven, who would be loving, lovable and loved,²⁰³ and while it is good to understand that they are there, it is better to be able also to see and to touch them. A separated soul cannot give friend a hug, but a human being can.

Not only would natural things cause us to produce phantasms (or experience delight) but even the Beatific Vision, that is God Himself, would produce in us phantasms by an overflow.²⁰⁴ In this way, the Beatific Vision is different from rapture. For although we cannot by our natural powers attain to the Beatific Vision, nevertheless when God grants it to us, he will grant it to us respecting our nature as rational animals.

Thus, the operations of the sensitive part of the soul belong to human happiness consequently, that is after the resurrection, because the perfection of human nature requires it. Thomas's concept of final happiness entails the perfection of the whole human being.²⁰⁵ Perfection of the body is necessary for the complete perfection of a

²⁰¹ According to Aquinas, the plants and animals of this world will perish at the end of the world, (ST Supplement, 91, 5) but my point is that whatever sensible objects there might be, complete human beings will be able to understand them in a way natural to humans.

²⁰² ST Supplement 82, 3 and 4; SCG IV 86, 4.

²⁰³ ST I-II 4, 8; ST II-II 26, 13.

²⁰⁴ ST II-II 175, 4 ad 1.

²⁰⁵ ST I-II 3, 2.

human being, because we are naturally creatures composed of souls and bodies.²⁰⁶

Perfection of the body includes perfection of the operations of the sensitive part of the soul. Thus, after the resurrection, our bodies will be restored in perfect condition, and with the bodies, the operations of the sensitive soul. Heavenly happiness does not change human nature, but perfects it.

Conclusion

We can now see that the sensitive part of the soul does participate in contemplation, at least as far as sensory perception and the production of phantasms is concerned. To acquire knowledge, we need sensible objects, and in order to sense those objects, we need to produce phantasms. In order to really understand the concepts we have acquired by abstraction, we need to return to phantasms stored in our memory. In order to formulate propositions, we need phantasms. In order to learn about immaterial things, we need to use our knowledge of material things and to use phantasms. In order to learn about God and to contemplate God, we help ourselves with phantasms. Separated souls are not able to think clearly or to know certain things because they lack senses and phantasms. Resurrected persons, who will be granted knowledge and abilities beyond their earthly capabilities, will nevertheless use phantasms. Aquinas tells us that even the Beatific Vision will produce phantasms in us by “overflow”, that is by the influence of the rational soul on the sensitive soul. In accordance with the Order of Creation, each rational creature contemplates God in accordance with its nature, and since the nature of human beings is such that it requires the use of senses and phantasms, those traits will

²⁰⁶ ST I-II 4, 6.

also figure in the contemplation of God in heaven. Human beings never cease to be animals.

We can now see why Aquinas says that the operations of the sensitive soul are necessary for human happiness consequently, that is after this life. He says: “The operations of the senses can belong to happiness, both antecedently and consequently ...consequently, in that perfect happiness which we await in heaven; because of resurrection.”²⁰⁷ But the Beatific Vision itself does not involve sensory operations.²⁰⁸ So, according to Aquinas, operations of the sensitive part of the soul belong to heavenly happiness despite the fact that contemplation of God in itself is a purely intellectual activity, which is why happiness essentially consists in the operations of the intellectual part of the soul. But the happiness of a separated soul is not the same as the happiness of a human being. The sensitive soul is needed for human happiness because it is natural for humans to have it,²⁰⁹ because by nature we are not separated intellects. It is natural for us to use phantasms when we are thinking.²¹⁰ It is natural for us to enjoy sensations.²¹¹ When we are deprived of what belongs to our nature, we are missing some perfection. We are also missing many delights associated with sensations. In a different passage, Aquinas also tells us that the body is necessary for happiness, even happiness in

²⁰⁷ Possunt autem operationes sensus pertinere ad beatitudinem antecedenter et consequenter....Consequenter autem, in illa perfecta beatitudine quae expectatur in caelo, quia post resurrectionem... ST I-II 3, 3.

²⁰⁸ ST I-II 3, 3.

²⁰⁹ ST I-II 4, 6.

²¹⁰ ST I 84, 7; ST II-II 175, 4 ad 1.

²¹¹ ST I 78, 1; ST Supplement 82, 3 and 4; SCG IV 86, 4.

heaven.²¹² This provides us the clue to better understand what he says in the ST I-II 3, 3 about the perfection of the lower part because of the overflow. Aquinas says that the body is necessary for happiness because we are composite creatures, made of body and soul, and thus, for a complete happiness, we must be complete as to our nature. Thus, we need a body for our complete happiness in heaven, and the body and the operations of vegetative and the sensitive parts of the soul which belong to the body are necessary for complete enjoyment of human happiness, even in heaven.

And so we can see that the operations of the sensitive soul belong to human happiness consequently, because we are dependent on our senses, both outer and inner senses, in our acquisition of knowledge. And even in the act of contemplation itself, we are using phantasms. We contemplate God, and the truths of metaphysics or mathematics, because we are rational. But the way we arrive at the truth and even in the act of contemplation itself, we show ourselves also to be animals.

²¹² ST I-II 4, 5.

CHAPTER THREE

DESIRE AND CONTEMPLATION

In the previous chapter, I have shown that, according to Thomas Aquinas, in our pursuit of knowledge and even our contemplation, we manifest our animal as well our rational nature. It would be impossible to get to know anything without the input of sensory data, and it would be impossible for us to sense if we could not produce phantasms. These are traits we share with other animals. The operations of the intellect and thus the rational part of the soul need to be connected to the powers of the sensitive part of the soul for we must abstract intelligible species from phantasms and then, Aquinas tells us, we cannot think without using phantasms. Separated souls in heaven are handicapped because they cannot produce phantasms, while after the resurrection, even the Beatific Vision will cause us to experience phantasms, not because there is phantasm of God, but because we are animals. After we are reintegrated again with all the parts of body and soul, it will be natural for the sensitive part of the soul to be influenced again by the intellectual part of the soul, because we are always composite beings by nature, and that nature includes animality.

The next thing I would like to consider is the role of animal inclinations, appetites, and passions in the human pursuit of knowledge. Thomas does not tell us about it explicitly, but he does provide us with clues to find the explanation of their role. We possess a natural inclination to truth in virtue of which we pursue knowledge and engage

in contemplation of truth. The truth we contemplate has to be truth derived from our knowledge of the world around us, beginning with the knowledge of sensible objects. In maneuvering through the world of sensible objects, we are guided first by our animal inclinations, animal passions and animal cognition before we can respond to these objects as rational beings. It is so because qua animals we must react to things as either useful or dangerous if we are to survive at all.

The Need for Selective Attention

Animal appetites and passions, together with the cogitative power, guide us in the choice of objects we pay attention to because we have to pay attention to them in order to live, or at least because these objects appear to us, as pleasant.¹ These objects may eventually become the objects of our study and contemplation. Since Thomas tells us that even in order to imagine non-existent things we use the images of known things,² the objects we study and perhaps contemplate are derived from our experiences. If our learning is to begin with sensible objects then we must notice some object, i.e. our attention must be drawn to it. We cannot simply receive all the sensory data from the world around us in a haphazard way; we must select and organize our perceiving. What we notice and select for further consideration must be something to which we have a natural attraction or aversion. We notice these objects because we possess senses, but possession of senses alone does not explain why we notice the particular objects which we do in fact notice. Our noticing a particular object is best explained by positing that the attention is a function of the sense appetites acting together with the cogitative power

¹ Klubertanz, George, S.J. *The Discursive Power*, St. Louis: The Modern Schoolman, 1952, p.288-290.

² ST I 78, 4.

(estimative power in other animals). This is the argument of G. Klubertanz, who says:

“Attention, therefore, in the sensory order is a function of sense appetite, which is determined by the judgments of the estimative or [cogitative] power.”³

His argument is that in order to hold some object in the mind, the phantasm representing that object has to remain at rest. The intellect needs that phantasm to remain at rest, because the process of reasoning, of decision making, has certain duration. Klubertanz does not stop to consider other animals’ processes of making choices, but it is obvious that those processes also take time and also require the use of phantasms. The inner sense of phantasia, however, cannot account for the fact that phantasms remain stationary. The only thing that could account for keeping a given object in the actual apprehension for any length of time is love.⁴ Love causes an agent to desire and to pursue a good, and that clearly implies paying attention to a particular good, a particular object which is good.⁵ Since all passions follow from love, according to Aquinas, love is the foundation of all our attractions and our aversions.⁶ Passions, of which love is the most fundamental, are movements of the sensitive appetite.⁷ The movements of the sensitive appetite follow apprehension.⁸ Therefore, the movements of the sensitive appetite follow the apprehension of intentions, which is the function of the estimative power (in humans,

³ Klubertanz, *The Discursive Power*, p.290.

⁴ ST I-II 28, 1-3; ST II-II 173, 3 ad 2 ; ST II-II 175, 2 ; Klubertanz , *The Discursive Power*, p. 290.

⁵ ST I-II 28, 6.

⁶ ST I-II 28, 6; ST I-II 25, 2.

⁷ ST I-II 22, 2; ST I-II 26, 1.

⁸ ST I 80, 1 ad 3; ST I 81, 2 and 3.

cogitative power). Therefore, attention follows from the sense appetite, which is determined by the judgment of the estimative (or cogitative) power.

This is how we can account for attention on the sense level. Human beings are also capable of voluntary attention, which is be guided by the intellect and the will. However, the intellect depends for its operations on the input from the sensitive appetite and the cogitative power. Therefore, whatever we pay attention to as guided by the sensitive appetite and the cogitative power that is the very first thing we pay attention to, and thus the first thing presented to the intellect.

What we pay attention to is first of all predetermined by our animal nature, since like all animals we are endowed with the powers of the sensitive soul in order to survive, and with the basic inclinations, which include animal inclinations. What we notice in our environment and the kind of feelings we then experience are to a large extent dependent on what kind of animals we are, even if our rationality may also have some influence on our behavior. We must select and organize the data we perceive and some of that selecting and organizing is determined by our animal inclinations.

In order to pay attention to anything, animals in the natural world must have a natural tendency to turn their attention to a given object. As was discussed in chapter 1, animals have natural inclination to preserve their life as individuals and to preserve their species, and those natural inclinations are manifested in characteristic patterns of behavior. Since animals are creatures who are sentient and capable of locomotion their behavior generally consists in either pursuing things they find attractive or avoiding things which they find repulsive.⁹ For example, the sheep seeing a wolf runs away.

⁹ ST I 78, 1 and 4; ST I 80, 1.

The sheep runs because of the inclination to self-preservation, because it instinctively recognizes the wolf as the enemy. The sheep then has a desire to run away. However, avoidance of a wolf is not characteristic of every kind of an animal. The wolf may be more or less noticeable and more or less important to different animals, and how it is regarded depends on those animals, not on the wolf. What these animals notice, what kind of feelings they experience and what is supposed to be their characteristic reaction depends on their kind, their species. In order to act in ways appropriate to their species and thus to survive, the animals are endowed with cognitive abilities, and with appetitive powers.

Surviving and thriving is equivalent to achieving animal perfection, given animal's proper good and proper end. The final end for human beings is contemplation of God in heaven and thus, the fulfillment of a human being as a rational creature. However among the proximate ends in human life on earth there is physical survival and thriving; qua animals we are oriented towards those ends like all other animals. In the pursuit of animal ends, we are oriented towards certain objects which then we might reflect upon and study as rational creatures. In that way, our animality predetermines the beginning stages of our pursuit of knowledge and eventually, the contemplation of what we come to know.

Estimative Power

In order for an animal to react to something in its environment, the animal must possess knowledge of the object towards which its appetites are directed. Knowledge, as was discussed in chapter 2, begins with sensory perception. But what an animal perceives according to its nature must be also organized with respect to its usefulness. The power of

the soul by which an animal can know something as good or bad for it is called the “estimative power”. The estimative power is one of the interior senses.¹⁰ By the estimative power an animal recognizes what it is supposed to seek or avoid. The animal is oriented towards or away from certain things because of its natural appetites, but the animal’s capacity for reacting follows also from the estimative power, which is cognitive in nature. It is by the estimative power that an animal seeks or avoids various things in its environment on account of advantages or disadvantages which those things offer to that animal. The estimative power is what allows an animal to maneuver itself through a dangerous world. It is by the coordinated operation of the estimative power and the sensitive appetite that an animal is enabled to pay attention to some phenomena and ignore other. Aquinas gives us examples of a sheep and a bird. The sheep picks out the wolf as a harmful thing in the environment, while the bird picks out straws as useful things. A sheep picks out the shape and the smell of the wolf from its environment and reacts to it as something dangerous while it ignores many other shapes and smells. A bird notices straws (of a correct shape and size) and perhaps other useful bits of nesting material while it ignores many other objects. Not every animal fears wolves, and not every animal is interested in little straws. Thus, the estimative power enables the animal to notice those things in the environment which are relevant to that particular animal.

The estimative power is a cognitive power and represents the animal level of knowledge. In *Questions on the Soul*, Aquinas gives us a brief description of animal

¹⁰ ST I 78, 4; QDV 25, 2; QDA 13.

cognition. We can distinguish five elements in his description of the animal cognition.¹¹ To start with, the exterior senses receive data from sensible things.¹² A sensible object affects the proper senses and these senses are able to be affected by certain kinds of objects, according to the nature of a given animal. Secondly, the data

¹¹ Now for complete knowledge, which would be adequate for an animal, five things are indispensable. First, that a sense power receive a species from sensible things, and this activity belongs to a proper sense (one of the external senses). Secondly, that there be a sense to discriminate among the sensible qualities perceived and to distinguish them from one another; and this action must be performed by a power in which all sensible perceptions terminate, and this power is called the unifying sense. Thirdly, that the species of sensible thing which have been received be retained. For an animal needs to know sensible things not only when they are present, but also after they are no longer present. And it is necessary that this activity be attributed to another power, because in corporeal things the principle which receives and that which retains are distinct; for that which is very receptive is sometimes poorly retentive. Now this power is called imagination or fantasy. Fourthly, a sense is required which might apprehend intentions that the other senses do not perceive, such as the harmful, the useful, and other notions of this sort. Now a human being arrives at a knowledge of these intentions by investigation and deliberation; but other animals possess this kind of knowledge by natural instinct, as, for example, a sheep naturally flees a wolf as being harmful. Hence in animals other than human beings a natural estimative power is directed toward this end, whereas in a human being there is a cogitative power, which compares these particular intentions; hence this power is called both the particular reason and the passive intellect. Fifthly, complete sense knowledge requires that things which were previously apprehended by the external senses and have been retained in the interior senses be once again summoned up for actual consideration. And this activity belongs to the power of recollection, which in animals other than human beings operates without investigation, but in human beings operates through inquiry and endeavor. Hence there is in human beings not only memory but also reminiscence. Now it was necessary that the power which is ordered to this end be distinct from the other powers, because the activity of the other sensitive powers involves a movement from the things to the soul, whereas the activity of the power of recollection involves a movement from the soul toward things.

Ad perfectam autem sensus cognitionem, quae sufficiat animali, quinque requiruntur. Primo quod sensus recipiat speciem a sensibilibus; et hoc pertinet ad sensum proprium. Secundo quia de sensibilibus perceptis dijudicet, et ea ad invicem discernat; quod oportet fieri per potentiam ad quam omnia sensibilia perveniant, quae dicitur sensus communis. Tertium est quod species sensibilibus receptae conserventur. Indiget autem animal apprehensione sensibilibus, non solum apud eorum praesentiam, sed postquam abierint. Et hoc necessarium est reduci in aliam potentiam; nam in rebus corporalibus aliud principium est recipiendi et conservandi; nam quae sunt bene receptabilia sunt interdum male conservativa. Huiusmodi autem potentia dicitur imaginatio sive phantasia. Quarto autem requiritur quod apprehendantur intentiones quas sensus non apprehendit, sicut nocivum et utile et alia huiusmodi. Et ad haec quidem cognoscenda pervenit homo inquirendo et conferendo; alia vero animalia quodam naturali instinctu, sicut ovis naturaliter fugit lupum tamquam nocivum. Unde ad hoc in aliis animalibus ordinatur aestimativa naturalis; in homine autem vis cogitativa, quae est collativa intentionum particularium; unde et ratio particularis dicitur et intellectus passivus. Quinto autem requiritur quod ea quae prius fuerunt apprehensa per sensus et interius conservantur, iterum ad actualem considerationem revocentur. Et hoc quidem pertinet ad memorativam virtutem, quae in aliis quidem animalibus absque inquisitione suam operationem habet, in hominibus autem cum inquisitione et studio. Unde in hominibus non solum est memoria, sed reminiscencia. Necesse autem fuit ad hoc potentiam ab aliis distinctam ordinari, quia actus aliarum potentiarum sensitivarum est secundum motum a rebus ad animam; actus autem memorativae potentiae est e contrario secundum motum ab anima ad res. QDA 13.

¹² Primo quod sensus recipiat speciem a sensibilibus; et hoc pertinet ad sensum proprium. QDA 13.

from various senses must be integrated by an interior sense called the “common sense”¹³ Thirdly, the forms of sensible things received must be retained: “For an animal needs to know sensible things not only when they are present, but also after they are no longer present.”¹⁴ This is accomplished by the production of phantasms by the interior sense called *phantasia* or imagination. Fourthly, an animal must apprehend the intentions as useful or harmful, and that belongs to the interior sense called the estimative power.¹⁵ Fifthly, in order to have a complete sense knowledge, the animal must be able to recollect the intention it has previously retained.¹⁶ This capacity belongs to the interior sense called memory.

To summarize the process of animal cognition: the proper senses are affected by a sensible object, the common sense unifies and integrates the information received by proper senses, the phantasms which represent the forms of the sensible objects are produced by the *phantasia*, and finally, these phantasms are interpreted by the estimative power as representing things useful or harmful to a given animal. These interpreted phantasms (called intentions) are retained in the animal’s memory. According to Aquinas, the estimative power represents the acme of the animal kind of knowledge.¹⁷

¹³ Secundo quia de sensibilibus perceptis dijudicet, et ea ad invicem discernat; quod oportet fieri per potentiam ad quam omnia sensibilia perveniant, quae dicitur sensus communis. QDA 13; ST I 78,4.

¹⁴ Indiget autem animal apprehensione sensibilibus, non solum apud eorum praesentiam, sed postquam abierint. QDA 13.

¹⁵ Quarto autem requiritur quod apprehendantur intentiones quas sensus non apprehendit, sicut nocivum et utile et alia hujusmodi. Unde ad hoc in aliis animalibus ordinatur aestimativa naturalis. QDA 13.

¹⁶ Quinto autem requiritur quod ea quae prius fuerunt apprehensa per sensus et interius conservantur, iterum ad actualem considerationem revocentur. Et hoc quidem pertinet ad rememorativam virtutem, quae in aliis quidem animalibus absque inquisitione suam operationem habet. QDA 13.

¹⁷ ST I 78, 4 See also: Klubertanz, *The Discursive Power*, p.274.

What the animal knows is a particular thing; it is represented by a phantasm, which phantasm is interpreted by the estimative power as corresponding to a thing which is recognized as being useful or harmful in some way. If it is useful, the animal may pursue it; if harmful, it would avoid it.

The estimative power is interpreted by scholars as providing instinctive knowledge.¹⁸ Thomas also uses the word “instinct” when talking of estimative power.¹⁹ Instinctive knowledge is an innate kind of knowledge which is characteristic of a given species of animal and which is necessary for that animal’s survival and thriving. Instinctive knowledge is the cognitive aspect of its inclinations and enables the animal to pursue that animal’s proper ends.

Cogitative Power

Humans are also animals, and like other animals, we are guided by the equivalent of the estimative power, which in humans is called cogitative power.²⁰ The cogitative power is an inner sense and is rooted in animal inclinations, since by that power the human animal is enabled to pursue its animal ends. The selection of things we notice and react to in the world around us is guided by that power, just like in case of other animals.

¹⁸ Klubertanz, *The Discursive Power*, pp.272, 273, 275. See also: Braun, William, “Instincts in Men and Animals According to St. Thomas Aquinas”, M.A. Thesis, The Catholic University of America, 1954. See also: Brennan, Robert E., O. P. *Thomistic Psychology*, The Macmillan Co.,1962, p.143-144. However Brennan points out that the estimative power corresponds only to the cognitive factor in instinct, and he claims that the sensitive appetite may be closer to our modern view of instinct. In my opinion, the estimative power and the sensitive appetite together account for instinctive behavior.

¹⁹ Now a human being arrives at a knowledge of these intentions by investigation and deliberation; but other animals possess this kind of knowledge by natural instinct, as, for example, a sheep naturally flees a wolf as being harmful.

Et ad haec quidem cognoscenda pervenit homo inquirendo et conferendo; alia vero animalia quodam naturali instinctu, sicut ovis naturaliter fugit lupum tamquam nocivum. QDA 13.

²⁰ ST I 78, 4.

However, in humans, the estimative power is called cogitative power, because it is influenced by our reason, by the overflow.²¹

We all know from experience that human beings, unlike animals, are not determined to act in accordance with instincts, even though humans may have a tendency to act in certain ways in certain circumstances which might be interpreted as akin to instinct. But human beings are free to choose how they will act.²² Perhaps an example of such a situation might be those vague feelings we get in the presence of various things in our environment (for example a strange figure in a dark alley), which require us to make a quick decision (for example, a decision to run away). If we were like other animals, we could act only in a predetermined way (for example, a sheep runs away from the wolf). But we humans possess reason and free will. We may act in a way that is consistent with our vague feelings or contrary to them. We are free to ignore our impression, to ignore our fears. We do not have to act on those impressions of there being something harmful which ought to be avoided (or something pleasant which ought to be pursued) because we are rational creatures who can make decision according to the judgment of our own reason, while other animals, according to Aquinas, are guided by their natural inclinations only.²³

Even though our behavior is ultimately subject to our rational decisions, Thomas insists that cogitative power is functionally the same as the estimative power of other animals up to the point of recognizing objects as useful or harmful. It is by the cogitative

²¹ ST I 78, 4; QDV 25, 2.

²² ST I 81, 3; Klubertanz, *The Discursive Power*, pp. 164, 202-203, 239; Braun, p. 24.

²³ ST I-II 1, 2.

power that we recognize danger, and that happens in similar way other animals recognize danger by the estimative power.²⁴ The estimative power which irrational animals possess the human animal also must possess for we do not lose animal powers just because we are rational. The cogitative power, which corresponds to the estimative power in other animals, is the inner sense which apprehends intentions, and enables us to recognize objects as either useful or harmful to us. In ST I 78, 4 ad 5 Thomas says that the cogitative and memorative powers of man are not distinct from their equivalents in other animals, but more perfect because of the affinity a human being has to the universal reason “which, so to speak, overflows into them.”²⁵ What Thomas calls the “coalition of ideas” is the coalition of the instinctive knowledge with rational thinking.

In humans the cogitative power is not pure instinct like it is in other animals, but something like a combination of an instinct with our reasoning abilities.²⁶ Thomas says:

Now, we must observe that as to sensible forms there is no difference between man and other animals; for they are similarly immuted by the extrinsic sensible. But there is a difference as to the above intentions: for other animals perceive these intentions only by some natural instinct, while man perceives them by means of coalition of ideas. Therefore the power which in other animals is called the natural estimative, in man is called the cogitative, which by some sort of collation discovers these intentions.²⁷

²⁴ First the sensible object affects the proper senses, the information is integrated by the common sense, the phantasm is formed by the phantasia, and the phantasm is interpreted by the estimative (or cogitative) power as representing something useful or harmful.

²⁵ Dicendum quod illam eminentiam habet cogitativa et memorativa in homine, non per id quod est proprium sensitivae partis; sed per aliquam affinitatem et propinquitatem ad rationem universalem, secundum quandam fluentiam. Et ideo non sunt aliae vires, sed eadem perfectiores quam sint in aliis animalibus. ST I 78, 4 ad 5.

²⁶ Thomas speaks of “coalition of ideas” quendam collationem. ST I 78, 4; See also: Klubertanz, *The Discursive Power*, pp.280-286.

²⁷ Considerandum est autem quod quantum ad formas sensibiles non est differentia inter hominem et alia animalia; similiter enim immutantur a sensibilibus exterioribus. Sed quantum ad intentiones praedictas

Unlike in other animals who simply apprehend intentions, i.e., usefulness or harmfulness, in a human being there is further processing of what one apprehends: “In a human being there is a cogitative power, which compares these particular intentions; hence this power is called both the particular reason and the passive intellect.”²⁸ The cogitative power can compare particular intentions, because in a human being the cogitative power communicates with reason: “The cogitative and memorative powers in man owe their excellence not to that which is proper to the sensitive part; but to a certain affinity and proximity to the universal reason, which, so to speak, overflows into them.”²⁹ The universal reason “overflows” in a sense that the conclusion reached as a result of reasoning (very quick reasoning) modifies the notions of the estimative power, for example, changing the cognizance of something as fearful to the cognizance of something as playful. Thomas explains this like this:

In man the estimative power...is replaced by the cogitative power, which is called by some the particular reason, because it compares individual intentions. Wherefore in man the sensitive appetite is naturally moved by this particular reason. But this same particular reason is naturally guided and moved according to the universal reason...Therefore it is clear that the universal reason directs the sensitive appetite...Anyone can experience this in himself: for by applying certain universal considerations, anger or fear or the like may be modified or excited.³⁰

differentia est; nam alia animalia percipient huiusmodi intentiones solum naturali quodam instinctu, homo autem per quondam collationem. Et ideo quae in aliis animalibus dicitur aestimativa naturalis, in homine dicitur cogitativa, quae per collationem quondam huiusmodi intentiones adinvenit. ST I 78, 4.

²⁸ In homine autem vis cogitativa, quae est collativa intentionum particularium; unde et ratio particularis dicitur et intellectus passivus. QDA 13.

²⁹ Dicendum quod illam eminentiam habet cogitativa et memorativa in homine, non per id quod est proprium sensitivae partes; sed per aliquam affinitatem et propinquitatem ad rationem universalem, secundum quandam refluentiam. ST I 78, 4 ad 5.

³⁰ Loco autem aestimativae virtutis est in homine...vis cogitativa, quae dicitur a quibusdam ratio particularis, eo quod est collativa intentionum individualium. Unde ab ea natus est moveri in homine

The universal reason, i.e., the intellect, influences the particular reason, i.e., the cogitative power and guides it in the evaluation of usefulness or harmfulness of various objects. We can experience this when we persuade ourselves to modify our feelings in accordance with the judgment of the intellect. Feelings are movements of the sensitive appetite, which in turn is moved by the cogitative power, and thus the operations of the cogitative power and the sensitive appetite together produce in us feelings. However, Thomas observes that the intellect does not have absolute control over feelings, only a “political” one,³¹ meaning that although the intellect may move the cogitative power, which in turn moves the sensitive appetite, it may nevertheless fail to move it. That is because the feelings and the instinctive knowledge belong to the animal side of human nature, which is subject to the eternal law, not to human reason.³² The intellect does not rule the sensitive soul, but communicates with it. That communication is what Aquinas calls the overflow. As a result of that overflow the initial recognition of something as harmful or useful may be modified.

When I was a child of six, I came across a stuffed boar’s head in my friend’s attic. I remember that my first reaction was intense fear, simply fear, which caused me to stand motionless. Next, I was able to name the fearful object, for I recalled seeing something like that in books. Next, I realized that it was stuffed, and therefore, nothing to be afraid

appetitus sensitivus. Ipsa autem ratio particularis nata est moveri et dirigi in homine secundum rationem universalem...Et ideo patet quod ratio universalis imperat appetitui sensitivo...Hoc etiam quilibet experiri potest in se ipso; applicando enim aliquas universales considerationes, mitigatur ira aut timor aut aliquid huiusmodi, vel etiam instigatur. ST I 81, 3.

³¹ Ibid.

³² ST I-II 1, 2 and ST I-II 93, 5.

of, but rather meant for entertainment. It took me perhaps two seconds to go from pure fear to the conclusion that I was looking at something like a large toy. In those seconds, I have manifested both, my animality (in that prelinguistic, intense fear of some large animal with tusks) and my rationality (in the process of reasoning which led me to conclusion that there was really nothing to be afraid of). That experience of mine is a good illustration of cogitative power as a combination of instinctive knowledge with rationality or the way the estimative power is influenced by the intellect.

Instincts always orient animals towards their good, while reasoning is less reliable. For example, if we see some dark, scary figure in a dark alley, we may be inclined to run away. We instinctively recognize something as dangerous. We recognize danger by our cogitative power. But because we are rational, our reason affects the cogitative power and our behavior is finally determined by the intellect, not by the cogitative power. We may explain to ourselves that we are exaggerating the risk, decide to ignore our natural tendencies and move towards the strange figure rather than away from it. We do not have to act like a sheep, who would never move towards the wolf. But if we decide to ignore our fears, we may find out that we made the wrong decision as we get attacked. As this example shows, the cogitative power does not always serve us better than an estimative power. Nevertheless, we have to have cogitative power, because our behavior has to be more flexible than that of a sheep. Hence, in humans, animal knowledge is supplemented by reason.

Instinctive knowledge that something is dangerous is a component of our thinking, but another component is rational thinking and decision making. The fact that we can reason and freely choose how to act does not mean that we do not possess the

inner sense which in other animals is called the estimative power. Like all animals, we have that inner sense. Also, to some extent we are passively moved towards our ends in accordance with our natural inclinations, because all animals are thus moved.³³ But humans also possess the intellect which allows them to reflect on the kind of knowledge which might be called instinctive. Thus, human beings may act in accordance with the rational judgment rather than with that animal kind of knowledge. In humans, there is found a certain combination of instinctive, animal kind of knowledge and rational reflection, and that combination is called the cogitative power.

The cogitative power also marks humans as boundary beings, between irrational animals and angels. On the one hand, one cannot equate cogitative power with reasoning, for reasoning belongs to the intellect, and the function of the cogitative power must be different than the function of the intellect. Indeed, the function of the cogitative power, like that of estimative power, is that instantaneous recognition of intentions, i.e. the harmfulness or usefulness of things around us. On the other hand, the cogitative power differs from the estimative power, for the recognition of intentions only provides humans with the first step of reasoning while by the estimative power an irrational animal possesses all the knowledge about a given object. In the cogitative power, the knowledge we possess as mere animals blends with the rational judgment of a creature endowed with reason.

Because we are animals, we are equipped with the equivalent of the estimative power, the cogitative power, which allows us to sort the things we perceive into things which are either useful or harmful. They are useful or harmful to us according to what is

³³ ST I-II 93, 6.

suitable to the kind of animals that we are. For example, we are instinctively afraid of large animals with tusks, because such animals tend to be dangerous to humans; on the other hand, we may be instinctively attracted to colorful fruit, because such fruit often turns out to be food fit for humans. We humans cannot completely rely on our instincts, but qua animals we have them, and they help us to pursue what is good for us and avoid what is bad. According to Thomas Aquinas, humans, just like other animals, maneuver through the world with the aid of their cogitative power. The cogitative power is one of the means by which we are naturally oriented towards our ends. It orients us to those ends by orienting us to particular things in our environment, things which naturally attract us or repulse us. We are forced to notice these particular things to which the cogitative power directs us. In the process of noticing these objects qua animals, we may also find among them objects which we wish to know more about qua rational beings. We might wonder about certain objects, about their causes, and we might decide to find out more about them. But we can only wonder about those objects to which we pay attention in the first place, and that depends on how our cogitative power guides us.³⁴ In this way our cogitative power gives us the scope of things from which we might later choose some things for study, for the pursuit of theoretical kind of knowledge.

Sensitive Appetite

The estimative power is the cognitive power. Besides the estimative power, an animal's behavior is also determined by the sensitive appetite. Animal inclinations, as was discussed in chapter 1, direct the animal towards the fulfillment of an animal's ends,

³⁴ "Attention, therefore, in the sensory order is a function of sense appetite, which is determined by the judgments of the estimative or discursive power. In man, the discursive power is of its nature subject to reason and will. Voluntary attention on the sense level is thus brought about in that reason and will direct the discursive power in its judgment." Klubertanz, *The Discursive Power*, p.290.

towards its good and perfection. All beings tend to ends proper to them and for that reason are endowed with the appropriate powers. One of the powers which orient sentient beings, towards their ends is the appetitive power of the sensitive soul.³⁵ An animal's appetitive power, like estimative power, orients it either to the pursuit of its good, or to the avoidance of its evil. Aquinas tells us:

It is necessary to assign an appetitive power to the soul. To make this evident, we must observe that some inclination follows every form ... Now the form is found to have a more perfect existence in those things which participate in knowledge than in those which lack knowledge. For in those which lack knowledge, the form is found to determine each thing only to its own being – that is, to its nature. Therefore this natural form is followed by a natural inclination, which is called the natural appetite. But in those things which have knowledge, each one is determined to its own natural being by its natural form, in such a manner that it is nevertheless receptive of the species of other things ... Therefore, as forms exist in those things that have knowledge in a higher manner and above the manner of natural forms; so must there be in them an inclination surpassing the natural inclination, which is called the natural appetite.³⁶

Several things must be noted here. In the above passage, Aquinas contrasts “natural” inclination (or appetite) with the “animal” inclination. In fact, both inclinations are natural in a sense that they are both natural to that kind of a being, and sometimes Aquinas uses the designation “natural” in that way. However, this is one of the passages in which he draws our attention to the difference between the inclinations an animal

³⁵ ST I 80,1; QDV, 25 1.

³⁶ Dicendum quod necesse est ponere quondam potentiam animae appetitivam. Ad cuius evidentiam considerandum est quod quamlibet formam sequitur aliqua inclinatio; Forma autem in his quae cognitionem participant, altiori modo invenitur quam in his quae cognitione carent. In his enim quae cognitione carent, invenitur tantummodo forma ad unum esse proprium determinans unumquodque, quod etiam naturale uniuscuiusque est. Hanc igitur formam naturalem sequitur naturalis inclinatio, quae appetitus naturalis vocatur. In habentibus autem cognitionem sic determinatur unumquodque ad proprium esse naturale per formam naturalem, quod tamen est receptivum specierum aliarum rerum; Sicut igitur formae altiori modo existunt in habentibus cognitionem supra modum formarum naturalium, ita oportet quod in eis sit inclinatio supra modum inclinationis naturalis, quae dicitur appetitus naturalis. ST I 80, 1.

possesses as a merely corporeal and living being and the inclinations it possesses as an animal, a sentient being. The difference between the animals and other kinds of beings is that animals are receptive of the forms of other things around them. Animals possess sensory organs and through them, they sense other things. Because they can sense the presence of other things, there must be in them some inclination which goes beyond those inclinations they already possess as mere physical objects, or even mere living beings. This animal kind of inclination is the sensitive appetite. “And this superior inclination belongs to the appetitive power of the soul, through which the animal is able to desire what it apprehends, and not only that to which it is inclined by its natural form. And so it is necessary to assign an appetitive power to the soul.”³⁷ Thus, Aquinas posits the existence of the appetitive power in the soul – the sensitive soul – which enables the animal to desire something which it senses and thus come to know in its environment.³⁸ Because of the appetitive power the animal feels desires and is motivated to act. Needless to say, humans qua animals also possess appetitive power in the sensitive part of their souls.

The sensitive appetite is divided into the concupiscible and the irascible powers, or concupiscible and irascible appetites.³⁹ These appetites are distinguished on the basis of their objects: the object of the concupiscible appetite is simply the good which the animal needs to pursue, while the object of the irascible appetite is the arduous good, a

³⁷ Et haec superior inclinatio pertinet ad vim animae appetitivam, per quam animal appetere potest ea quae apprehendit, non solum ea ad quae inclinatur ex forma naturali. Sic igitur necesse est ponere aliquam potentiam animae appetitivam. ST I 80, 1 See also QDV 25, 1.

³⁸ ST I 81, 2.

³⁹ ST I-II 23, 1.

good which is difficult to obtain. Absence of the good, or the obstacles in the attainment of the good, is regarded as evil. Aquinas says:

In order, therefore, to discern which passions are in the irascible and which in the concupiscible, we must take the object of each of these powers....the object of the concupiscible power is sensible good or evil, simply apprehended as such, which causes pleasure or pain....this very good or evil, inasmuch as it is of an arduous or difficult nature, is the object of the irascible faculty.⁴⁰

The concupiscible power enables the animal to pursue and enjoy the good or to reject the evil. The concupiscible power manifests itself in the emotion of love, desire and delight, and on the negative side in hate, aversion and pain.⁴¹ The irascible power enables the animal to deal with dangers or to face difficulties in the pursuit of the good. It enables the animal to struggle to obtain the good or to repel the evil.⁴² The irascible power manifests itself in the emotions of fear, anger, despair, and on the positive side in daring and hope.⁴³

When an animal apprehends something as useful, that is instrumentally good (like straws for building bird's nest), the sensitive appetite manifested in the emotions causes the animal to be attracted to the good, to desire it and to pursue it, perhaps even to fight for it. Likewise, when an animal apprehends something as evil (like that wolf from the point of view of a sheep), the sensitive appetite manifested in such emotions like hate, fear

⁴⁰ Ad cognoscendum ergo quae passiones sunt in irascibili, et quae in concupiscibili, oportet assumere obiectum utriusque potentiae....obiectum potentiae concupiscibilis est bonum vel malum sensibile simpliciter acceptum, quod est delectabile vel dolorosum....ideo ipsum bonum vel malum, secundum quod habet rationem ardui vel difficilis, est obiectum irascibilis. ST I-II 23, 1.

⁴¹ ST I-II 25, 1 and 2; ST I-II 23, 1.

⁴² ST I-II 25, 1; ST I-II 23, 1.

⁴³ ST I-II 25, 3; ST I-II 23, 1.

and aversion causes the animal to flee from the evil. The sensitive appetite is coordinated with the instinctive knowledge which animals possess of useful and harmful things in their environment,⁴⁴ and thus, the animal necessarily experiences the requisite emotions upon apprehending something as either simply good or as arduous good, and the animal acts in the ways dictated by the feelings experienced, i.e. it simply pursues the good or struggles to obtain an arduous good.

In humans, likewise, there is the sensitive appetite in which we distinguish the concupiscible and the irascible powers. Since these powers belong to the human soul, they can be governed by reason to some extent, but they do not obey the reason completely.⁴⁵ The powers of the sensitive part of the soul do not fully obey the reason, because the sensitive appetite is supposed to guide the animal to its good, to its proper ends. In humans the reason can override the sensitive appetite, although in humans, the sensitive appetite is also supposed to orient the creature to its good.

Integration of the Estimative Power and the Sensitive Appetite

Thanks to the sensitive appetite, animals can pursue what is good for them. In case of the concupiscible appetite, what it causes a given animal to desire is not merely something which that animal is capable of sensing, but something which is actually useful to that animal. In case of the irascible appetite, it causes the animal to struggle against something which is harmful to that animal. As was discussed above, the estimative power enables the animal to apprehend things as suitable to it. The appetitive power governs the desires of the animal:

⁴⁴ ST I 81, 3.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Each power of the soul is a form or nature, and has a natural inclination to something. Wherefore each power desires by the natural appetite that object which is suitable to itself. Above which natural appetite is the animal appetite, which follows the apprehension, and by which something is desired not as suitable to this or that power, such as sight for seeing, or sound for hearing; but simply as suitable to the animal.⁴⁶

Among the many objects in their environment that animals see, hear, smell etc. is what is important to them. What is good for a given animal is desired by it, and thus pursued, while what is bad for that animal is rejected and avoided.

As was discussed above, the estimative power is a cognitive power. Aquinas tells us that by the estimative power “an animal apprehends intentions not received by the sense, such as friendship or hostility... It is accordingly in virtue of the estimative power that animals are said to have a sort of prudence.”⁴⁷ By the estimative power, the animal interprets objects of perceptions as either useful or harmful. This apprehension affects the appetitive part of the animal soul, i.e., the sensitive appetite, which is comprised of the irascible and the concupiscible powers.

Thomas speaks of cognition as preceding desires or aversions since we must know something first in order to affectively react to it.⁴⁸ Thus, the estimative power which enables the animal to recognize objects as either useful or harmful also moves the sensitive appetite which enables the animal to experience appropriate feelings in regards

⁴⁶ Dicendum quod unaquaeque potentia animae est quaedam forma seu natura, et habet naturalem inclinationem in aliquid. Unde unaquaeque appetit obiectum sibi conveniens naturali appetitu. Supra quem est appetitus animalis consequens apprehensionem, quo appetitur aliquid non ea ratione qua est conveniens ad actum huius vel illius potentiae, utpote visio ad videndum et auditio ad audiendum; sed quia est conveniens simpliciter animali. ST I 80,1 ad 3.

⁴⁷ Animal apprehendit intentiones non acceptas per sensum, ut amicitiam vel inimicitiam...unde ratione hujus aestimationis dicuntur animalia quamdam prudentiam habere. QDV 25, 2.

⁴⁸ ST I 80, 1 ad 3; ST I 81, 1 and 3.

to those objects.⁴⁹ The feelings must follow cognition, for otherwise they would not be directed to any particular object. However, in practice, the affective and the cognitive powers must work almost simultaneously in order to guide the animal through the world. Together, the sensitive appetite and the estimative power guide the animal to attain its proper ends and thus to reach its animal perfection.

The motivation for pursuit or avoidance is provided by the sensitive appetite, from which particular desires are derived. The sensitive appetite and the cognitive powers of the animal follow from the animal's nature, that is, from the form, as was explained above. Different animals have the ability to sense different things, and to regard different things as useful or not. What a human animal picks out of its environment also accords with the natural appetites proper to humans, and is picked out as something suitable to humans in general and to that person in particular. We are attracted to something by our appetitive power, manifested by feelings, because we are animals, because we perceive it as good and suitable. In the case of humans, as in the case of any other kind of animal, what seems good is also desired, but whether it is pursued depends on what a person decides to do because humans are rational animals. Moral decisions are not the subject of this dissertation. We must note, however, that the sensitive appetite together with the cogitative power provides humans with the range of objects one might consider pursuing or avoiding: the range of objects one must take notice of and must affectively react to. These objects necessarily become the first objects we are able to study.

⁴⁹ ST I 81, 3.

Our Choice of Subjects of Study

From all the above we must conclude that our choice of subjects for study is, in the beginning, guided by the cogitative power and the sensitive appetite. The acquisition of knowledge begins, as was discussed in the previous chapter, with sensory perception⁵⁰ and abstraction of phantasms.⁵¹ The cogitative power causes us to have an impression of either harmful or useful objects,⁵² and our sensitive appetite causes us to feel either attraction or aversion and the desire to act accordingly.⁵³ Up to this point our process of knowledge acquisition follows the same pattern as it does in the case of other animals. Thus, when we consider how we come up with the subjects to study, we must realize that the animal kind of reaction to our environment must lie at the foundations of our choice of subject.

On the one hand, the choice of topics for study should be made by the intellectual soul, for the pursuit of knowledge is a rational activity. Of course, it is true that study, or research, not to mention contemplation, are intellectual activities and it is the intellect that must choose what it will think about. On the other hand, as was explained before, in order to even begin thinking, the intellect must have certain objects presented to it by the senses, which objects are identified as useful or harmful by the cogitative power, and as desirable or not by the sensitive appetite.⁵⁴ Also, while it is true that when we consider contemplation of God we are not talking of an animal pursuing something which an animal

⁵⁰ ST I 84, 6 and 8.

⁵¹ ST I 79,4; ST I 84,7; ST I 85, 1; QDA 13.

⁵² ST I 78, 4; QDA 13.

⁵³ ST I 81.

⁵⁴ ST I 78, 4 ad 4 and ad 5; ST I 80, 2 ad 3; ST I 81, 3.

desires, the first step to contemplation is the noticing of sensible objects and reacting to them. Therefore, animal powers belonging to the sensitive part of the soul guide our choice of subject of study, from which eventually will be derived the object of our contemplation.

When Aquinas says that “in the imperfect happiness,” we need to “advance from the perfection of the lower part to the perfection of the higher part,”⁵⁵ this also applies to the starting point in our pursuit of knowledge. Operations of the sensitive soul are antecedent to the pursuit of knowledge, even though studying which leads us to truth is a rational kind of activity.

Passions

Thus, we are in the beginning guided in our choice of subject for study by the sensitive appetite and the cogitative power. However, the sensitive appetite and the cogitative power give us only a general direction, while what we pay attention to and perhaps study must be something particular. To choose the particular object of special interest to us, we must be guided by particular desires.

By the estimative power, the animal knows what it is to seek or avoid. However, that is not yet enough to cause that animal to act on that knowledge. In order to act, to move, it must be motivated by the sensitive appetite not in a general way, but by feelings which arise from it.

Animals, unlike other natural creatures, experience feelings. Feelings are technically called “passions” (*passiones*) by Aquinas. Passions arise in sentient beings, that is, animals, because of inclinations characteristic to their kind. The sheep’s

⁵⁵ A perfectione inferioris partis proceditur ad perfectionem superioris. ST I-II 3, 3 ad 3.

experience of passions (fear, hate) and desires (to run away) when it sees the wolf, appear because of the sheep's inclination to self-preservation. In human beings, passions also follow inclinations. Passions follow sensitive apprehension of something in a way important to a given kind of an animal. Passions are reactions to the environment. An animal experiences certain kinds of passions according to the nature of that animal. Passions arise from the concupiscible and irascible appetites, both of which help the animal to preserve itself and its kind. According to Aquinas, passions are animal in origin, for passions are movements of the sensitive part of the soul.⁵⁶

Passions also require having a body for they are manifested not only by feelings, but also by bodily changes. Thomas says: "As stated above passion is properly to be found where there is corporeal transmutation. This corporeal transmutation is found in the acts of the sensitive appetite, and is not only spiritual, as in the sensitive apprehension, but also natural."⁵⁷

Passions indicate a change, either for better or for worse. In general, it can be said that something is passive because it receives something.⁵⁸ Thomas explains the phenomenon of passion by using the example of health and sickness. An animal's body is passive insofar as, for example, it receives health and loses sickness,⁵⁹ or vice-versa, loses health and receives sickness.⁶⁰ Feeling sick is an example of what is most often

⁵⁶ ST I-II 22, 2 and 3.

⁵⁷ Dicendum quod, sicut iam dictum est, passio proprie invenitur ubi est transmutatio corporalis. Quae quidem invenitur in actibus appetitus sensitivi; et non solum spiritualis, sicut est in apprehensione sensitiva, sed etiam naturalis. ST I-II 22, 3.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ ST I-II 22, 1.

understood as passion, that is, suffering.⁶¹ However delight is also a passion on Thomas's account.⁶² Passions are movements of the sensitive appetite.⁶³ Passions qua feelings belong to beings who have a sensitive soul, namely, they belong to animals.⁶⁴ Thomas says: "It is evident that the passions of the soul are the same as affections. But affections manifestly belong to the appetitive, and not to the apprehensive part. Therefore the passions are in the appetitive rather than in the apprehensive part."⁶⁵ Thus, the passions belong to the sensitive appetite. Passions are associated with various bodily changes - for example, anger is said to be associated with the heating of the blood: "Wherefore the material element in the definition of the movement of the appetitive part, is the natural change of the organ; for instance, anger is said to be a kindling of the blood about the heart."⁶⁶ Passions are experienced as feelings which result from some change in the body.⁶⁷ It is a property of matter that it can receive or lose something, so in order to experience passions our bodies must be affected. Also, since the sensitive soul requires a

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² ST I-II 25, 1 and 2.

⁶³ ST I 81, 2.

⁶⁴ ST I-II 22, 2 and 3; ST I 78, 1; ST I 80, 1.

⁶⁵ Patet quod passiones animae sunt idem quod affectiones. Sed affectiones manifeste pertinent ad partem appetitivam, et non apprehensivam. Ergo et passiones magis sunt in appetitiva quam in apprehensiva. ST I-II 22, 2 Sed contra.

⁶⁶ Unde in definitione motuum appetitivae partis materialiter ponitur aliqua naturalis transmutatio organi; sicut dicitur quod ira est ascensio sanguinis circa cor. ST I-II 22, 2 ad 3.

⁶⁷ ST I-II 22, 1 ad 1.

body of its operations,⁶⁸ these movements of the sensitive appetite cannot happen unless there is a body. Thus, passions belong to beings composed of form and matter.⁶⁹

Thomas is clear that passions belong to the sensitive part of the soul and can be experienced by composite beings - like humans, for example - but they cannot be experienced by beings whose composition does not include matter. He tells us that angels do not experience passions.⁷⁰ Angels are rational but incorporeal creatures and thus, they cannot experience passions which are found in the sensitive part of the soul and which involve bodily change. Passions, Thomas says, are not found in the intellectual appetite, which is the will.⁷¹ He says: “When love and joy and the like are ascribed to God or the angels, or to man in respect of his intellectual appetite, they signify simple acts of the will having like effects, but without passion.”⁷² These quasi-passions associated with intellect and the will Aquinas calls joy (*gaudium*),⁷³ sorrow (*tristitia*),⁷⁴ love in the sense of choice (*dilectio*),⁷⁵ and love in the sense of charity (*caritas*).⁷⁶ All of these are movements of the will, which is the intellectual appetite, and they follow intellectual apprehension.

⁶⁸ ST I 77, 8.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ ST I-II 23, 3 ad 3.

⁷¹ ST I-II 23, 3.

⁷² Dicendum quod amor et gaudium et alia huiusmodi, cum attribuntur Deo vel angelis, aut hominibus secundum appetitum intellectivum, significant simplicem actum voluntatis cum similitudine effectus absque passione. ST I-II 22, 3 ad 3.

⁷³ ST I-II 31, 3.

⁷⁴ ST I-II 35, 2.

⁷⁵ ST I-II 26, 3.

⁷⁶ ST II-II 23, 1; 27,1.

Passions follow sensitive apprehension (seeing a wolf, for example), and are movements of the sensitive appetite, which is divided into the irascible and the concupiscible appetite.⁷⁷ They are designated by the following names: love (*amor*), hatred (*odio*), concupiscence or desire (*concupiscentia vel desiderium*), delight (*delectatio*), joy (*gaudium*), hope (*spe*), despair (*desparatio*), pain (*dolor*) sorrow (*tristitia*), fear (*timor*), and anger (*ira*).⁷⁸ Concupiscible passions incline an animal to recognize the good and to seek it, to desire it, and to delight in it when it is obtained. For example, a cat loves mice, seeks them out, desires them, and delights in them when it eats them.⁷⁹ Irascible passions cause an animal to recognize the evil, to hate it, to fear it and to avoid it. For example, the sheep hates the wolf; it fears and avoids it.⁸⁰ Hope keeps the cat patiently sitting at the mouse hole while despair (and pain) would be experienced by a sheep caught by the wolf.⁸¹ The passion of anger is experienced when there is a difficulty in either pursuing the good or avoiding the evil. Anger is most often manifested by a fight.⁸²

At this point one might object that humans cannot experience passions in the same way as other animals, for humans are endowed with intellect and free will. Aquinas would agree, for he does not say that humans experience passions exactly in the same

⁷⁷ ST I-II 23, 1 and 2; ST I 80.

⁷⁸ ST I-II 26-48.

⁷⁹ ST I-II 25,2.

⁸⁰ ST I-II 25, 3.

⁸¹ ST I-II 25, 1 and 3.

⁸² Ibid.

way as other animals do. He only says that humans experience passions because they are animals. However, due to the fact that humans possess a rational soul, the human experience of passions is influenced by that rational soul. Aquinas often mentions “overflow” of the rationality into the sensitive part of the soul.⁸³ Thus, he seems to say that human experience of passions derives from the sensitive appetite, but are somewhat modified by our rational understanding of events and our judgment regarding them. As we recall, in humans, the estimative power is called cogitative power because our instinctive feelings are modified by our rational understanding and judgment. Thus, it would follow that human loves, fears, desires etc. would differ from those experienced by cats or sheep. Nevertheless, given the fact that they belong to the irascible or concupiscible appetite and are movements of the sensitive part of the soul, it would also follow that our passions should have quite a lot in common with those experienced by other animals. However, to determine how much they have in common is well beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Motivation to Act

Passions are movements of the sensitive appetite which direct us to those objects which are suitable to us. As was discussed above, animal attractions and aversions are at the beginning of our pursuits of various ends. Afterwards, humans, who are equipped with the intellect and will and thus have the power to control their actions⁸⁴, may choose not to follow their natural desires or to follow them in a modified way. Humans, unlike other animals, are also equipped with the intellectual appetite, which is the will. The will

⁸³ ST I 78,4; ST I-II 3,3 ad 3; ST I-II 32, 8; ST I-II 35,5 ad 1; ST I-II 30 1, ad 1; ST II-II 175, 4 ad 1.

⁸⁴ ST Prologue I-II.

is free and our willing does not automatically follow any external events, unlike the lower appetites, i.e., the appetitive powers of the sensitive soul, which are passively moved by external objects. The will is moved by the intellect, and even though our thinking depends on sensory perception, the ideas on which we may decide to act are not mere phantasms.⁸⁵ Because humans possess intellect and will, humans may desire immaterial things, such as knowledge or virtue, because intellectual appetite may tend to particular things as “standing under the universal”.⁸⁶

And yet, there is only one motive power in a human being, and the foundation of it is the sensitive, not the intellectual appetite. First of all, Thomas dismissed the speculative reason as the motive power. He says: “The mind simply considered in itself (or the speculative reason) does not move anything because it prescribes nothing about pursuit or flight.”⁸⁷ It is the practical reason that ordains pursuit or flight, because the practical reason ordains action with respect to a goal.⁸⁸ However, the practical reason is not enough to move a human being to action either. In our moral actions, the intellect judges that something is the right action according to the general principles. But what moves a human being to action is not understanding of the principles, but a desire to act

⁸⁵ For the appetitive power is a passive power, which is naturally moved by the thing apprehended: wherefore the apprehended appetible is a mover which is not moved, while the appetite is a mover moved.... Therefore, since what is apprehended by the intellect and what is apprehended by sense are generically different; consequently, the intellectual appetite is distinct from the sensitive.

Potentia enim appetitiva est potentia passiva, quae nata est moveri ab apprehenso, unde appetibile apprehensum est movens non motum, appetibus autem movens motum ... Quia igitur est alterius generis apprehensum per intellectum et apprehensum per sensum, consequens est quod appetitus intellectivus sit alia potentia a sensitivo. ST I 80, 2.

⁸⁶ ST I 80, 2 ad 2.

⁸⁷ Idest ratio speculativa nihil movet, quia nihil dicit de prosequendo vel fugiendo. In NE VI 2, 1135.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

in a certain way. Thomas says: “A universal opinion does not move except by means of a particular opinion; and in like manner the higher appetite moves by the means of the lower: and therefore there are not two distinct motive powers following the intellect and the sense.”⁸⁹ What this means is that in order to be moved to act, humans, like other animals, must be motivated by desire for some particular object, and not by a general principle alone. For example, we may know that it is good to eat vegetables. Then we come across a particularly fresh ripe tomato. We know that it is good to eat vegetables, that this tomato is a vegetable, and so, we know that it is good to eat this tomato. This is a valid inference, however, what motivates us to action i.e. reaching for the tomato and eating it, is not only understanding that this tomato, being a vegetable, is good to eat, but the sight and smell of the tomato. Nobody would be enthusiastic about eating ‘vegetables’, but somebody might be enthusiastic about eating this tomato. In case of humans, such desires may be thwarted because of our understanding of the circumstances (for example, the fact that this tomato is someone else’s property), while in case of non-rational animals, such desires are followed instinctively. But in both humans and other animals, the motivation for action is provided by the appetible object and the desire it elicits. As Aquinas tells us, all agents are moved by love (understood in the general sense as appetite or inclination) and love is the cause of desire: “Now the end is the good desired and loved by each one. Wherefore it is evident that every agent, whatever it be, does every action from love of some kind.”⁹⁰

⁸⁹ *Opinio universalis non movet nisi mediante particulari; et similiter appetitus superior movet mediante inferiori. Et ideo non est alia vis motiva consequens intellectum et sensum. ST I 80, 2 ad 3.*

The formation of a “universal opinion” depends on our knowledge of particulars, which has to rely on the senses - because we have to perceive particulars - and on passions - because we have to select them from our environment as suitable to our nature and then as attractive or otherwise. As Thomas tells us, a thing constitutes our good in relation to us, not in and of itself. That is why we cannot desire some good regarded in theoretical and universal terms, but only a concrete good thing. We come to know particular good things through our senses, by the cogitative power we identify those things as good for us, and this in turn triggers in us the desire for those things, since the cogitative power moves the sensitive appetite. The intellect receives the information for the sensitive soul and judges whether a desired object is really good, in accordance with the universal principles. Without this input from the cogitative power and the sensitive appetite, the intellect would not be able to know anything about the availability of desirable objects, and so this is one way in which the judgment of the intellect and the subsequent consent of the will depend on the sensitive soul. But furthermore, the sensitive appetite can move one to action, regardless of the judgment of the intellect.

As was explained above, the intellect may influence the cogitative power and the sensitive appetite. But the power of the intellect over the sensitive appetite is not absolute.⁹¹ Because the intellect cannot absolutely rule the appetites, people sometimes find themselves doing things they disapprove of, like eating excessive amount of sweets. Thomas considers this to be the evidence that the basic motive force is the sensitive

⁹⁰ Dicendum quod omne agens agit propter finem aliquem... Finis autem est bonum desideratum et amatum unicuique. Unde manifestum est quod omne agens, quodcumque sit, agit quamcumque actionem ex aliquo amore. ST I-II 28, 6; See also: ST I-II 30, 2.

⁹¹ ST I 81, 3

appetite. He says: “Appetition, on the other hand, can move to action independently of reason, as we see in the case of the concupiscible desire which is a sort of appetite.... Clearly, then, the motive principles are reducible to the one object of appetition.... Hence if we act amiss it is, in the last analysis, because we fall short of what we intellectually know; and our previous conclusion stands, that the final motive-impulse comes from the object of desire.”⁹²

The good understood by the intellect is the universal good. But what is good for us is always a particular good. It is the cogitative power together with the sensitive appetite that enables us to identify and desire our good. Thomas says: “Yet not every good is desirable as a cause of action, but only the good-as-term-of-action, i.e., a good that is actually related to our actions. And precisely as such no such good is always good in the same way; for it must vary in relation to ourselves. That is why the ultimate and absolute good, regarded in its universality, does not as such, move us to act. Clearly, then, the final motive force derives from the soul itself acting through the appetitive power.”⁹³ A particular good is what is good for us qua individuals, at a particular time and place. It is identified by the senses and we become aware of it as something we desire. Thus, it is the sensitive appetite that moves us to action first.

As human beings, we are capable of understanding the complexities of various situations and so after some deliberation we may perhaps will to act in a way contrary to

⁹² Sed appetitus movet sine ratione, sicut patet ex his quae es concupiscentia moventur. Concupiscentia enim est appetitus quidam....Et sic patet quod moventia reducuntur in unum, quod est appetibile....Et ideo in actionibus nostris contingit deficere a rectitudine secundum quod deficimus ab intellectu et ratione. Unde patet ex praedictis quod appetibile semper movet. In DA III 15, 826.

⁹³ Non autem omne bonum est appetibile et movens, sed bonum agibile, quod est bonum applicatum ad operationem; et hoc contingit aliter se habere, sicut omnia quae nostrae actioni subduntur. Unde bonum ultimum et necessarium in sua universitate consistens, non movet. Manifestum est igitur quod potentia animae quae dicitur appetitus, sit movens. In DA III 15, 827.

our desire,⁹⁴ although on the other hand, we may succumb to the temptation and reach for what we desire. In the case of animals, motivation for action – towards or away from something – is provided by the apprehension of something as delightful or painful, and is not complicated by deliberations.⁹⁵ While human beings have to grapple with moral choices regarding appetible objects, the starting point is always desire for the concrete object, and it is that desire that motivates us to act. The appetitive power is needed to motivate any animal to act and then the motive power enables the animal to actually move.

Attractive Objects

Motivation is provided by the sensitive appetite reacting to the presence of some object. The object may be regarded by us as either attractive or repulsive, and accordingly we may desire either to pursue or to avoid it. As was discussed above, our pursuit of knowledge has to begin with the reflection on the objects we notice and react to as animals, since this is the beginning of our knowledge of the world. If we talk of the pursuit of knowledge, then it is more probable that we would wish to study those things which we find attractive rather than those which we find repulsive. However, what is attractive as an object of study is relative to us, as subjects.

Aquinas writes of study and also of contemplation as being associated with delight. He tells us that the desire for knowledge is one of the causes of delight.⁹⁶ And he

⁹⁴ We may act in a way contrary to our original desire. In the end, the intellect would have to influence the cogitative power and thus change the kind of desires we have. See: ST I 81, 3 and the discussion of the cogitative power above.

⁹⁵ ST I 80; QDA 13.

⁹⁶ ST I-II 32, 8.

also tells us that contemplation begins and ends with delight.⁹⁷ Aquinas clearly regards study and contemplation as something delightful, and it is so because knowledge is a good and so our desire for it would be associated with the expectation of a delight and the attainment of a good should terminate in delight.

One may wonder, however, about the cases when someone studies or contemplates something which is not in and of itself delightful or pretty, for example an illness, or Christ's passion. Thomas addresses that problem in ST I-II 35, 5 "Whether there is any Sorrow Contrary to the Pleasure [Delight] of Contemplation?"⁹⁸ His answer is that there is not. He acknowledges that the thing one contemplates may be something unpleasant, but the activity of contemplation is always delightful.⁹⁹ Contemplation, as was discussed in chapter 2, has to begin with study, and study begins with our wondering about something which at the moment surpasses our understanding.¹⁰⁰ Aquinas tells us that wonder is the cause of delight even if we study things which in themselves are not delightful. He says: "Also, representations of things, even of those which are not pleasant [delightful] in themselves, give rise to pleasure [delight]; for the soul rejoices in comparing one thing with another, because comparison of one thing with another is the proper and connatural act of the reason."¹⁰¹ Thus, according to Aquinas, the pursuit of

⁹⁷ ST II-II 180, 1 and 7.

⁹⁸ *Utrum Delectationi Contemplationis Sit Aliqua Tristitia Contraria* ST I-II 35, 5.

⁹⁹ ST I-II 35, 5.

¹⁰⁰ ST I-II 32, 8.

¹⁰¹ *Et omnes repraesentationes rerum, etiam quae in se non sunt delectabiles; gaudet enim anima in collatione unius ad alterum, quia conferre unum alteri est proprius et connaturalis actus rationis.* ST I-II 32, 8.

knowledge as an activity is delightful. However, the object we choose to study need not be generally regarded as delightful, it only needs to be found attractive by us, attractive in the sense of being interesting.

We begin our pursuit of knowledge by noticing something which we find attractive. From among the things to which our attention is drawn by the cogitative power and the sensitive appetite, what we notice and select for further consideration must be something to which we have a natural attraction, because we see it as a good proper to us.¹⁰² Being rational creatures, we are also capable to wonder, and so we may also wonder about something we find attractive. Then we would be inclined to pay more attention to it, and to spend some time and effort in studying it. Thus, our motivation for action, even in case of pursuit of knowledge, is rooted in our sensitive appetite and our natural attraction towards particular things.¹⁰³ The things we would be attracted to are those things which are suitable for us according to our nature. Technically speaking, those would be the things we love.

Love

The extrinsic cause of our movement is some object which is attractive to us. We may have a general appetite of a certain kind, and general attraction to a certain class of objects, but it must be a particular object which moves us. According to Aquinas, we must have some natural affinity for that object so that the object in question affects our appetite, and that effect is what he calls love (*amor*): “Accordingly the first change wrought in the appetite by the appetible object is called *love*, and is nothing else than

¹⁰² In DA III 15, 827; ST I 80, 2; QDA 13.

¹⁰³ ST I 80, 2 ad 3.

complacency in that object; and from this complacency results a movement towards that same object, and this movement is *desire*.”¹⁰⁴ Thus, when we notice the appetible object, we feel love, and develop a desire for that object. We feel that attraction because we have a natural inclination to the objects of this sort, and this is one of them.

Inclinations follow the form of a given kind of being. When we come upon an object that allows us to attain a greater degree of completion we are naturally attracted to such an object - we are inclined towards it. There is a certain fit between us and such an object.

That fit is what Aquinas means by “complacency”.

Thomas tends to use the word “love” (*amor*) when he talks of sentient beings, and especially of humans desiring and pursuing some good. As was explained in chapter 1, all beings possess natural inclinations, which are general tendencies to behave in certain ways, and which are also referred to as appetites. Sometimes Thomas also uses the word “love” (*amor*) interchangeably with “inclination”, or “appetite”. However, there are fine differences in the meaning of these terms. Inclination follows a form,¹⁰⁵ which means that every natural being is endowed with certain inclinations, certain patterns of behavior, characteristic of its kind. That is true of all natural beings, even inanimate ones. The description of a thing’s set of inclinations would give us the description of a given thing’s nature. (Human beings are supposed to possess five basic inclinations.)¹⁰⁶ Those natural inclinations are also sometimes called “natural appetites” or even “natural loves”. As was discussed in chapter 1, natural appetites orient each being towards its proper good.

¹⁰⁴ Prima ergo immutatio appetitus ab appetibili vocatur amor, qui nihil est aliud quam complacentia appetibilis; et ex hac complacentia sequitur motus in appetibile, qui est desiderium. ST I-II 26, 2.

¹⁰⁵ ST I 80, 1.

¹⁰⁶ ST I-II 94, 2.

Natural appetite exists in all beings, but in case of non-rational beings, while they are subject to it, they do not understand it. They pursue their ends in accordance with the Order of Nature as created by God. “In the natural appetite the principle of this movement is the appetitive subject’s connaturalness with the thing to which it tends and may be called *natural love*.”¹⁰⁷ “Connaturalness” is Aquinas’s term to describe natural adaptation, a kind of fittingness, between the subject and its object of “love”. Thomas’s favorite example of natural love is that of stone’s natural tendency to fall to the ground, where its tendency to seek the center of the earth may be called “natural love”. There is connaturalness between the stone and the ground. A being as a whole is subject to natural love. “Natural love is not only in the powers of the vegetal soul, but in all the soul’s powers, and also in all the parts of the body, and universally in all things.”¹⁰⁸

“Appetite” also refers to an inclination, but more strictly, it is an inclination of an animal kind which requires sensory perception - a kind of knowledge - and actions on the part of an animal. That animal inclination belongs to the sensitive appetite and it enables an animal to desire what it perceives and what is suitable for that animal.¹⁰⁹ An animal is capable of apprehending something as good, of desiring it, and of trying to obtain it.

¹⁰⁷ In appetitu autem naturali principium huiusmodi motus est connaturalitas appetentis ad id in quod tendit, quae dici potest amor naturalis. ST I-II 26, 1.

¹⁰⁸ Dicendum quod amor naturalis non solum est in viribus animae vegetativae, sed in omnibus potentiis animae, et etiam in omnibus partibus corporis, et universaliter in omnibus rebus. ST I-II 26, 1 ad 3.

¹⁰⁹ ST I 80, 1.

Animal appetites are found in the sensitive part of the soul,¹¹⁰ and more precisely, in the concupiscible power.¹¹¹

Thus the sensitive appetite exists in animals and follows the apprehension of some good. In humans, the apprehension of a good is followed by a judgment and free choice, since we have reason and free will. The will is called the “intellectual appetite”.¹¹² Will’s tendency to will the good presented to it by the intellect is the rational love: “In like manner the aptitude of ... the will to some good, that is to say, its very complacency in good, is called ... intellectual or rational love.”¹¹³ Rational love is the will’s complacency in something which the intellect understands to be a good worthy of pursuing. The intellect, of course, apprehends universal good while the sensitive apprehension of an animal pertains only to a particular and a concrete good. The term “love” may be used to designate any kind of appetite or inclination. Thomas explains it at the beginning of his discussion of love.¹¹⁴ He says: “Love is something pertaining to the appetite; since good is the object of both. Wherefore love differs according to the difference of appetites.”¹¹⁵ Thus, love differs according to natural, sensitive or intellectual kind of appetite.

¹¹⁰ ST I 80, 1; 81,2; I-II 26,1.

¹¹¹ ST I-II 26, 1.

¹¹² ST I 80, 2.

¹¹³ Et similiter aptatio appetitus... voluntatis ad aliquod bonum, idest ipsa complacentia boni, dicitur amor... intellectivus seu rationalis. ST I-II 26, 1.

¹¹⁴ ST I-II 26, 1.

¹¹⁵ Dicendum quod amor est aliquid ad appetitum pertinens, cum utriusque obiectum sit bonum. Unde secundum differentiam appetitus est differentia amoris. ST I-II 26, 1.

Love as a passion pertains only to the sensitive part of the soul,¹¹⁶ since rational part of the soul does not feel.¹¹⁷ Thus, the word “love” in reference to natural tendencies, i.e., “natural appetites,” or in reference to willing something good needs to be placed in context. The stone’s “love” for the ground is not a passion. However, love as a passion, a movement of the sensitive appetite, presupposes love as a natural inclination characteristic of non-sentient beings, because sentient beings must be also living and corporeal.

Rational “love” may be more correctly called “dilection,” which implies a choice and not mere attraction: “For love has a wider signification than the others, since every dilection or charity is love (*amor*), but not vice versa. Because dilection implies, in addition to love, a choice (*electionem*) made beforehand, as the very word denotes; and therefore dilection is not in the concupiscible power, but only in the will, and only in the rational nature.”¹¹⁸ Thus, Aquinas uses the word “love” (*amor*) to cover a wide variety of meanings. Intellectual love, which is “dilection,” is not a passion. Dilection follows the judgment of reason and signifies the choice of the good. Love in the sense of passion simply follows the sensitive apprehension of a good: “And it [love] belongs to the concupiscible power, because it regards good absolutely.”¹¹⁹ In the case of human beings, sensitive apprehension of good would normally be followed by the judgment of reason

¹¹⁶ ST I-II 22, 3.

¹¹⁷ ST I-II 22, 3 ad 3.

¹¹⁸ Nam amor communius inter ea est; omnis enim amor dilectio est vel caritas, sed non e converso. Addit enim dilectio supra amorem electionem praecedentem, ut ipsum nomen sonat. Unde dilectio non est in concupiscibili, sed in voluntate tantum, et est in sola rationali natura. ST I-II 26, 3.

¹¹⁹ Et [amor] pertinet ad concupiscibilem, quia dicitur per respectum ad bonum absolute. ST I-II 26, 1.

and then, if the good seems to be worthy of pursuit, that pursuit may be willed, and that is called “dilection”.

However, love (*amor*) has a “wider signification” than dilection, because in order to choose to will some good, and in order to understand it as a good, we must recognize it as good in the sense of being suitable to us according to our nature. That recognition depends on the cogitative power and the sensitive appetite, because it is their function to orient us towards our good. Therefore, recognizing what is our good belongs to love as a passion. It is the sensitive soul that is the seat of animal cognition and animal appetites, and is equipped to recognize good things in the world around us. As was explained before, our appetites orient us towards the good, and qua animals we recognize in our environment things which are good (or not good) for us, generally speaking.¹²⁰ The intellect is supposed to consider various pieces of data presented to it by the senses and passions, and judge the situation according to the universal principles, but the intellect cannot in and of itself notice the good that might be pursued; the intellect has to receive that information from the sensitive part of the soul. Hence, the apprehension of the good in absolute terms must precede the judgment and free choice. That is why love as a passion belonging to the concupiscible power of the sensitive part of the soul precedes and encompasses dilection. This is why “rational love”, which is not a passion, presupposes sensitive love, which is a passion. And furthermore, love as a passion presupposes love as a natural inclination.

¹²⁰ ST I 80, 1; ST I 78, 4.

As was repeated many times, we are motivated to seek God, and thus to contemplate God, because we want to know the essence of the First Cause.¹²¹ One might think that it is a reasoned understanding, and a moral choice, i.e. dilection, which drive us to it. Those certainly are present. However, Aquinas is of the opinion that we are really drawn to love God by love in the sense of *amor*, which is passion. He says: “But it is possible for man to tend to God by love, being as it were passively drawn by Him, more than he can possibly be drawn thereto by his reason, which pertains to the nature of dilection...And consequently love (*amor*) is more Godlike than dilection.”¹²² It is love of good, a basic inclination, which causes us to pursue our ends, which little by little ought to bring us closer to the knowledge of God, since our ultimate good is contemplation of God. Aquinas tells us that God is the last thing we come to know, and in this world we come to know something about God only through learning about other things:

God is knowable and lovable for Himself, since He is essentially truth and goodness itself, whereby other things are known and loved: but with regard to us, since our knowledge is derived through the senses, those things are knowable first, which are nearer to our sense, and the last term of knowledge is that which is most remote from our senses.¹²³

On the other hand, God is the first thing we love, in a sense that we love what constitutes our greatest good. That does not mean that we know what that greatest good is; it only

¹²¹ ST I-II 3, 8.

¹²² Magis autem in Deum homo potest tendere per amorem passive quodammodo ab ipso Deo attractus, quam ad hoc eum propria ratio possit ducere, quod pertinet ad rationem dilectionis, ut dictum est. Et propter hoc divinius est amor quam dilectio. ST I-II 26, 3 ad .

¹²³ Deus est propter seipsum cognoscibilis et diligibilis, utpote essentialiter existens ipsa veritas et bonitas, per quam alia et cognoscuntur et amantur. Sed quoad nos, quia nostra cognitio a sensu ortum habet, prius sunt cognoscibilia quae sunt sensui propinquiora; et ultimus terminus cognitionis est in eo quod est maxime a sensu remotum. ST II-II 27, 4.

means that we are naturally drawn to it.¹²⁴ Thus, we love God first, and we know God last. At some point we may acquire enough knowledge to realize that God is our greatest good, and therefore that loving God is the right thing to do - that intellectual approval is dilection (*dilectio*). Dilection belongs to human intellect and will: “dilection is not in the concupiscible power, but only in the will, and only in the rational nature.”¹²⁵ But love (*amor*) as a basic inclination to good and as a passion is a manifestation of God’s will for His creatures. Thus, love as *amor* is more divine than dilection. Love as *amor* is what drives us towards our final end and to all the proximate ends throughout our lives, in accordance with God’s plan. Thus, Divine Truth is loved intellectually, but it also must be loved with a passion, passively. Miner says that God’s power to draw people to Himself by sensible means exceeds our intellectual power, and he says: “Lacking the energy of the sensitive appetite, the *amor intellectualis Dei* will be weak.”¹²⁶ I would say that without the sensitive appetite, which is necessary if we are to pursue our ends in accordance with our nature, intellectual love of God would be impossible. Our nature as boundary beings, both rational and animal, requires the engagement of passions as well as intellect in our love for God.

One more thing needs to be made more precise. Thomas says that “sensitive love is in the sensitive appetite, just as intellectual love is in the intellectual appetite.”¹²⁷ He

¹²⁴ ST II-II 27, 4; ST I-II 1, 4 and 5.

¹²⁵ Dilectio non est in concupiscibili, sed in voluntate tantum, et est in sola rationali natura. ST I-II 26, 3.

¹²⁶ Miner, Robert, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions: a Study of Summa Theologiae 1a2ae 22-48*, Cambridge University Press, 2009, page 121-122.

¹²⁷ Amor igitur sensitivus est in appetitu sensitivo, sicut amor intellectivus in intellectivo appetitu. ST I-II 26,1.

does not claim here that the “sensitive appetite” and “sensitive love” is the same thing, but rather that love (as passion) is in the appetite (as a tendency). It is so because love is the principle of movement whereas appetite is simply the tendency to engage in that kind of movement. Thomas says: “Now in each of these appetites, the name *love* is given to the principle of movement towards the end loved.”¹²⁸ For example, my appetites include an appetite for food, which I need in order to stay alive, and which follows from my basic inclination for self-preservation. But I may have a more specific love for freshly baked bread. Love pertains to something particular, like bread. When I see and smell freshly baked bread, I desire it. It is my love for bread which is the cause of my desire. My love of fresh bread may then motivate me to “move towards the end loved”, that is, to desire that bread, and then I might act on that desire and reach for the bread. Thus, love for bread is the principle of my movement. If all goes well and I eat that bread, I experience delight. Thus love is the cause of desire, and desire may terminate in delight. In order to pursue anything, one must love it and then desire it. As was mentioned before, it is the sensitive appetite which moves us to act. But more specifically, it is love and the desire for the object we love that cause us to act. Love and the resulting desire are passions which belong to the concupiscible power of the sensitive appetite.

Love is the fundamental passion, which is the cause of other passions. We love what is good, or at least what appears good to us. Thomas says that “Love is a cause of all that the lover does”.¹²⁹ As we recall from chapter 1, every agent acts for an end, and

¹²⁸ In unoquoque autem horum appetituum, amor dicitur illud quod est principium motus tendentis in finem amatum. ST I-II 26, 1.

¹²⁹ Amor sit causa omnium quae amans agit. ST I-II 28, 6.

the end is the good. Some particular good is loved and therefore desired by an agent. That good may be then pursued. (In case of repugnance or danger, love of self is the motivation of the agent's avoidance of what is not good.) No creature pursues what it does not desire, does not love, and thus, love in a sense of passion is the motivation of all the sentient agent's actions. Thomas says: "Now the end is the good desired and loved by each one. Wherefore it is evident that every agent, whatever it is, does every action from love of some kind."¹³⁰

Strictly speaking, contemplation ought to be contemplation of God, and the object of love of the contemplative ought to be God. But not all contemplatives may be able to achieve that at once; many may begin with loving and contemplating creatures. Aquinas tells us that while we love God first, as the final cause, we come to know Him last, after we study His creation. Thomas says:

Since to love God is something greater than to know Him...it follows that love [*dilectio*] of God presupposes knowledge of God. And because this knowledge does not rest in creatures, but, through them, tends to something else, love [*dilectio*] begins there, and thence goes on to other things by a circular movement so to speak; for knowledge begins from creatures, tends to God, and love [*dilectio*] begins with God as the last end, and passes on to creatures.¹³¹

We must note here that love begins with God as the last end, and that implies that we are predisposed to love things which lead us to that last end, which would be things of this world in which our good consists. That is consistent with the notion of natural

¹³⁰ Finis autem est bonum desideratum et amatum unicuique. Unde manifestum est quod omne agens, quodcumque sit, agit quamcumque actionem ex aliquot amore. ST I-II 28, 6.

¹³¹ Dicendum quod quia dilectio Dei est maius aliquid quam eius cognitio ... ideo praesupponit ipsam. Et quia cognitio no quiescit in rebus creatis, et per hoc ad alia derivatur, per modum cuiusdam circulationis: dum cognitio a creaturis incipiens, tendit in Deum; et dilectio, a Deo incipiens sicut ab ultimo fine, ad creaturas derivatur. ST I-II 27, 4 ad 2.

inclinations. Speaking of love, the word Aquinas uses here is *dilectio* and thus he refers to the rational kind of love, the love of choice. But, as was explained above, the intellectual love presupposes the sensitive love, especially if we are supposed to be motivated to study and contemplation. Thus, we are led to knowledge of God through knowledge of creatures, while by loving things which are our proximate ends, which take us closer to our last end, we are already loving God.

Contemplation generally is preceded by study. As was described in chapter 2, the process leading to contemplation begins with perceiving things in the world around us and studying them. It ends when we reach some truth which we would simply behold, i.e. contemplate. Thus, we must begin our pursuit of knowledge with observation of something that is attractive to us, some concrete objects. It may be toads.

Once I met a boy who was fascinated with toads and other amphibians, and who acquired an impressive amount of knowledge about them. The boy undoubtedly began with noticing a toad once upon a time and stretching his hand for it. But here we must notice that other people might have seen the same toad, or at least might have been able to see the same toad if they paid attention to the fact that it was present in their field of view, but they either ignored it or did not even notice it. That boy noticed it, because he had natural predisposition to notice toads. On the basis of our discussion so far we can say that the cogitative power which recognized a toad as something useful moved his sensitive appetite, causing the boy to desire the toad as his good.¹³² Also, we know that it is a particular good that moves us to action - it is something which is good relative to us,

¹³² ST I 78, 4; ST I 80, 1; ST I 81, 1 and 3.

individually, in a given situation.¹³³ Thus we can say that a toad must be considered as that boy's good. Indeed it is so, if the study of toads would perfect that boy intellectually and help him to realize the talents with which he is endowed. One of the basic human inclinations is the inclination to truth and the pursuit of knowledge,¹³⁴ which, like all inclinations, requires that we pursue a particular good. For that purpose he is endowed with the natural attraction to frogs and toads as objects of interest. Technically, we would say that he loved toads, and this is "love" in the sense of *amor*, or love of need. He wanted that toad.

When we encounter the object we love (*amor*), we delight (*delectatur*) in it and our love increases.¹³⁵ The boy who studied toads must have begun his studies of amphibians because he loved toads (and frogs) - he found them irresistibly attractive. As his knowledge of them increased, it seems that his love for them also increased, causing him to pursue further knowledge. As he knew more about them, he could better appreciate them when he looked at them, and thus, he would love them more.

Thomas tells us that the contemplative life, while strictly speaking ought to be devoted to contemplation of God, may also pertain to consideration of any truth, because every truth leads us to God.¹³⁶ Therefore, the study and contemplation of toads counts as pertaining to contemplative life. As was discussed in chapter 2, before we contemplate, we must engage in study, and we must begin with observation of sensible objects. The

¹³³ In DA III 15, 827.

¹³⁴ ST I-II 94, 2; ST I-II 32, 8.

¹³⁵ ST II-II 180, 7 ad 1.

¹³⁶ ST II-II 180, 4.

boy who loved toads undoubtedly began with noticing a toad once upon a time and stretching his hand for it. Barring cases of miracles and raptures, the road to contemplation of God begins with attractions, i.e., a love for sensible objects. The love of sensible objects is a passion belonging to the sensitive part of the soul.

Love and contemplation – some final remarks

Thus, the pursuit of knowledge and contemplation involves both, the intellective and the sensitive part of the soul. To choose some object for our study and then perhaps for contemplation, we must be directed by the appetitive part of the soul. There is the intellectual appetite, which is the will, and there is the sensitive appetite. It is the sensitive appetite which is the moving force of all our actions, albeit, being rational and moral creatures, we need to will our actions also.¹³⁷ What we want to study - which study might eventually lead us to contemplation – is something which is attractive to us qua animals, and interesting to us qua rational beings. In both ways, we recognize it as good and pursue it. We desire the good both as rational beings and as animals.

What we recognize as our good, we love: “And this very aptitude or proportion of the appetite to good is love”¹³⁸ Love which is found in the intellectual soul is *dilectio*, which also includes choice. But love as *dilectio* must be also accompanied by love as a passion, love as *amor*. All other passions are a result of love.¹³⁹ And love is the cause of everything we do.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Note that willing is not enough. People who suffer from clinical depression will to do things, but lack the motive force, the desire to do them. And a desire is for particular things, the things we love.

¹³⁸ Ipsa autem aptitudo sive proportio appetitus ad bonum est amor. ST I-II 25, 2.

¹³⁹ ST I-II 27, 4.

What causes us to pursue knowledge and to engage in contemplation is love.

We love the truth and we desire to know it; therefore, we seek wisdom and knowledge; therefore, we contemplate. We love truth and seek knowledge because we have a natural inclination to it qua rational beings. The pursuit of knowledge is fitting to us in accordance with our nature as rational animals, and therefore, we naturally desire to know.¹⁴¹

Thus, we strive to attain knowledge. But, as was discussed earlier, we cannot ever know completely the object of our contemplation. Even in heaven, though we can see God, we cannot comprehend God, for we are only finite creatures. And on earth, we cannot comprehend God, although we can contemplate Him. Furthermore, we cannot even fully comprehend what we contemplate as God's creation because we cannot ever comprehend their First Cause. Thus, our desire for knowledge leads to frustration.

However, Aquinas tells us that we may love the object of our contemplation although we cannot know it perfectly: "Love [*amor*] is in the appetitive power, which regards a thing as it is in itself: wherefore it suffices, for the perfection of love, that a thing is loved more than it is known; since it can be loved perfectly, even without being perfectly known.

This is most evident in regard to the sciences... The same applies to the love of God [*amorem Dei*]."¹⁴²

Contemplation begins and ends with love:

¹⁴⁰ ST 28, 6.

¹⁴¹ ST II-II 180, 7.

¹⁴² Amor est in vi appetitiva, quae respicit rem secundum quod in se est. Unde ad perfectionem amoris sufficit quod res prout in se apprehenditur, ametur. Ob hoc ergo contingit quod aliquid plus amatur quam cognoscatur, quia potest perfecte amari etiam si non perfecte cognoscatur. Sicut maxime patet in scientiis... Et similiter est dicendum circa amorem Dei. ST I-II 27,2 ad 2.

And since the end corresponds to the beginning, it follows that the term also and the end of the contemplative life has its being in the appetite, since one delights in seeing the object loved, and the very delight in the object seen arouses yet greater love. . . . And this is the ultimate perfection of the contemplative life, namely that the Divine Truth be not seen but also loved.¹⁴³

Thus, although we cannot fully understand the Divine Truth, we can love it and be perfected by it according to our nature, and it is love, which causes us to contemplate.

Desires

As was discussed above, what an animal notices is something important to that kind of animal, and not merely something that can be seen or heard.¹⁴⁴ If something seems to be good to a given animal, it may desire and pursue it. What we apprehend as good, we love, and love is the cause of desire.¹⁴⁵

Generally speaking, desires follow from natural inclinations, as was explained in chapter 1. Thus, the inclination to self-preservation is the basis of our desire to flee or fight, and also the basis for the emotions of fear or anger; the inclination to propagate our species is the basis of attraction to members of other sex and the emotion of love of a romantic kind; and the inclination to truth is the basis of seeking causes and explanations of the phenomena we observe. The inclination to truth is characteristic of rational creatures and follows from our nature just like other natural inclinations. Since natural inclinations direct every being towards its proper good, the desires must be coordinated

¹⁴³ Et quia finis respondet principio, inde est quod etiam terminus et finis contemplativae vitae habetur in affectu: dum scilicet aliquis in visione rei amatae delectatur et ipsa delectatio rei visae amplius excitat amorem. . . . Et haec est ultima perfectio contemplativae vitae: ut scilicet non solum divina veritas videatur, sed etiam ut ametur. ST II-II 180, 7 ad 1.

¹⁴⁴ ST I 78, 4; ST I 80, 1.

¹⁴⁵ ST I-II 30, 1 and 2.

with the natural inclinations of a given kind of animal. That includes the human animal. Even desire for knowledge follows from our natural inclination to truth, and is coordinated with all our inclinations, as was explained in chapter 1.

When an animal desires something, it pursues it and when the animal obtains what it desires, it rests. Aquinas says that the animal desires what it loves and what it apprehends as good, and when the animal obtains that good, it rests in the good, and that is called delight. Humans are also animals, so the sequence applies to humans as well: humans pursue what they love and apprehend as good, and when they obtain it, they delight in it.

What we apprehend, love and desire is not something general like “the good”, or “nourishment” or “knowledge”, but something particular like the bread or the knowledge about the toad. If one happens to love toads, one pursues toads and desires them in some way. If such a toad lover caught the toad and studied it, he would be delighted. Here we must notice that the boy who studied toads and kept them in terrariums did so because he liked to look at them, touch them, observe them and generally study them. He didn’t eat them, didn’t make shoes out of them, he simply rejoiced in studying them. The boy with the toad sought knowledge about toads simply because he wanted to know them better. He possessed desire for knowledge, and specifically knowledge about toads.

Aquinas distinguishes two types of desires: those pertaining to the rational and those pertaining to the sensitive part of the soul. He uses the word *desiderium*¹⁴⁶ when talking of desire for knowledge, but he uses the word *concupiscentia* when talking of desire as a particular passion, associated with animal desires and belonging to the

¹⁴⁶ ST I-II 32, 8.

sensitive part of the soul.¹⁴⁷ Aquinas considers the objection of someone who claims that concupiscence is not only in the sensitive appetite, but also in the intellectual, for one may have a desire for the commandments of God.¹⁴⁸ Aquinas's answer to it is that *desire* has a broader meaning than *concupiscence* and may pertain to both the higher appetite (i.e. the will) and the lower appetite, i.e. the sensitive appetite.¹⁴⁹ Desire, Aquinas says, is “simply a movement towards the thing desired”.¹⁵⁰ And the thing desired may be a sensible thing or not; thus, it may be only a “good of reason.”¹⁵¹ Concupiscence is the craving for an absent good of a sensible kind, and that craving pertains to the whole person, a composite being made of body and soul together. Thus, Aquinas is saying that the term *desire* (*desiderium*) includes desires for rational as well as sensible goods, while the term *concupiscentia* pertains specifically to the sensible kind of good.

If one likes toads in the sense that one appreciates their beauty, (one likes the way they look, move about, etc.), then one likes them as a sensible good. Presumably, one would then love to and desire to possess toads and to look at them. That desire to possess and to enjoy some good in a sensory way would be a desire as *concupiscentia*. We could also call it *desiderium*, but calling it *desiderium* would be calling it by a more general term and thus it would give us less information about that kind of desire. The term *desiderium* includes *concupiscentia*. Desire is simply “movement towards the thing

¹⁴⁷ ST I-II 30, 1.

¹⁴⁸ ST I-II 30, 1 obj. 2.

¹⁴⁹ ST I-II 30, 1 ad 2.

¹⁵⁰ Simplicem motum in rem desideratam. ST I-II 30, 1 ad 2.

¹⁵¹ Bonum rationis. ST I-II 30, 1 c.

desired”¹⁵² and that may pertain to either the higher or the lower appetite. A desire to acquire theoretical knowledge, perhaps knowledge about toads, is *desiderium*. That desire pertains to the higher appetite. Desire for sensory delights, like the delight of watching or touching toads, pertains to the lower appetite, but it is also a movement towards the thing desired, and so it is also *desiderium*. However, desire for sensory delights is usually called *concupiscentia* which indicates a desire for a sensible good. According to Aquinas, the term *desiderium* includes *concupiscentia*. So it seems that when we talk of desire for theoretical knowledge about toads, we also include the desire for toads as sensible objects. The reason why *desiderium* includes *concupiscentia* is that what happens in one part of the soul tends to affect other parts of the soul. Desire of a rational kind does not stay confined to the rational part of the soul but “overflows” into the sensitive part of the soul. Thomas says:

The craving for wisdom, or other spiritual goods, is sometimes called concupiscence; either by reason of a certain likeness; or on account of the craving in the higher parts of the soul being so vehement that it overflows into the lower appetite, so that the latter also, in its own way, tends to the spiritual good, following the lead of the higher appetite, the result being that the body itself renders its service in spiritual matters.¹⁵³

Thus, here again we find a mention of the “overflow” from the rational to the sensitive part of the soul.¹⁵⁴ This “overflow” takes place because a human being is a complex yet integrated being, composed of body and the tripartite soul, and all our parts are affected

¹⁵² Motum in rem desideratam ST I-II 30, 1 ad 2.

¹⁵³ Dicendum quod appetitus sapientiae vel aliorum spiritualium bonorum, interdum concupiscentia nominatur, vel propter similitudinem quandam, vel propter intensionem appetitus superioris partis, ex quo fit redundantia in inferiorem appetitum, ut simuletiam ipse inferior appetitus suo modo tendat in spirituale bonum consequens appetitum superiorem, et etiam ipsum corpus spiritualibus deserviat...ST I-II 30, 1 ad 1.

¹⁵⁴ Other places mentioned so far: ST I-II 3,3; ST I 78, 4 ad 5; ST II-II 175, 4 ad 1.

by whatever happens in other parts, with the final result of a completely integrated functioning.

If the boy who loves toads desires to catch a toad, to play with it, and to learn something about it, the sensitive kind of desire (to catch, to look at, to touch) and the rational kind of desire (to learn more about the toad), while strictly speaking belong to different parts of the soul, influence one another. If that boy did not find toads attractive in a sensible kind of way, he would not have developed desire to study them. We can study only something which we notice because we find it attractive, and what we find attractive we love (in a sense of amor) and desire. Since the original attraction must be animal attraction, and love is a passion belonging to the sensitive part of the soul, desire which arises from that love must be desire for the sensible kind of good. But a human being as a rational creature does not have to stop with that kind of desire and may further develop a desire of a rational kind, a desire to know. Thus, concupiscence might be the beginning of a desire to learn something. That would be the influence of the sensitive part of the soul on the rational part. On the other hand, desire for knowledge and wisdom “overflows” to the lower part of the soul kindling desire as *concupiscentia*. That is the influence of the rational part of the soul on the sensitive part. Thus, both parts of the soul can influence one another.

Desire has its roots in animal appetites, which allow the animal to pursue its proper ends. Thanks to these appetites, the animal feels attraction to something it perceives, something recognized as useful by the animal’s estimative/cogitative power. The attractive (i.e. appetible) object causes a change in the appetite, which change is

called love (*amor*). Love is a passion from which other passions arise, and desire is caused by love.

The above description pertains to animal desire. But humans are also animals and this description applies to humans as well, except that in the case of humans there is also the influence of the rational part of the soul. Because of that influence, human loves and desires may acquire a different quality, not to mention that from a sensible desire there may arise a desire for knowledge. Nevertheless, nobody can develop a desire for learning about things one never noticed and never experienced; nor can anyone truly desire to study a thing which one finds repulsive. Desire which belongs to the sensitive soul is therefore a prerequisite to forming a desire for knowledge.

Wonder, Desire for Knowledge

Desire for knowledge about causes of things is called “wonder” (*admiratio*).¹⁵⁵ The desire to know, or more precisely, to know more about something than we know already, is a rational desire, and is characteristic of us qua rational beings, not qua animals. Being rational, we desire to find out more simply for the sake of knowing. Thomas says: “Now wonder is a kind of desire for knowledge; a desire which comes to man when he sees an effect of which the cause either is unknown to him, or surpasses his knowledge or faculty of understanding. Consequently wonder is a cause of pleasure [delight], in so far as it includes a hope of getting the knowledge which one desires to have.”¹⁵⁶ Knowledge is a rational good - it is a good which completes us qua rational

¹⁵⁵ ST I-II 32, 8.

¹⁵⁶ Est autem admiratio desiderium quoddam sciendi, quod in homine contingit ex hoc quod videt effectum et ignorat causam, vel ex hoc quod causa talis effectus excedit cognitionem aut facultatem ipsius. Et ideo

beings. We desire that good and that completion. That desire is experienced as a desire for knowledge.

The boy who liked toads engaged in the study of toads for the sake of knowledge, not for any utilitarian reason. That is what Aquinas and Aristotle tell us is the pursuit of wisdom, which culminates in the contemplation of truth.¹⁵⁷ Wisdom goes beyond art and beyond any utilitarian concerns; wisdom is the knowledge of the first principles which we want to know simply because we possess natural desire to know. Wisdom is sought for its own sake.¹⁵⁸ The pursuit of wisdom begins with wonder.

Ultimately, the object of our contemplation is God. But, as was discussed above, on earth we cannot contemplate God directly. On Earth, the intellection of God does require sense perception:

Since the human intellect in the present state of life cannot understand even immaterial created substances, much less can it understand the essence of the uncreated substance. Hence it must be said simply that God is not the first object of our knowledge. Rather do we know God through creatures... while the first object of our knowledge in this life is the quiddity of a material thing, which is the proper object of our intellect.¹⁵⁹

As the discussion so far shows, to know creatures and to move on to knowledge of God, we need to rely on our animal characteristics, that is, on animal appetites, sensory perception, and passions.

admiratio est causa delectationis, in quantum habet adiunctam spem consequendi cognitionem eius quod scire desiderat. ST I-II 32, 8.

¹⁵⁷ In Met. I, 1.

¹⁵⁸ In Met I, 1, 33.

¹⁵⁹ Unde simpliciter dicendum est quod Deus non est primum quod a nobis cognoscitur; sed magis per creaturas in Dei cognitionem pervenimus... Primum autem quod intelligitur a nobis secundum statum praesentis vitae, est quidditas rei materialis, quae est nostri intellectus obiectum. ST I 88, 3.

We are capable of wonder because we possess the desire for knowledge, because of our natural inclination to truth. Our desire for truth is natural to us qua rational beings, but is embedded in our whole nature as rational animals. Our pursuit of truth, although driven by a desire characteristic of a rational creature, always has to begin with sensory perceptions, and be driven by desires characteristic of an animal, and specifically, the animal of our species *Homo sapiens*, since every creature is endowed with natural inclinations in accordance with its nature. Granted, when we consider human happiness which consists of contemplation of God – even in this world - we are not talking of an animal pursuing something which an animal desires. Contemplation is not what a non-rational animal desires. But human beings can reach their ultimate goal only through a long and difficult road. And even in this life, the first step to contemplation is awareness of sensible objects.

As we recall from previous chapters, we humans naturally have a desire for knowledge: “Because each individual delights in the operation which befits him according to his own nature or habit. Now contemplation of the truth befits a man according to his nature as a *rational animal* (italics mine): the result being that *all men naturally desire to know*, so that consequently they delight in the knowledge of truth.”¹⁶⁰ God gave us this natural inclination to truth and desire to pursue knowledge. The desire for knowledge follows from our basic inclination to truth in virtue of the fact that we are

¹⁶⁰ Quia unicuique delectabilis est operatio sibi conveniens secundum propriam naturam vel habitum. Contemplatio autem veritatis competit homini secundum suam naturam, prout animal rationale. Ex quo contingit quod omnes homines ex natura scire desiderant et per consequens in cognitione veritatis delectantur. ST II-II 180, 7.

rational beings. But because we are also animals we possess animal inclinations from which follow animal interests and desires.

Desire for knowledge may eventually lead us to the contemplation of God. On earth we can not contemplate God in an unmediated way, but only through God's effects, i.e. creation. Aquinas tells us that, while strictly speaking the contemplative life consists in contemplation of God, nevertheless, contemplation of any truth, that is, contemplation of things in this world, also pertains to contemplative life. This is because all creation leads us back to God, because God is the First Cause of all.¹⁶¹ Thus it seems that Thomas would allow that even people who do not engage in theological contemplation – scientists, artists or philosophers – might also engage in contemplation of some truth, which might lead them to God. And there would be no adult scientists if there were no children who love to play with toads and such things. Josef Pieper claims that all forms of contemplation are fundamentally religious in nature because in all of them we are trying to pursue our eternal happiness and because we must be directed by love towards the object of our contemplation.¹⁶²

Therefore, someone who delights in finding an explanation for the effects he/she observes may not engage in the contemplation of God. That person may only study things found in the world around us and contemplate the truth about them. If one continues like that, and if someone also added some metaphysical reflections, one would eventually arrive at contemplation of God. Many people will not get that far in their earthly lives.

¹⁶¹ ST II-II 180, 4.

¹⁶² Pieper, *Happiness and Contemplation*, pp. 80-81.

Nevertheless, any truth, good or beauty we find has its source in God¹⁶³ and in this way, even if indirectly, we get a glimpse of God. Thus, God shows us something of Himself in everything true, good and beautiful. Aquinas tells us that all creatures imitate God by their goodness and usefulness.¹⁶⁴ All creatures have their beginning in God,¹⁶⁵ and their final end is likewise God.¹⁶⁶ All goodness, beauty and truth derive from God. Whenever we encounter the good, the beauty or the truth, we get a glimpse of God, although we may not realize it.¹⁶⁷ But the good has to be manifested to us on earth in sensible objects, for example, in toads. The pursuit of truth about any object, for example, about toads, eventually leads us to the realization that there is the First Cause,¹⁶⁸ and thus, to the realization that there is God. Meeting the First Cause, who is God, is not possible in this world, but thinking about God, discovering God's attributes, is possible. Thomas tells us: "Now in itself the very order of things is such, that God is knowable and lovable for Himself, since He is essentially truth and goodness itself, whereby other things are known and loved; but with regard to us, since our knowledge is derived through the senses, those things are knowable first, which are nearer to our senses, and the last term of knowledge is that which is most remote from our senses."¹⁶⁹ The "last term of

¹⁶³ ST II-II 27, 4; ST I 6, 1; ST I 16, 1; ST I 5, 4 ad 1; ST I-II 27, 1 ad 3.

¹⁶⁴ ST I 103, 4; SCG III 24, 6.

¹⁶⁵ ST I 44, 1.

¹⁶⁶ ST I 44, 4.

¹⁶⁷ Further discussion of God as the good, the truth and the beauty is well beyond the scope of this dissertation.

¹⁶⁸ ST I 2, 3; ST I-II 3, 8; ST II-II 180, 4.

knowledge” which is the most remote from our senses is, of course, God. We love God first, but come to know Him last. Thus, the study of God’s creation may lead us to the contemplation of God. And love of God causes us to love creatures, and through them, come to know and love God more.¹⁷⁰

Our nature as boundary beings, beings that are both rational and animal, is manifested in our capacity to wonder about things. We can only wonder about something we notice and find attractive. That depends on the operations of the sensitive part of the soul. We can only desire something we find attractive. Desire is a passion and belongs to the sensitive part of the soul. We may be moved to some actions regarding the appetible object because of the desire rooted in the sensitive appetite. However, all of the above operations of the sensitive soul occur under the influence of the intellective soul, because a human being is a composite being at all times. Perception of a toad as a useful object is determined by a cogitative power, which power is influenced in its functioning by the intellect. Human desires are also influenced by the intellect. Furthermore, an appetible object is regarded by a human being not only from the perspective of the practical reason, i.e. usefulness and pleasantness, but also from the perspective of the speculative reason, i.e. the effect whose cause is unknown. We want to know the cause. And that desire to know the cause is wonder. Wanting to know the cause is not a passion but an intellectual desire. In and of itself it is not a feeling. However, the thought of something attractive (which, of course has to be represented by a phantasm), might be associated with the

¹⁶⁹ Est autem ipse ordo rerum talis secundum se quod Deus est propter seipsum cognoscibilis et diligibilis, utpote essentialiter existens ipsa veritas et bonitas, per quam alia et cognoscuntur et amantur. Sed quoad nos, quia nostra cognitio a sensu ortum habet, prius sunt cognoscibilia quae sunt sensui propinquiora; et ultimus terminus cognitionis est in eo quod est maxime a sensu remotum. ST II-II 27, 4.

¹⁷⁰ ST II-II 27, 4 ad 2.

feeling, i.e. a desire, because that object is also the object of a sensual desire. Thus, the thought of that object is connected to the feeling caused by that object; a person's desire to know more about a given object would be necessarily connected with the desire or desires of a sensual nature which are elicited by that appetible object. Thus, wonder is associated with passions in two ways: wonder can arise only in the presence of passions, and wonder may also be a cause of passion. Thomas Aquinas tells us that wonder is a cause of delight.¹⁷¹

Aquinas says that there is a kind of "overflow" (*redundantia*) from the rational part of the soul to the sensitive part. Because of that overflow, the human equivalent of the estimative power is called the cogitative power. Because of that overflow, human passions acquire a special quality. And because of that overflow, rational desire influences the sensitive part of the soul causing the experience of desire to be felt even on the level of passions. Aquinas says: "The craving [for wisdom] in the higher parts of the soul being so vehement that it overflows into the lower appetite."¹⁷² Thus, the desire for some spiritual good, i.e. wisdom, "overflows" into the sensitive part of the soul.¹⁷³ Furthermore, Aquinas tells us: "In this way the body itself renders its service in spiritual matters."¹⁷⁴ In this way, the desire for knowledge causes the feeling of desire in the

¹⁷¹ ST I-II 32, 8.

¹⁷² Vel propter intensionem appetitus superioris partis, ex quo fit redundantia in inferiorem appetitum... ST I-II 30, 1 ad 1.

¹⁷³ Miner also mentions "overflow" of the rational desire into the lower appetite but does not discuss it in detail. Miner interprets it as meaning that by the overflow the concupiscence has been "reoriented and perfected". Miner, p. 159.

¹⁷⁴ Et etiam ipsum corpus spiritualibus deserviat. ST I-II 30, 1 ad 1.

whole person. That may explain why the pursuit of knowledge may be described as “exciting”.

Since the motivation for any kind of action must be provided by the sensitive appetite – and more precisely by passions – we must observe that merely a rational desire is not enough to motivate a person to any action. Investigation of causes and effects is also an action. This explains the dependence of our curiosity on our animal appetites. People suffering from depression do not desire much, do not notice much and are not interested in investigating things. They may understand that it would be a worthwhile undertaking, but mere knowledge does not move anybody. We must feel like studying, we must be passionately interested in something. The desire for knowledge is necessary to lead us to contemplation – eventually, to the contemplation of God – but the rational desire for knowledge must be complemented by the experience of desire as a passion in order to move us. Thus, the “overflow” of the desire for knowledge into the non-rational part of the soul is crucial in making us act on that desire, in making us pursue knowledge.

Thomas also says that wonder is a cause of delight. The object of desire is something delightful.¹⁷⁵ Knowledge is a rational kind of good, so in and of itself, it is not appropriate to speak of it as “delightful”. However, given all we know already about the passions accompanying the pursuit of knowledge and even the desire for it, we can see that delight might be also among the passions involved. I shall discuss delight in the next chapter.

¹⁷⁵ ST I-II 30, 2 ad 1.

Conclusion

The human desire for knowledge can arise only if there are animal desires. Animal appetites and animal passions are necessary for the development of the human desire for knowledge. We contemplate because we have a natural love of knowledge,¹⁷⁶ because of our natural inclination to truth.¹⁷⁷ All beings pursue what they love¹⁷⁸ because love implies seeking what is good for a given being.¹⁷⁹ Thus, we love truth and pursue knowledge because that is natural to us, qua rational beings. Ultimately, what we want to know is the First Cause, which is God.¹⁸⁰ On earth, we can only know God through God's effects,¹⁸¹ thus speculative sciences play an important role in our earthly contemplation.¹⁸² We need to pick particular topics in the speculative sciences to think about, and these topics have to come from our observation of and interaction with the world. Therefore, we focus our contemplation on things that attract our attention. But those things have to be attractive to us because they are sensible and delightful, since only what is sensible and delightful can be the cause of desire to get closer to them. Thus, the things we focus on must be things picked out by our senses and our passions, and those things appeal to us qua animals. But as our reactions are those of rational animals, we are not only attracted to delightful sensible objects but we think about them, and we

¹⁷⁶ ST II-II 180, 7.

¹⁷⁷ ST I-II 94, 2.

¹⁷⁸ ST I-II 28, 6.

¹⁷⁹ ST I-II 27, 1.

¹⁸⁰ ST I-II 3, 8.

¹⁸¹ ST I 88, 3.

¹⁸² ST I-II 3, 6; ST II-II 180, 4.

try to know them as rational as well as animal kind of beings. Thus, we search for the causes of what we observe, and eventually, that search may lead us to the First Cause. Thus, the operations of our sensitive souls are a prerequisite to our pursuit of truth. The object of our contemplation, i.e., what we actually concentrate on while we are contemplating, has to be derived from our sensory experiences and our natural desires.

The contemplation of truth, which is our reward for the seeking of knowledge, begins with our natural attractions and aversions, and is guided by our natural appetites in accordance with our nature as rational animals. Thus, the choice of what we study and ultimately the choice of our objects of contemplation is guided by our animal nature. Thus, our natural appetites also guide us in our pursuit of knowledge, even though it may culminate in the contemplation of God.

Furthermore, the desire for knowledge “overflows” into the sensitive part of the soul with the result that it may be felt by a whole person. That influence on the sensitive part of the soul is necessary for providing us motivation for actually pursuing knowledge.

In our desire for knowledge and truth, we again show ourselves to be composite and integrated beings, made of body and tripartite soul. We desire knowledge as rational animals, but our pursuit of knowledge also involves the operations of the sensitive soul. Thus, we can see how “perfection of the lower” is needed for the attainment of the “perfection of the higher” parts, and how afterwards the “perfection of the higher” parts perfects the lower ones.

CHAPTER FOUR

DELIGHT AND CONTEMPLATION

The pursuit of knowledge begins with wonder, that is, wonder about causes and effects, and it ends with delight upon the discovery of the cause,¹ especially when at the end of our pursuit we find the First Cause, which is God. All pursuit of knowledge - whether it is knowledge of humble or grand causes - begins with wonder and ends with delight. It ends with delight because delight is a rest in the good obtained.² Truth is a good which is both lovable and delightful, says Aquinas.³

The attainment of knowledge of the cause, and the contemplation of it, produces in the human soul intellectual delight. But in accordance with Aquinas's view of a human as a composite and integrated being, that delight of contemplation is also accompanied by sensual delight. Sensual delight, as well as intellectual delight, accompanies the pursuit of knowledge and the practice of contemplation, because of the delights which belong to the process of learning leading to contemplation, and because of the influence of the intellect on the sensitive soul. The operations of the sensitive soul which are necessary for our attainment or enjoyment of happiness, include not only sensory perceptions and animal desires, but also the feeling of delight. In my reading of Aquinas I find textual support for saying that sensual delight is a powerful motivational factor in the human pursuit of

¹ ST I-II 32, 8.

² ST I-II 23, 4.

³ ST II-II 180, 4.

knowledge and in the practice of contemplation. Delight of both kinds, intellectual and sensual, is a reward for our efforts, for the achievement of an end. Sensual delight also accompanies the intellectual delight in the practice of contemplation. Furthermore, there is a sensual component not only in earthly contemplation, but even in the contemplation of God in heaven. Thus, I find in Aquinas's texts that delight is a motivating factor, a reward, and the necessary accompaniment of the pursuit of knowledge and contemplation of truth, here and hereafter.

What Delight Is

We begin our pursuit of knowledge because of our desire for something attractive, and therefore interesting, in our environment. The object of desire is something delightful,⁴ so delight⁵ belongs to our pursuit of knowledge. When we desire something, we anticipate delight. When we attain the object of our desire, delight follows. Both, the anticipated delight and delight as rest in the good attained pertain not only to the pursuit of sensible goods, but also to the pursuit of knowledge.

Aquinas distinguishes two kinds of delights: intellectual and sensual.⁶

Contemplation of truth and the study which leads up to it bring about intellectual delight, while sensual delight, of course, follows upon the attainment of sensible goods, like food,

⁴ ST I-II 30, 1.

⁵ In discussing the general features of delight, Thomas Aquinas uses the word *delectatio*, which is translated as either 'delight' or 'pleasure'. In ST I-II 31, translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, the word *delectatio* is translated as *delight* in articles 1-4 and as *pleasure* in articles 5-8. Aquinas sometimes uses also the word *voluptas* if he talks about carnal pleasures and wishes to stress their carnality. However, even then he uses the word *delectatio* interchangeably with *voluptas*, for the word *delectatio* refers to any kind of a delight. (See: ST I-II 2, 6) In English translation, *voluptas* is rendered as 'pleasure'. But *delectatio* may be also translated as 'pleasure'. Thomas Aquinas also uses the word *delectatio* when talking of intellectual delights. That is translated either as 'delight' or as 'pleasure'. (See: ST I-II 32, 8; ST I-II 31, 5; ST II-II 180, 1 and 7) In the present discussion, 'delight' and 'pleasure' will be used synonymously as equivalent to Latin *delectatio*.

⁶ ST I-II 31, 4 and 5.

sex, etc. Intellectual delight is the movement of the will following apprehension of something by the reason, which belongs to the intellective part of the soul, while the sensual delight is a passion which is a movement of the sensitive appetite, and which must involve bodily change. Aquinas says: “Delight of the sensitive appetite is accompanied by a bodily transmutation, whereas delight of the intellectual appetite is nothing but the mere movement of the will.”⁷ That intellectual delight is called “joy” (*gaudium*).⁸

Sensual delight is a passion: “It is therefore evident that, since delight is a movement of the animal appetite arising from an apprehension of sense, it is a passion of the soul.”⁹ Thus, sensual delight is a passion which follows sensitive apprehension of a sensible good. What Aquinas means by sensitive apprehension, is the fact that animals are capable of perceiving their attainment of some good, and in that, they differ from non-sentient beings.¹⁰ The attainment of the good and the knowledge of it result in the feeling of delight. Aquinas also notes that the good attained must be appropriate to the nature of a given animal. He talks of animals being “established in the state becoming their nature” and “attaining natural perfection” as causes of delight.¹¹ As was discussed in the first chapter, according to Aquinas, all beings pursue ends proper to their nature, and in attaining those ends, attain their own perfection. This achievement of some end, some

⁷ Delectatio appetitus sensibilis est cum aliqua transmutatione corporali; delectatio autem appetitus intellectivi nihil aliud est quam simplex motus voluntatis. ST I-II 31, 4.

⁸ ST I-II 31, 4.

⁹ Sic ergo patet quod cum delectatio sit motus in appetitu animali consequens apprehensionem sensus, delectatio est passio animae. ST I-II 31, 1.

¹⁰ ST I-II 31, 1.

¹¹ Ibid.

goal proper to a given animal according to that animal's nature, brings about delight.

And this applies to the achievement of the final as well as proximate ends, for every good proper to the animal's nature completes it, or perfects it in some way, and delight accompanies the achievement of any degree of perfection.

Given the above, we feel delight when we achieve some good proper to our nature, because we are animals. We apprehend the fact that we have obtained some good, we are completed by it in some way, and we are capable of experiencing the passion known as delight, because we are animals. Intellectual delight, i.e. joy, follows the attainment of a rational kind of good, i.e. knowledge. However, joy attaches only to the morally right way of attaining knowledge, whereas sensual delight attaches to the attainment of sensory good, regardless of moral circumstances.¹² In either case, delight follows when we have attained the good proper to us.

Delight as Rest

Because we love something, we desire it; and when we obtain it, we feel delight.¹³

When we do attain some good, we rest in it. That rest is called delight: "Pleasure [*delectatio*] is the repose of the appetite in some good."¹⁴ This pertains first of all to animals; thus, when they attain some good, for example a meal, they rest in the good and experience delight. This also means that when we humans attain a good, we feel delight.

¹² ST I-II 31,4; ST II-II 167.

¹³ ST I-II 25, 2.

¹⁴ Delectatio est quies appetitus in bono. ST I-II 34, 2.

According to Aquinas, delight perfects the activity.¹⁵ He explains it by saying that to the good which is the end achieved, there is another good added, which is delight, which is a rest of the appetite in that good, and thus, delight completes a given operation.¹⁶ Delight also perfects an activity in a second way, insofar, a person who finds a given activity delightful, is more enthusiastic about it, does it better, and with greater care.¹⁷ In the case of study and contemplation, Thomas says that delight, which is associated with those activities, improves the quality of the performance: “pleasure [*delectatio*] that arises from the use of reason, strengthens the use of reason.”¹⁸ The reason why delight perfects an activity is because the attainment of an end perfects to some extent the agent, and the agents who are capable of perceiving it are sentient agents (animals) who perceive it under the guise of delight.¹⁹ The feeling of delight is a signal to an animal that something is good, that something was done correctly. When we attain some good suitable to us according to our nature, one of the results is delight.²⁰

It is obvious that when we obtain a sensual good which is proper to us, this causes in us the feeling of delight. But Thomas also says that wonder is the cause of delight and that the contemplation of truth is delightful. All natural desires orient us towards our good. Our desire for the truth is also the desire for the good, since the truth is convertible

¹⁵ ST I-II 32, 1; I-II 33, 4; In NE X, 4, 2025 – 2030.

¹⁶ ST I-II 33,4.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Delectatio autem quae consequitur actum rationis, fortificat rationis usum. ST I-II 33, 4 ad 1.

¹⁹ ST I-II 31, 1.

²⁰ ST I-II 32, 10; I-II 2, 6 ad 3.

with the good.²¹ Attainment of truth, which is an intellectual good, brings about delight, for attainment of any kind of good proper to us brings about delight. The delight of truth is primarily an intellectual kind of delight, but I will show below that there is also a sensual component in the enjoyment of truth.

All natural desires which belong to a given creature must function within the context of that creature as a whole. Our animal desires direct us to preserve our lives, or to preserve our species, and that is good for us qua animals.²² Our desire for knowledge directs us to search for the First Cause that is God, and that is good for us qua rational beings.²³ We might expect that our contemplation can only be practiced in a way which is integrated with everything else about us, including the sensitive soul, the vegetative soul and the body. All of our natural desires taken together help us to achieve perfection and happiness. According to Thomas, we naturally love truth and delight in it because it befits our nature qua rational beings.²⁴ Thus, the pursuit of knowledge, that is, the pursuit of truth, is a desire for a kind of good, and the attainment of it brings about delight.

Delight is not the highest good, but is the result of the attainment of a good and thus a necessary accident of that attainment. Delight also attaches to the attainment of the supreme good.²⁵ Delight is required for happiness: “And in this way delight is necessary for happiness. For it is caused by the appetite being at rest in the good attained.

²¹ ST I 6, 4.

²² ST I-II 31, 7.

²³ ST I-II 3, 8; ST I-II 31, 7.

²⁴ ST II-II 180, 7.

²⁵ ST I-II 2, 6 ad 3.

Wherefore, since happiness is nothing else but the attainment of the Sovereign Good, it cannot be without concomitant delight.”²⁶ Delight thus accompanies happiness, both the ultimate happiness and the imperfect happiness on earth. If we do attain our eternal good and contemplate God in the Beatific Vision, delight will also attach to it as a necessary accident.

Having obtained the object of desire, we rest, and then we experience delight. This, according to Aquinas, pertains both to sensual and to intellectual delight. Delight is rest in the good, and is considered as a kind of reward, since it rewards the effort involved in the pursuit of the good.²⁷

Delight as Motivation

Delight is not only a reward, but also a motivating factor. First of all, the basic motive force of any action has to be in the sensitive appetite.²⁸ The appetible thing is loved, and if absent, it is desired.²⁹ And that thing is desired as something delightful. Aquinas tells us: “Concupiscence is caused by love and tends to pleasure [*delectatio*].”³⁰ Aquinas gives us a more detailed explanation of that process and links it with the notion of natural inclinations in his discussion of love (*amor*). He says:

Now it is evident that whatever tends to an end, has, in the first place, an aptitude or proportion to that end, for nothing tends to a disproportionate

²⁶ Et hoc modo delectatio requiritur ad beatitudinem. Delectatio enim caustur ex hoc quod appetitus requiescit in bono adeptio. Unde cum beatitudo nihil aliud sit quam adeptio summi boni, non potest esse beatitudo sine delectatione concomitante. ST I-II 4, 1.

²⁷ Consequently, delight is included in the very notion of reward. Unde in ipsa ratione mercedis redditae delectatio includitur. ST I-II 4, 1 ad 1.

²⁸ ST I 80, 2 ad 3; ST I 81,3; ST I-II 22, 2; In DA III 15, 825-827.

²⁹ ST I-II 30, 2.

³⁰ Concupiscentia causatur ab amore, et tendit in delectationem. ST I-II 30, 2.

end; secondly, it is moved to that end; thirdly, it rests in the end, after having attained it. And this very aptitude or proportion of the appetite to good is love, which is complacency in good; while movement towards good is desire or concupiscence; and rest in good is joy or pleasure [*delectatio*]. According in this order, love precedes desire, and desire precedes pleasure [*delectatio*]. – But in the order of intention, it is the reverse: because the pleasure [*delectatio*] intended causes desire and love.³¹

Thus, everything tends to an end and has a natural aptitude for that end. All agents - from the inanimate natural things to rational creatures – act for an end, and all agents have certain ends proper to them and a final end. For that purpose all creatures are endowed with natural inclinations. From natural inclinations, in the case of sentient creatures, follow appetites, which allow them to pursue the useful and avoid the harmful and which motivate them to pursue the useful. Thanks to these natural appetites, an animal has an aptitude for responding to a particular kind of a good, as the good which helps it to attain its proper ends. That aptitude is love (*amor*). In the presence of a particular good, love for that good causes the desire (*concupiscentia*) for it and motivates the animal to pursue that good. When that good is obtained, the animal rests in it and that rest is the delight (*delectatio*). Thus, tending to an end, natural inclinations, and then the love which follows, causes the desire. The satisfied desire causes delight. It is obvious that this process applies to sensual goods and delights. However, as will be shown below, it also applies to the pursuit of a rational good, i.e. knowledge and the joy and delight which

³¹ Manifestum est autem quod omne quod tendit ad finem aliquem, primo quidem habet aptitudinem seu proportionem ad finem; nihil enim tendit in finem non proportionatum; secundo, movetur ad finem; tertio, quiescit in fine post eius consecutionem. Ipsa autem aptitudo sive proportio appetitus ad bonum est amor, qui nihil aliud est quam complacentia boni; motus autem ad bonum est desiderium vel concupiscentia; quies autem in bono est gaudium vel delectatio. Et ideo secundum hunc ordinem amor praecedit desiderium, et desiderium praecedit delectationem. Sed secundum ordinem intentionis est e converso; nam delectatio intenta causat desiderium et amorem. ST I-II 25, 2.

follows from its attainment. That is so because the pursuit of knowledge also follows from the natural love, which is natural to a human being.

We always act for the sake of an end. But someone might object that we are motivated simply by delight, that we pursue what we anticipate to be delightful without regard for whether or not it is good. Aquinas considers this objection.³² In reply Aquinas distinguishes the ends we pursue from the motivation which may lead us there, and delight provides motivation, although it is not the end itself. He says:

It comes to the same whether we desire good, or desire delight, which is nothing else than the appetite's rest in good: thus it is owing to the same natural force that a weighty body is borne downwards and that it rests there.... But if we denote the formal or rather the motive cause, thus delight is desirable for something else, i.e., for the good, which is the object of that delight, and consequently is its principle, and gives it its form: for the reason that delight is desired is that it is rest in the thing desired.³³

Thus, according to Aquinas, we do not really desire pleasure for its own sake. Animals, like all beings, pursue their proper good not because it is delightful, but because it leads to their perfection (and in the case of humans, to happiness). Delight is not the final end of any being. Aquinas does not claim that delight really is the final end we pursue, but that in pursuing delight, we would normally pursue our proper ends, for just as the stone has a natural inclination to fall to the ground, we have natural inclinations to pursue our proper ends and are made to do so by the feeling of delight. So, all things

³² ST I-II 2, 6 Ob.1.

³³ Dicendum quod eiusdem rationis est quod appetatur bonum, et quod appetatur delectatio, quae nihil est aliud quam quietatio appetitus in bono; sicut ex eadem virtute naturae est quod grave feratur deorsum, et quod ibi quiescat. Si vero dicat causam formalem, vel potius causam motivam, sic delectatio est appetibilis propter aliud, idest propter bonum, quod est delectationis obiectum, et per consequens est principium eius, et dat ei formam; ex hoc enim delectatio habet quod appetatur, quia est quies in bono desiderato. ST I-II 2, 6 ad 1.

considered, our pursuit of delight, sensual delight, ought perfectly to coincide with our pursuit of the good, of our proper ends; and the delight, which is a passion and the object of concupiscence, gives us the motivation to pursue our good. As we know, things are not always working as they should, but this is ideally how it should be.

Animals (including humans) tend toward delight when they pursue what they desire. Aquinas distinguishes two ways in which delight relates to our actions: first delight motivates our actions, and secondly we feel delight after we have attained the good.

Aquinas says:

Now the nature of the motive power of the end or of the good, differs according as it is really present, or absent: because, according as it is present, it causes the faculty to find rest in it; whereas, according as it is absent, it causes the faculty to be moved towards it. Wherefore the object of sensible pleasure [*delectatio*] causes love, inasmuch as, so to speak, it attunes and conforms the appetite to itself; it causes concupiscence, inasmuch as, when absent, it draws the faculty to itself; and it causes pleasure [*delectatio*], inasmuch as, when present, it makes the faculty to find rest in itself.³⁴

A delightful object when absent causes love, which in turn gives rise to desire. We naturally desire and therefore pursue those things which we expect to bring us delight. Therefore delight – anticipated delight – motivates our actions. Present delightful object causes delight when the appetite rests in the good.

Delight can motivate the animal to action. The motivation is the anticipated delight of the object not yet possessed. The motive power of the animal is the sensitive

³⁴ Est autem alia ratio virtutis motivae ipsius finis vel boni, secundum quod est realiter praesens, et secundum quod est absens; nam secundum quod est praesens, facit in seipso quiescere; secundum autem quod est absens, facit ad seipsum moveri. Unde ipsum delectabile secundum sensum, in quantum appetitum sibi adaptat quodammodo et conformat, causat amorem; in quantum vero absens atrahit ad seipsum, causat concupiscentiam; in quantum vero praesens quietat in seipso, causat delectationem. ST I-II 30, 2.

appetite by which the animal reacts to the presence of useful things in its environment. Delight (*delectatio*) is the impression made on the appetite³⁵ by the desired object and it is this impression that actually motivates the animal to pursue that object. The object of desire is something delightful, and as such, it motivates the animal to move towards it. The animal's reactions are passions, i.e. feelings, such as the passion of love from which arises desire for a given object. That object is desired (and therefore pursued) by the animal as something delightful. This is the anticipated delight. This delight is what motivates animals to pursue what is naturally good for them, such as the nourishing food. The anticipated delight provides the motivation for action. After the animal attains the object of desire, it delights in it, and that delight is a "repose" of the appetite.

But delight (*delectatio*) already experienced causes the animal to desire more of the same delight.³⁶ Aquinas tells us that this may happen in two ways, and in both cases the delightful thing possessed is not possessed perfectly. In one way, because the nature of the thing possessed is such that one cannot possess it as a whole at once, but can only obtain possession of it successively. The example of that successive coming into possession is the delight of eating. If we start eating some delicious food, we desire the rest of it. One bite of delicious food causes us to desire more of it, because it gives us delight.³⁷ This is the way all animals, including humans, may desire more of a given delight.

³⁵ ST I-II 31, 1 ad 2.

³⁶ ST I-II 33, 2.

³⁷ This happens through the thing possessed one obtains possession of it successively, and while taking pleasure in what one has, one desires to possess the remainder... In this way nearly all bodily pleasures

Another way a delight may cause us to desire more of it is when the thing possessed is perfect in itself, but the possessor cannot possess it perfectly. Aquinas here gives as an example Divine knowledge, which is perfect in itself, but we cannot possess it perfectly in this life. This is a delight we do not share with other animals. Intellectual delights shall be further discussed below.

Finally, the memory of a delight can cause us to desire to experience it again.³⁸ Inasmuch as an animal is capable of remembering things, it is capable of desiring more of the past delight. There is no doubt that humans share that feature with other animals. Thus, delight – anticipated delight - is a motivating factor before an animal obtains the object of the desire, and – the delight of enjoyment - is a motivating factor after the animal comes to possess the object it desires, if that object cannot be possessed all at once. Even remembered delight may motivate the animal to seek it again.

Delight as motivation in intellectual pursuits

As in the case of bodily delights, intellectual delights also cause desire for more of themselves. The ways in which this happens mirror the ways sensual delight motivates an animal to pursue the sensible goods. In discussing how any delight causes thirst for

cause thirst for themselves, until they are fully realized, because pleasures [*delectationes*] of this kind arise from some movement: as is evident in pleasures of the table.

Eo quod res habita non est tota simul; unde successive recipitur, et dum aliquis delectatur in eo quod habet, desiderat potiri eo quod restat. . . Et hoc modo omnes fere delectationes corporales faciunt sui ipsarum sitim, quousque consummentur, eo quod tales delectationes cosequuntur aliquem motum, sicut patet in delectationibus ciborum. ST I-II 33, 2.

³⁸ Lastly, if we consider pleasure, not as existing in reality, but as existing in the memory, thus it has of itself a natural tendency to cause thirst and desire for itself: when, to wit, man returns to that disposition, in which he was when he experienced the pleasure that is past.

Si vero consideretur delectatio prout est in memoria et non in actu, sic per se nata est causare sui ipsius sitim et desiderium, quando scilicet homo redit ad illam dispositionem in qua erat sibi delectabile quod praeteriit. ST I-II 33, 2.

itself Aquinas tells us that it may be due to the thing we delight in, or due to the possessor.³⁹ It is due to the delightful thing if that thing cannot be possessed at once, but only successively. He gives the example of hearing the first part of a verse, which causes us to desire to hear the rest of it. Delight may cause desire for itself, also because the possessor is not able to possess it completely. Divine knowledge, perfect in itself, cannot be completely possessed by us in this life, but a faint perception of it causes us to desire more of it. Thomas also observes that the more intense our enjoyment of whatever we may perceive of Divine knowledge, the more ardent will be our desire for it, and this is in contrast to bodily delights, which pall on us when they reach the point of perfection. Contemplation never palls on us; although due to the weakness of the human body we may become tired of study and contemplation, contemplation itself is never tiring or distasteful. Thus, even as corporeal delights tend to cause desire for more such delights, it is even more so in the case of intellectual delights, for contemplation offers an unending delight. Thus, in all these ways, delight awakens desire for more delight.⁴⁰

Wonder is a cause of delight, and motivation to get more such delight:

“Consequently wonder is a cause of pleasure [*delectatio*], in so far as it includes a hope of getting the knowledge which one desires to have.”⁴¹ Hope and anticipation of something delightful is itself a delight.⁴² It is not only the attainment of knowledge which is delightful, but even the research itself, for it proceeds from a desire to know what we

³⁹ ST I-II 33, 2.

⁴⁰ ST I-II 33, 2.

⁴¹ Et ideo admiratio est causa delectationis, in quantum habet adiunctam spem consequendi cognitionem eius quod scire desiderat. ST I-II 32, 8.

⁴² ST I-II 32, 3.

do not yet know, and according to Thomas we find the greatest delight in learning something for the first time.⁴³ It is so, because then we are more aware of having achieved knowledge and therefore a greater perfection. Delight which attaches to the intellectual operations perfects that operation, just like delight which attaches to the operations of the sensitive soul perfects those operations.⁴⁴

Briefly summarizing, delight is repose in the good attained - the good proper to us and consistent with the pursuit of our ends. In the case of humans, there are two kinds of delight - intellectual and sensual. Both are the appetite's repose in the good, for in human beings there is the rational as well as the sensitive appetite. Delight is also a motivating factor, because we naturally pursue our ends by pursuing delight, and because delight causes desire for more of itself. Thus, delight is the rest in the good possessed, and a motivation to pursue a good not yet possessed.

Two Kinds of Delight

The delight of intellectual pursuits

Thomas distinguishes between two forms of delight - sensual and intellectual. It is obvious that when we are talking of sensible goods, such as food, obtaining those goods brings about the feeling of delight. But according to Aquinas, wonder, i.e., desire for knowledge, is also a cause of delight: "Wonder gives pleasure [*delectatio*], not because it implies ignorance, but in so far as it includes the desire of learning the cause, and in so far as the wonderer learns something new, i.e., that the cause is other than he had thought

⁴³ ST I-II 32, 8 ad 2.

⁴⁴ ST I-II 4, 1 ad 3; 33, 4; 32, 8 ad 3.

it to be.”⁴⁵ Finding out the causes of things, according to Aquinas, gives us delight, and the research and study of the causes of things eventually leads us to the discovery of certain truths and to contemplation.

The desire for knowledge is natural to human beings and follows from our basic inclination to truth. Truth is a rational good and when we obtain it, we achieve a greater degree of perfection. Of course, when we obtain a sensible good we also achieve a greater degree of perfection. Just as in the case of obtaining a sensible good, obtaining a rational good is the cause of delight. Thomas says this about our natural love of truth: “Each individual delights in the operation which befits him according to his own nature or habit. Now contemplation of the truth befits a man according to his nature as a rational animal the result being that *all men naturally desire to know*, so that consequently they delight in the knowledge of truth.”⁴⁶ Truth befits our nature and is thus a cause of delight. This is the same pattern which we see in case of obtaining any other good that befits our nature. For this reason Thomas counts delight associated with contemplation among other kinds of delights.⁴⁷ When we acquire knowledge we also acquire something good, and we experience delight.⁴⁸ Thus, delight, which is the rest in the good, also follows rest in the good of a rational kind. Delight which attaches to intellectual operation, perfects that

⁴⁵ Dicendum quod admiratio non est delectabilis in quantum habet ignorantiam, sed in quantum habet desiderium addiscendi causam, et in quantum admirans aliquid novum addiscit, scilicet talem esse quem non aestimabat. ST I-II 32, 8 ad 1.

⁴⁶ Quia unicuique delectabilis est operatio sibi conveniens secundum propriam naturam vel habitum. Contemplatio autem veritatis competit homini secundum suam naturam, prout est animal rationale. Ex quo contingit quod omnes homines ex natura scire desiderant et per consequens in cognitione veritatis delectantur. ST II-II 180,7.

⁴⁷ ST I-II questions 31, 32, 33, 34 and 35.

⁴⁸ ST I-II 32, 8.

operation.⁴⁹ And delight is also one of the rewards of our pursuit of knowledge:

“Consequently, delight is included in the very notion of reward.”⁵⁰

Joy and delight

We find two words referring to delight of some kind: ‘delight’ (*delectatio*), synonymous with English ‘delight’ (or English ‘pleasure’) and ‘joy’ (*gaudium*). Thomas reserves the word ‘joy’ (*gaudium*), for those acts of the intellect which are also approved by the will as good. He says: “And accordingly, in the intellectual appetite or will there is that delight (*delectatio*) which is called joy (*gaudium*), but not bodily delight (*delectatio corporalis*).”⁵¹ There are two kinds of appetites: sensitive and intellectual. We feel passions because of the sensitive appetite found in the sensitive soul. The intellectual appetite is the will, found in the intellectual soul. The intellectual soul has no feelings, and thus, joy is not a passion, a feeling, but rather a kind of intellectual satisfaction that we have willed the right action. When we are engaging in contemplation of God and are doing it in the right way and for the right reasons, it is understandable that we would also find joy in that contemplation. This is what we have in common with angels. He says: “Accordingly we have delight (*delectatio*), not only in the sensitive appetite, which we have in common with dumb animals, but also in the intellectual appetite, which we have in common with the angels.”⁵² Sensual delight is a passion which is accompanied by

⁴⁹ ST I-II 4,1 ad 3.

⁵⁰ Unde in ipsa ratione mercedis redditae delectatio includitur. ST I-II 4, 1 ad 1.

⁵¹ Et secundum hoc in appetitu intellectivo, sive in voluntate, est delectatio quae dicitur gaudium, non autem delectatio corporalis. ST I-II 31, 4.

⁵² Et ita in nobis est delectatio non solum in appetitu sensitivo in quo communicamus cum brutis, sed etiam in appetitu intellectivo in quo communicamus cum angelis. ST I-II 31, 4 ad 3.

bodily change, whereas joy, which belongs to the intellectual appetite, is a simple movement (i.e. willing) and is not accompanied by any bodily changes.⁵³

According to Thomas, “Delight extends to more things than does joy”.⁵⁴ Joy is the delight which is also understood by us to be morally good, and which is in accordance with the mean of virtue:

For we take delight both, in those things which we desire naturally, when we get them, and in those things which we desire as a result of reason. But we do not speak of joy except when delight follows reason; and so we do not ascribe joy to irrational animals, but only delight....And accordingly delight extends to more things than does joy.⁵⁵

According to Thomas’s classification, joy is to delight as species is to genus.⁵⁶ Thus when Aquinas talks of intellectual delight he may be simply using a broader term, which includes joy. Every joy is also a delight, but not vice-versa. Thus, one might be speaking of joys or intellectual delights and mean the same thing. But it would not follow from it that when we experience joy we also feel sensual delight, which is a passion.

We experience joy (*gaudium*) only in those situations where we rationally understand and approve of a given activity. Joy accompanies any type of activity, including contemplation, as long as we engage in it in a virtuous way. But we may engage in contemplation in a morally wrong way. (Morally wrong approaches to study

⁵³ ST I-II 31, 4.

⁵⁴ Delectation est in his plus quam gaudium. ST I-II 31, 3.

⁵⁵ Delectamur enim et in his quae naturaliter concupiscimus, ea adipiscentes, et in his quae naturaliter concupiscimus secundum rationem. Sed nomen gaudii non habet locum nisi in delectatione quae consequitur rationem; unde gaudium non attribuimus brutis animalibus, sed solum nomen delectationis. ... Et secundum hoc patet quod delectatio est in his plus quam gaudium. ST I-II 31, 3.

⁵⁶ Accordingly sorrow is a species of pain, as joy is a species of pleasure.

Sic igitur tristitia est quaedam species doloris, sicut gaudium delectationis. ST I-II 35, 2.

and contemplation are discussed under the heading of the vice of “curiosity”).⁵⁷ Thus, joy would be experienced when we contemplate in a virtuous kind of way. But we might engage in contemplation in a vicious way, and then joy would not be appropriate, but delight (*delectatio*) might still be felt.⁵⁸ The fact that delight, generally speaking, may be associated with a desirable intellectual activity devoid of intellectual delight, i.e., joy, raises the possibility that there is also sensual delight present in our intellectual pursuits.

The object of contemplation is delightful

In general, delight results from the fulfillment of a desire, and thus, from the attainment of some good.⁵⁹ It is natural for us to desire knowledge and truth, and when we obtain that good, i.e. truth, our desire is fulfilled and we feel delight. Wonder, which is desire for knowledge, causes delight when it is to some extent satisfied - when we come to understand something.⁶⁰ The immaterial good, which is possession of truth, causes in us the experience of joy, but in addition to that joy it also causes a sensual delight.

Thomas says that contemplation is “the simple act of gazing on the truth”⁶¹ He also says that we delight in the object we contemplate, because we love that object. He says: “Secondly, contemplation may be delightful on the part of its object, in so far as one contemplates that which one loves; even as bodily vision gives pleasure, not only because

⁵⁷ ST II-II 167 (the vice of *curiositas*).

⁵⁸ ST II-II 167, 2 ad 1.

⁵⁹ ST I-II 30, 2; 25, 2.

⁶⁰ ST I-II 32, 8.

⁶¹ ST II-II 180, 3.

to see is pleasurable in itself, but because one sees a person whom one loves.”⁶² But what do we exactly gaze upon or behold with love? We behold whatever it is that we like to study and contemplate, whatever we find attractive.

Before we contemplate, we must engage in research. Aquinas tells us that research, the seeking of knowledge, begins with wonder, and that wonder is the cause of delight.⁶³ It is the cause of delight, because it gives us hope of getting knowledge, which is connatural to us. Aquinas also tells us that the objects of study are delightful and give rise to delightful associations. He says: “For this reason whatever is wonderful is pleasing, for instance things that are scarce. Also, representations of things, even of those which are not pleasant in themselves, give rise to pleasure; for the soul rejoices in comparing one thing with another.”⁶⁴ Thus, objects of study and of contemplation are delightful.

We study and contemplate what we find delightful because that follows from the natural process of the human pursuit of knowledge. The fact that we try to learn about the causes of things, and that we contemplate, follows from our natural inclination for truth. We have that natural inclination to seek truth, that appetite for knowledge, and from this follows desire to know the causes of things we encounter, which desire is called ‘wonder’. We desire what we love. Love is an attraction to something particular, while

⁶² Thomas says: “Alio modo contemplatio redditur delectabilis ex parte obiecti, in quantum scilicet aliquis rem amatam contemplatur: sicut etiam accidit in visione corporali quod delectabilis redditur non solum ex eo quod ipsum videre est delectabile, sed ex eo etiam quod videt quis personam amatam.” ST II-II 180, 7.

⁶³ ST I-II 32, 8.

⁶⁴ Et propter hoc omnia admirabilia sunt delectabilia, sicut quae sunt rara, et omnes repraesentationes rerum, etiam quae in se non sunt delectabiles; gaudet enim anima in collatione unius ad alterum. ST I-II 32, 8.

natural inclination orients us towards our good in general. What we love and desire must be suitable for us according to our nature, that is, that object must be our good and must perfect us in some way. In the case of study, research and contemplation of what we desire are subjects which are suitable for us. Those are the subjects for which we have a natural aptitude. For example, some people have a natural aptitude for engineering, or poetry, or metaphysics, etc. Study of those subjects completes and perfects those who have appropriate talents. As a result, study of suitable objects also gives people delight. Should we attempt to study something not suitable for us, not in accordance with our nature, we would find it difficult, frustrating and unpleasant. According to Thomas, we might also be guilty of a sin of curiosity,⁶⁵ and perhaps of presumption.⁶⁶ Under normal circumstances, we would wonder about things for which we have natural aptitude and thus study, and eventually contemplate something which perfects us and therefore gives us delight. And thus, the object of contemplation must be (under normal circumstances) something delightful for the person who contemplates. Delightful objects are the objects we desire, pursue and try to possess, and thereby, they are also the objects we study.

The most delightful of all objects is, of course, God. God is the most lovable and delightful object of contemplation.⁶⁷ In earthly contemplation we cannot actually see God, but earthly contemplation must involve the use of some phantasms. In earthly contemplation we focus on something regardless of whether we are contemplating God, or something created. Let us consider ordinary contemplation of some earthly object.

⁶⁵ ST II-II 167.

⁶⁶ ST II-II 130.

⁶⁷ ST 27, 4; ST I-II 4, 1 and 2; ST II-II 180, 7.

Aquinas doesn't mention toads; however, it follows that if one loves a toad and contemplates it as a beloved object, then the sight of the toad gives one delight. It would be so especially if one possesses knowledge about toads so as to be able to understand their nature and appreciate them. The boy I met in the park certainly was able to see the goodness and beauty of the toad. Thus, he could delight in it as he contemplated it. If one proceeded to contemplate more exalted subjects, the objects of contemplation might be even more delightful.

Two kinds of delights

In considering the causes of delight we must look at the way we experience delight, as well as the object which is the good obtained. We experience delight differently with regard to the sensible and the intellectual goods. In his discussion of passions, Thomas asks whether sensible delights are greater than spiritual or intellectual ones;⁶⁸ thus indicating that there are different kinds of delight, associated with two kinds of goods.

Sensible goods

Delights caused by sensible objects themselves are immediate and may be intense. Thomas says that intellectual delights are in a way greater than sensible ones, yet the sensible delights are more vehement and more intense.⁶⁹ We literally feel sensible delights more, because as passions they produce alteration in the body, and in that sense they are greater delights. Also, sensible things are more known to us than the intelligible

⁶⁸ ST I-II 31, 5.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

things,⁷⁰ because our knowledge of the intelligible things is derived from our knowledge of the sensible ones.

Phantasms

Our pursuit of knowledge begins with sensory experience of a delightful kind. Even though intellectual operations as such cannot be described as delightful - for delight is a passion and the intellect feels no passions - the objects we are studying, and the memory of them are supposed to be delightful.⁷¹ In the intellect, these sensible objects are represented by phantasms. As Aquinas tells us many times, we cannot think or contemplate without phantasms, although our knowledge goes beyond phantasms: “In the present state of life human contemplation is impossible without phantasms, because it is connatural to man to see the intelligible species in the phantasms.”⁷² That pertains even to contemplation of God.⁷³ On earth we cannot contemplate God directly, only the divine effects, i.e. the creation.⁷⁴ Thus, when we engage in contemplation on earth we have to concentrate on some image. Even while we contemplate God, we have to use some phantasm. In ordinary contemplation which follows study, we would certainly use phantasms. Phantasms belong to the sensitive part of the soul, thus we have here the involvement of that part of the soul. Phantasms are not passions; however, phantasms

⁷⁰ ST I-II 27, 2; 31,5.

⁷¹ Memory and hope are also causes of delight. See: ST I-II 32, 3.

⁷² Dicendum quod contemplatio humana, secundum statum praesentis vitae, non potest esse absque phantasmatis: quia connaturale est homini ut species intelligibiles in phantasmatis videat. ST II-II 180, 5 ad 2.

⁷³ ST II-II 180, 5 ad 2.

⁷⁴ ST I 88, 3; I-II 3, 6 and 8.

may evoke passions.⁷⁵ Presumably we would choose something delightful for a subject of our contemplation, and then the images and memories associated with that particular thing would be delightful for us.⁷⁶ Contemplation on earth necessarily involves phantasms, imagination and memory of some objects we find lovable and delightful. Thus, phantasms which necessarily must be used in contemplation might be at least one of the causes of delight we find in contemplation.

In that way, sensual delights would enter into contemplation. The phantasm used in contemplation, however, is a highly processed image in the case of those objects of contemplation which in reality are immaterial or spiritual. The delight caused by such images would not be very intense. What we know by understanding we know by the intelligible species, while what we know by sense we know by phantasms. But while phantasms may be the causes of delight, intelligible species cannot be.

Intellectual goods

Nevertheless, Thomas says that intellectual delights are greater than the sensible ones. Thomas says: “For a man takes much more delight (*delectatur de hoc*) in knowing something by understanding it, than in knowing something by perceiving it with his sense.”⁷⁷ He states that intellectual or spiritual delights are greater than the sensible kind.⁷⁸ This is so, because intellectual delight results from: “the good which is brought

⁷⁵ Memory and hope are the causes of delight. See: ST I-II 32, 3.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Multo enim magis delectatur homo de hoc quod cognoscit aliquid intelligendo, quam de hoc quod cognoscit aliquid sentiendo. ST I-II 31, 5.

⁷⁸ ST I-II 31, 5.

into conjunction, that to which it is conjoined, and the conjunction itself.”⁷⁹ The good in this case is some truth, perhaps truth about God, and that is in itself a greater good – far greater – than, for example, a piece of cake. The thing to which it is conjoined is the human intellect, which is more noble than the sensitive soul and the body. The conjunction itself is greater for three reasons, according to Aquinas. First, it is more intimate because what we know through our senses are only accidents, whereas what we can know through the intellect is the very essence of things. Second, it is more perfect, because the sensible delights are not all perceived at once, but pass away even as we experience them, while intellectual delights are perceived all at once. Finally, the conjunction is more firm because sensible things are corruptible, whereas intellectual goods are immaterial and thus incorruptible and eternal.⁸⁰ So, intellectual delights are greater than the sensible one.

Delight of Contemplation

The nature of delight of contemplation

Aquinas tells us that there is delight in contemplation.⁸¹ He tells us that there is delight in our pursuit of knowledge,⁸² in earthly contemplation,⁸³ and in contemplation of God in heaven.⁸⁴ The question is what kind of delight it is. First of all, delight of

⁷⁹ Bonum coniunctum, et id cui coniungitur, et ipsa coniunctio. ST I-II 31, 5.

⁸⁰ Est etiam firmior, quia delectabilia corporalia sunt corruptibilia, et cito deficiunt; bona vero spiritualia sunt incorruptibilia. ST I-II 31, 5.

⁸¹ ST II-II 180, 7.

⁸² ST I-II 32, 8.

⁸³ ST II-II 180, 7.

⁸⁴ ST I-II 4, 1.

contemplation is a delight of an intellectual kind. Contemplation is the intellectual act of regarding the truth already known; it is the “gazing on the truth”.⁸⁵ The intellectual delight is possible only for rational beings. However, there is evidence that Aquinas also includes sensual delight in the delight of contemplation, albeit in a secondary way.

Thomas tells us that both the pursuit of knowledge and the contemplation of the already known give us delight.⁸⁶ There is delight in contemplation because we delight in the operation which is suitable to us, and since we are rational beings we delight in the knowledge of truth.⁸⁷ Contemplation of truth befits our nature as rational animals, and the stress here is on our rationality and spiritual delight. However, Aquinas mentions the appetitive power, saying that the contemplative life begins in the appetite and what motivates it is love (*amor*).⁸⁸ What motivates us to action, any action, is desire for something we love, and the possession of the object of our love is accompanied by delight. Thomas says: “And since everyone delights (*delectatur*) when he obtains what he loves (*amat*), it follows that the contemplative life terminates in delight (*delectatio*), which is seated in the affective power, the result being that love (*amor*) also becomes more intense.”⁸⁹ Thus love and desire motivate a person to the practice of contemplation,

⁸⁵ ST II-II 180, 3.

⁸⁶ ST I-II 32, 8 and ST II-II 180, 7.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ ST II-II 180, 7 ad 1.

⁸⁹ Et quia unusquisque delectatur cum adeptus fuerit id quo amat, ideo vita contemplativa terminatur ad delectationem quae est in affectu: ex qua etiam amor intenditur. ST II-II 180, 1.

and the contemplation is accompanied by delight. The contemplative life and the contemplation, pertain not only to the intellect, but also to affections.⁹⁰

As was discussed above, such passions like ‘love’ and ‘concupiscence’ accompany their intellectual equivalents, i.e. *dilectio* and *desiderium*. *Dilectio* presupposes love as *amor*, while *desiderium* includes desire as *concupiscentia*. Love of any kind presupposes love as a passion (*amor*), and desire of any kind includes the passional desire (*concupiscentia*). Likewise, delight of any kind includes sensual delight (*delectatio*), although we may be also experiencing joy (*gaudium*), which is a purely intellectual kind of delight. *Gaudium* is a species of *delectatio*.⁹¹ The reason why the experience of delight (and also of love and desire) always includes the sensual component is because human beings are composite beings and their intellectual activities cannot be dissociated from their bodies and the operations of the sensitive soul.

In the delight of contemplation there are intellectual and sensual components. There are several reasons for the presence of sensual delight. First, we recall that the objects of contemplation are regarded as delightful,⁹² that in contemplation we must make use of phantasms,⁹³ and that phantasms also may evoke in us passions.⁹⁴ All of the above contribute to the delight of contemplation, and specifically to the sensual delight. But the sensual delight found in contemplation is also caused by the overflow, in an

⁹⁰ ST II-II 180, 1.

⁹¹ ST I-II 35, 2.

⁹² ST I-II 32, 8.

⁹³ ST II-II 180, 5 ad 2.

⁹⁴ ST I-II 32, 3.

analogous way to the one in which desire for knowledge causes the sensual desire in the sensitive soul.⁹⁵ After we obtain the object of desire and start rejoicing in the truth, this joy overflows into the sensitive appetite.

Overflow

There are two kinds of delights - intellectual and sensible ones, of which the intellectual are more delightful, even though the sensual ones are more vehement. Thomas says that sensible delights are felt more strongly because they are passions which cause bodily transmutation whereas “this does not occur in spiritual pleasures, save by reason of a certain reaction of the superior appetite on the lower.”⁹⁶ This is the “overflow” or influence of the rational part of the soul on the sensitive part.

This mention of influence of the rational on the sensitive soul was found in the discussion of cogitative power, in the discussion of wonder, and it is here again when Aquinas talks of intellectual delights. Thomas refers to this kind of overflow in the experience of delight or pain on several occasions; for example, he tells us that the morally right and compassionate actions of others done for us are a cause of delight to us,⁹⁷ and that when we are doing something good for others, it is also a cause of delight to us.⁹⁸ In the case of others being good to us, we may benefit by receiving sensible goods, but it is chiefly because their actions make us better appreciate our own worth and

⁹⁵ ST I-II 30, 1 ad 2.

⁹⁶ Quod non contingit in delectationibus spiritualibus, nisi per quandam redundantiam a superiori appetitu in inferiorem. ST I-II 31, 5.

⁹⁷ ST I-II 32, 5.

⁹⁸ ST I-II 32, 6.

recognize the love of friendship which motivates such actions.⁹⁹ That knowledge is not a sensible good, yet it is supposed to be the cause of our delight (*delectatio*). Our doing good to others certainly is not equivalent to our receiving some sensible good, and yet it is supposed to be a cause of delight (*delectatio*) to us.¹⁰⁰ In both cases, love is the cause of delight. But love is also the cause of delight in contemplation.¹⁰¹ In all those cases it seems to be an immaterial kind of good which is the direct cause of our delight. Immaterial kind of evil is also listed as a cause of passion. Anger should accompany our understanding that some injustice was perpetrated.¹⁰² Yet injustice is an intellectual concept, just like our understanding that someone is good to us or that we are good to them requires intellectual understanding. According to Aquinas, our understanding of moral phenomena ought to be accompanied by passions.¹⁰³ Thus, Aquinas seems to be talking of delight and pain caused by other feelings or knowledge of things, and not necessarily by direct contact with sensible objects. As he tells us, the movement of the

⁹⁹ ST I-II 32, 5.

¹⁰⁰ ST I-II 32, 6.

¹⁰¹ ST II-II 180, 7.

¹⁰² ST I-II 46, 7 Also: This movement [of the sensitive appetite] is a necessary sequel, in man, to the movement of his will, since the lower appetite necessarily follows the movement of the higher appetite, unless there be an obstacle. Hence the movement of anger in the sensitive appetite cannot be lacking altogether, unless the movement of the will be altogether lacking or weak. Consequently lack of the passion of anger is also a vice, even as the lack of movement in the will directed to punishment by the judgment of reason.

Et hic quidem motus ex necessitate consequitur in homine ad simplicem motum voluntatis: quia naturaliter appetitus inferior sequitur motum appetitus superioris, nisi aliquid repugnet. Et ideo non potest totaliter deficere motus irae in appetitu sensitivo, nisi per subtractionem vel debilitatem voluntarii motus. Et ideo ex consequenti etiam defectus passionis irae vitiosus est: sicut et defectus voluntarii motus ad puniendum secundum iudicium rationis. ST II-II 158, 8.

¹⁰³ ST I-II 59, especially article 2.

will is necessarily followed by a movement of the lower appetite, that is, by passion.¹⁰⁴ Thus, he points to the influence of the rational part of the soul on the sensitive part.

In fact, he also points to the connection between the body, the rational soul and the sensitive soul. Aquinas tells us that anger and fear cause – or may cause – bodily illness.¹⁰⁵ But sorrow (*tristitia*), which is to pain as joy is to delight,¹⁰⁶ and which therefore pertains only to the intellectual appetite, may cause the most grievous illness and even death.¹⁰⁷ Today we would call these effects “psychosomatic”. Thus, Aquinas tells us that our states of mind affect our body. It might be interpreted as influence limited to passions, which are in the sensitive soul and which cannot be separated from the body. However, that would not explain Aquinas’s view of the effects of sorrow, or the nature of cogitative power, or his persistent use of the word *delectatio*.

As it is, it would be more consistent to interpret Aquinas’s view of the relation between the intellect and other parts of the soul and body as a relation of parts which form an integral whole and which necessarily interact with and affect one another. The interpretation which stresses the interaction between the intellect and the sensitive soul and the integrity of the whole person is also consistent with Aristotle’s hylomorphic theory, which Thomas accepted. According to Thomas, body and soul are completely integrated; the soul affects the body and the body affects the soul, and all the parts of the

¹⁰⁴ ST II-II 158, 8.

¹⁰⁵ Anger: ST I-II 48, 4. Fear: ST I-II 44 1, 3 and 4.

¹⁰⁶ ST I-II 35, 2.

¹⁰⁷ ST I-II 37, 2, 3 and 4.

soul affect one another. For example, the vegetative soul insures the proper functioning of the body, i.e. health, without which the operations of the sensitive soul and even those of the intellect are not possible.¹⁰⁸ The rational soul has the power to override the desires or pain, which direct us to act in a certain way.¹⁰⁹ The passions of the sensitive soul are manifested in the bodily changes, and at the same time have the power to affect the intellect and the will.¹¹⁰ Thus, what happens in the sensitive soul, affects the intellect and vice-versa. And Thomas says so. For example, the passions may affect the intellect and will, for good or bad.¹¹¹ Our feelings may distract us,¹¹² or help us to concentrate.¹¹³ As was at length discussed above, our feelings also guide us in the choice of objects we study and motivate us to study them. Likewise, our thoughts may affect our feelings, and even our body. As was mentioned above, witnessing morally good acts is a cause of pleasure,¹¹⁴ and witnessing injustice is a cause of anger,¹¹⁵ and then perhaps sorrow;¹¹⁶ wonder is a cause of pleasure,¹¹⁷ while contemplation is delightful¹¹⁸ and receives its

¹⁰⁸ ST I 78,1; ST I-II 4, 6.

¹⁰⁹ ST I 78,1; ST I 81, 3.

¹¹⁰ ST I 78, 1; ST I-II 22,1; ST I-II 24, 1 and 2.

¹¹¹ ST I-II 24; ST I-II 77, 2; ST I-II 33, 3.

¹¹² ST I-II 77, 1, 2.

¹¹³ ST I-II 77, 1.

¹¹⁴ ST I-II 32, 5 and 6.

¹¹⁵ ST I-II 46, 7.

¹¹⁶ ST I-II 36, 1.

¹¹⁷ ST I-II 32, 8.

¹¹⁸ ST II-II 180, 7.

motivation from the appetitive power.¹¹⁹ Thus, it is possible for the rational soul to influence the sensitive soul in such a way that the delight or pain understood by the intellect would overflow and be felt as the delight or pain of the passional kind.

Delight and Perfection

Thomas mentions overflow when he says that the “lower part” is perfected by the overflow from the “higher part” in heaven.¹²⁰ When we attain happiness in heaven, we are “perfected and bettered” by attaining God as the object of our love.¹²¹ We are perfected and bettered even by attaining lesser goods which are suitable to us.¹²² And this in turn is a cause of delight.

Like all beings, we tend to our ends and to our final end, which for us is happiness.¹²³ We pursue that last end, and all the proximate ends, because we desire our perfection, our completion: “Since everything desires its own perfection, a man desires for his ultimate end that which he desires as his perfect and crowning good.”¹²⁴ We can achieve our ultimate perfection only when we achieve our final end, but achieving our proper good even regarding proximate ends helps us to be more perfect.¹²⁵ We are perfected by the attainment of an intellectual good to a greater extent than by the

¹¹⁹ ST II-II 180, 1.

¹²⁰ ST I-II 3, 3 ad 3.

¹²¹ Amor ergo boni convenientis est perfectivus et meliorativus amantis. Unde maxime homo perficitur et melioratur per amorem Dei. ST I-II 28, 5.

¹²² ST I-II 28, 5.

¹²³ ST I-II 1.

¹²⁴ Quia cum unumquodque appetat suam perfectionem, illud appetit aliquis ut ultimum finem, quod appetit ut bonum perfectum et completivum sui ipsius. ST I-II 1, 5.

¹²⁵ ST I-II 3, 2; I-II 28, 5.

attainment of a material good. Intellectual good perfects us, completes us, to a greater extent than sensible good, because it perfects us as rational creatures, and it is our rationality that differentiates us from other animals and raises us above their level.

When we become more perfect, we feel delight.¹²⁶ Delight results when we obtain the object we desire and rest in that object. When we contemplate, we have obtained the good which is truth and we feel delight: “For pleasure [*delectatio*] is the enjoyment of the good, which enjoyment is, in a way, the end, just as the good itself is.”¹²⁷ And as was discussed, the delight of contemplation is not mere intellectual delight, that is, joy, but joy accompanied by passion, by sensual delight. Thus, while the intellectual good perfects us more than a sensible one and the delight of intellectual kind is greater than the delight of a sensible kind,¹²⁸ we cannot have one without the other.

Delight of Contemplation - Conclusion

Thus we have explained how delight, specifically sensual delight, might be in fact present even in the act of contemplation of truth. Truth is a rational, not sensible, kind of good; and contemplating truth is an intellectual activity. That, in itself, might be the cause of joy (*gaudium*), which is not a passion, as it pertains to the will alone. It might not be the cause of joy if we engage in contemplation in a morally questionable way. However, contemplation is preceded by study and study begins with simple observation, with noticing things in the world around us. Even though our end is the contemplation of God,

¹²⁶ ST I-II 31, 1.

¹²⁷ *Delectatio enim est fruitio, quae quodammodo est finis sicut et ipsum bonum.* ST I-II 25, 2.

¹²⁸ ST I-II 31, 5.

we learn about God last, after we learn about created things.¹²⁹ As was discussed in previous chapters, the acquisition of knowledge by human beings relies on sensory perception and is guided by animal appetites, by passions. The most relevant passions are love, desire and delight. If the acquisition of knowledge depends on the formation of phantasms of loved and pleasant objects, and on pursuing something one loves and delights in, then it is easy to see that those passions would contribute to the experience of delight when we eventually get to the contemplation of truth; those we might call “antecedent” delights involved in the process leading to contemplation. These delights belong to the sensitive part of the soul. When we get to the point of contemplating the truth, this can be only done by the intellective part of the soul. The intellect cannot feel the delight of a sensual kind or any other passion, for that matter. However, in Thomas’s writings we find many references to what might be called “psychosomatic effects”, which he calls “overflow”, and which for him signify the influence that intellect has over the sensitive part of the soul and the body. Because of this influence, the human estimative power becomes cogitative power, human passions acquire a different quality than mere animal passions, and desire for knowledge activates the feeling of desire in the sensitive part of the soul. The intellectual enjoyment (*gaudium*) then likewise ought to overflow into the sensitive part of the soul, kindling the feeling of delight - sensual delight (*delectatio*). That is also consistent with Aquinas’s terminology according to which joy is a species of delight. Thus where there is intellectual joy there ought also to be sensual delight (although not necessarily vice-versa). Thus, the second reason why there is delight in contemplation would be that overflow from the rational part of the soul.

¹²⁹ ST II-II 27, 4; ST II-II 180, 4.

Now we can also appreciate why the intellectual delights are greater than sensible delights. Sensible delights derive from the satisfaction of sensual desire, which is delight in the loved object. But some of that is also present in intellectual delight because of the process that leads up to our understanding of some truth. Then there is the joy of contemplation of truth, which overflows into the sensitive part of the soul, and which causes the feeling of sensual delight by its influence. That means that when we experience intellectual delights, we experience some sensual delight because of the process that led up to it, some sensual delight because of the overflow, and we also experience joy which is the rational delight. It is no wonder that intellectual delights are greater than sensible ones since there are altogether three factors contributing to the experience of their delight in them. Thus, we find an explanation for delight in contemplation and we can see that there must be a great deal of delight in it.

In the investigation of the way in which the sensitive soul participates in contemplation, several times we come across the mention of overflow. Aquinas mentions overflow (*redundantia*) when he talks of phantasms being experienced by the saints in heaven, when he speaks of cogitative power's function on earth, when he speaks of human experience of passions in general, and particularly when he speaks about desire and delight. And he also mentions overflow when he talks of heavenly perfection.

One more thing needs to be noted about the phenomenon of overflow from the intellectual soul to the sensitive soul: the intellectual soul can affect the sensitive soul because the intellect is incorporeal, spiritual in nature. According to Aquinas, spiritual entities have the power to affect the material entities, but not vice-versa.¹³⁰ The sensitive

¹³⁰ ST I 84, 6; ST I 115, 4; SCG III 78.

soul, although not material in itself, depends for its operations on the body, and the body cannot by itself affect the intellective soul.¹³¹ Instead, the intellect retrieves from the sensitive soul whatever it judges to be important. Thus, the intellect abstracts the intelligible species and the intellect may decide that we ought to act on certain feelings or it may decide that we ought to act against them.

The intellective soul comprises the intellect and the will, and thus, represents our rationality and freedom. While we cannot function without the information provided by the sensitive soul, being rational among animals we do not have to follow the guidance of the sensitive soul - we do not have to act on that information. Discussion of whether it is good or bad for us to follow the guidance of our passions lies outside the scope of this work. Here we must only note the mode of interaction between these two parts of the soul, and particularly, the way in which the operations of the sensitive soul are necessary for the rational activity of contemplation.

Thus, the sensitive soul contributes to contemplation in two ways. First it provides the intellect with the information about the things in this world and guidance as to their usefulness. The intellective soul cannot think without phantasms derived from sensory objects - it cannot judge the usefulness or harmfulness of things without the guidance of the cogitative power and the desirability of things without the guidance of the passions. The intellective soul depends on the operations of the sensitive part of the soul for its functioning on earth. Without that support of the sensitive soul, we could never acquire any knowledge, and we could not get to the point where we can engage in contemplation. Secondly, the sensitive soul participates in contemplation in a passive way, because of

¹³¹ ST I 84, 6. See also: Stump p. 264.

the overflow from the intellective part. The desire for knowledge overflows to cause, or perhaps to intensify, the experience of desire, while the intellectual joy overflows to cause, or intensify, the feeling of delight. The sensitive soul is never “shut off”, even if we are concentrating our powers on an intellectual activity. Even in heaven, the sensitive part of the soul will participate in the contemplation of God, for Aquinas tells us that by the overflow from the higher parts, we will experience phantasms and delight even in the “lower parts” of our being. That is because we are complex beings and we should experience delight as complex beings and not as parts.

Delight in Heaven

It behooves us to also consider the delight of saints in heaven, since contemplation of God in heaven is the last end of every human being, that towards which all our actions are supposed to lead. A complete discussion of what Aquinas says about heaven is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but a brief look at a few of his thoughts about delight and perfection in heaven may help us to better appreciate his holistic view of human nature and his recognition of the fact that we are animals, even in heaven.

Resurrection of the bodies completes our heavenly happiness

If all goes well, we will go to heaven, where we shall enjoy the Beatific Vision. If we look at the heavenly happiness, which essentially consists in the contemplation of God in the presence of God, from the perspective of the object of contemplation, then it is obvious that the body, the senses and the passions are not needed for the enjoyment of such contemplation. We can enjoy the Beatific Vision without the assistance of our senses. Before resurrection, separated souls are happy because they already possess Beatific Vision. However, if we look at the heavenly happiness from the perspective of

the people who are supposed to enjoy that happiness, then we can see that it is necessary for those people to be complete, rather than mere parts of themselves. People cannot be completely happy as themselves until they get back their animal bodies, because intellectual enjoyment is not enough for a creature that is an animal. After the resurrection, the saints in heaven will be able to experience happiness not merely as souls, but as complete human beings, with all the powers belonging to a human being.

According to Aquinas, the body will be resurrected by divine power,¹³² and thus, every human being will be made complete again, a creature made of body and soul. With the body, our senses, appetites, and passions will be restored to us. We are also told that the saints in heaven shall experience delight,¹³³ while those in hell shall suffer.¹³⁴ In a body which is perfect the senses would be also perfectly keen.

It does not seem that it would matter whether or not we have keen sensory perception in heaven. To contemplate God in heaven, we do not need the senses, for we can contemplate God as a spirit, thanks to God's grace, and without the use of phantasms. Aquinas considers whether the body is necessary for our happiness in heaven, and states that, strictly speaking, it is not necessary, because intellection of God in heaven does not require sense perception.

For the intellect needs not the body, for its operation, save on account of the phantasms, wherein it looks on the intelligible truth, as stated in the 1st part (q. 84, a.3). Now it is evident that the Divine Essence cannot be seen by means of phantasms, as stated in the 1st part (q. 12, a.3) Wherefore, since man's perfect Happiness consists in the vision of the Divine

¹³² SCG IV 81,14; SCG IV 79-81.

¹³³ SCG IV 86, 4.

¹³⁴ SCG IV 90.

Essence, it does not depend on the body. Consequently, without the body the soul can be happy.¹³⁵

Without the body, and without phantasms, sensations and passions, separated souls can already enjoy the Beatific Vision. However, Aquinas tells us, that while the body is not needed for the heavenly happiness essentially, it is needed in a secondary way, because the perfection of human nature requires the body. He says: “For since operation depends on a thing’s nature, the more perfect is the soul in its nature, the more perfectly it has its proper operation, wherein its happiness consists.”¹³⁶ Since a human is a composite being made of body and soul –a tripartite soul – human perfection demands that all the parts of human being be perfect. The completeness and perfection of a human being will be manifested in perfect operations of the soul. And since happiness also indicates final perfection,¹³⁷ our ultimate happiness ought to be the happiness of a perfect human being. Therefore, Aquinas says that for the full enjoyment of the Beatific Vision we do need the body. He says:

The desire of the separated soul is entirely at rest, as regards the thing desired; since, to wit, it has that which suffices its appetite. But it is not wholly at rest, as regards the desirer, since it does not possess that good in every way that it would wish to possess it. Consequently, after the body has been resumed, Happiness increases not in intensity, but in extent.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Nam intellectus ad suam operationem non indigent corpore nisi propter phantasmata, in quibus veritatem intelligibilem contuetur, ut in Primo dictum est. Manifestum est autem quod divina essentia per phantasmata videri non potest, ut in Primo ostensum est. Unde, cum in visione divinae essentiae perfecta hominis beatitudo consistat, non dependet beatitudo perfecta hominis a corpore. Unde sine corpore potest anima esse beata. ST I-II 4, 5.

¹³⁶ Cum enim operatio dependeat ex natura rei, quanto anima perfectior erit in sua natura, tanto perfectius habebit suam propriam operationem, in qua felicitas consistit. ST I-II 4, 5.

¹³⁷ ST I-II 3, 2.

¹³⁸ Dicendum quod desiderium animae separatae totaliter quiescit ex parte appetibilis; quia habet id quod suo appetitui sufficit. Sed non totaliter requiescat ex parte appetentis, quia illud bonum non possidet

Here Aquinas distinguishes between the object of contemplation, “the thing desired”, and the subject, “the desirer”. We do not need a body in order to contemplate God, but we need the body in order to contemplate God as complete humans. It is our nature, not God’s nature that requires us to be reunited with our bodies in order to enjoy complete happiness.

The body is necessary for the complete happiness of a human being, because a human being is a composite creature, made of body and soul, and such a creature cannot be completely happy unless it is itself complete. A human being is not the “ghost in the machine,” it is the composite of body and soul. If you separate the soul from the body, the body will die, while the soul will live as a handicapped, incomplete being, a partial being, i.e. a separated soul. The soul must be united to its body if there is to be a whole human being. That is why Thomas says: “The man is not a soul, but something composed of soul and body.”¹³⁹ I can speak of myself as “I” only when I mean that I am a creature made of body and soul together.

Separated souls in heaven are happy because they are already enjoying the Beatific Vision. But, as was discussed in chapter 2, separated souls are somewhat dysfunctional. They cannot think very clearly¹⁴⁰ because our thinking depends on phantasms. Our thinking is also helped by our passions, but without the body and the

secundum omnem modum quo possidere vellet. Et ideo, corpore resumpto, beatitudo crescit non intensive, sed extensive. ST I-II 4, 5 ad 5.

¹³⁹ Homo non est anima tantum, sed aliquid compositum ex anima et corpore. ST I 75, 4 There is an even a stronger statement in I ad Corinthios XV, 1, 11 ed Cai, 924: “Anima mea non est ego.”

¹⁴⁰ ST I 89, 3; QDA 18.

sensitive part of the soul (which cannot function after the death of the body¹⁴¹) there are no passions.¹⁴² The intellective part of the soul cannot feel passions. Without the sensitive part of the soul we cannot even experience sensations, because sensations are characteristic of animal life.¹⁴³ While we exist as separated souls, we are without the use of senses and without any feelings, whether sensations or emotions. Here we must note that strictly speaking, separated souls are not people, so that it is not even correct to say that we exist as separated souls; for separated souls are only parts of us.

Separated souls can experience intellectual joy (*gaudium*), but they cannot feel sensual delight (*delectatio*). As was discussed above, the delight of contemplation includes both joy and sensual delight, and is experienced by humans as beings composed of bodies and souls. Separated souls cannot experience complete delight of contemplation and thus their enjoyment of the Beatific Vision is not as perfect in extent as it can be for a complete human being. That is why the body - the animal body - is needed for the perfect happiness of a perfect human being.

Sensory delights in heaven

Aquinas tells us that we shall experience sensations in heaven. It is not necessary to have sensations in order to experience the Beatific Vision, but it is necessary to experience sensations if one is an animal without a defect.

Aquinas tells us that the saints in heaven, after the resurrection, will experience sensory delight. In the delight of contemplation, as was discussed above, there is a

¹⁴¹ ST I 77, 8; QDA 19.

¹⁴² QDA 19 ad 11.

¹⁴³ ST I 78, 1; In DA II, 5.

component of a sensual delight. A resurrected body implies the resurrection of the sensitive soul, and that in turn implies the capacity for sensations and passions. Since the bodies will be perfect (physically perfect), our sensory perception will be more acute in heaven than on earth. Thus, we will have an even greater capacity to feel delight than we do in earthly life. (Likewise, the bodies of the damned will have greater capacity to feel suffering, because of their keener senses.) Aquinas tells us that we shall be free from suffering in heaven, but we will be able to experience sensual pleasure. He says: “Nonetheless, this incapacity of suffering will not cut them off from the modification essential to sense knowledge, for they will use their senses for pleasure in the measure in which this is not incompatible with their state of incorruption.”¹⁴⁴ Saints in heaven ought to experience sensations, since the fullness of life requires that they have sensations. In the Supplement of *Summa Theologica* we find more textual support for it. In Question 82, article 3 we read: “All are agreed that there is some sensation in the bodies of the blessed; else the bodily life of the saints after the resurrection would be likened to sleep rather than to vigilance. Now this is not befitting that perfection, because in sleep a sensible body is not in the ultimate act of life, for which reason sleep is described as half-life.”¹⁴⁵ Knowing God is our ultimate happiness; however, knowing God and experiencing that happiness with every particle of our being makes that happiness more perfect than merely knowing.

¹⁴⁴ Quae tamen impassibilitas non excludit ab eis passionem quae est de ratione sensus: utentur enim sensibus ad delectationem secundum illa quae statui incorruptionis non repugnant. SCG IV 86, 4.

¹⁴⁵ Dicendum quod aliquem sensum esse in corporibus beatorum omnes ponunt. Alias corporalis vita sanctorum post resurrectionem assimilaretur magis somno quam vigiliae. Quod non competit illi perfectioni: eo quod in somno corpus sensibile non est in ultimo actu vitae; propter quod somnus dicitur vitae dimidium. ST Supplement 82, 3; See also: IV Sent. 44, 2, 1, 3.

We are also told that all the senses will be actual, so that the saints in heaven will experience delightful sensations of every kind all at once, for otherwise human nature would not be in its greatest perfection.¹⁴⁶ That means that we will be able to see light and colors, to hear music, if any, to smell beautiful scents, perhaps to feel delightful taste in our mouths and to feel delightful touch.¹⁴⁷ Thomas especially emphasizes capacity of resurrected bodies for touch: “The body of man when he rises must have the capacity to touch, for without touch there is no animal. But that which rises must be animal if it is to be man.”¹⁴⁸ We do not need the senses to contemplate God in heaven; we need the senses to be perfectly happy as ourselves. If we did not feel delight even on a sensory level, then we would not be human beings contemplating God, but only parts of a human being, an incomplete, mutilated being. The resurrected saints in heaven will experience not only the intellectual satisfaction of knowing the essence of the First Cause, not only the joy (*gaudium*) of being with God, but also sensory delight (*delectatio*), a passion. In heaven people will experience more acute feelings than on earth, due to greater perfection of the resurrected bodies. And those experiences will be delightful.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ ST Supplement 82, 4; See also: IV Sent. 44, 2, 1, 4.

¹⁴⁷ ST Supplement 82, 4.

¹⁴⁸ Corpus hominis resurgentis oportet esse tactivum: quia sine tactu nullum est animal. Oportet autem ut resurgens sit animal, si sit homo. SCG IV 84, 14.

¹⁴⁹ Nobody knows what we will find in heaven, so Aquinas does not tell us what we might see, hear etc. We know that in heaven we will be in the presence of God, angels and other people. We do not know whether there will be other sensible objects besides people. Our experience of sensual delight is required if we are to be made perfect and to feel perfectly happy. Thus, we are looking at heavenly delight from the perspective of what we need, in order to be perfectly happy, not from the perspective of what is there.

Perfection of a human being in heaven

Thus, in heaven human beings will attain their final perfection. The body will be resurrected by divine power and will be made perfect and incorruptible. The perfection which human beings will achieve in heaven includes the perfection of the body, of all parts of the soul, of the disposition of a whole person.

We shall be perfected by grace, yet grace only perfects nature; grace does not change our nature.¹⁵⁰ When we talk of human perfection and human happiness in heaven, we must keep in mind that it is the whole human person that is perfect and perfectly happy. Let us recall (from chapter 1) Thomas's reaction to Augustine's remark about the body as a burden. Thomas says: "For since it is natural to the soul to be united to the body; it is not possible for the perfection of the soul to exclude its natural perfection."¹⁵¹ Thus, perfection of the body is necessary for the overall perfection of a human being. Perfection of the body also implies perfect operations of the vegetative and the sensitive part of the soul.

Naturally, our rationality is more important than our animality. Perfection, first of all, pertains to the intellect and the will. Our intellect will never again suffer deception.¹⁵² Our will shall be fixed forever in willing the good.¹⁵³ That perfection of the rational part of the soul will overflow into the sensitive and the vegetative parts of the soul.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ ST I-II 109, 1; ST I-II 111, 1; ST I 1, 8 ad 2.

¹⁵¹ Cum enim naturale sit animae corpori uniri, non potest esse quod perfectio animae naturalem eius perfectionem excludat. ST I-II 4, 6.

¹⁵² ST I 89, 5.

¹⁵³ SCG IV 92.

In earthly life our intellectual processes are dependent on sensory perceptions and specifically on phantasms.¹⁵⁵ That dependence makes it impossible for us to see the essence of God while we live on earth. When Thomas discusses rapture¹⁵⁶ he says that those who experience it in this life and therefore in a mortal body need to be separated from the senses, because the senses would have interfered with their direct vision of God. However, in heaven there will not be anything between us and God, so, if our senses were to receive any information from God, they would not be a hindrance but a help to the enjoyment of God. It would increase our enjoyment for then all the powers of our soul, including the interior senses, would be involved in the contemplation of God. Indeed, Aquinas tells us that our natural perfection demands that we will experience phantasms while we are enjoying the Beatific Vision. Those phantasms are produced by the overflow from the rational part of the soul.¹⁵⁷

In our earthly life, all of our powers, whether of reason or the powers of the non-rational part of the soul, are to help us to achieve our ends, and ultimately our last end, which is happiness. Our natural appetites orient us towards the good, our will can will only the good, and our reason judges whether something which appears to be good is a real good. The reason governs the actions of rational creatures like humans, but the passions and natural inclinations are necessary to orient us towards our good and thus assist the reason in making correct judgment. In earthly life, the lower, that is, the non-

¹⁵⁴ ST I-II 3, 3 ad 3.

¹⁵⁵ ST I 84, 7 and 8.

¹⁵⁶ ST II-II 175, 4.

¹⁵⁷ ST II-II 175, 4 ad 1.

rational part of the soul, is necessary for achieving the perfection of the “higher,” that is, the rational part of the soul. We advance from the perfection of the lower part to that of the higher part.¹⁵⁸ But in heaven, we are perfected in the opposite way, for our intellect is the first thing to be perfected, while the non-rational parts of the soul and the body, the last. In heaven we are perfected by God’s grace.¹⁵⁹

The perfected body, and the sensitive part of the soul which belongs to it, will be completely under the governance of the rational part of the soul. We will not experience inner conflicts any more between our desires and our understanding of what is the real good we ought to pursue. Thomas says: “The body [will] be perfectly within the soul’s dominion, and will share in what is perspicuity of sense knowledge, in the ordering of appetite, and in the all-around perfection of nature; for a thing is the more perfect in nature, the more its matter is dominated by its form.”¹⁶⁰

As we behold God, who is the ultimate good, all of our appetites will be directed to God as the good. Our will shall will the good, that is, to be in conformity with God’s will.¹⁶¹ Thus, we shall attain perfection in regard to our disposition, which perfection in earthly life is called virtue. The soul will achieve its perfect goodness because it will share in God’s goodness, while the body, with its senses and passions, will be perfectly under the dominion of that perfected soul. Since the ordering of appetites will be perfectly governed by the soul, such a person will achieve perfect virtue.

¹⁵⁸ ST I-II 3,3.

¹⁵⁹ ST II-II 184, 2; SCG IV 86, 3; SCG IV 92.

¹⁶⁰ *Corpus proprietates participabit quantum possibile est, in perspicuitate sensuum, in ordinatione corporei appetitus, et in omnimoda perfectione naturae: tanto enim aliquid perfectius est in natura, quanto eius materia perfectius subditur formae.* SCG IV 86, 5.

¹⁶¹ SCG IV 92.

Since in the state of perfection the body will be under the dominion of the rational part of the soul, and our appetites will be perfectly ordered, we shall never be led astray by our passions, and that will remove one of the major causes of our earthly suffering. In the state of perfection we will love and desire what is truly our good, and the attainment of that good will bring us delight. Because as perfected human beings we will be made complete, with the body, senses, appetites and passions restored to us; we will feel love and delight on all levels possible for a human being.

In heaven we shall be perfected in every way. The intellect will be perfected by attaining to the knowledge of God, the essence of the First Cause.¹⁶² The will shall forever will the good.¹⁶³ The sensitive appetite which naturally orients us towards our good will unerringly orient us towards our greatest good, that is, God.¹⁶⁴ That means that our desires will be only for the real good, and since they will be satisfied, the result will be delight. The body will be made perfect, and with it the sensory perception will be made perfect.¹⁶⁵ Our passions will also be perfected.¹⁶⁶

Overflow

In heaven the passions, the sensitive appetite, will be perfected by the overflow from the intellective part of the soul,¹⁶⁷ which in turn will be perfected by grace, which will enable us to contemplate God. Perfection attained by the rational part of the soul will

¹⁶² ST I-II 3, 2 ad 4; I-II 3, 8.

¹⁶³ SCG IV 92 and 95.

¹⁶⁴ SCG IV 86, 5; SCG III 3 and 17.

¹⁶⁵ SCG IV 86.

¹⁶⁶ SCG IV 86 and 92.

¹⁶⁷ ST I-II 3, 3 ad 3.

overflow into the sensitive soul and the body, thus the lower part will be perfected by the overflow from the higher part: “In perfect happiness the entire man is perfected, in the lower part of his nature, by an overflow from the higher.”¹⁶⁸

Aquinas mentions several times the overflow from the rational soul to the lower parts. Because a human being is a composite being, made of body and tripartite soul, and because a human is also an integrated being in which whatever happens in one part affects in some way all the other parts, the states of the rational part of the soul appropriately affect the sensitive soul and the body. In earthly life the overflow pertains to the cogitative power,¹⁶⁹ to desire,¹⁷⁰ to desire for knowledge,¹⁷¹ and to the spiritual delights.¹⁷² Thomas also says that the Beatific Vision will be the cause (among other things) of phantasms, by the overflow,¹⁷³ and that in heaven, the lower part, i.e., the sensitive soul and the body, will be perfected by the overflow of the perfection of the rational soul.¹⁷⁴ Even the perfect agility of the saints, i.e., perfect ease of movement, will be caused by the overflow. Thomas says: “For weakness is what we experience in a body found wanting in the strength to satisfy the desire of the soul in the movements and actions which the soul commands, and this weakness will be entirely taken away then,

¹⁶⁸ Dicendum quod in perfecta beatitudine perficitur totus homo, sed in inferiori parte per *redundantiam* a superioris. ST I-II 3, 3 ad 3.

¹⁶⁹ ST I 78, 4 ad 5.

¹⁷⁰ ST I-II 30, 1 ad 1.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² ST I-II 31, 5.

¹⁷³ ST II-II 175, 4 ad 1.

¹⁷⁴ ST I-II 3, 3 ad 3.

when power is *overflowing* into the body from a soul united to God.”¹⁷⁵ In general, the body will be influenced by the perfection of the soul which has attained its final end, that is, the Beatific Visions. Thomas says: “Therefore, just as the soul which enjoys the divine vision will be filled with a kind of spiritual lightsomeness, so by a certain *overflow* from the soul to the body, the body will in its own way put on the lightsomeness of glory.”¹⁷⁶

In the text which immediately precedes the last quote about the overflow to the body, Thomas says that passions will be influenced by the overflow. Passions are bodily changes and also the movements of the sensitive soul, and are experienced by us as emotions, such as fear, anger, pleasure etc. In heaven, the only passions possible will be those of love and delight, since there will be no more strife, or pain, or any unfulfilled desires. Love and delight have both intellectual and sensual components (*dilectio* presupposes *amor*, while *gaudium* presupposes *delectatio*). Thomas says: “But the glory and power of the soul elevated to the divine soul will add something more ample to the body united to itself. For this body will be entirely subject to the soul – the divine power will achieve this – not only in regard to its being, but also in regard to action, passion,

¹⁷⁵ Infirmatem enim experimur in corpore quia invalidum invenitur ad satisfaciendum desiderio animae in motibus et actionibus quas anima imperat: quae infirmitas totaliter tunc tolletur, virtute *redundante* in corpus ex anima Deo coniuncta. SCG IV 86, 3.

¹⁷⁶ Sicut igitur anima divina visione fruens quadam spirituali claritate replebitur, ita per quadam spirituali claritate *redundantiam* ex anima in corpus, ipsum corpus suo modo claritatis gloriae induetur. SCG IV 86, 2.

movements, and bodily qualities.”¹⁷⁷ And since our sensory perception will be more acute in the perfected bodies, our capacity for feeling passions will likewise increase.

We shall need our bodies in heaven not only to be complete, but also to fully enjoy ourselves. Aquinas says: “For the soul desires to enjoy God in such a way that the enjoyment also may *overflow* into the body, as far as possible. And therefore, as long as it enjoys God, without the fellowship of the body, its appetite is at rest in that which it has, in such a way, that it would still wish the body to attain to its share.”¹⁷⁸ Again, we find the mention of the overflow from the intellect to the lower appetite and to the body. The delight which the intellective soul feels in heaven overflows into the sensitive part and the body. That points to the feeling of delight as a passion and not mere joy of possessing the vision of God in heaven. Thus, we find the mention of that sensual component of the delight of contemplation even in heaven, and, like in the case of earthly contemplation, the sensual delight may be experienced because of the overflow from the rational part of the soul. The joy of the rational soul overflows to the lower part of the soul and the result is the feeling of delight.

Causes of feeling sensual delight in heaven

If we are to be completely happy, as complete human beings, then it would not be enough to merely know the goodness and beauty that is God, for goodness and beauty must be felt. We know the truth of God, but we feel His goodness. We feel it, love it and

¹⁷⁷ Sed ex claritate et virtute animae ad divinam visionem elevatae, corpus sibi unitum aliquid amplius consequetur. Erit enim totaliter subiectum animae, divina virtute hoc faciente, non solum quantum ad esse, sed etiam quantum ad actiones et passiones, et motus, et corporeas qualitates. SCG IV 86, 1.

¹⁷⁸ Appetit enim anima sic frui Deo, quod etiam ipsa fruitio derivetur ad corpus per *redundantiam*, sicut est possibile. Et ideo quandiu ipsa fruitur Deo sine corpore, appetitus eius sic quiescit in eo, quod tamen adhuc ad participationem eius vellet suum corpus pertingere. ST I-II 4, 5 ad 4.

delight in it. In heaven, as on earth, we can feel the attraction of the good, love that good, and since our desire for it is satisfied, delight in the good.

There are several reasons why we experience sensual delight in addition to intellectual delight in heaven. As was said above, people in heaven will be able to feel sensations¹⁷⁹ and they will be able to experience all kinds of delightful sensations simultaneously.¹⁸⁰ We are not told what the source of those sensations will be. Perhaps there will be sensible objects present which will be delightful. Even if there were no other kinds of sensible objects, at least there would be other people, bodily present, perfect, lovable and loving. The presence of such people would be sufficient to be the cause of our delight.

Sensitive apprehension is possible for us through the formation of phantasms. Apprehension of things is directly connected to the passional response to the same things, because in the animal, the cognitive power and sensitive appetite must work in conjunction. Phantasms representing sensible objects (including people) in heaven will also be connected to the passional response. Since everything in heaven will be delightful, our perception of it will lead to the passional response of a delight.

Thomas also tells us that there will be phantasms produced in the sensitive parts of the soul by the overflow of the intellectual delight caused by the Beatific Vision.¹⁸¹ Those phantasms would also cause the passional response of delight. Thus, two sources

¹⁷⁹ ST Supplement 82, 3.

¹⁸⁰ ST Supplement 82, 4.

¹⁸¹ ST II-II 175, 4 ad 1.

of phantasms – the perception of delightful objects, and the overflow of delight caused by the Beatific Vision - cause the experience of sensual delight.

The Beatific Vision would be, first of all, the cause of intellectual delight. Intellectual delight, i.e. joy (*gaudium*), belongs to the rational part of the soul. According to Aquinas's view of a human being as a composite and integrated being, there is naturally an "overflow" from the rational soul to the sensitive soul, which influences the functioning of our senses and ennobles our passions.¹⁸² That is why what happens in the rational soul is reflected in the sensitive soul. As was discussed above, joy cannot be experienced without sensual delight. So, the joy of experiencing the Beatific Vision will also be the cause of sensual delight because of the overflow from the rational soul.

Finally, Thomas says that delight results from the attainment of greater perfection which results from the attainment of some good, by reaching an end proper to us.¹⁸³ When we attain the greatest, ultimate good and the final end, which is God, and when we become ultimately perfect, we shall necessarily rest in that good and feel the greatest delight possible. Attainment of complete perfection implies the most perfect and complete delight of which we are capable. Complete delight includes both intellectual and sensual delight.

From acting for an end to delight

We always act for an end, and ultimately we do everything for the sake of our final end. When we gain even one of our proximate ends and find some good proper to

¹⁸² ST I 78, 4 ad 5 cogitative power; ST I-II 30,1 ad 1 desire; ST I-II 32, 8 desire for knowledge and delight; ST I-II 31, 5 spiritual pleasures; ST I-II 4, 5 ad 4 need of a body for complete heavenly happiness; ST II-II 175, 4 ad 1 phantasms cause by the Beatific Vision; ST I-II 3, 3 ad 3 overall perfection.

¹⁸³ ST I-II 31, 1; ST I-II 32, 1.

us, our response is love of that good. That love is the cause of desire for the good.

When we obtain our good we are perfected by it to some extent and that is the cause of our delight. That process begins in our earthly life and is completed in heaven.

Finding our good involves our whole being, including the animal way of gaining knowledge, i.e. sensory perceptions and estimative/cogitative power. These will not be suppressed in heaven, although their role will be only to augment the perfection of the whole being. On earth, these powers are needed for us to gain knowledge, while in heaven, the knowledge which we shall possess of God will overflow into the powers of the sensitive soul.¹⁸⁴

Finding our good on earth also depends on the direction of the sensitive appetite. When we do find some good, our response to that particular good is love (*amor*).¹⁸⁵ In heaven, we will know our greatest good, that is, God. We shall love God with the love of choice (*dilectio*), but we shall also love God with the love of attraction (*amor*).¹⁸⁶

Love

The good is lovable, the greatest good is the most lovable, and in heaven we shall meet God who is the greatest good and thus the most lovable being.¹⁸⁷ In heaven we shall be able to contemplate God, and we shall behold God, who is the most lovable of all things. Our love shall increase, for as Thomas says: “One delights in seeing the object loved, and the very delight in the object seen arouses a yet greater love.”¹⁸⁸ He uses here

¹⁸⁴ ST II-II 175, 4 ad 1.

¹⁸⁵ ST I-II 26, 1.

¹⁸⁶ ST I-II 26, 3.

¹⁸⁷ SCG 92, 8.

the word *amor*, which is the love of attraction. Thomas tells us that God draws us to Himself by that love of attraction,¹⁸⁹ and thus we can love God passionately. Since we also understand the goodness of God, we can love God in a sense of dilection.¹⁹⁰ And since we will be in the presence of God, and communication between us and God will be made perfect in heaven,¹⁹¹ we shall also possess charity. In heaven, we shall be able to love God in all those ways thanks to God's grace.

Although in heaven it is love as charity that will manifest itself; charity, as Thomas tells us, also presupposes love as *amor*.¹⁹² Joy which belongs to the rational soul influences the sensitive soul and causes the feeling of delight. That happens even in earthly life. In heaven, we will love God not only in a detached, rational way, but also passionately, for we are creatures capable of passions. Thus, we will experience love (*amor*) as a passion, and, of course, we will also experience delight (*delectatio*) as a result.

Desire

Aquinas uses the word *amor*, the love of attraction, to describe love of the good. Our last end is our greatest good. Natural love orients us to that good. In heaven we shall attain our last end and possess our greatest good, which is God. When we find the lovable good, we desire it and move to obtain it. If we do attain our good, we rest in that good

¹⁸⁸ Aliquis in visione rei amatae delectatur, et ipsa delectatio rei visae amplius excitat amorem. ST II-II 180, 7 ad 1.

¹⁸⁹ ST I-II 26, 3 ad 4.

¹⁹⁰ ST I-II 26, 3.

¹⁹¹ ST II-II 23, 1 ad 1.

¹⁹² ST I-II 26, 3; II-II 27, 4.

and that rest is called delight. In heaven, when we find true beatitude, our desires are fulfilled and there is nothing else we will seek.¹⁹³ Thomas Aquinas tells us that the Beatific Vision will also satisfy our will: “the desire for happiness is nothing else than to desire that one’s will be satisfied.”¹⁹⁴ Strictly speaking, ultimate happiness is an operation of the speculative intellect. However, the Beatific Vision is what we truly want, and thus it will ultimately be a satisfaction of our will, and also, a satisfaction of all our desires. When we possess final happiness we shall possess everything we could ever want. The accident which attaches to the Beatific Vision is delight, because Beatific Vision is our greatest good: “Wherefore since happiness is nothing else but the attainment of the Sovereign Good, it cannot be without the concomitant delight.”¹⁹⁵

What we ultimately desire is, of course, not delight, but knowledge of God as the essence of the First Cause. For human beings, the ultimate end and ultimate happiness is the Beatific Vision. In heaven, the beatified engage in the perfect contemplation of God. But God is infinite and the creator of all, and as such cannot be comprehended by any of His creatures. The created intellect cannot know all as God knows, but can have knowledge only in proportion to its capacity: “Therefore no created intellect in seeing God can know all that God does or can do, for this would be to comprehend His power; but of what God does or can do any intellect can know the more, the more perfectly it sees God.”¹⁹⁶ How perfectly we may see God depends on the individual:

¹⁹³ SCG IV 92,5; ST I-II 3, 8; I-II 5, 8.

¹⁹⁴ ST I-II 5, 8.

¹⁹⁵ Unde cum beatitudo nihil aliud sit quam adeptio summi boni, non potest esse beatitudo sine delectatione concomitante. ST I-II 4, 1.

Of those who see the essence of God, one sees Him more perfectly than another. This, indeed, does not take place as if one had a more perfect similitude of God than another, since that vision will not spring from any similitude; but it will take place because one intellect will have a greater power or faculty to see God than another. The faculty of seeing God, however, does not belong to the created intellect naturally, but is given to it by the light of glory, which establishes the intellect in a kind of deiformity.¹⁹⁷

According to Thomas, the one who can see God more perfectly is the one who has a fuller participation in God, and that means the one who has more charity: “Hence he who possesses the more charity, will see God the more perfectly, and will be the more beatified.”¹⁹⁸ That is because charity is the cause of desire, and where there is more desire, there is greater capacity to receive that which one desires. Thus those who love God more, desire God more and are prepared to receive God’s glory in a greater measure. Their desire will be satisfied. Charity is friendship with God. Thus, those who have greater charity, that is, those who are admitted to friendship with God, will see God more perfectly and know God better.

Charity is a theological virtue which we receive from God.¹⁹⁹ Charity is a virtue which may be given in earthly life, but it will be perfected in heaven.²⁰⁰ Aquinas tells us

¹⁹⁶ Nullus igitur intellectus creatus, videndo Deum, potest cognoscere omnia quae Deus facit vel potest facere; hoc enim esset comprehendere eius virtutem. Sed horum quae Deus facit vel facere potest, tanto aliquis intellectus plura cognoscit, quanto perfectius Deum videt. ST I 12, 8.

¹⁹⁷ Dicendum quod videntium Deum per essentiam unus alio perfectius eum videbit. Quod quidem non erit per aliquam Dei similitudinem perfectiorem in uno quam in alio, cum illa visio non sit futura per aliquam similitudinem, ut ostensum est. Sed hoc erit per hoc quod intellectus unius habebit maiorem virtutem seu facultatem ad videndum Deum, quam alterius. Facultas autem videndi Deum non competit intellectui creato secundum suam naturam, sed per lumen gloriae, quod intellectum in quadam deiformitate consuit... ST I 12, 6.

¹⁹⁸ Unde qui plus habebit de caritate, perfectius Deum videbit et beatior erit. ST I 12, 6 (Ibid.)

¹⁹⁹ ST I-II 62, 1; ST II-II 23, 2 and 3.

²⁰⁰ ST II-II 23, 1.

that human perfection is charity.²⁰¹ Charity is a kind of friendship, communication with God.²⁰² Charity is in the will as its subject, and therefore in the rational soul.²⁰³ However, even charity is not disconnected from the sensitive soul for it presupposes love of attraction, love as an inclination to our proper good. According to Aquinas, charity begins with love we have for ourselves,²⁰⁴ because we naturally wish to preserve ourselves and to attain our good. It is important that we love ourselves in the right way, i.e., that we choose a greater good over the lesser one.²⁰⁵ We ought to love God, because God is our greatest good.²⁰⁶ Thomas says:

God will be to each one the entire reason of his love, for God is man's entire good. For if we make the impossible supposition that God were not man's good, He would not be man's reason for loving. Hence it is that in the order of love man should love himself more than all else after God.²⁰⁷

It is natural for us to love ourselves and to pursue our good.²⁰⁸ Natural tendency to pursue our good is love in a sense of basic inclination. Manifestation of this basic inclination is love as a passion which causes us to pursue our good as a particular good in particular situations. Our sensitive appetite orients us to our good, the intellect judges whether it is a

²⁰¹ ST II-II 184, 1.

²⁰² ST II-II 23, 1.

²⁰³ ST II-II 24, 1.

²⁰⁴ ST II-II 25, 4.

²⁰⁵ ST II-II 25, 7.

²⁰⁶ ST II-II 26, 3.

²⁰⁷ Dicendum quod unicuique erit Deus tota ratio diligendi eo quod Deus est totum hominis bonum: dato enim, per impossibile, quod Deus non esset hominis bonum, non esset ei ratio diligendi. Et ideo in ordine dilectionis oportet quod post Deum homo maxime diligat seipsum. ST II-II 26, 13 ad 3.

²⁰⁸ ST I-II 94, 2.

real or apparent good, and the will wills the good presented to it by the intellect. In this way, we are approaching our greatest good which is God. However attainment of our greatest good is beyond human power, and so, God helps us by infusing within us the theological virtue of charity.²⁰⁹ Aquinas says:

Just as God is supremely knowable in Himself yet not to us, on account of a defect in our knowledge which depends on sensible things, so too, God is supremely lovable in Himself, in as much as He is the object of happiness. But He is not supremely lovable to us in this way, on account of the inclination of our appetite towards visible goods. Hence it is evident that for us to love God above all things in this way, it is necessary that charity be infused into our hearts.²¹⁰

Charity (*caritas*) is love (*amor*) perfected.²¹¹ Grace perfects nature. Thus even intellectual love which is charity presupposes the passion of love as attraction for the beloved object,²¹² and we are also supposed to be drawn to God by love as a passion.²¹³ Any detailed discussion of charity is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but it needs to be noted that charity, which is the ultimate perfection of a human being, also presupposes love as a passion.

²⁰⁹ ST II-II 23, 2; ST II-II 24, 2.

²¹⁰ Dicendum quod sicut Deus secundum se est maxime cognoscibilis, non tamen nobis, propter defectum nostrae cognitionis, quae dependet a rebus sensibilibus; ita etiam Deus in se est maxime diligibilis in quantum est obiectum beatitudinis, sed hoc modo non est maxime diligibilis a nobis, propter inclinationem affectus nostri ad visibilia bona. Unde oportet quod ad Deum hoc modo maxime diligendum nostris cordibus caritas infundatur. ST II-II 24, 2 ad 2.

²¹¹ Excellent discussion of different forms of love in the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas is found in Josef Pieper's *Faith, Hope, Love*, Ignatius Press, 1986. Pieper notes that: "natural forms of love are presupposed to be intact; and no special, solemnly sublime vocabulary is needed to describe the operations of *caritas*." p. 280.

²¹² ST II-II 23, 2; ST II-II 24, 2; ST I-II 26, 3.

²¹³ ST I-II 26, 3 ad 4.

When we contemplate God, our desire is fulfilled, our end is reached, we attain union with what we love and we are also loved. Since we contemplate God Himself, we are also drawn by God to Him, passively, and thus feel the Divine Love. And because God as the object of contemplation is infinitely lovable, our love for God has no end.

Delight

Love causes us to desire union with the object we love, and the fulfillment of that desire is the cause of delight. Contemplation of God in heaven is the fulfillment of our desires and the union with what we love the most. Thomas says: “Contemplation may be delightful on the part of its object, in so far as one contemplates that which one loves...there is delight in the contemplative life, not only by reason of the contemplation itself, but also by reason of the Divine love.”²¹⁴ Contemplation, even on earth, is delightful; but in heaven it will be perfectly delightful: “The contemplation of God in this life is imperfect in comparison with the contemplation in heaven; and in like manner the delight of the wayfarer’s contemplation is imperfect as compared with the delight of contemplation in heaven.”²¹⁵ Heavenly delight will be perfect, because it will correspond to our reaching our final end and our greatest good.

The rest of the appetite in the good is delight.²¹⁶ In heaven we attain our final end and our greatest good - our desires are fulfilled and delight necessarily follows. In heaven

²¹⁴ Contemplatio redditur delectabilis ex parte obiecti, in quantum scilicet aliquis rem amatam contemplatur... in vita contemplativa non solum est delectatio ratione ipsius contemplationis, sed ratione ipsius divini amoris. ST II-II 180, 7.

²¹⁵ Dicendum quod contemplatio Dei in hac vita imperfecta est respectu contemplationis patriae: et similiter delectatio contemplationis viae est imperfecta respectu delectationis contemplationis patriae. ST II-II 180, 7 ad 3.

we reach the ultimate perfection, perfection of the soul and of the body. As a result, we can experience delight on all levels. In heaven we will experience joy (*gaudium*), which belongs to the rational part of the soul. We will also experience sensual delight, first because of our overall perfection, and also because of the overflow of delight from the rational soul. Ultimate happiness will be the cause of our joy²¹⁷ and delight.²¹⁸

Delight in heaven will be perfect in every way. As perfected beings we will be able to experience delight and joy perfectly. We will not be distracted by any diseases.²¹⁹ We will not be distracted by any temptations. Contemplation of God will be continuous and eternal, enjoyed by people whose intellectual powers will be perfect, people who will possess wisdom. That contemplation will cause the greatest possible joy (*gaudium*). The grace which will perfect the bodies and the intellectual part of the soul will also flow to the sensitive part of the soul. The senses and the passions will be perfected. People will experience sensations again and those will be nothing but delightful. People will feel passions again, namely love and delight. In heaven we can feel delight even more keenly than in this life, because our bodies will be more perfect, and because there will be more reason to feel delight.

Delight of a rational animal

Heavenly delight must be a perfect and multifaceted delight, of a perfect and complex being, a rational animal, possessed of intellect and will, but also possessed of a

²¹⁶ ST I-II 4, 1; ST I-II 31, 1.

²¹⁷ ST I-II 4, 2.

²¹⁸ ST I-II 4, 1.

²¹⁹ Thomas says that perfection of the body is required for happiness for natural perfection of a composite being i.e. human requires perfections of both, body and soul. ST I-II 4, 6.

body, senses and passions. First of all, there is intellectual enjoyment of the Beatific Vision. However, operations of the sensitive soul, namely sensory perceptions, and passions such as love of attraction (*amor*) and delight (*delectatio*) are needed for the complete enjoyment of human happiness not only on earth, but even in heaven. Thus the sensitive soul is necessary both for the attainment and for the enjoyment of heavenly happiness.

Our capacity for feeling sensual delight will be perfected in heaven because our senses will be more keen. We shall feel love and delight of any kind more because of our greater perfection. In heaven the operations of the sensitive part of the soul will be perfected by the overflow from the higher to the lower part, but ultimately we shall be perfected in all of our parts by grace. But grace does not change nature; only perfects it.²²⁰ Our nature does not change in heaven. Even in heaven a human being shall remain a rational animal.

Conclusion

Thomas tells us in ST I-II 3, 3 that the operations of the sensitive soul enter into happiness antecedently and consequently. Antecedently we need the operations of the sensitive soul to acquire knowledge and to contemplate. We need sensory perception in order to acquire any knowledge. We need our cogitative power and our passions in order to guide us in our research. We need the sensitive appetite and the passions in order to motivate us to act. Finally, we need phantasms in order to think, and even to contemplate. Consequently, in heaven, we need the sensitive soul no longer for the acquisition of knowledge or any guidance, but simply for the full enjoyment of our happiness.

²²⁰ ST I-II 109,1; ST I-II 111, 1.

In earthly contemplation, we need phantasms to think and passions to guide us, which we will not need for the contemplation of God in heaven. But even in heaven, our bodies and all the parts of the soul shall be integrated and affect one another. We shall not be separated souls any longer, but souls united with their bodies. As complete human beings, we will be able to think clearly,²²¹ while the sensitive soul and the body will again feel delight, thanks to the overflow of the rational part of the soul. Operations of the sensitive soul enter into our happiness consequently, after the resurrection. We need the body and the sensitive soul not only to attain happiness, but also to enjoy it.

As human beings, we achieve our full perfection through intellectual contemplation, and ultimately through contemplation of God in heaven. Thomas says that in heaven, the lower part will be perfected by the overflow from the higher part, while on earth, the perfection of the lower part must precede the perfection of the higher.²²² We can now see how the perfection of the lower part is necessary for the successful contemplation on earth, and that the perfection of the higher part overflows into the lower part even in this life, and certainly in heaven. We love, desire and delight in contemplating the truth, in contemplating God on earth and in heaven, on both levels, as intellectual beings and as animals at the same time.

²²¹ ST I 89, 3.

²²² ST I-II 3, 3.

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