

Understanding and Faith in the Philosophy and Theology of Thomas Aquinas:

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"Wisdom through self-knowledge is not limited to the progress from empirical through scientific to normative knowledge. Beyond the wisdom we may attain through the natural light of our intellects, there is a further wisdom attained through the supernatural light of faith, when the humble surrender of our own light to the self-revealing Uncreated Light makes the latter the loved law of our assents. Rooted in this faith, supernatural wisdom has a twofold expansion. In its contact with human reason. it is the science of theology which orders the data of revelation and passes judgment on all other science. But faith besides involving a contact with reason, also involves a contact with God. On that side wisdom is a gift of the Holy Spirit, making us docile to His movements in which even perceptibly one may be "non solum discens sed et patiens divina". (*Verbum: Word and Idea in Thomas* B.J. Lonergan University of. Notre Dame Press. 1967, p.91.).

'Wisdom is becoming to peacemakers, in whom there is no movement to rebellion, but only obedience to reason." (Augustine, *The Sermon On The Mount*, Book I, Chapter 4.)

Introduction

When a man is searching for the one key among many which will unlock a door, he is concerned with all of the possible keys because he is looking for the right one. But once he has found the right key he is no longer concerned with the others. He is content to put the right key into the lock and go inside. And so it is with the interpretation of Thomas. There are many keys offered to the interpreter but how many will bring him inside? How many will allow him to penetrate and understand the depth of the great medieval theologian? If the interpreter is limited to a short dissertation and he knows that he has found the key to interpreting Thomas he is left with only two possible modes of approaching the matter of illuminating the meaning of the text. On the one hand he can show how he came to find the right key by demonstrating how the others do not fit and thus leaving the reader standing at the door with the proper key. Or on the other band he might use the key to get inside and thereby not only show the beauty and truth of the structure but also indirectly demonstrate that the other keys do not fit the lock and lead one inside. Needless to say I shall choose the latter of the two alternatives because it is more fruitful.

In other words this thesis is a work of research and collaboration. It grows out of the author's appropriation of the work of Bernard J. Lonergan's two historical studies on Thomas: Gratia Operans and Verbum: Word and Idea In Thomas but especially out of the latter work. Lonergan's guiding principle, while profound, is also simple. It is that Thomas' philosophical reflections and theological investigations rest on the fact that Thomas practised psychological introspection.¹ Thomas first attempted to understand the psychological facts of his own conscious understanding in order to put his philosophy and speculative theology on a sound basis.

Once the interpreter catches on to how this is operative in Thomas, everything he has to say about the human soul, about human knowledge and metaphysics, and finally about theological matters falls into perspective and becomes intelligible. Without this key the interpreter is left with a

¹ See *Verbum: Word and Idea in Thomas*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1961. pp. 1-95.

mass of textual problems which he could never solve nor could he do justice to the solutions given by Thomas himself.

If this is true for Thomas' theology in general, it also applies to what he has to say about faith. But we are interested not only in what Thomas has to say about faith but also in what he meant by faith. First Thomas meant his own Christian faith. This was his personal faith. Next that faith was transmitted in a theological tradition which was mainly influenced by Augustine and so his understanding of that faith was based on his understanding the Augustinian tradition. Thirdly a further factor influenced Thomas' methodology. Science in the West was becoming Aristotelian and Thomas had read, understood, and corrected Aristotle for his own philosophical and theological purposes. Through an integration of both Aristotle and Augustine Thomas fashioned his own theology of faith adding what he could through his understanding extending the then developing science of speculative theology. Thomas' understanding of faith begins and ends in that personal act by which he and others in his religious community believed in God. It was an act by which a man stood before God and assented trustingly to the truth which God had given to him in order to lead him to Himself. Thomas intended to examine the issue not only by answering the speculative question what is faith, but also by answering, the existential question how faith is historically part of the order intended by God for mankind.

If the present author were only treating of understanding, he could appeal to the facts of consciousness helping the reader to recognize that there is such a thing as understanding; for who would say that they never understood anything? The case concerning faith in God is not strictly parallel to the case of understanding. Though a man grows in understanding, he does not always decide to understand since questions arise spontaneously. But before a person comes to believe, they have to decide to believe or else they do not yet believe. If reasonable belief rests on a decision, then belief in God should rest on a decision that is a free, reasonable, and responsible choice. If the parallelism of the experience of understanding and the experience of faith is not perfect, still there is a point of likeness: They both arise in conscious experience.

There are facts of conscious experience to which the writer can appeal. For even if a person has not yet come to believe in God, there are things and persons in whom he or she does believe in since no one can live a real human life without believing in many persons and many things. For belief is not only a trust in people, its object functions as a kind of knowledge of things which comes from what someone else knows and the believer believes. Belief is necessary for human living because it would be impossible for a person to know everything she or he needed to know before he or she could act. It would be impossible for someone to get to know everything they needed to know before acting, for then they would never be able to act.

Not only do many human situations call for action, science requires collaboration and scientific collaboration means that the scientist puts a qualified trust and belief in his colleagues and their work. He trusts and believes them and their work because he cannot work everything out for himself. He must begin with some presuppositions both implicit and explicit and he cannot verify all of them. Still his belief in them is qualified by his trust in scientific method and limited since human knowledge is limited. He believes his fellow scientists as long as they follow an acceptable scientific method and until some reason arises why he should not believe in their conclusions, or their presuppositions. Without human faith and belief there can be no human collaboration and without human collaboration there can be no scientific development, no progress in scientific or human knowledge. Hence what we call human knowledge is a symbiosis of things we can know because we can demonstrate their truth and the things we can reasonably believe.

The desire to understand and know as much as we can and the hope that understanding might become self-understanding and self-knowledge including an understanding of human limitations would lead to a recognition of the reason why it is intelligent and reasonable for human beings to believe others who know and are trustworthy. Faith in ones fellow man is not faith in God for though men may be

trustworthy yet they are also fallible, they can be mistaken about even the most important things, whereas God alone is not fallible because He knows everything. Though men are dependent upon other men and God, God is not dependent upon man. Though man's knowledge is limited and his faithfulness and trustworthiness can fail, God's cannot. The question of faith is principally a theological question because even as a psychological act of trust and belief it refers to God himself. The object of our investigation is the theological virtue of faith.

Since the psychological fact of believing in God is a free act, as one that rests on a decision, strictly speaking any appeal to the facts of consciousness can be made only to one who already believes in God. For one who does not yet have faith in God is not able to relate an understanding of this kind of faith to his own interior life. Though any theological investigation is limited in this way, this limitation does not exclude the possibility of its resting on the psychological facts of consciousness. Thus one either believes in God or one does not believe in God. But since human beings are in the process of understanding things, other persons, and themselves as existential historical subjects, they may also be in the process of coming to believe in God if they have not excluded that possibility and if they are open to the truth about human existence. For faith in God does not take place outside of a human mind or outside of human history. Nor does it suspend the desire to understand more deeply or the drive to live more intelligently, reasonably, and responsibly. If God intends human beings to find Himself through faith in Him, he also intends them to use their intelligence and reasonableness to come to that faith. And so if faith in God is objectively the way to the truth about God that God wills for man as his destiny, then the man who is open to that truth will find it in his belief in God. There will be an *intelligo ut credam*, an understanding that leads to belief. Again if belief in God is a necessary condition for a person to reach the truth about God and human destiny, then there will be a *credo ut intelligam*. Believing in God will shed light on the truth about God and human destiny leading to a more profound understanding of man and God in the science of theology. The believer's love of God which motivates his theological understanding will take him closer and closer to God. Believing in order to understand and understanding in order to believe will be recognized as parts of a comprehensive wisdom because they make it possible for the believer to judge correctly about God's nature and human destiny.

This inquiry will move from an understanding of what human knowing is to an understanding of self-knowledge and then from self-knowing to a knowledge of God and the self that results from faith in Him. Finally from an examination of the meaning of the act of faith as Thomas understands it in the Christian context, the argument will proceed to a deeper understanding of the self and God that will result in a theological form of wisdom when faith is brought into contact with human reason. The theological virtue of faith can blossom into a deep love of God that will be understood as the fulfillment of the natural desire to understand and to know which itself finally will be recognized as a covert natural desire for God.

There will be a brief discussion of human destiny as the understanding of God himself in a beatific vision. The unrestricted desire to understand and know everything about everything as the natural desire to know God as He is in Himself will provide continuity to the argument. The psychological unfolding of that desire in consciousness itself as the ground of the intelligent and rational development of human understanding and knowledge will reveal the need for belief and in the historical human condition of a fallen and redeemed humanity the need for faith in an historical revelation. This historic (Christian) faith will be expressed in beliefs that deliver the truths God has intended and revealed to human beings in history. The theological virtue of faith will become the substance of a hope for the final bliss in that perfect understanding of God himself (Beatific Vision) which God has destined to be true human happiness.

Chapter I:

Thomas' Teaching on the Intellectual Light of the Human Mind (*Lumen Intellectuale*)

Thomas was well aware of the existence of an act of understanding (*intelligere*). He understood it to be the grounding act which expressed itself in inner words or concepts.² These inner words arising in the human mind emerge at the end of a process of thoughtful inquiry.³ Until a word emerges a person has not yet understood but they are thinking in order to understand.⁴ These inner words emerge simultaneously with the act of understanding.⁵ The inner word (*verbum intus prolatum*) is really distinct from the act of understanding.⁶ The words are an in the mind expression of the cognitional content of the act of understanding.⁷ The more perfect the act of understanding the more numerous the inner words it embraces in a single view.⁸ Thomas was not talking about an unconscious, mechanistic process; but he was speaking of his own conscious understanding of the human mind and its intelligent and rational conscious operations.

He realized that it is not ultimately the eye that sees or the intellect that understands; but it is *I*, the subject, who see with my eyes and understand with my intelligence.⁹ Thomas spoke of an intellectual light that was not completely synonymous with the Aristotelian term, *Agent Intellect*. For Aristotle the Agent Intellect was held in common by mankind. For Thomas it was personal and singular, unique to and experienced by each person in the experience of wonder and the act of questioning. Hence the intellectual light was something imminent in the person who understands. When Thomas argued with the Avicennists about whether the Agent Intellect of Aristotle was imminent or transcendent, he was arguing for a personal identification of the agent intellect with the ground of intellectual light. In other words Thomas was using the classic metaphor of "light" in what after Augustine's theology became the technical concept of "intellectual light" to refer to **the inner, conscious experience of insight** or the act of understanding and to argue that each human being had within himself all the powers or faculties by which he could understand for himself.

Before we can actually understand, we must ask questions. The act of questioning is the personal act of our active intelligence. In so far as human beings have the power to question, they have agent intellects. In so far as I am consciously questioning, I can say that my agent intellect is in act. Thomas attributes the light of intelligence to each person's agent intellect. The intellectual light is a property of human consciousness and therefore it is not an object but a conscious medium through which I come to, know. Intellectual light is a conscious medium not in the sense that it is a known object by means of which another object is known; but it is a conscious medium in the sense that it makes other objects knowable. The intellectual light is a conscious operation.

We can say that the light of the agent intellect is known through itself because it is a conscious operation. We know our own intellectual light through that light not because the light is an object, but because when we question, we are aware (conscious) of our questioning. And we can question our own questioning.¹⁰ For Thomas our intellectual light enters within the range of introspective observation most conspicuously in our grasp of the first principles of understanding. Scientific conclusions are accepted because they are implied in the first principles. Our assent to first principles has as its motive the intellectual light within us. When we reflect on the assumptions of our questions, the light of the agent intellect in act makes first principles self-evident.¹¹ It is the

² *De Ver.* q 4" a 2" ad 5 ST I q 27" a 1. c, *De Pot.* q 8" a 1" ad 5

³ *In John.* Chapter 1, Lecture 1

⁴ *De Pot.* q 9. a 9c

⁵ *C.G.* IV, 14

⁶ *De Pot.* q 8, a 1, c; *De Pot.* q 9 a 5, c

⁷ *De Ver.* q 4, a 2 c

⁸ *S.T.* I q 85, a 4, *S.T.* I q 12, aa 8 and 10, *S.T.* I q 55, a 3, *S.T.* I q 14, a 7 c, *S. T.* I q 58, aa 2-4.

⁹ *De Spirit. Creat.* a 10, ad 15; *De Ver.* q 2, a 6, ad 3, *S. T.* I, q 75, a 2, ad 2

¹⁰ *De Ver.* q 10 a 8 ad 10 (2ed ser) 13. *In Boet de Trin* q 3 a 1 ad 4

¹¹ *In Sent* d 23 q 2 a 1 ad 4 cf. *C. Gent.* I, n, 46.

same light of intelligence that makes us capable of learning any science.

This light is the foundation for intelligence itself and for all the acts of understanding and the expression of inner words that proceed in the human mind.¹² It comes to us directly from God when he creates an intelligent creature.¹³ The experienced effects of intellectual light as the evidence of principles and the motive of judgment and the interior basis of certitude are not the only instances in which intellectual light indirectly enters into the field of consciousness. It constitutes the very foundation and power of our understanding.¹⁴ Intellectual light is the principle from which proceed all inquiry and discourse.

Humans reason moving from thought to thought, questioning by their intellectual light, limited only by temporal continuity because humans obtain their knowledge from sense and imagination. As the principle of inquiry, intellectual light is the source of the search for reasons which is grounded in the natural human desire to understand the reason for everything, namely, God himself Who can be known directly only in the beatific vision.¹⁵

Man's knowledge has a twofold source: An extrinsic source on the level of sense and an intrinsic origin in the light of our intellects.¹⁶ Sense supplies the matter from which our knowledge arises.¹⁷ But the object of understanding is already something within us as offered by the imagination. The object of understanding becomes understood when it is completed by that intellectual light.¹⁸ It is the agent intellect which is given the function of ordering the images offered by the imagination to bring about the right schema or model that releases the flash of insight in the act of understanding.

Aristotle defined the soul generically as the first principle of movement in a living body. He distinguished plants from animals and animals from men by saying that the difference was formal or essential. He noted that the distinction of essence or form depended upon the distinction of power. In other words living things were different if they could do radically different things. He argued that the distinction of power or potency or faculty depended upon the distinction of kinds of acts or in sentient, higher animals conscious operations. And finally that the distinction of act depended upon the distinction of object or what kind of thing the power was able to grasp by its act.¹⁹ In other words objects specify acts, potencies, and essences. You can tell what a thing is by what it does. You can tell what a sentient animal can do by what it can reach or grasp in the order of knowledge. The act of questioning looks to sensible data in order to understand it or it looks to sensible data, memories, images, and concepts when it reflects in order to judge whether propositions are true or false. It is one thing to understand and it is another thing to express that understanding in an inner word whether it be a direct act of understanding in order to define (concept) or a reflective act of understanding in order to judge (affirm or deny a proposition).²⁰ And so Thomas concluded the existence of a possible intellect is a really distinct act from the act of the agent intellect.

If the function of the agent intellect is questioning, then the function of the possible intellect is the expression of the act of understanding first in the inner word or concept and then in the outer word of the definition or asserted or denied proposition reached at the end of the process of inquiry.²¹ In other words we learn by questioning; but while it is the essential beginning of learning, questioning is not the full or complete act of learning. There are not two intelligences in human

¹² **In Boet. de Trin.**, q 1. a 3, ad 1

¹³ **In Boet. de Trin.**, q 1, a 3c

¹⁴ **In II Sent. D. 3**, q1, a2, sol.

¹⁵ **S.T. I**, II q 3a, 8c

¹⁶ **De Ver** q 10, a 6c ad fin

¹⁷ **S. T. I.** q 84, a 6 c

¹⁸ **In D Sent.**, d 20, q 2a 2, ad 2

¹⁹ **Aristotle De Anima** Bk II, cb 4, 1415a 14-22 **S. Thomas In De Anima** lect. 6 sec. 304-S06.

²⁰ **In Boet de Trin.** q 5, a 4, ad 4

²¹ **In John** ch. I lect. I

beings. A single intelligence has two complementary principles from which proceed two complementary acts. If we understand, we can intelligently express our understanding in many inner and outer words. If we reflect and grasp what is sufficient for a true judgment, we will be able to say yes to any judgment which is equivalent in meaning to the judgment with sufficient evidence and we know that this to be reasonable.

Human knowledge is not restricted to scattered acts of understanding and judgment. Human understanding develops. Knowledge is habitual when a person learns a science or develops their common sense. Though a single definition can arise from a single act of understanding and two definitions can proceed from two acts of understanding which might remain separate and isolated from each other, still one insight can combine with another and develop into a third that includes the two previous insights to produce the equivalent of a higher viewpoint.. This is what happens when we learn a science.²² There may be an intelligible unification by which a person in a single view deals with many concepts. This intelligible unity is not a change in the concepts but a coalescence or a development in understanding. First there were two acts of understanding. Now there is one act of understanding that includes many things (*Intelligere multa per unum*). Many acts cannot be simultaneous but one act can grasp many objects in a single view.²³ The synthetic character of understanding can be seen In the concept of the whole (a house. which is made up of many parts but the knower need not advert to any of the parts separately) or in the grasp of a first principle. Habitual scientific knowledge is concerned with demonstrating conclusions to be true. Scientific demonstrations do not admit an infinite regress and so there must be a prior habit that regards first principles. The science of first principles gives the speculative thinker (scientist) a synthetic view. For Thomas the evidence for synthetic understanding is to be found in the **experience** of the person who is **learning** a science. The less intelligent need things explained in great detail; the more intelligent catch on from a few indications.²⁴

For Thomas God's self-understanding is a synthetic act of understanding that sweeps through and profoundly penetrates everything in one all inclusive act.²⁵ Implicit in the human being's ceaseless questioning rooted in the natural desire to understand and to know is the natural aspiration of human intelligence to know God as He is in Himself, the natural desire to know is the desire to see God, to know Him face to face.²⁶ For Thomas what distinguishes humans from animals is the natural desire to understand everything about everything.²⁷ Reason is not one power and understanding another, they are the same power that differs as a process differs from its goal. Reasoning is a process that intends deeper understanding. It begins with understanding and ends with a deeper understanding.²⁸ Discursive knowledge comes to a term in the apprehension of a field of implications and interrelations and in the recognition of dependencies. In God there is only the final state of complete understanding of everything through self-understanding.²⁹ We must always keep in mind that for Thomas God is *Ipsium Intelligere*, an infinitely rich act of understanding everything about everything.³⁰

So how did Thomas come to posit the identity of the Divine substance with an unrestricted act of understanding? Aristotle grappled with the question how do we come to know what we did not know previously. Like Plato he was struck by the difference between, on the one hand the concrete knowledge of sensation and perception which is always of the particular and of individual things as individuals and, on the other hand the abstract, universal and theoretical knowledge of the sciences

²² *In Sent.* d 14. q 1, a 3 sol 3. cf. *C Gent.* III. 56 ; *S. T.* II, II, q 180. a 6, ad 2

²³ *Quodlibetum VII* a 2, *Co Gen.* I, 55 *De Vera* q. 8, a 14 *De An* a 18, ad 5; *S. T.* q 85. a 4.

²⁴ *S. T.* I q 55, a 3 c

²⁵ *De Ver* q 8, a 10, *C Gent.* II. 98

²⁶ *I Cor.* 13:12, For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood.

²⁷ *C. Gent.* m, 51

²⁸ *De Ver*, q. 15, a 1, *S. T.* I q 79, a 8 c, *S. T.* II,II q 8, a I, ad 2.

²⁹ *S. T.* I, q 14 a. ., c

³⁰ *Ibid.*

which are not restricted to particular and individual things. The knowledge the speculative thinker has in scientific understanding creates a new dimension, an enrichment of the human knowledge of reality. The scientist is better able to deal with particulars when he or she knows the reasons why things are the way they are and what they are. The doctor who knows the cause of an illness does not use hit or miss common sense remedies. He applies the principles of the science of medicine to eliminate the cause of the illness. In Thomas' view though Plato was aware of these differences between knowledge of the particular and scientific understanding, he did not account for the difference in the same way Aristotle did. Thomas knew both Plato and Aristotle argued for the immateriality of the act of understanding in contrast to the materiality of sense knowledge. That was obvious to them because scientific knowledge does not depend on a thing being in this place rather than in that place or at this time rather than at that time. But a definition equally applies to any individual of a class. Plato was more intrigued by the difference between the two kinds of knowledge than he was intent on accounting for the **genesis** of universal scientific knowledge of things from our observations of them in the world. Thomas interpreted Plato as postulating a cleavage between the ground of knowledge (transcendent ideas) and the existent perceptual reality it was meant to make intelligible. His theorem of universal knowledge was based on the immediate confrontation of the mind or soul with the idea. The Greek word, **εἶδος**, is rooted in the metaphor of sight as an immediate experience. Thomas understood Plato's theory of learning to imply that the human mind confronted the immaterial ideas in a transcendent realm and now sense impressions and material images remind us of them (***anemnesis***).

In contrast, Thomas thought, Aristotle was more concerned with the psychological **genesis** of definitions and concepts in science and mathematics. Aristotle focused his attention on the learning process especially on the elements of the questions and the images constructed by intelligence from the sense data about which the questions arose. And so he arrived at a theory of knowledge which included an Agent Intellect capable of making sensible data intelligible by abstracting what is essential in it thus informing the Possible Intellect which receives the abstracted immaterial object and expresses it in the inner word of a concept and the outer word of the definition.

Thus Aristotle, Thomas thought, could account not only for the difference between knowledge of the Particular and knowledge of the Universal in the practice of the sciences but he could also account for the genesis of human knowledge by appealing to **psychological facts** which can be understood by paying attention to our own conscious operations. Aristotle went on to generalize his theory of learning in a theorem of knowledge by **identity**: When what is able to be sensed (sensible) is in act, it is the sense itself which is in act. In other words, there is no difference between actual sounding and hearing. Actual sound is the object of the sense of hearing. Unheard sound is sound in so far as it can be heard. It is the sensible as able to be sensed. When it is heard, it becomes actual sound in the act of hearing. The same is true for understanding. What is to be understood is the **intelligible**. It is actually understood when the intellect itself is actually understanding.

Plato postulated knowledge by the **confrontation of mind with the transcendent -idea** to account for the immateriality of the idea. For Aristotle understanding was knowledge by **identity of intelligence with the intelligible** so that the act of knowing enriches the knower. Abstraction is an enriching not an impoverishing act.³¹ For Aristotle we understand by what we **are** as **intelligent beings**. Abstraction the moment in understanding when we grasp what is essential enriches us as knowers. Thomas was cognizant of the difference between the Platonist and Aristotelian theories of knowledge.³² He chose the Aristotelian position. But he was not content with the Aristotelian theorem of identity as a complete explanation for human knowledge. He realized that though we understand and the object of our understanding is within us, Thomas knew the **object may or may not refer to a**

³¹ Following Hegel many modern and post-modern thinkers understand "abstract concepts" as impoverished replicas of reality. Not so with Aristotle and Thomas. Empty concepts are concepts that have been severed from their source in experience and understanding.

³² **C. Gent.** II, 98, toward the end

concrete reality as existing; and if not, it could be an intelligible hypothesis and still refer to nothing real and existent. He knew that for Aristotle what is understood is the forms of things and that there is an isomorphism between understanding and the reality understood. Still the forms were not identical with the entire existing reality even though our knowledge of forms intends the existing reality. In as much as intelligence and its object are in act identically there is knowledge as understanding perfecting the knower, but not yet knowledge of the other as an **existing other**. When we know something, we know that the thing known can be other than ourselves and unless it is the knower knowing itself, it is some existent other. And so, Thomas concluded, there must be a further act of understanding which occurs in reflection and which brings the incomplete **intentionality** of concepts to perfection in **judgment**.

Since reflection is not by identity the Aristotelian theory of knowledge remains incomplete.³³ In human knowing rational reflection bears the weight of the transition from knowledge as **understanding** to knowledge of the existent other in **reflection and judgment**. The specific perfection of the human being is that he has intelligence, the power of understanding. To the extent that a person understands more and more, to that extent the person becomes more perfect. as a human being. The person can assimilate (achieve a likeness) other things, not in their real existence, but in their **intentional** existence in the mind. Human beings become other things by coming into an intelligent relation to them by understanding and knowing them not by becoming them. The human desire to know extends to everything because everything can be the object of a question.

What human intelligence is by desire (*potens omnia facere et fieri*.) the essence of God is by . the act of self-understanding identical with self-knowing by which God knows everything about everything. In God his Existence is identical with His essence which is To Exist as well as identical with His Intentional Being or *Ipsium Intelligere. Or Ipsum Esse est Ipsum Intelligere*.³⁴ If the perfection of understanding lies in its identity with its object, then the most perfect form of understanding would be not only an identity of object and act but a perfect identity of **esse naturale**, substance, with **esse intentionale**, the act of understanding with its object, an unrestricted act of understanding which understands itself by which it understands everything because God's Being includes the richness of everything understandable. God's Being is His Knowing. For this reason Thomas identified the unrestricted act of understanding with the divine substance.

However since Thomas also wrote about a **quoddam reflectionem**, a certain reflection, as grounding the act of judgment in human knowledge, why did he not say that God was an infinitely rich act of reflection?³⁵ To answer this question let us consider why the human mind must reflect in order to judge. Knowledge results from true judgments. The true judgment says of what is, that it is and of what is not, that it is not. Sense knowledge does not include knowledge of the known as known. It does not include a knowledge of similarity or dissimilarity with the real. Though we infallibly understand what we understand, still what we do understand might fall short of what we intend to understand, that is the way something really is.³⁶ Since human understanding is always limited, the function of judgment is to say precisely what is known of the real. Hence there is a necessity for a standard in judgment.³⁷ The standard is not the thing itself because the thing by hypothesis would be unknown before the judgment yes or no is made. The standard could not be another idea or representation of the thing; for that would be futile and involve an infinite regress, for then the standard would need a standard and so on.³⁸ The standard had to be the principle of

³³ The difference between knowledge by immaterial **identity** and knowledge by **intentionality** becomes apparent to Thomas when he has to account for the difference between one immaterial intelligence knowing another immaterial intelligence. S. T. I q 56. a 2 ad 3.

³⁴ C. Gent. I. 47 sec 5

³⁵ In Boet de Trin q 5, a 4, ad 4; In VI Met lect. 4 S8C 1236, S. T. I q 16, a 2 c, De Ver q 1, a 9 c. on the problem of criticism

³⁶ De Ver q 1, a .12 c.

³⁷ De Ver q 10, a 1 c, De Ver q 10, a 9 c.

³⁸ Cf. The Third Man objection in Plato's *Parmenides*

intelligence itself.³⁹ Thomas' validation of rational reflection as the way to the truth is in some way connected with Augustine's claim that we have a vision of eternal truth. Augustine argued that we know the truth not by looking **outside** but by looking **inside**, by our inward glance directed upward to what is above us, to a personal vision of the eternal truth. Thomas could not accept Augustine's proposal without qualification because it rested on a theory of the **confrontation** of our minds with eternal truth in an immediate intellectual vision, as it were, and not with the mediated⁴⁰ identity of the knower and the known.

We know by what we are and not by an immediate confrontation or spiritual contact with the known. Although the ultimate ground of our knowing is God, the Eternal Light, the reason why we know is within ourselves, the light of our own intellects. If it is true to say we know by what we are, then it is true to say we know that we know by knowing what we are. The highest point in rational reflection is the knowledge intelligence has of its own intelligence, the wisdom that comes with self-knowledge. In other words it is by the personal, intellectual light that the mind grasps the sufficiency of the evidence presented to it for a judgment. The Eternal Light is the Divine act of Understanding its own understanding everything about everything. The truth about everything is known by God in his understanding of Himself as the unrestricted act of understanding. Because God's understanding is at once an understanding of everything through an understanding of itself, it is at once perfect understanding and perfect reflection on itself in one act. In God the object of understanding and the act of understanding are identical. Though our questions are potentially unlimited, the questions we actually ask are limited and the acts of understanding we are able to make are limited by time, by this or that thing, or by the fact that a limited act can never become an unrestricted act without ceasing to be itself. But the meaning of the word, true, does not apply only to the act of understanding everything about everything.

If the real is the universe of being, then our understanding is limited by the fact that we must learn, by the fact that we begin with objects of sense when we begin to learn, by the fact that we must continually use examples, models, and illustrations even when we do understand. Our actual understanding is always limited to a limited number of things. Nevertheless there is an act of reflection that moves the mind beyond understanding toward judgment. All human beings make judgments. The judgments a person makes betray the quality of the person, the quality of their knowledge, and to what extent they are responsible. A judgment may be rash, if a person refuses to weigh the evidence or foolhardy if they judge too quickly. A judgment can be suppressed if a person refuses to reflect, understand, or becomes overly cautious. A judgment may be false, if a person does not grasp evidence sufficient to justify it. But there are wise judgments that are true.

In the act of reflection there is an interplay of sensation, memory, imagination, insight, definition, and past judgments that are brought to bear in the present act of reflection. The act of understanding is preceded by the question, **What is it? (Quid sit?)**; while the act of reflection arises from the question, **Is it so? (An sit?)** In reflection the mind grasps that no judgment concerning existence is necessarily true, while at the same time every true judgment is conditionally true. In human experience the mind grasps that there are always certain conditions which must be fulfilled for something to be so. The conditions are bound up with our past and present experience of sensation, perception, imagination, understanding, and judgment. Once the mind grasps the sufficiency of evidence, the judgment follows rationally and responsibly that something is true. Once the mind grasps the conditions are fulfilled, a conditioned absolute enters into human knowledge. At this moment human knowledge becomes transcendent in the sense that the mind transcends or goes beyond the subject's self-awareness to grasp the existence of something beyond itself expressed in a judgment that is affirmed as true.⁴¹ Human knowledge begins in sense experience moves through perception, memory, and imagination

³⁹ **De Ver** q 10, a 1 c

⁴⁰ Mediated by questioning arising from wonder expressed in Aristotelian terms as the work of the Agent Intellect or nouV poetikoV

⁴¹ **S. T.** 1. q 3. a 4. ad 2

whose images are ordered by questions for understanding and reflection and finally comes to term in the assent of judgment. In true judgments human knowing is perfected.⁴²

The critical problem of knowledge is not a problem of moving from within outwards, of moving from subject to an object outside the subject. It is a problem of moving from above downwards, of moving from an infinite potentiality commensurate with the universe towards a rational apprehension that seizes the difference of subject and object in essentially the same way that it seizes any other real distinction (namely in a judgment (A is not B) based on rational reflection). Thus realism is immediate not because it is naive and unreasoned and blindly affirmed. But because we know the real before we know such a difference within the real as the difference between subject and object.⁴³

Thomas uses the word assent for judgment when he wants to emphasize its subjective and reflective aspect. Assent is judgment as a personal act of positing a Yes or No to one side of a contradiction Assent is identical with the act of judgment, but it expresses the dimension of responsibility that goes into every carefully weighed judgment.

In this chapter we have attempted to summarize the most significant elements of Lonergan's account of Thomas' introspective method. As far as I know, Lonergan's account is the only comprehensive and coherent account of the large number of texts on the nature of human knowledge in Thomas' writings. The common element in our experience of our acts of understanding is the pure quality that Thomas calls the **Intellectual Light** (*Lumen Intellectuale*). It lights up the mind when we ask the questions, **What is it? *Quid sit?*** and partially is realized when we directly understand an essence and more fully realized when we ask the further question, **Is it so? *An sit?*** and reflectively understand the conditioned necessity of affirming the thing's existence. We never experience the Intellectual Light in its pure form because we never just inquire as a pure act without an object. We always inquire about something. Moreover we never achieve a pure unlimited act of understanding for understanding is always an understanding of some object. Nor do we achieve a pure act of reflective understanding in which we understand ourselves comprehensively and once and for all. Still we discern the Intellectual Light introspectively and indirectly in every direct and reflective act of understanding. The inner light of our intelligence is a *nisus* toward the divine, our connection with the Infinite.

Aristotle opened the book that was later called the *Metaphysics* remarking that all human beings by nature desire to know; but like Augustine, Thomas measured that natural desire finding in it an undying restlessness for an Infinite Divine Intelligence, an Intelligence identical with Being itself, pure existence, *Ipsium Esse*, an Uncreated Unlimited Light. Though our intellects are potential and could not hope by nature to achieve a Vision of this Infinite Divine Intelligence, yet our intellects have a natural, dynamic orientation, a natural desire to see God. So nothing short of the Vision of Pure Intelligence in its Eternal Light can satisfy it utterly.

⁴² S. T. I. q 16. a 2. Thomas speaks of judgment and reflective activity in the *via iudicii* as opposed to the *via inventionis* Cf. S. T. q 79. a 8 c and a 9 c.

⁴³ *Verbum: Word and Idea in Thomas*. Bernard J. Lonergan, S. J. University of Notre Dame Press. 1967. p. 88.

Chapter II: Human Belief

As we have seen in the first chapter according to our interpretation of Thomas, human knowing is an **intelligent**, conscious process occurring **within** a human **mind**. In contrast to natural processes that are intelligible, the conscious process in the human mind is also **intelligent**. Whereas a natural process has its intelligibility in a law consciously recognized by intelligence; the intelligent process in the mind finds and expresses the law within its own dynamically conscious unfolding. Intelligence as the source of order grounds the intelligibility of law. The act of understanding defies formulation in terms of a specific law since it is the source of all laws and definitions. Intelligence governs itself by the laws of thought applicable to everything, for example; the principle of identity, of non-contradiction of excluded middle, and of sufficient reason.

Thus though human knowledge begins in sense experience, it reaches a higher integration in understanding and ever higher integrations in synthetic understanding and comes to a final perfection in the matrix of true judgments that constitutes human knowledge in the proper sense. In knowing the mind intends the true as that which is. Truth is always in some mind because truth is the mind relating to reality.⁴⁴ So there are no truths outside of minds. Even if there is an Eternal Truth, it must be in an Eternal Mind.⁴⁵ The Truth as Eternal could not possibly be in a human mind since it is not eternal. Yet the truths we come to know in judgment do have a conditionally absolute character and a transcendent quality. By the reflective act of understanding the mind grasps that certain conditions for the prospective judgment are fulfilled and the judgment follows rationally and it retains this absolute character as long as the conditions remain fulfilled. When we judge correctly, we not only know; but we know that we know. Our knowledge not only intends what is true, but in judgment we know what is true. The transcendent quality of judgment consists in its reference beyond itself. It is the transcendent quality of truth that permits true judgments in the form of propositions to be communicated from one mind to another

Belief makes possible the communication of a truth known by one person available to another who does not yet know it. To believe is to assent to a truth that is known by another person and communicated to someone else who accepts the proposition communicated as true. Hence belief can function like knowledge because knowledge gives a person access to what is true.⁴⁶ A person can know what is true by grasping in reflection the sufficiency of the evidence that is the ground and reason for his assent (knowledge in the proper sense).⁴⁷ But a person can also believe what is true by assenting to the truth of proposition that is not grounded by his own reflective understanding, but rather is grounded in someone else's reflective understanding.

Belief then gives the word, **true**, a double meaning: For a truth can be in a mind as known or in a mind as believed. The object of belief is what is believed; namely, the truth of a proposition, but the motive of belief is the reason why the person believes and that is the knowledge and truthfulness of the person proposing the truth. Whereas judgment in knowledge proceeds directly from an act of reflective understanding, assent in belief proceeds directly from an act of the **will** in which the believer decides to trust (faith) the person who claims to know it, and by virtue of the trust to assent to the truth communicated in the proposition (belief).⁴⁸ The basic drive of the human mind is to understand either directly by inquiring into our experience leading to a definition or by inquiring reflectively leading to a judgment. Hence Thomas maintains that to believe is to think with assent.

⁴⁴ Truth and falsity are in a mind. **In VI Met.** lect. 4, sec. 1230. **In V Met.** lect. 9, sec. 895. **In I Sent.** d. 19, q 5, a 1, sol. 1. **De Ver.** q 1, a 2 c. **S. T. I.** q 16, a 1 c.

⁴⁵ . **Unde si nullus intellectus esset aeternus, nulla veritas esset aeterna** Cf. **S. T. I** q 16, a 7 c.

⁴⁶ **In Sent III** d 24. q 1. a 2 sol I and sol II. A text which clearly shows that Thomas adverted to the difference between seeing (an immediate conscious act) and understanding (a mediated intelligent conscious act.).

⁴⁷ **In Boet de Trin.** q 3. a 1. ad 4.

⁴⁸ **S. T. II** n. q 1. a c. **S. T. II.** q 4. a 1 c. **S. T. II, II,** q 8. a 8. ad 2. **De Ver** q 14. a 1 c.

⁴⁹Belief is an assent because the object of belief is the truth of the proposition believed. Notice Thomas maintains that **thinking remains essential to believing** because the exigence of the human mind is toward understanding and a person does not yet understand reflectively what they believe.⁵⁰

In the act of believing the rational exigence for grounding a person's judgments in the reflective act of understanding becomes manifest in the act of believing when the mind demands reasons (rational exigence) for accepting the word of another or when the mind attempts to go from believing a truth to understanding what was initially believed. In the first case the believer seeks the reasons why he ought to believe. The rational exigence requires beliefs to be reasonable. For unreasonable beliefs can never be justified. In the second case the believer recognizes through the rational exigence that even beliefs must be intelligible for them to function as reasonable beliefs. Moreover the believer can go on to recognize through the rational exigence that he or she can believe in order to come to a deeper understanding of the truth she or he believes. Thinking as inquiry is not only not opposed to believing but necessary for belief to be authentic in accordance with the light of intelligence manifested in the rational exigence.⁵¹ Thomas asserts a person strictly cannot know and believe the same thing in the same way at the same time.⁵² For Thomas the judgment grounded in a reflective act of understanding based on the grasp of sufficient evidence is the perfection of knowledge generated in the human mind and is knowledge in the unequivocally proper sense. The act of assent in belief is not grounded in the reflective act of understanding that grasps the sufficiency of evidence in the matter to be believed. And so Thomas concludes that one can not reflectively understand in the sense of grasp the sufficient evidence for the judgment and not reflectively understand and fail to grasp the sufficiency of evidence for the same proposition asserted in the judgment at the same time. If a person knows the truth of a proposition in the proper sense of having an immanently generated knowledge of it, they cannot believe that same proposition because there is no need to believe what a person already knows. Belief is derivative of proper knowledge and subordinate to it.

If the object of belief is the truth, the most general reason or motive for believing is that it is good to know the truth. Thomas recognizes human beings must cooperate with each other because they are not self sufficient. In human society a person must give credence to the words of another or the social order would break down. Classically the lack of individual self-sufficiency is a foundation for justice in human society. The Greeks recognized humans needed to live in a **polis** or a political community if they were to live fully as human beings. So belief is necessary for cooperation, cooperation is necessary for justice and justice establishes the good of order in a human society. Such was the philosophical tradition as Thomas understood it.⁵³

Thomas distinguishes subalternate from subalternating sciences. The subalternate science represents knowledge of principles or conclusions that become presuppositions for another science called subalternating.⁵⁴ Thus what is proper knowledge of the presuppositions in the subalternate science in a subordinate (subalternating) science are propositions that are believed by the person practicing the subalternating science because they do not themselves know the reasons for their truth. For Thomas this represents an instance of believing certain conclusions that come from another science in order to develop a deeper understanding of the science a person might be pursuing. New sciences build on the foundations of well established fields of human knowledge. For example a scientist cannot make progress in understanding biochemistry until he is familiar with the principles and conclusions of chemistry, even though he may not thoroughly understand those principles or conclusions because he is not a chemist The scientist then is said to believe the principles and conclusions because someone else knows them. This belief is necessary because a scientist cannot

⁴⁹ **In Sent. III.** d. 23, q 2, a 2, sol. I. **De Ver.** q 14, a 1 c. **In Heb. II** lect. 1. S. T. II,II q 2, a 1 c

⁵⁰ **In Sent. III,** d. 24, a 1, sol. I. **De Ver.** q 14, a 8 c. **De Virtute** q 4, a 1 c.

⁵¹ **S. T. II, II** q 2, a 1 c.

⁵² **S. T. II, II** q 1, a 5 c. **De Ver.** q 14, a 9 c

⁵³ **In Boet de Trin** q 3, a 1 c

⁵⁴ **In Boet de Trin** q 2. a 1, ad 5 and., **In Sent. III** cl. 24, q 1. a 2, sol II, ad 3. **S. T. I.** q 1, a 2 c.

possibly make progress in the knowledge of a science unless he begins by believing the conclusions of other scientists who follow the scientific method.

Thomas found the simplest example in the learning process itself.⁵⁵ When a person begins to learn something new, he has incomplete knowledge of the subject and so he needs a teacher to acquire an understanding of the science. The teacher could not help the beginner understand unless the teacher himself had a sufficient grasp of the science and its principles. At the outset the teacher does not try to explain all the conclusions he intends to demonstrate nor does he expect the student to understand the principles of the science after the teacher has explained the meaning of the technical terms. So he proposes the principles to the student; and at first the student accepts them on the authority of the teacher because the student believes the teacher knows the reasons for the truth of the principles that he has not yet understood for himself. Thus the student begins by believing. It is good for the student to begin by believing the teacher because if he did not, he could not acquire mastery of the science. Once he has gained mastery, of course, he becomes an expert and is able to understand and criticize the conclusions or principles in the science that might be put forward by others. If the student began by doubting everything the teacher proposed until he could verify the principles and conclusions for himself, it might take a lifetime for the student to learn the science; and only then might he realize that the teacher was right. Belief is necessary in human affairs, but belief need not be blind belief. There are good reasons for believing the teacher knows what he is talking about and if he does not, he will be found out. Natural belief is good for the human mind because it makes further understanding and good judgments possible. Natural belief supports the natural desires to understand and to know which define human intelligence. The necessity of belief marks the limitation of human intelligence: Human beings need to cooperate in achieving knowledge as much as they need to cooperate to secure the common goods of life. Natural belief makes cooperation possible. And cooperation is the foundation of the social order necessary for human living.

Thomas recognized that he owed a great deal to Augustine for his general theory of belief. Augustine argued that belief and the corresponding attitude of faith or trust was reasonable because it was necessary for human life. Augustine maintained that if belief was a necessity for commerce between man and man in the world of practicality, how much more was it necessary for man's life in relation to God. But Thomas was not content to put his argument simply in those terms. Thomas not only adverted to the act of understanding, but he also attempted to understand it scientifically in formulating definitions and drawing distinctions to meet speculative questions in a systematic way.. He developed a cognitional psychology and a theory of knowledge that provided the grounds for his metaphysics and his theology. He learned from Aristotle how to develop his own speculative method.

Aristotle distinguished science from opinion, and Thomas explicitly located the distinction in the act of understanding. Science consisted in conclusions or judgments whose concepts were directly understood and whose grounds were reflectively grasped. An opinion was a judgment that was not grounded in a reflective act of understanding that could be expressed in an argument and so was liable to be false and uncertain.⁵⁶ Thomas distinguished the act of judgment on the basis of the attitude of the subject making the judgment. When the subject is in doubt, the subject has no grounds to judge; and so he refuses to judge. When the subject is in a state of suspicion, the subject is inclined to one side of a contradiction; but he knows that he does not have the proper motives or reasons to favor his judgment over its contradiction. When the subject holds an opinion, the subject is inclined to assent to a proposition for some reasons fearing that the other side might be true. Finally when the subject acquires scientific knowledge, the subject knows and knows that he knows the reasons why one side is true and the other is false and so he becomes certain.⁵⁷

Still human living is filled with uncertainties and so there is a need for prudence based on a

⁵⁵ **De Ver.** q 14. a 10 c. cf. **In Boet de Trin.** q 3. a 1 c

⁵⁶ **S. T. I.** q 79, a 9, ad 4. **S. T. II, II** q 1, a 4 c and 5. ad 2.

⁵⁷ **S. T. II,II.** q 2. a 1 c. **De Ver.** q 14, a 1 c.

habitual knowledge developed through an understanding of human affairs and how to conduct oneself in them. Both prudence and human belief have the same object in view; namely, human living. The difference between mere opinion and human belief depends on the difference between understanding and its object. The object of opinion is the truth or falsity of a proposition for which scientific theoretical knowledge is possible. Whereas the object of a prudent judgment is the truth or falsity of a proposition that concerns human affairs about which scientific and theoretical knowledge is not possible. Opinion lacks the kind of evidence necessary for scientific knowledge. The ground for practical judgments is limited to reasonable belief. Thus prudential judgments are based on probabilities understood by persons of experience. Much of practical knowledge of human affairs remains contextual and inexpressible because it is concerned with the particularities and individualities of concrete human existence. Thus persons of experience are not able to give all of the reasons for their prudential judgments. To do so might require him to give his complete autobiography to show how he knows what he knows from experience and how his practical knowledge applies to this particular case.⁵⁸ Both prudence and human belief regard the good. Whereas the virtue of prudence regards the good to be done, human belief looks to the good of the human mind, namely, the truth. A person believes in order to learn about practical affairs or in order to develop a science and in both cases the objective is to discover what is true.

Thomas describes the act of believing as an act of the intellect inasmuch as the will moves the intellect to assent. The **act of belief** proceeds from **the intellect and the will** both of which have a natural orientation to each other to be perfected in this way.⁵⁹ There are reasons why a person ought to believe but the reasons are not enough to compel the assent of the intellect because the reasons are about the act of believing, the reasons for believing and not directly the reasons for the truth of the proposition to be believed, the matter or object to be believed. In contrast, in the process of knowing the reflective act of understanding would ground a judgment that would amount to an expression of a knowledge of the object. The will commands the intellect to assent in belief only after the value of believing this or that person for this or that reason has been understood and affirmed. The will commands the assent because the intellect grasps the value, but the intellect does not assent until the will commands.⁶⁰

Thomas' understanding of the generic notion of belief is not based on a faculty psychology, but rather on his attention to and understanding of his own cognitional acts using an original introspective psychological method. He recognized the object of belief is the truth because the conscious act of believing is an assent (a judgment) that **accepts the believed proposition as true** based on a prior **value judgment** that the person proposing the belief is worthy of being believed. He distinguished believing from knowing the truth by contrasting it with the Aristotelian notion of science and locating the difference between knowing and believing in the reflective act of understanding and its function in both conscious processes. He discussed the general notion of belief as based on the trust between human beings needed for human cooperation that was necessary for practical life in the human community as well as for the pursuit of knowledge.

Belief, then, is a good of the intellect to the extent that it makes it possible for human beings to have access to the truth so that they might later come to understand and know it for themselves. Yet it would be wrong to think that his primary concern was a general notion of belief (*Fides communiter accepta*).⁶¹ His primary objective was a systematic explanation of the act of believing in God, the theological virtue of faith. Like Augustine whose tradition he had inherited, Thomas was a theologian. Like Augustine, Thomas focused his attention not only on the human good, the good of man as man but also, and more importantly, the good of man as open to God, and more specifically the end of man as willed by God.

⁵⁸ In *Ethics of Aristotle*, BK VI. Lect., 6 and 1. *S. T. II, II*, qq. 41-5 discussion of prudence

⁵⁹ *S. T. II, II*. q 4, a 2 c and loc parall

⁶⁰ loc. Cit.

⁶¹ *De Ver.* q 14, a 2 c.

The fact that human beings can understand not only made them different from the animals, but also made them God like insofar as they reflected the image of God pointing them toward an indefinite and unknown future.⁶² By its unrestricted nature, questioning opens human beings to everything intelligible. Questioning intends being itself. The notion of being opens out to a universe of being and the intelligibility of beings. Moreover human questioning could come to question itself in reflection and come to know itself as intelligent Human beings can come to identify themselves with their own intelligence. To be Intelligent means to have the universe of being in some way within oneself. (**Esse Intentionale**)

To learn we must ask questions; and just as we can have many questions, we have much to learn. Though we will never understand or know everything about everything, nevertheless we spontaneously seek to know the truth when ask what and why and whether something is or is not the case. The act of belief is an assent to the truth because the truth is a good required by intelligence. Still the truths acquired by belief are not grounded directly by intelligence in a reflective act of understanding, but by an act of the will as a choice of a means (belief) to having a truth that cannot yet be known. Thomas describes belief as thinking with assent (*Cogitatio cum assensu*) because inquiry and the desires to understand and to know remain connected to the act of believing. Under the guidance of wonder and the desires to understand further inquiry motivated by belief can lead to a deeper and fuller understanding. Nevertheless believing always remains subordinate to knowing. We believe in order to gain the truth necessary for human living which for some reason because of our limitations as human beings we are not able to know for ourselves.

Thomas recognized that men and women wonder not only about practical things, but about everything. They seek not only the truth about what is practical, but also truth for its own sake. So he claimed that truth is a good of the intellect. When human beings know the truth or believe it, they are able to seek a deeper understanding demanded by the natural desire to understand that manifests itself in the simple curiosity of the child, the complex questions of the scientist, the profound wonder of the philosopher, and the rhapsodic awe of the poet and the mystic.

⁶² **S. T. I** q 93, aa 6 and 7. The desire to know God directly is natural, but the achievement of that desire would have to be an undeserved gift. This is the real meaning of the supernatural, not ghosts and goblins or other forms of mystification usually identified with that unfortunate term.

Chapter III

The Object of the Theological Virtue of Faith and the Theorem of the Supernatural

Chapter two dealt with the general notion of belief. It focused on the reflective act of understanding as the essential conscious act that distinguishes knowledge from belief. For Thomas the reflective act of understanding is the ground of the judgment of value that makes intelligent and reasonable belief possible. The discussion centered on the abstract mediation of the truth as a good of intelligence and as a human good. We showed by the concrete examples of scientific belief Thomas used and the fact that belief was essential in the learning process that he understood the act of believing to be an essential human value. Because human beings are intelligent, they act by their intelligence and it is often intelligent and reasonable to believe. We showed that for Thomas the process of coming to believe begins with the question for reflection: Can I and ought I believe this person for this reason? When the evidence is sufficient, it grounds the value judgment that becomes the reason for the act of the will that commands the assent of the intellect to believe the truth proposed. Belief is not knowledge of the truth but an assent to the truth grounded in the judgment of value. The act of believing is free because the decision is free.⁶³ The psychological process of coming to believe consists in the following:

1. A reflective act of understanding grounding a judgment of value,
2. A judgment or affirmation of value -- a "Yes" to the proposition: I can and ought to believe, this proposition as true because the person proposing it is worthy of belief,
3. A command of the will in the decision to believe by assenting to the truth proposed,
4. An assent of the intellect in the act of believing the proposition to be true.⁶⁴

Such is the explicitation of the psychological process of coming to believe anything. We noted that the desire to understand and to know remains throughout the process of coming to believe and that anything short of understanding and knowing will not satisfy the desire. Since the desire to understand and know remains after a person believes and assents to the truth in belief the desire becomes the basis for a systematic and a critical exigence in theology. It becomes a systematic exigence because thinking remains in believing. "To believe is to think with assent."⁶⁵ This thinking represents the systematic exigence to the extent that a person seeks to understand in an orderly and explanatory fashion the meaning of the truth that is believed. This thinking represents the critical exigence to the extent that, on the one hand, the mind seeks the reasons for believing, the reasons for the value judgment in reflection which is the beginning of the process of coming to believe.⁶⁶ On the other hand the mind seeks the reasons for the truth itself which is believed. The mind seeks not simply to believe but also to know the truth because the natural desire of human intelligence is to know the truth, if it is possible.

Thomas always maintained the object of belief is the truth affirmed in the assent of the intellect.⁶⁷ Truth is always in some mind and an object is always a cognitional term in Thomas'

⁶³ S. T. II, II, Q 2, a 9, ad 2. Thomas discusses the difference between scientific assent as compelled by reason of a demonstration and the free act of believing. When a person grasps the reason why something is so, they must say that it is so. But a person is free to assent or not to assent when they believe. If we understand why $2 + 2 = 4$, we assent to it whether we like it or not. If we do not know why $E = MC^2$ is true, we may choose to believe it, because of the knowledge of the scientist. Both are rational activities, but assent to a known truth is not free; whereas assent to believed truth is always free.

⁶⁴ The analysis of the general notion of belief in Thomas is taken from his mature work in the **Summa Theologiae II, II** qq. 1-7 and the corresponding work in B. Lonergan's **Word and Idea in Thomas Aquinas**

⁶⁵ S. T. D II q 2. a 1 c. **In Sent** m d. 23, q 2, a 2 sol I. **De Ver.** q 14, a 1 c.

⁶⁶ II II q 2, a 10 c. *cf.* **In Sent** m d. 24, a 3, sol III C. G. I. ch. 8.

⁶⁷ S. T. II,II, q 2, a 1 c.; **De Ver.** q 14, a 1 c.; **In Sent.** III d 23, q 2, a 2

language. For Thomas cognitional objects are correlated with operations. The objects of the intellect are objects of understanding. First there is the **moving object** of direct understanding that is an intelligibility brought to act by the what-question directed at the presentation of an image or phantasm. In other words the question, What is this thing that I imagine or sense? begins the conscious and intelligent process of direct human understanding. Second there is the **terminal object** of direct understanding which is the essence expressed in a definition or concept that is grounded by the act of understanding the moving object, namely; the questioned sense data constructed by intelligence in the image (phantasm). Third there is the **moving object of reflective understanding**, the intelligent and reasonable **collection of the evidence** on the issue brought to light in the question for reflection. Fourth there is the **terminal object of reflective understanding**, the word expressed in the **judgment** or the **assent** positing the judgment by the words, “Yes” or “No.” Finally there is the **transcendent object**, the reality, known imperfectly in prior acts, but perfectly through the truth of the judgment.⁶⁸

The theorems concerning natural belief lay the foundation for Thomas’ systematic understanding of the theological virtue of faith, the trust and belief in a Christian God who reveals Himself to human beings in history. Thomas follows Aristotle’s principle that operations are specified by their objects. Thus if faith and belief in God differs from natural belief, it is because the object attained in the act of faith is different. How is the object of Christian faith different from the object of natural belief? And how is the act of faith in God different from other natural acts of believing? The answer to the first question will be the subject in the present chapter; the answer to the second question will be treated in the next chapter.

Thomas says that the Vision of God Himself is the end of man in the sense of human destiny, the final or ultimate good of human beings. The Vision and Possession of God is man's ultimate happiness. But an end must be known before it is willed since the will is a rational appetite. The will can only seek what is first known by the understanding. (The principle is: *Nihil volitum, nisi praecognitum*.) The end of human life cannot be known or even guessed without an historical revelation and the response of faith as a theological virtue. The beatific vision of God as human destiny is **supernatural** in the strict sense that the direct vision of God is beyond the natural capacity of human beings. If a human being is to attain a supernatural end, he is in need of a cognitional activity that will allow him to know the end. Through Christian faith human beings come to know the end that is beyond what they could know naturally by reasoning about human life. A supernatural object is attained by the act of faith. It must be an object because it is the correlative term of a cognitional activity. The supernatural object is not known but believed. It is **supernatural** in the proper theological sense because it is a gift from God to human beings that no human being could ever hope to achieve on his own or to merit by his actions.⁶⁹

What precisely is the object of this historical Christian faith? Why must the object be supernatural? How is a supernatural object of belief in the theological virtue of faith connected with the objects of human understanding and human knowing? We must next consider how Thomas answers these questions in his systematic theology of faith.

Thomas insists that human beings do not know God's essence in this life.⁷⁰ Yet the objective of the unrestricted, natural desire to know unknowingly intends God as its object. Thus the object of faith and the object of the natural desire are one and the same; namely, the vision of God himself, or as Thomas would say, God known by his essence. To create a human being is to create someone who can understand, an intelligent subject. Human intelligence has its source in wonder, the ground of the unrestricted desire to understand and to know that expresses itself in questions of the type: What is it? How does it work? Is it so? To create human intelligence is to create an unrestricted desire to understand and to know that is ultimately, without the person knowing it, a natural desire to see God.

⁶⁸ Cf. *Verbum: Word and Idea In Thomas Aquinas*, B. Lonergan, U.N.D.P., 1967, pp. 128-140.

⁶⁹ *De Ver.* q 14. a 10. ad 3. *De Ver.* q 14. a 9. c and ad 5

⁷⁰ *S. T. I* q 13. a 1 c.

It is one thing to desire to know everything through the divine essence and it is another thing to achieve the knowledge of God through the divine essence. For Thomas it was obviously impossible to attain that object by the natural power of human understanding. The human intellect needs a grace, a gift from God in the form of what he called an **infused light of glory** by which human beings can understand God.⁷¹ To have an unrestricted desire to know means human beings are **open** to receiving the light of glory. Just as it is one thing to understand and another to understand understanding; so it is one thing to have an unrestricted desire to know and it is quite another to realize that it opens humans to the possibility of understanding God in His essence. Thomas thought that human beings are open to understanding God because of the nature of human understanding that he believed intended the complete intelligibility and meaning of everything. He identified an unrestricted desire to know as the beginning of the process of coming to understand. The wonder of the child develops into the understanding of the mature person, but questions will always remain for the person who is open to understanding and knowing. No one can answer all of the questions that can arise. Since their number is potentially infinite, every question could not be asked. That potential infinity, Thomas believed, symbolized an actually infinite act of understanding. If God has generously destined human beings to that vision of Himself proper only to Himself, He has graced human life with a supernatural end, an end which human intelligence naturally desires, but which it could never attain without the divine assistance of grace. The theological virtue of faith is the beginning of the movement toward a share in the very life of God in the Beatific Vision that a gracious God freely offers His creatures in love. Faith is the substance of things hoped for (Hebrews 11:1) and the “thing ultimately hoped” for is sharing of the life of God given by Himself to humans in a Beatifying Vision of Love

Thomas claims the object of faith is the first truth of faith, namely, that the vision of God himself is the ultimate end of human life.⁷² Faith in God is the assent of a person to the first Truth, God Himself as his supernatural end; it is the beginning of the movement of humankind to its final end because by faith the person becomes aware of that end.⁷³ Faith in God is a cognitive habit because the object of faith is intended by the believer in an assent to the truth of whatever God has revealed in history. The reason why the believer assents is not the knowledge the believer has of God but rather the knowledge that God has of himself. In other words the motive for believing in God is God's own knowledge of himself which Thomas calls the formal object of faith. The material object is the reality believed and this is also God as the First Truth in as much as nothing comes under faith except in so far as it is related to God.⁷⁴

The known is in the knower according to the manner in which the knower achieves knowledge. (*Quidquid recipitur, per modum recipientis recipitur.*) The human mind intends what is true in the assent of judgment, and judgment takes a position, posits the object by saying, “Yes” or “No” to a proposition. The judgment is an affirmation or a negation of a proposition. God is simple and knows in a single act of understanding identical with Himself. By contrast we know simple things in a complex way because we must experience, understand, and make judgments about them before we come to know them. Since the subject matter of a judgment is expressed in a proposition that we either affirm or deny, assent to or dissent from, the material object of faith, consists in the complex activity of making judgments.

Thomas refers to the **first act of the mind** as simple because it is the act of **understanding** a quiddity or essence by answering the question, “What is it?” that is expressed in a simple word; namely, in a **concept**. The **second act of the mind**, judgment is complex because it is the synthesis of concepts expressed in a **proposition** that is then **affirmed** or posited by a yes or a no on the basis of reflectively grasping the evidence to be sufficient for a yes or insufficient requiring a no. Thus

⁷¹ C. G. III. ch. 52 and 53.

⁷² In Sent. In d 24, a 1, sol. I. De Ver q 14, a 8 c. S. T. II, II, q 1, a 1 c

⁷³ S. T. II,II, q 4 a 3 c. De Ver. q 14, a c

⁷⁴ S. T. II II q I. a 1 c.

Thomas claims the material object of faith is expressed in a proposition,⁷⁵ or in a series of propositions depending on how developed the theological understanding (science) of faith is. For Thomas the primary object of faith is God himself as the end of man, but that object is **intended** by the human mind in an assent to a judgment. The principle is: *Verum est medium in quo ens cognoscitur*. That is: **Truth (true judgments) is the medium in which being (existent reality) is known**. Not only is God the object intended by the assent in the act of faith, but the formal object, the motive, the reason why we assent is God's own authority. The ground of that authority is the infallible knowledge God has of Himself. For Thomas the faithful believe God speaks in revelation in history directly to the believer through the scriptures, tradition, and the teachings of the church. In this Thomas represents the medieval Christian worldview.⁷⁶ For Thomas the ground of faith and authority is the knowledge God has of himself. So the measure of that knowledge is not the knowledge we have of God, but the knowledge He has of Himself which knowledge the faithful person believes God to have. Thus a person can believe in God before they are able to prove the existence of God.⁷⁷

If someone believes in God, nothing false can be attributed to divine revelation. That means the believer cannot hold, based on faith, a proposition as true that is shown to be false. So the false opinions of believers arise from human conjecture rather than from faith.⁷⁸ The critical implications of this theorem are amazing. It means that if an authentic branch of human knowledge, like the sciences or history or philosophy, arrive at truths through the proper application of their methods, those truths cannot contradict what is essential to faith. Thus if the believer holds opinions that are contradictory to established knowledge, those believers cannot claim that those propositions are true on the basis of their faith without being inauthentic believers and betraying authentic faith. For Thomas this would mean that the Medieval Church should not contradict science or reason in the name of faith. It would be blasphemous to attribute falsity to God!

If belief in God rests on one's own self sufficiency, then, of course what Thomas says is nonsense. But if belief in God though not subject to reason, comes into contact with reason to bring the believer to a deeper understanding of God, a knowledge of which no person on their own is capable; then what Thomas says makes very good sense.

We have answered the first question: What is Thomas' systematic understanding of the theological virtue of faith? So we come to the second question: Why does Thomas claim the object of faith is supernatural? The term, *supernatural*, is a theorem in Thomist theology. It is not a common notion nor is it to be confused with the common notion of the supernatural that developed in the later period of the European Enlightenment. It has nothing to do with the bizarre or the ghost stories of folk mythology. We cannot understand Thomas' theological theorem of the supernatural in terms of the later scholastics who either turned the theorem into a conceptualist dogma or gave an interpretation to the term that Thomas never intended. In Thomas' systematic theology the development of the theorem of supernatural was a genuine speculative medieval achievement. It was an advance in the developing science of systematic theology.⁷⁹ Thomas' speculative theology of grace addressed a central theological problem inherited by medieval theology from the Augustinian tradition.

Thomas mentions in *the Summa Theologiae II, II*, question six article one that the Pelagians held that the cause of faith was nothing other than man's free-will; and consequently, they claimed

⁷⁵ S.T. II, II, q. 1, a 2 c; cf. In Sent. III, d24, a1 sol II.

⁷⁶ In Boet. de Trin. q 2, a 1 c. For Thomas reason errs when it takes precedence over faith to the point where a person would be willing to believe only what they could know by reason alone. Still authentic faith could never contradict authentic reason. Truth is One. Cf. also De Ver. q 14, a 8 c near the end.

⁷⁷ De Ver. q 14, a 9, ad 9

⁷⁸ S. T. II, II q I, a 3, ad 3.; In Sent. III d 24, a 1. sol III

⁷⁹ See B J F Lonergan's work on *Operating and Cooperating Grace in St. Thomas*. Theological Studies II (1941). pp. 289-324. III, (1942). pp. 69-88; 375-402; 533-578. It would be impossible to recount briefly and do justice to the historical work done on this subject by Bernard Lonergan.

that the beginning of faith arises from ourselves in as much as it is in our power to be ready to assent to things which are of faith while the perfection of faith comes from God Who proposes to us the things we are to believe. Thomas claimed this was false because by assenting to matters of faith human beings are raised above their nature. So faith must come to us from a supernatural principle that moves us inwardly and that principle must be God. Thus faith as an assent, the chief act of faith as belief, must come from God moving the mind of the believer inwardly to assent by grace.

Again in the Summa Theologiae II, II, question 109, article one, we read that knowing the truth is an employment or act of **intellectual light**. Thomas says every use implies movement in the broad sense; so we can call thinking and willing movements. No matter how perfect a corporeal or spiritual nature is, it cannot proceed to its act unless it is moved by God. This “motion” is not by necessity, but by the plan of providence. Thomas further asserts that every “motion from God” is from the First Mover, and every formal perfection is from Him as from the First Act that transcendently grounds every act in so far as it is a perfection. Thus the act of the intellect of any creature depends upon God in two ways: First in as much as it is from Him that it has the form whereby it acts; secondly, inasmuch as it is moved by Him to act. Every form bestowed on created things by God has the power for a determined act which it can bring about in proportion to its own proper endowment; and beyond which it is powerless unless it is supplemented by a form added above and beyond the given form of the act. Thus human intelligence has a form; namely, the intellectual light (experience of insight) which of itself is sufficient for knowing intelligible things proportionate to its form of intelligence; namely, the things we can come to know through the senses. The intelligible things that exist beyond the scope of the senses the human intellect cannot know properly unless it be perfected by a stronger light; namely, the **light of faith**. Following Augustine, Thomas holds that for the knowledge of any kind of truth whatsoever human beings need divine help so that the intellect is moved by God through the **intellectual light** (experience of insight) to its acts of understanding (expressed in conception) and grasping the evidence in the **light of reflective understanding** expressed in judgment. However Thomas knew that human beings do not need a new light (an experience beyond the human experience of insight) added to their natural intelligence to know the truths proportionate to the nature of human intelligence. But they do need a new light, the **light of faith**⁸⁰ to know the truths of things that surpass their natural knowledge.

In the Summa Theologiae I, II, question 111, article 2 Thomas mentions a double act of the will: The act of **willing the end** and the act of **willing the means**. The former refers to the will which hitherto willed evil but now begins to will the good. In this case God is the mover and the will is the thing moved. Thomas calls this is “**Operating Grace**.” The latter is the act of the will commanding other activities necessary to achieving the end. Thomas calls this human cooperation with God, “**Cooperating Grace**”.

The medieval Christian theological tradition understood grace to be a gift given by God over and above the natural endowments given by Him in the creation of human nature. The question for them was: If a human being is complete in his nature, how could this gift, this further enrichment, be understood? Initially medieval theologians tried to answer the question by connecting it with the Aristotelian notion of habit. They argued that just as nature is a principle of activity; and, as Aristotle showed, habit is a “second nature” because it too is a principle of activity; so, grace is a habit as a new principle of activity given by God.

However a new question was raised by the semi-Pelagian claim that God may have given the gift of His grace as a habit; but man activated it by his own free will, a position that Thomas himself entertained until he found out it was a heresy. Then he needed to find another solution. Thomas recast the question as “How was God alone responsible for the supernatural act of faith?” Was this

⁸⁰ We shall see that this “**light of faith**” can be nothing other than the recognition that God is **in love** with human beings. This is what it means to say that God is the first grace: God gives Himself in love to mankind in Jesus.

new activity proceeding from the supernatural habit of faith, experienced by human beings, an act proceeding from the human will or from God? The problem became especially acute when considering the question of conversion when a man turned to God as his true destiny. For then how was a man responsible for his own acts if those acts were directly and solely dependant on God?

Thomas developed a creative solution to the problem of grace and its relation to human freedom by working out a **theological theorem** or **theory** of *Operating and Cooperating Grace*. He started by generalizing the principle of causality put forward by Aristotle in his treatise on *Physics*. Then he distinguished between willing the end and willing the means. He generalized the principle of causality by applying it, not only to the movement (change) in corporeal things but also to changes that occur in anything. In Thomas' theorem a cause is a **formally perfect thing (act) that is able to account for the dependence of any given effect dependent on it**. In other words a thing is an **effect** to the extent that it is **really dependent on something else either for its existence or its operation or both**. Hence in willing the end the will was suffering in the sense of receiving a motion (act) from God in the sense that the change that amounts to the act of believing (faith) is totally dependent upon God and not on itself.

In the next step Thomas applied the theorem of the supernatural habit and its corresponding act to the realm of cognitional object using the notion of intelligible light as an analogy for the light of faith. Thus he argued that just as the **intellectual light** was infused when God created human intelligence so the **light of faith** was infused in God's new creation in the act of faith in the human being who begins to trust and believe in God. If habits and acts are ultimately specified by their objects, then the supernatural habit and act of faith is specified by the cognitional object attained in faith. The object itself is God revealing Himself and so the act and the habit from which it proceeds must be supernatural.

Thomas made clear in his *Summa Contra Gentes* the continuity of nature with supernatural grace in his discussion of the natural desire to know God. Thomas claimed since the desires to understand and to know were natural and since they were potentially unrestricted (*potens omnia facere et fieri*), that demonstrated human beings were open to an unrestricted, an Infinite Act of Understanding and Knowing that could only be God Himself as *Ipsium Intelligere*. Still it was obvious to Thomas that even if human beings were open to God or intending God in their wonder and questions, it was not true that they could understand and know everything about everything by knowing God in His Essence as Pure Self-Understanding. On its own no created intelligence can understand or know God as God knows Himself and everything else. Thus since the proper object of faith is God as He reveals Himself, the object of faith is God as the **supernatural** end of mankind, an end that cannot be willed unless it is first known in some way. A supernatural end, God's gift of Himself in love, cannot be known outside of the assent of faith.

The Beatific Vision of God, the final destiny of man, is not attainable by man's natural power of understanding. The propositions of faith are called mysteries because they could neither be demonstrated once they were revealed nor could they be fully understood even after assent was given to them in faith. Still they were not "mysteries" in the obscurantist sense of being unintelligible. Thomas thought that even though the mysteries of faith could not be directly understood, they could be understood by intelligent analogies. It was not possible to have a reflective understanding of the mysteries of faith because their truth was beyond a strictly human knowledge; and therefore, they were not demonstrable by reason. But a theologian could show why the mysteries of faith expressed in doctrines like the Trinity or the Incarnation are not impossible or self-contradictory.⁸¹ Still it is one thing to show a doctrinal proposition to be non-contradictory; it is quite another thing to prove that the mysteries are true. Nevertheless the theologian could use a created analogue to understand, however imperfect the analogue, to illuminate the meaning of the mysteries of faith revealed by an Uncreated Act of Understanding. The truth of the mysteries of faith is "known" in the sense of

⁸¹ In Boet. de Trin. q 1. a 4 c.

assented to as true in the act of faith. The assent to the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation intends the mystery of God himself in accordance with Thomas' oft quoted principle: "Verum est medium in quo ens cognositur."

The question remaining is: How does the supernatural object compare with the schema on the objects of human understanding? Thomas has assembled all the elements of the solution. For the supernatural object is a further determination of the transcendent object of human understanding: the truth as that in which the mind grasps the real (being). The judgments expressing the truth of the mysteries of faith intend the reality of God himself just as human knowledge intends what is real in true judgments. "Verum est medium in quo ens cognositur." Though the elements of the solution were already present in Thomas' *De Veritate*, it was not until he wrote the *Summa Contra Gentes*⁸² that Thomas was able to come to deal effectively with the problem of the relation between the natural and the supernatural on the **cognitional level**; for it was not until he had worked out the account of the natural desire to know God as that natural opening of the human mind to a supernatural end. Once that became clear to him the notion of a supernatural object in faith could be placed in continuity with the objects of human understanding. It became clear how the transcendent object intended in the assent (judgment) of faith is the Being of God Himself. As Thomas would put it: God, the First Truth, intends a supernatural end for human beings; namely, the knowledge of God as He is in Himself without the medium of a created idea (species). This means that the knowledge human beings will have of God in the Vision of God will be an act of understanding which will terminate not in a concept but in the very essence of God⁸³ (First Truth) when all our questions will be answered in the direct knowledge of God who is the Unrestricted Act of Understanding. Such knowledge of God is proper to God alone and thus beyond the understanding of any created intelligence. It would be the pure Gift of Self, a Divine Self Who is Infinite Love Itself, to man, His intelligent creature. This Vision of God beginning with the loving gift of faith is expressed in the assent to the truth of the mysteries, the unfolding of which has occurred in time in the history of the developing Christian doctrines.⁸⁴

Human understanding intends the real, but the real is what can be rationally affirmed with sufficient evidence in a judgment. For Thomas faith and belief in God, even if it was a supernatural act, had to be a reasonable act and certainly not an irrational act. God Himself is Pure Intelligence Itself. The ultimate good God intends for man and makes possible for him in an act of love is a share in the Knowledge He has of Himself in the Beatific Vision. The openness of human beings to the possibility of that Vision Thomas recognized as grounded in the natural desire to see God expressed in man's unrestricted desire to understand and to know. The Vision begins in the knowledge of God's love in the **light of faith** (the experience that God is in love with us!) that leads a person to affirm the truth of the mysteries of faith. The vision of God, the direct understanding of the divine essence, is the perfection of the knowledge that comes from faith. Thomas understood the supernatural object of faith as defining the concrete, existential reality of human life. The conscious and intelligent process that begins with the simple wonder of the child that then becomes the complex and manifold questions of the mature person called to become even more perfect in the act of faith, and finally in death ends in the Vision of God, remains for Thomas an intelligent and rational process that takes place in the unfolding consciousness of the intelligent life of humankind.

⁸² A natural desire for the beatific vision is absent from the earlier writings: there is the silence of *In I I Sent.*, d. 33, q. 2; a. 2; IV, d. 49, q. 2, a. 1; *Quod.*, X, a. 7; *De Ver.* q. 8, a. 1; furthermore, it seems positively excluded by *De Ver.*, q. 14, a. 2, with which compare *Sum. Theol.*, II-II, q. 4, a. 1. **Its first appearance would seem the masterly discussion of beatitude in C. Gent.**, 111, 25-63; see esp. cc. 25, 48, 50, 63. It is reaffirmed in *Sum. Theol.*, I, q. 12, a. 1 c; a. 8 ad 401; q. 62, a. 1 c; I-II, q. 3, a. 8; *Compo Thel.*, C. 104. The origin of the doctrine is Aristotle (*In I Met.*, lect. 1, § 2-4; lect. 3, § 54 f; § 66 f.). This appears most clearly in *C. Gent.*, 111,50, and *Sum. Theol.*, I-II, q. 3, a. 8 C.

⁸³ *Cont Gent.* III. ch. 54 DO. 9

⁸⁴ *S. T. II,II*, q 1, a, c.

Chapter IV

The Act of Faith

The last chapter explored the notion of the supernatural object of faith in the systematic theology of Thomas Aquinas. For Thomas the theorem of the supernatural was already part of the medieval Augustinian theological tradition. Thomas centered his theology of faith on an understanding of religious conversion as the act of willing the supernatural end, an act that was directly dependent upon God. Then he worked out the theological implications of the notion of the supernatural object of faith in the light of his practice of cognitional introspection. His investigation of human understanding brought him to the conclusion that human understanding rooted in wonder and the natural desire to understand and to know was the basis for man's openness to God. He located this openness to God in man's natural desire to see the essence of God. He distinguished between the natural desire and its supernatural fulfillment by showing that the natural desire was unrestricted in the sense that it could be satisfied only by a knowledge of God based on a direct understanding of God himself in the Beatific Vision. The Beatific Vision of God was utterly beyond the power of any creature and thus proper to God alone.

In his treatment of faith in *the Summa Theologiae*, second part, he maintained that the end of man that was the object of the natural desire was intended but not naturally known, but became known when the person began to have faith and believe in God. What was only an unspecified possibility in the openness of the natural desire became a determinate possibility as the believed object of faith. In the assent of faith the object of faith is not understood but believed. The assent of faith is a judgment, which like all judgments, intends being or what really and truly is. In this case it is God himself who is the object of the central mysteries of the Christian faith (Trinity' and Incarnation). There is continuity in the conscious process of coming to know God, but faith represents a higher integration of man's knowledge of God. Faith in God is a higher integration of the knowledge of God than what is possible through reason alone because faith introduces a new cognitional object, a supernatural truth that only God can know and bring about: The gift of God's Love to man in the direct vision of God.

This chapter will focus on the act of faith itself and how it attains its supernatural object. The primary purpose will be to show that there is a corresponding supernatural act in the cognitional order that attains a supernatural object and that from this act there follows in intelligent and rational consciousness the other acts that lead to the assent of faith in God. Thomas' understanding of the conscious process of coming to belief in God will be examined.

Typically Thomas begins his explanation of the conscious process of coming to belief in God by recalling a cognitional principle he learned from Aristotle: An act is specified by its object, a habit is known through its act, an act or habit is said to be good by the end that it intends. Next he adds the theological theorem of the supernatural object of faith: The ultimate good of mankind as intended and known by God is the direct vision of Himself. Faith is the act by which a person becomes aware of his supernatural end. It follows that the object and the end of faith are one and the same thing: God Himself, as the First Truth.⁸⁵ Knowledge of the supernatural object will shed light on the supernatural cognitional act that is the beginning of faith. Thomas customarily referred to the supernatural cognitional act grounding the assent of faith as the **Light of Faith** or the **Lumen Fidei**. He used the analogy of **light** to express the continuity in consciousness between human knowledge and the theological virtue of faith. In the first chapter we showed how Thomas spoke of a light of intelligence that is the principle and ground in experience of the act of understanding. The light of faith then, is the principle and ground in experience of the act of faith and belief. It is the origin of belief in the cognitional order. Just as the Intellectual Light manifests the principles of understanding to the knower so also the light of faith manifests the articles of faith to the believer. Or in an analogy from

⁸⁵ S.T. II, II, q. 1, a 1c.

Aristotle's logic: Just as the act of understanding grasping an inference makes the conclusion of a syllogism manifest to the mind of the person making an argument, so also the light of faith makes the articles of faith credible for the one believing. Thomas says the light of faith is the **ratio** inclining the will to believe the articles of faith and through the articles God himself. Thomas claims that corresponding to the light of faith is the Word of God himself.⁸⁶

Insofar as truth perfects the intellect, the intellect is made more perfect by the light of faith which makes the divine truth available to the human mind.⁸⁷ The light of faith is identical with the infused habit of faith to the extent that it has the same function as the habit of faith.⁸⁸ In the believer it functions as a kind of discretion, a discernment of spiritual meaning and truth.⁸⁹ Through the light of faith the believer discerns what ought to be believed as coming from God from what ought not to be believed as not coming from God. The light of faith does not destroy the natural light of reason but complements and goes beyond it. Sacred doctrine is founded on the light of faith. The light of faith is experienced as an inner act that responds to the Word of God in revelation.⁹⁰ It inwardly inclines a person to assent to the truths of faith. It acts like the grasp of sufficient evidence in a judgment but in this case the light of faith freely induces a person to believe in God and His Word. Thus it is sufficient to ground the assent of faith. The light of faith does not result in an actual understanding of the mysteries of faith but it gently inclines the will to believe. It does not force assent, but allows it to be voluntarily. Just as intellectual light is innate and infused at creation so also the light of faith is infused by God in the first act of faith of the believer. The **light of faith** is an imperfect participation in the supernatural light which will become **perfect** in the **light of glory** that makes the Beatific Vision actual. Thus the light of faith leaves rational, discursive thought restless and unfulfilled (*inquietus*).

Thomas calls the light of faith evidence because, like evidence for a judgment which permits a person to determine what is to be judged, it permits a person to determine what is to be believed.⁹¹ He says the light of faith is more powerful in the believer than the natural light of reason in the knower. Though the fallen angels assent to the truths of faith, they do not possess the infused light of faith for it is the gift of a loving response to the gift of God's love which they have rejected.⁹² The light of faith makes the truths of faith credible and through the will directs the human mind to assent to the truths of the mysteries of love and awe in faith and not to things that would compromise faith. Lacking the light of faith, unbelievers are ignorant of what ought to be believed.⁹³ Thomas calls the light of faith an inner divine instinct responding to God's authority.⁹⁴ Thomas says that when the infused habit of faith is in act, it is said to be determined by God through revelation and by man through doctrine.⁹⁵

Collecting the texts in which Thomas writes so eloquently of the lumen fidei is one thing, but interpreting them correctly and understanding how together they make sense of what Thomas meant by the light of faith is something else. The heart of this thesis is that Thomas made the lumen fidei

⁸⁶ **In Sent. III**, d 23, q 2, a 1 sol. 1; **In Boet. de Trin.** q 3, a I, ad 1. **Der Ver** q 14, a 2, ad 9. ; **S. T. II, II** q 2, a 3, ad 2.

⁸⁷ **In Sent. III**, d 23. q 3. a 1 sol II

⁸⁸ **Compare In Sent. III** d 23. q 3. a 3. sol II and **In Sent III**, d 24. q 1. a 2, sol II, ad 3 and **In Boet. de Trin.** q 3. a 1. ad. 4.

⁸⁹ **In Sent. III** d 24. q 1. a 2. sol II ad 3. "Discretionem credendorum habet homo per lumen fidei sic ut discretionem spiritum per aliquam gratiam gratis datam unde homo lumen fidei habeas non consentit his quae sunt contra fidem nisi inclinationem fidei derelinquat ex sua culpa "

⁹⁰ **In Boet de Trin** q 3. a 1 c.

⁹¹ **De Ver** q 14. a 2. ad. 9. near the end

⁹² **De Ver** q 14. a 9. ad 4 for the fallen angels have refused God's gift of love: Satan's "Non serviam!"

⁹³ **S. T. II, II** q 1. a 4. ad. 5.

⁹⁴ **S. T. II, II** q 2. a 9.

⁹⁵ **In Sent. III**. d 23. q 3. a .2 ,sol 1 ad 4. Is Thomas anticipating the notion of the historical development of doctrines?

the defining conscious act in what he meant by faithfully believing in God. The light of faith is the defining conscious act not only in his psychological understanding but also in his systematic theological understanding of faith. It is the central conscious act in the psychological process of coming to belief because it is the equivalent of the reflective act of understanding⁹⁶ that grounds the judgment of value which in the case of faith is the judgment based on the recognition of God's love for man and his will for him to share in His Divine Life as his final destiny and ultimate good. As grounding the judgment of the value in believing, the light of faith is concrete because it intends the good that God wills for us. The *lumen fidei* functioning as a reflective act of understanding consciously orients a person to the higher integration of the knowledge that comes from faith in God.⁹⁷ The principle of intellectual light is integrated in a judgment based on an understanding of the sufficiency of evidence that allows a proposition to be known to be true. The light of faith is an inner principle that is integrated in the assent of faith that allows the believer to be conscious of the truth known by God and communicated by Him. The truths of the mysteries of faith are vital truths because they represent the ultimate meaning of human life that God intends for man. In order to understand how Thomas was able to unite his statements on faith in a single view, the interpreter must grasp the central significance of the function of the *lumen fidei*. For it was through this conscious and reflective act that Thomas applied the theorem of the supernatural in the cognitional order. It was through this same act that Thomas demonstrated the continuity between nature and grace within the unfolding of human intelligent and rational self-consciousness. Through this act a person becomes conscious of his own selfhood before God.

This final chapter will first explore the place of what Thomas called the *preambles of faith* (*praeambula fidei*) and the reflective act of understanding that grounds the judgment of the value of believing in God. The preambles of faith are the beginning of the conscious process of coming to faith in God. Then we ask the question: How does the light of faith, the *lumen fidei* make it possible for the believer to assent to the mysteries of faith? The question concerns the application of Thomas' psychological analysis of the conscious process of coming to believe in God. The analysis will shed light on Thomas' odd claim that the fallen angels (devils) have a kind of faith because they believe the mysteries of faith to be true. Finally the chapter will conclude with a brief discussion of how Thomas understood the connections between authority, faith, reason, and revelation.

A preamble to faith is any form of knowledge that prepares a person, makes the person capable of and leads a person to believe in God. The preambles are all the things a person understands and naturally believes that can orient them to the act of assent in faith. Thus Thomas begins by saying that nature itself is a preamble to faith.⁹⁸ He maintains that one of the uses of philosophical argument is to demonstrate the truth of the preambles. Though Thomas never lists the philosophical preambles, they can be inferred to be all the truths about God that can be demonstrated by reason. The things that lead a person to faith in God are different for different men. Thus the preambles are not necessarily philosophical truths. Thomas remarks that a person can begin to believe what they did not at first believe but held as true with some hesitation or doubt. For example, before believing in God a person might think God exists, even though the person has no proof that He does, but the person might come to think it would please God if the person believed in Him and even believed God to exist.⁹⁹ However for a more educated person with a knowledge of philosophy, the preambles would need to be philosophically and historically rigorously demonstrated. For the person incapable of understanding philosophical arguments, the preambles will consist of natural, more or less, reasonable beliefs. Thus the preambles of faith are truths of natural reason either known or reasonably believed.

⁹⁶ *In Boet. de Trin.* q 3. a. 1. ad 4

⁹⁷ *In Sent III.* d. 24. q 1. a 3. sol II, ad 2. Homo. dum credit. rationem non abnegat. quasi contra eam faciens sed eam transcendit, altiori dirigenti innixus scilicet, Veritate Primae; quia ea quae fidei sunt. etsi supra rationem sunt tamen non sunt contra rationem. See also *De Ver.* q 14. a 2. ad 9.

⁹⁸ *In Boet. de Trin.* q 1. a 3c

⁹⁹ *De Ver.* q. 14, a 9, ad 9.

For Thomas what makes a preamble a preamble is the fact that it orients a person to believe in God as his supernatural end in the Beatific Vision. The believer comes to faith who believes his destiny is to be in community with God in God's very own life.

Sic ergo intellectuale lumen gratiae ponitur donum intellectus, in quantum intellectus hominis est bene mobilis a spiritu sancto. Huius autem motus consideratio in hoc est quod homo apprehendat veritatem circa fidem. Unde nisi usque ad hoc moveatur a spiritu sancto intellectus humanus ad rectam aestimationem de fine habeat. nondum assectus est donum intellectus; quantumcumque ex illustratione spiritus alia quaedam praeambula cognoscat.

Accordingly, then, the intellectual light of grace is called the gift of understanding in so far as man's understanding is easily moved by the Holy Spirit, the consideration of which movement depends on a true apprehension of the end. Wherefore unless the human intellect be moved by the Holy Spirit so far as to have a right estimate of the end, it has not yet obtained the gift of understanding however much the Holy Spirit may have enlightened it in regard to other truths that are preambles to faith.¹⁰⁰

The intellectual light of which Thomas speaks is the light of faith that is an inner word that causes or grounds the assent of faith. The transcendent efficient cause of the assent of faith is God Himself.

"Quia cum homo. assentiendo his quae sunt fidei. elevator supra naturam suam, oportet quod hoc insit ei ex supernaturali principio interius movente quod est deus. Et ideo fides quantum ad assensum qui est principalis actus fidei, est a deo interius movente per gratiam.

For since man by assenting to matters of faith is raised above his nature, this must needs accrue to him from some supernatural principle moving him inwardly; and this is God. Therefore faith as regards the assent which is the principal act in faith is from God moving man inwardly by grace.¹⁰¹

God alone is responsible for the creation of the light of faith. It is in that light that the person coming to belief in God is able to understand what is believable and what is not.

Lumen fidei facit videre ea quae creduntur. Sicut enim per alios habitus virtutum homo videt illud quod est sibi conveniens secundum habitum illum. Ita etiam per habitum fidei inclinatur mens hominis ad assentiendum his quae conveniunt rectae fidei et non aliis.

The light of faith makes us see what we believe. For just as by the habits of the other virtues, man sees what is becoming to him in regard to that habit, by the habit of faith the human mind is directed to assent to such things as are becoming to and proper to faith and not to assent to others.¹⁰²

Unbelievers who lack the light of faith are ignorant of the credibility of the things concerning faith.

Infideles eorum quae sunt fidei ignorant jam habet. Quia nec vident aut sciunt ea in seipsis, nec cognoscunt ea esse credibilia. Sed per hunc modum fideles habent eorum notitiam non quasi demonstrative sed in quantum per lumen fidei videntur esse credenda.

Unbelievers are in ignorance of things that are of faith, for neither do they see them in themselves nor do they know them to be credible. The faithful on the other hand, know them, not by demonstration, but by the light of faith which makes them see that they ought to believe them.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ S. T. II, II, q 8, a 5 c.

¹⁰¹ S. T. II, II q 6. a. 1 c. near the end. The light of faith is an impression of the First Truth in our minds. See **In Boet. de Trio.** q 3, a 1. ad 4

¹⁰² S. T. II, II q 1. a 4. ad 3. See also ad 2.

¹⁰³ S. T. II, II q 1, a 5, ad 1.

The light of faith makes it possible for the preambles to orient the person to assent to the truths of faith. The light of faith turns the potential preambles into actual conditions that lead the person to faith. The light of faith is the equivalent of the reflective act of understanding expressed in the judgment of value of believing in the Word of God. It is a judgment that says it is worthwhile for the person to believe that human beings have been called by God to a supernatural end. Thomas says the preambles are related to the light of faith as matter is related to form. Thus the preambles do not orient a person to assent to the truths of faith until they are illuminated by the light of faith.¹⁰⁴ In the terms of consciousness this means that the *lumen fidei* allows the prospective believer to recognize the value of believing in God and the revealed mysteries and turns the praeambula into what will actually lead the prospective believer to assent to believe. Thus the light of faith is related to the preambles the way reflective grasp of evidence is related to the affirmation of a proposition which before the judgment or assent is a mere synthesis of inner words (concepts). In the case of belief in God Thomas says emphatically that it is a recognition that God has gifted human beings with the supernatural end of sharing His own life with them in the Beatific Vision. The mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation are foretastes of knowing God as He knows Himself. Neither God as the supernatural end of human beings nor the mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation could be known without revelation and faith in God.

What Thomas does not say, but took for granted, was the Gospel, the Good News announced in the writings of the New Testament: God loved us first. The prospective believer comes to recognize that *God has fallen in love with human beings*, became one of us (Incarnation), and allowed His Son to be sacrificed on the Cross out of love for us. “Greater love has no man than this: That a man lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13) The *Lumen Fidei* is the recognition of the prospective believer that God loves Him, has befriended him as the writer of John’s Gospel would say, “No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but *I have called you my friends*, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.” (John 15:15) The recognition (*Light of Faith*) that God has befriended us is itself a grace, a supernatural gift of God that no human being can merit. Love cannot be commanded, but it can be motivated, the will can be moved inwardly and freely to assent by the light of faith, the grace of conversion.

How are the preambles of faith taken in the formal sense related to the mysteries of faith? Recall that Thomas claims almost anything can be a preamble to faith: The most obvious things from his medieval perspective would be things like the reading of the scriptures, or the teachings of the church, but by his own principles it could be anything: a person we know, a book we read, a life experience like a birth or a death in the family, a movie we see (even though Thomas knew nothing about movies), etc. God could use anything as the occasion for bestowing the light of faith on a person. The light of faith orients a person to be open to believe in the mysteries revealed by God.

Thomas says the proposition that God is **one** when predicated of the divine essence by the believer is an article of faith.¹⁰⁵ He says that the **omnipotence** and **providence** of God in one sense cannot be proved by reason. How can Thomas maintain these propositions since he has given many proofs from reason alone to demonstrate that God is **one, omnipotent, and provident**?¹⁰⁶ Is he contradicting himself? We must understand these apparent inconsistencies in the light of what Thomas says about the light of faith as the form of the preambles of faith. Here is Thomas’ explanation:

¹⁰⁴ The reason for this is given by Thomas in the *De Veritate* q 14, a 5, ad 5 when he says that understanding precedes the act of the will in the process of reception. If something is to move the will to assent in belief, it must first be received into the understanding. This is the function of the *lumen fidei* as the reflective act of understanding grounding the judgment of value in believing in the mysteries revealed by God himself

¹⁰⁵ *De Veritate* q. 14, a 9, ad 8.

¹⁰⁶ God is **One**: S.T. I, q. 11, aa. 1-4; God is **Omnipotent**: S.T. I, q. 25 aa. 1-6; God is **Provident**: S.T. I, q. 22, aa. 1-4.

The articles of faith stand in the same relation to the doctrine of faith, as self-evident principles to a teaching based on natural reason. Among these principles there is a certain order, so that some are contained implicitly in others; thus all principles are reduced, as to their first principle, to this one: "The same thing cannot be affirmed and denied at the same time," as the Philosopher states (*Metaphysics*, iv, text. 9). In like manner all the articles are contained implicitly in certain primary matters of faith, such as God's existence, and His providence over the salvation of man, according to Heb. 11: "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and is a rewarder to them that seek Him." For the existence of God includes all that we believe to exist in God eternally, and in these our happiness consists; while belief in His providence includes all those things which God dispenses in time, for man's salvation, and which are the way to that happiness: and in this way, again, some of those articles which follow from these are contained in others: thus faith in the Redemption of mankind includes belief in the Incarnation of Christ, His Passion and so forth.¹⁰⁷

Thus the truths established by the natural light of reason like God is one, omnipotent, and provident turn out to be **generic truths**; but once they become **informed by the light of faith** and believed on the authority of the Word of God in history, they become **specific truths** connected with God revealing Himself and carry all the further meaning that historic truth bear beyond what human beings can know on their own. An example would be the difference between knowing that someone was born on a certain date and in a certain place from a particular parents, on the one hand (a generic truth), and on the other hand learning about the concrete particulars of the events from a narrative of the father or mother who personally knew those events.

So Thomas says that the articles or truths of faith are implicitly contained in the primary matters of faith such as God's existence and his providence over the salvation of man. The existence of God includes everything the faithful believe to exist in God eternally, for example, the TrInlty. Faith and its corresponding belief (assent) in providence include all the things that God dispenses in time for man's salvation and happiness, for example the Incarnation and the mystery of the Cross. Thomas notes that all the mysteries of faith are implicitly contained in these two truths. The person enlightened by the light of faith believes (assents to) them and is open to discover the implications of the truths God revealed in history. This is the function of theology and the unfolding of the doctrines of the church. For Thomas the light of faith is a supernatural form of openness based on the fact that the believer primarily trusts God, only derivatively the church, in so far as the church is the faithful community of God. Thomas, as theologian, believes in **doctrine** without being a **dogmatist**, a distinction many Christians have to learn. In the openness established by the light of faith the believer refuses to place anything in the way of investigating the truths God reveals in history.

The preambles of faith informed by the light of faith function as the reflective act of understanding: The **intelligent, rationally self-conscious** process of coming to believe in God as the supernatural end of human beings. For Thomas the implication is that believing, assenting to the truths of the mysteries in the light of the light of **faith is an extension of human intelligence, not something opposed to intelligence**. There is no **"wall of separation"** between intelligence and faith that was to become a principle of the "European Enlightenment," an "Enlightenment" that Leo Strauss called a *lucus a non lucendo*, a "light where there was to be no light." The "wall of separation" became the basis for the opposition between faith and reasonableness that even the post-medieval churches, if not explicitly, then implicitly by their pronouncements and behavior promoted.

To understand what Thomas meant by the conjunction of the preambles of faith informed by the light of faith we need to understand what he meant by the reflective act of understanding. Thomas

¹⁰⁷ S.T. II, II. q. 1, a. 7 c.

based his understanding of the act of faith on the analogy of making a reasonable judgment when we come to know any truth. For him all human knowledge begins in experience, the conscious acts of the senses both internal and external. With wonder and with the what and how questions (*Quid sit?*) about experience that arise from wonder, sometimes we achieve understanding. Once the conscious, intelligent act of understanding occurs, we express our understanding as a first inner word in concepts that intend an explanation or the meaning of a thing. But understanding is not yet knowing, even though it is an essential part of knowing. For Thomas the next question is crucial in coming to know. It is the question: Is it true? (*An sit*) that intends the truth about the thing. The question, Is it true?, looks to an act of reflective understanding characterized by the critical unrest expressed in the reflective question that demands the truth. Reflection proceeds by collecting and marshalling all the evidence; ordering it so it is relevant and sufficient for making a sound judgment based on it, whether the evidence is found in the senses or in memory, or in definitions, or in hypotheses, or in previous sound judgments. When these are collected and ordered in reflection the mind begins to weigh and measure them in order to determine whether the evidence is sufficient to ground a sound judgment or not. This reflection, weighing, and measuring comes to an end in the reflective act of understanding and by it the evidence is recognized either as a certainty, a probability, a mere possibility, or a reasonable doubt, and therefore, in some way or another sufficient or insufficient for a good judgment. Once the evidence is recognized, there arises by a kind of (rational) necessity for the judgment.

In the case of the theological virtue of faith the reflective question is: Is it worthwhile to believe God has revealed Himself in history? Thomas' theory of faith based on his cognitional analysis of the intelligent and rational conscious process of coming to believe is not a form of apologetics but a systematic understanding of the theological virtue of faith. Thomas was attempting to understand what was meant by believing in God by explaining the genesis of belief in rational self-consciousness. In Thomas' theorem of supernatural faith the pivotal act is the reflective act of understanding the *preambula fidei* in the light of the *lumen fidei* that grounds the assent to the truth of the mysteries in belief, especially, belief in the central mystery of the Beatific Vision as man's supernatural end. All antecedent and consequent acts are brought together in the preambles by the light of faith, the believer's recognition of God's love for him. That recognition along with the preambles becomes the basis for the judgment of overwhelming value commanding the assent of the will in the act of faith.

The acts antecedent to the intellect commanding the will to assent are brought together in the reflective act of understanding, for the reflective acts of understanding in grasping the truth of the preambles preceding the act of faith constituted by the will's assent form a certain apprehension of the evidence. This apprehension is brought about in one way by the learned and in another way by the uneducated; in one way by those born into the faith and in another way by those who come to faith later in life. A person could spend a lifetime examining evidence for believing and never come to make the act of faith. Until the light of faith itself brings the questions for reflection and deliberation to closure in the recognition of God's love and the gift of Himself to the believer, there is no reason in the intellect, whose light is enhanced by the light of faith, to demand that the will command the assent of the intellect to believe in the truth of the mysteries. Thus for Thomas Christian faith is not a blind leap of the mind, a step into the darkness, but a leap into the light! Faith does not suspend the intelligent and rational exigencies of the human mind, but heightens them. Faith is neither unintelligent nor irrational, but super-intelligent and super reasonable. The judgment of the value to believe is reasonable because it proceeds from sufficient evidence recognized as sufficient in the light of faith. The act of the will to believe is rational and reasonable because its object, man's union with God in love, is a supreme good and an ultimate value in accord with reason; and, therefore, always more than but never less than reasonable.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ **De Ver.** q 1, a 2, ad 9. Faith surpasses reason not because there is no act of reason in faith, but because reasoning about matters of faith (mysteries) cannot lead to a recognition of their truth independently of revelation.

Finally, then, the light of faith concerns practical judgments in the realm of the personal life of the believer. As such it is always connected with the community (the church) in history. Faith is not a solitary act of an isolated believer. As an extension of the intellectual light, the light of faith makes the fruitful, intellectual collaboration of believers possible in the form of a theological, academic community as well as in the form of the common sense community of practical human life.

The *lumen fidei* informing the preambles of faith acts as the reflective act of understanding in the judgment of value grounding the assent of belief commanded by the will. Thus the following are the moments in the intelligent and rationally self-conscious act of faith:

1. **The lumen fidei, the light of faith**, functioning as the reflective act of understanding by which the prospective believer recognizes the sufficiency of evidence for eliciting reasonably the following conscious acts:

2. The **practical judgment of credibility** that the truth of the supernatural end is credible. Thomas says the practical judgment of value consists in the fact that the person affirms himself to be destined by God to share in God's own life in the Beatific Vision as a supernatural end.

3. The **practical judgment of credentia** in which he believes in the truth of revelation including of all the other mysteries connected with his supernatural end.

4. The act of willing the supernatural **end**: The will wills the supernatural end ordered by God and the believer intends to pursue that end in his life.

5. The **act of willing the means**: Thomas calls willing the means "the pious affection of the believer." The believer recognizes his obligation to believe in God and commands the intellect to assent in the act of faith.

6. The act of **assent to the truth** of revelation and the mysteries of faith **elicited in the intellect**, freely commanded by the will. Faith remains thinking with assent.

For Thomas the assent of faith is the act of a reasonable person; it attains its object by assenting to the truth that God reveals, but it also retains its relation to intelligence and reason because its motive for belief in God is a value in accord with reason. For the ultimate reason why the believer believes is the authority of God, and the ground of God's authority is the knowledge and truthfulness of God. What could be more reasonable than to believe someone who knows everything and always speaks the truth? The light of faith "illuminates" this higher rationality that has its ultimate ground, not in human reason, but In God himself.¹⁰⁹

Thomas distinguishes three meanings of the act of faith: ***Credere Deo***: To believe God; ***Credere Deum***: To believe in God's word; and ***Credere In Deo***: To have faith or trust in God.¹¹⁰ To believe God (***Credere Deo***) refers to the reason why the mind, illuminated by the light of faith, is inclined by the will to assent to things that cannot be fully understood or evidenced, but simply because God knows them to be true and reveals them. To believe in God's word (***Credere Deum***) refers to the principle of evidence or objectivity in the act of believing. It refers to the act of assent which intends the First Truth as its object. Finally to have faith in God (***Credere in Deo***) refers to the act of trust as

¹⁰⁹ **In Sent. III** d 24, q I, a 2 sol II, ad 3. Where it is said that human reason is prior to human authority and divine reason is prior to divine authority. Cf. **S. T. II, II** q 4, a 8, ad 2. The authority of an expert is based upon his understanding of the matter under consideration.

¹¹⁰ **In Sent. III.** d. 23, q 2,a. 3, sol II, **S.T. II, II**, q 2. a 2 c.

the act of the will commanding the assent of the intellect in the act of faith. All three acts are held together in a unity by the **light of faith, the lumen fidei**.¹¹¹

A heretic is someone who has consciously rejected what he once believed and therefore lacks the light of faith. The heretic lacks discretion and cannot distinguish between what is and is not to be believed; sometimes he believes too much and is gullible or superstitious; other times too little and he is skeptical or willfully arbitrary basing his judgment on common custom. The heretic tends to pick and chose what he believes in accordance with the times or with his temperament. Even when he believes in the mysteries of faith, it is for the wrong reason, not a reason illuminated by the light of faith. The light of faith is the gift of openness to the truth of the mysteries of faith. It is the grace of faith distinguishing the true believer from the heretic. In contrast the man or woman of faith is the person who seeks the truth either in human knowledge, in belief, or in faith.¹¹²

Oddly enough Thomas claims the devils believe in the truth of the mysteries of faith. Whether or not devils exist, this raises the question: If they do exist, how might the belief of a devil or a fallen angel differ from the belief of a man or woman of faith?¹¹³ A fallen angel is a pure spirit who has consciously and once and for all rejected God as its end. A pure spirit is an immaterial, intelligent being whose life consists solely in acts of understanding and willing. The knowledge of a purely Intelligent creature like an angel is non-discursive, a knowledge based on perfect self-understanding and perfect self-knowledge. Fallen angels believe on the basis of their pure intelligence not on the basis of the light of faith. They lack the grace of the ***lumen fidei***. Still they cannot fully understand the mysteries nor do they have the direct evidence for their truth which can be had only by the blessed in the Beatific Vision. Their belief is intelligent and reasonable; but it is not the meritorious act of the theological virtue of faith. Even the fallen angels have a natural orientation to the supernatural end of enjoying the direct Vision of God. But they lack the act of the will commanding the intellect to assent based on the **lumen fidei** even though they have the evidence from human history that the mysteries of faith must be true. If they assent to the truth of the mysteries, it is by the powerful, natural light of their own intelligence.¹¹⁴ They have rejected the love of God and God's being in love with them. The meaning of the ***lumen fidei*** is the gift of recognizing God's being in love with us as well as the gift of responding to that love in faith by being in love with Him. Faith is perfected in love.

Thomas knew that faith does not occur in a vacuum. While the formal cause of the act of faith is ***the lumen fidei***, still the light of faith gets its content from God's revelation occurring in human communities in history.¹¹⁵ Thomas claims the faithful believe in prophets and apostles insofar as they witness to the Lord through signs and miracles; and the faithful believe in the successors of the apostles only insofar as they witness to the truth of the things that the prophets and the apostles left in their writings (sacred scriptures).¹¹⁶ For Thomas faith is infallible only to the extent that it inheres in God and God's testimony.¹¹⁷ Thus for Thomas the authority of God is based first on the knowledge of Himself and communicated to mankind through His prophets and apostles; next it is witnessed by the apostles confirmed by signs and miracles; and finally the word of God is believed by the faithful because of the ***inner light of faith*** that illuminates human intelligence through the command of the will to the intellect to assent to the truth of the mysteries of faith.¹¹⁸

In Thomas' theology the basis for divine revelation is the truth proposed by God in the sacred scriptures, interpreted by the doctrines of the church developed by the church councils. The doctrines in turn shed light on the truths of faith and make it possible for human beings to develop a further

¹¹¹ **De Ver.** q 14, a 7, ad 7.

¹¹² **S.T. II, II** q 5. a 3 c and ad 1, 2, 3. **De Ver.** q 14, a 10

¹¹³ Cf. **De Ver.** q. 14, a. 11, ad. 2

¹¹⁴ **In Boet. de Trin.** q 3. a 1. ad 5. Natural reason holds that assent ought to be given to truths declared by God.

¹¹⁵ **In Boet. de Trin.** q 3. a I, ad 4

¹¹⁶ **De Ver** q 14, a. 10. ad 11.

¹¹⁷ **De Ver.** q. 14, a 8 c.

¹¹⁸ **S.T. II, II**, q. 2, a. 9, ad 3.

understanding of those truths in theology. Revelation is the objective correlate to the light of faith in the believing subject. The development of the doctrines of the Christian faith represents an unfolding of the meaning in human understanding of the truths revealed by God.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ ***S. T. II, II*** q 5, a 3, ad 2. Also **Quod libet IV** a 18, q. 9, a 3) The place of reason and authority in theological method. ***In Boet. De Trin*** q. 3, a1, ad 4 and ***In Sent. III***, d. 24, q. 2, a1, sol IV, ad 1.

Chapter V

Conclusions

In the thesis we traced the systematic theology of faith in the works of the great, medieval theologian, Thomas Aquinas. First we explored the meaning of his theorem of the *lumen intellectuale*, experienced in wonder, questions, and direct and reflective acts of understanding, then we explained the common notion of **belief** Thomas recognized as necessary for practical as well as scientific knowledge, after which we explained Thomas' notion of the **theological virtue of faith** as an application of the general theorem of the supernatural (grace as *operans* and *cooperans*)¹²⁰ to the cognitional realm, and finally we explored the meaning and implications of the **lumen fidei** illuminating the *praeambula fidei* that together function as the reflective act understanding in the conscious act of the intellect assenting to the truths of faith commanded by the will. For Thomas the **light of faith and the preambles of faith** ground the judgment of the value of believing in the supernatural end of man as the direct Vision of God that completes the natural desire to see God adumbrated in the unrestricted natural desires to understand and to know everything about everything.

Thus Thomas' theorem of the *lumen fidei*, the light of faith, brings together his theory of grace as a supernatural habit and supernatural act with his theory of knowledge implicit in his metaphysics.¹²¹ His theory of *the lumen fidei* is the integrating moment in the systematic, understanding of Thomas' theology of faith. On the side of the subject believing it is the gift of openness to the truth revealed to mankind by God that results in the judgment of the value in believing that moves the will. In the light of faith informing the judgment of value, the will commands the intellect to assent to belief in the truths of the mysteries. The command of the will terminates in the assent of the intellect to the truth of the central mystery of man's supernatural end in the Vision of God. The latter becomes the basis for assenting to the truth of the other mysteries.

Thomas' theology of faith was not a form of apologetics (*fides in fieri*) but rather an understanding of faith as the act of the believer (*fides in facto esse*). Even his defense of the Christian faith against the Islamic criticism of it in the *Summa Contra Gentiles* was a movement from "above downwards." From theology through philosophy to history as he thought it was contained in the scriptures.¹²² Literary and historical criticism as we know them today did not exist in the Middle Ages. Still Thomas was intent on showing the higher rationality and reasonableness of the truths of faith. Thomas knew that belief in God and in the truths of reason could not be opposed. True doctrine could not contradict reason. Though a person had to learn how to reason correctly, a person did not need faith to do so. A person did not even need faith to show what was contrary to faith was incorrectly reasoned. Faith provided the deeper understanding of one's self, of man in history, of human destiny, and of God. To be open to the truths of faith is to seek the truth; the truth is our only access to the real; and attaining the real is the meaning of objectivity. The objectivity of the truths of faith is the foundation of apologetics.

It is possible to find the elements of a theory of the development of doctrines in the cognitional theory behind Thomas' theology. For Thomas faith is one because the object intended by faith is God Who is Truth itself. But he also asserted that human beings intend the Truth through truths that unfold in human minds over time. Truths are in the human mind to the extent that human beings assent to propositions that are true and that assent must be based either on sufficient evidence if it is knowledge, or reasonable belief if belief is to transcend mere opinion and give access to the truth. Thomas knew that faith is not just the assent to a proposition. He was no conceptualist dogmatist. However he also knew that if the proposition is eliminated, true judgments are eliminated; and if true judgments are

¹²⁰ Cf. B.J.F. Lonergan "St. Thomas' Thought on *Gratia Operans*," *Theological Studies* II, (1941), pp. 289-324. *Theological Studies III*, (1942), pp. 89-88: 375-402; 533-78.

¹²¹ *Verbum: Word and Idea in Thomas Aquinas*. Edited David Burrell, University of Notre Dame Press, 1966.

¹²² *Collection: Papers of Bernard Lonergan*, Herder and Herder, N. Y. 1967. pp. 121-141.

eliminated, man has no hope of attaining the truth even in faith since the truths of faith exist in the human mind. Eliminate truth from faith and faith becomes arbitrary opinion: Merely subjective, ultimately unintelligible, and indifferent to reality. Tragically this is what has happened in the post-medieval history of theology in the churches. Thomas knew that the propositions expressing the truths of faith can change even radically¹²³ because understanding is prior to concepts and reflective understanding is prior to propositions and judgments (doctrines). Still the truth intended by the proposition assented to in the act of faith remains true no matter how deeply the person comes to understand it.¹²⁴

The theorem of the *lumen fidei* is Thomas' way of demonstrating the continuity of nature and grace in the cognitional order. Grace does not eliminate nature but goes beyond it and perfects it. It shows that Thomas practiced introspection by paying attention to his own conscious acts of understanding and believing, his acts of knowing and his act of faith. Neither Thomas' theology nor his metaphysics (underlying philosophy) were based on conceptualism or dogmatism. A conceptualist is one who sets up a conceptual framework without relating that framework back to the conscious acts (wonder, experience, questions, and acts of understanding) from which all authentic understanding, knowing and believing derive. Nor is Thomas' theology the result of juxtaposing the philosophy of Aristotle and the theology of Augustine by somehow combining the doctrines of both as is often noted. It is true he learned from both great thinkers; but he appropriated and creatively transformed their insights into his own insights in his distinctive philosophy and theology. His work remains a work of genius and as a medieval, systematic theologian he has no peers.

What remained hidden behind Thomas' theological explanation of faith was the fact that for him the *lumen fidei* was a systematic, conceptual articulation of believer's recognition of God's being in love with mankind and personally with the prospective believer himself and the fact that faith was the believer's loving response to God Who loved him first. Thomas' theology was rooted in his own experience of the (symbolic) meaning of the gospels as the revelation of God's love as well as in his celebration of God's love in the liturgy of the church specifically in his celebration of the Eucharist. He wrote a famous liturgical hymn celebrating the Eucharist as an expression of God's love, the "*Adoro Te Devote*." The interpreter should never forget that Thomas' theology was an expression of his Christian piety. And what is more important is that for Thomas there is no opposition between piety and thought, even systematic thought. In fact, for him the two are complementary and mutually inclusive. The great ideal of the medieval universities was that the love of learning is the desire for God and vice versa. Thomas's thought epitomized the principle. His theology is grounded in Anselm's theological hermeneutic circle of understanding seeking faith and faith seeking understanding.

The present day eclipse of the relevance of systematic theology in the academic precincts of the churches represents a failure of theological thinking as well as of Christian piety. The eclipse of systematic thinking is itself a result of the failure of Christian thinkers to find a philosophy that would illuminate the meaning of human condition and provide an intellectual basis for systematic thought about the meaning, truth, and worth of the Christian life. The philosophical confusions and deformations introduced by the theological neglect and sometimes outright suppression of philosophy as a quest for the truth lead to the ridicule of the Christian faith as the refuge of the ignorant by the educated in a deformed, secular society. The work of Thomas is a witness to the central importance of systematic theology and its underlying philosophy; and it is a sober reminder that in the long term the churches will pay dearly for the neglect of both these disciplines. Thoughtless piety soon becomes impious.

¹²³ *De Ver*, q. 14, a 12 c.

¹²⁴ *S. T. II, II*, q 1. a. 7 c. *In Sent. III*, d 25. q 2 a 1.; *S. T. II, II* q 2, a 7 c. Sol I and II.

Our approach to interpreting Thomas’ theology of faith is both historical and critical. It expands on the work of Bernard Lonergan’s historical and critical appropriation of Thomas’ philosophy and his theology in his work on the theorem of the supernatural in the articles on “Gratia Operans and Cooperans,” and his work in the articles on “The Concept of the Verbum in Thomas Aquinas” in Theological Studies, as well as his original, philosophical work in Insight. Lonergan’s method of interpreting Thomas’ philosophy and theology based on a recovery of Thomas’ practice of introspection has been the most fruitful approach to understanding him. Moreover it is a method of understanding Thomas that is consonant with the intelligent and critical spirit of Thomas’ own method. We can get a glimpse of Thomas’ operative, if not explicit, critical method in the way he answered the Quodlibetal Question IV Question 9, Article 3; I quote the original Latin and the translation:

Utrum magister determinando quæstiones theologicas magis debeat uti ratione, vel auctoritate	Whether a teacher determining the answer to theological questions should use reason rather than authority
Circa tertium sic proceditur: videtur quod magister determinans quæstiones theologicas magis debeat uti auctoritatibus quam rationibus.	It seems that a teacher determining theological questions should use authorities rather than reasons.
Quia in qualibet scientia quæstiones optime determinantur per prima principia illius scientiæ. Sed prima principia scientiæ theologicæ sunt articuli fidei, qui nobis per auctoritates innotescunt. Ergo maxime quæstiones theologicæ sunt determinandæ per auctoritates.	For, in any science, questions are best determined through the first principles of that science. But the first principles of theological science are the articles of faith, which become known to us through authorities. Therefore, theological questions most of all should be determined by means of authorities.
Sed contra, est quod dicitur ad Tit., I, 9: <i>ut sit potens exhortari in doctrina sana, et contradicentes revincere</i> . Sed contradicentes melius revincuntur rationibus quam auctoritatibus. Ergo magis oportet determinare quæstiones per rationes quam per auctoritates.	On the other hand, Titus 1.9 says, <i>that he may be able to exhort in sound doctrine and to confute those who contradict it</i> . But gainsayers are better confuted by reasons than by authorities. Therefore, it is necessary to determine questions by reasons rather than by authorities.
<p>Respondeo. Dicendum, quod quilibet actus exequendus est secundum quod convenit ad suum finem. Disputatio autem ad duplicem finem potest ordinari. Quædam enim disputatio ordinatur ad removendum dubitationem an ita sit; et in tali disputatione theologica maxime utendum est auctoritatibus, quas recipiunt illi cum quibus disputatur; puta, si cum Iudæis disputatur, oportet inducere auctoritates veteris testamenti: si cum Manichæis, qui vetus testamentum respuunt, oportet uti solum auctoritatibus novi testamenti: si autem cum schismaticis, qui recipiunt vetus et novum testamentum, non autem doctrinam sanctorum nostrorum, sicut sunt Græci, oportet cum eis disputare ex auctoritatibus novi vel veteris testamenti, et illorum doctorum quod ipsi recipiunt. Si autem nullam auctoritatem recipiunt, oportet ad eos convincendos, ad rationes naturales confugere. Quædam vero disputatio est magistralis in scholis non ad removendum errorem, sed ad instruendum auditores ut inducantur ad intellectum veritatis quam intendit: et tunc oportet rationibus inniti investigantibus veritatis radicem, et facientibus scire quomodo sit verum quod dicitur: alioquin si nudis auctoritatibus magister quæstionem determinet, certificabitur quidem auditor quod</p>	<p>I answer that any act should be carried out as befits its end. But disputation can be ordered toward a twofold end. (1) Some disputations are directed toward removing doubt whether something is so; and in a theological disputation of that sort one should use especially the authorities one's fellow disputants accept. If one disputes with Jews, one must bring in authorities from the Old Testament; if with Manicheans (who reject the Old Testament), one must use only authorities from the New Testament; if with schismatics who accept the Old and New Testaments but not the teaching of our Fathers---this is the case with the Greeks---, then one must dispute using authorities from the Old and the New Testament and from those Doctors they accept. But if disputants accept no authority, one must have recourse to natural reasons for the purpose of refuting them. (2) Other disputations are pedagogical disputations in schools, meant not for removing error but for instructing their hearers so that they might be led to understand the truth; then, those investigating the root of truth and making known how what's said is true must rely on reasons; otherwise, if a teacher determines a question with bare authorities, the hearer will</p>

ita est, sed nihil scientiæ vel intellectus acquirat
et vacuus abscedet.

Et per hæc patet responsio ad obiecta.

indeed be assured that something is so, but he
will acquire no science or understanding and
will go away empty.

And from these remarks the answer to the
objection is clear.

In this *Quodlibet* Thomas is addressing the use of authority and reason in the teaching of theology. He says the end of the inquiry must determine the method. If the inquiry is directed to removing doubt about what is to be believed, (historical doctrinal disputation) you should use the authorities the person you are addressing accepts. Then he lists the kinds of authorities in the form of the texts the addressee might accept as authoritative: For Jews, the Hebrew Scriptures, for those who reject the Hebrew Scriptures like the Manicheans, just the New Testament; for the schismatics (the Orthodox Greek Christians) both testaments, but not the parts of Church tradition they reject, and finally from natural reason for those who reject the authorities a believer might recognize. But then he goes on to say there are **other kinds of inquiry** (pedagogical disputations), not meant for removing doubt or error relative to beliefs, but for **instructing** the students so that they can be led to **understand the truth**. If the inquiry is into the **source** of truth and showing how to **understand** (interpret) what is said is **true**, then the teacher must rely on **reasons**. If the teacher tries to answer the questions citing authorities alone, the students will be assured what the authorities assert as true, but the students will **acquire no knowledge or understanding**, and they will go away **empty**.

That is an amazingly critical view of Christian doctrine from a medieval doctor of the church and master of theology. Thomas limits this standard of pedagogical disputation to the academy and at his time a small minority of the members of the medieval church was literate or educated. If we applied his standard of pedagogical disputation to people who are supposed to be literate and educated, how much of what passes for inquiry into the meaning of what people are taught to believe would come up to Thomas' standard? How often do people go away from religious instruction empty?

Finally then, as an appropriate end of this inquiry, I would like to comment on a statement by Professor Eric Voegelin with which I agree and think worthy of consideration for serious students of theology and philosophy. Voegelin's argument in the article "The Gospel and Culture" puts the value of recovering the thought of writers like Thomas Aquinas into the present day perspective of the loss of the search for the meaning and truth of human existence.

"The reflections on the search and its deformation in our time have been carried sufficiently far to allow for a few conclusions concerning the question and its recovery. First of all, the blight of deculturation has affected philosophy at least as badly as it has the gospel. An acculturation through the introduction of contemporary philosophy into the life of the church, the feat of the *patres* in the Hellenistic-Roman environment, would today be impossible, for neither have the churches any use for deformed reason nor do the representatives of deformation ask the questions to which the gospel offers the answer. Second, however, the situation is not quite so helpless as it may appear, for the question is present in the time even when reason is deformed. The search imposes its form even when its substance is rejected; the dominant *philosophoumena* of the time are intelligibly the debris of the search. Deculturation does not constitute a new society, or a new age in history; it is a process within our society, very much present to the public consciousness and arousing resistance. As a matter of fact, in these very lines I am analyzing the phenomenon of deformed reason, and recognizing it as such, by the criteria of undeformed reason; and I can do it because the Western culture of reason is quite alive enough, appearances notwithstanding, to furnish the criteria for characterizing its own deformation. This last observation will, in the third place, dispose of the ideological propagation of deculturation processes as a "new age." We do not live in a "post-Christian," or "post-philosophical," or "neopagan" age, or in the age of a "new myth," or of "utopianism," but plainly in a period of massive deculturation

through the deformation of reason. Deformation, however, is not an alternative to, or an advance beyond, formation. One can speak of a differentiating advance in the luminosity of the search from myth to philosophy or from myth to revelation, but one cannot speak of a pattern of differentiating progress from reason to unreason. Nevertheless, and fourth, the deculturation of the West is an historical phenomenon extending over centuries; the grotesque rubble into which the image of God is broken today is not somebody's wrong opinion about the nature of man but the result of a secular process of destruction. This character of the situation must be realized if one does not want to be derailed into varieties of action which, though suggestive, would hardly prove remedial. The question of the search cannot be recovered by stirring around in the rubble; its recovery is not a matter of small repairs, of putting a patch on here or there, of criticizing this or that author whose work is a symptom of deculturation rather than its cause, and so forth. Nor will the conflict be resolved by the famous dialogues where the partners do not step on each other's toes, less because of excessive gentility than because they don't know which toes need being stepped on. And least of all can anything be achieved by pitting right doctrine against wrong doctrine, for doctrinization precisely is the damage that has been inflicted on the movement of the search. There would be no doctrines of deformed existence today unless the search of both philosophy and the gospel had been overlaid by the late-medieval, radical doctrinization of both metaphysics and theology." *The Gospel and Culture*, Eric Voeglin¹²⁵

Professor Voegelin speaks of the present "deformation" of the search for the truth of human existence. Thomas based his whole theological and philosophical understanding on the quest for the truth of human existence as revealed by God as well as what intelligent, human beings can learn from authentic human reason. Professor Voegelin speaks of the "recovery of the search." This is what we have been laboring to do in our recovery of the thought of Thomas on understanding and faith. The blight of deformation has affected philosophy as badly as the Gospel. So what would Thomas say when even the use of reason in searching for the truth has been abandoned because reason and the search itself has been abandoned? The feat of the early Christian apologists, the Fathers of the church, and later the Doctors of church and masters of philosophy and theology like Thomas himself who introduced the light of reason into the historical quest for the truth invoked by revelation would today be impossible. But I would add only to the extent that the contemporary churches and those who call themselves philosophers reject the project of recovering the meaning of the authentic search from the thinkers of the past who sought the truth. Here is where the work of Bernard Lonergan's theology and especially his philosophy becomes a starting point for the recovery of the search and an alternative to the deformation about which Professor Voegelin speaks so forcefully.

Professor Voegelin says the situation is not hopeless because the **question** remains **present** even in a time when reason is deformed. The debris of the search contains the form of the question, the search for truth. Deculturation does not create a new society or a new age (The terms secular society or the age of information or the age of enlightenment or post-Christian or post-philosophical or Neopagan Age are all myths to support the deformation of reason and the suppression of the question of the truth.) As he says, the only way he or anyone else can recognize "deformed reason" is by the presence of an undeformed reason still available to the seeker of wisdom and truth. I would suggest that presence is contained in the authentic western tradition whose culture of authentic reason still lives in the minds of those who have not suppressed the question or abandoned the search. While our culture is dominated by banal minds without a longing for the truth, there remains a minority of thoughtful people on the margins of our society who can arouse the social consciousness to resistance. As he points out "Deformation" cannot be an advance beyond reason. There is no differentiating process in history from reason to unreason. That is simply nonsense. **Human intelligence as the image of God** has been turned into the rubble it has become by the deformation of the secular process

¹²⁵ *Jesus and Man's Hope*, Donald G. Miller and Dikran Y. Hadidian, (eds). Pittsburg: Pittsburg Theological Seminary Press. 1971. pp. 66-67.

of the destruction of intelligence as a defining value in human life. First we must recognize the rubble and realize we cannot cure the disease by stirring around in it. The recovery of the search is not a matter of minor repairs; the cure is not a palliative for the symptoms. It is not a matter of criticizing an author whose work is just a symptom of deculturation rather than its cause, the process of secularization itself as a deformation of reason. Civilized dialogue, while necessary, is not a possible cure in a society based on deculturation that has destroyed the foundation of civilized life itself which is rooted in the quest of authentic reason for the truth. Finally the recovery cannot be achieved by pitting right doctrine against wrong doctrine because the process of doctrinization has been cut off from the experience of intelligence and reasonableness that founds the authenticity of the search, cut off from an understanding of the mythic-symbolic-conceptual, historical sources of the search for truth that Thomas, for example, symbolized in the metaphors of the *lumen intellectuale* and the *lumen fidei*.

Professor Voegelin concludes by saying, “There would be no doctrines of deformed existence today unless the search of both philosophy and the gospel had been overlaid by the late-medieval, radical doctrinization of both metaphysics and theology.” Let us be clear about what this means. Professor Voegelin is not claiming that all doctrines are necessarily deformations of the truth. He has spent his whole intellectual career arguing that authentic conceptualizations expressed in a limited way in doctrines must be rooted in the experience of questions, quests, acts of understanding and wise judgments. “Faith is not a leap into the darkness, but a leap into the light.” That has been his motto; and, I might add, it was the motto of Thomas as well, as we see in his answer in **Quodlibetal Question IV Question 9, Article 3** quoted above. What Professor Voegelin is criticizing by the term “doctrinization” is the conceptualist form of doctrinization that has dominated philosophy and theology since the late Middle Ages and the post-Reformation period and, dare I say, the pronouncements of the Christian Churches themselves. The notion that any Christian community is immune from the deformations of secularization is itself a result of the process of deformation expressed in a conceptualist version of doctrines that turn doctrines into dogmas. I need call attention only to the fact that many have become leaders in the churches who are chosen, not for their pastoral or even theological excellence, but for their managerial skills as if the church is a secular corporation to be managed rather than a community of believers who are to be faithful to the search for the truth of human existence.

So there will be a small minority, creative but often marginalized by the secular culture, a faithful remnant that will resist the secular process of deculturation and insist on the recovery of the quest for understanding, meaning, and the truth of human existence in the experience of the light of intelligence and faith. They will attempt to recover, not just the concepts or the doctrines, but the source of those concepts and doctrines in the experience and the stories of those who have not suppressed their longing for the meaning and truth of existence. First the authentic tradition of philosophy as the search for truth must be recovered. The work of Lonergan in *Insight* is a beginning. That project must be carried forward, for as Thomas says, “If disputants accept no authority, one must have recourse to natural reasons for the purpose of refuting them.”¹²⁶ But before we can have recourse to “reasons,” or begin to refute those who have abandoned reason, we must recover what Thomas meant by “**reason**” as the **light of understanding complemented by the light of faith in the search for truth**.

¹²⁶ **Quodlibetal Question IV Question 9, Article 3**