

# BLACKFRIARS

## A MONTHLY REVIEW

Edited by the English Dominicans

Published by Basil Blackwell, Broad Street, Oxford.

---

**VOL. XXV. No. 294. SEPTEMBER 1944. ONE SHILLING**

---

THOMISM AND 'AFFECTIVE KNOWLEDGE	Victor White, O.P.	321
CATHOLIC ACTION IN APOSTOLIC DAYS	Vincent McNabb, O.P.	329
CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS IN GER- MANY	John Hennig, Ph.D.	336
EUROPE'S FUTURE	E. Polimeni	342
BIBLE CHRISTIANS	The Editor	346
REVIEWS: Daniel Woolgar, O.P., Gerald Vann, O.P., Mar- grieta Beer, etc.		350
CORRESPONDENCE: T. S. Eliot		360

---

---

### THOMISM AND 'AFFECTIVE KNOWLEDGE (III)

WE have seen, in very general terms, what St. Thomas understands by 'knowledge.' We must now try and discover something of what he means by 'inclination,' 'connaturality' 'affect'—with a view, at long last, to trying to understand what he means by knowledge 'by connaturality,' 'by inclination' or *affectiva*. It will be convenient to introduce the subject by a preliminary attempt to remove a common misapprehension.

'Knowledge,' we have seen<sup>1</sup>, is that kind of being or reality which certain creatures are found to possess, whereby they transcend in various ways and degrees the limitations of their own identity and in a certain sense *become another*. But this identity they do not thereby lose; they become the other, have the 'being' of the other, without ceasing to be themselves. It is important to remember that such knowledge and its processes and products are but a *means*, an *instrument*. Thought is the *means* whereby a subject attains that which is not itself without losing its own selfhood; that whereby an *I* becomes a *That* without ceasing to be *I*. All our concepts, ideas, judgments, reasonings; all our organisation of these

---

<sup>1</sup> 'Blackfriars,' April, 1943, pp. 126 ff.

in sciences and philosophical systems, are *quo* and *in quo*, and not *quod*; they are that *whereby*, *with* which and *in* which we know, not *that which* we know<sup>2</sup>. Words—terms and propositions and syllogisms and the books that contain them—are, in their turn, but further means and instruments whereby these means and instruments are communicated from one mind to another. They are signs of signs; and woe betide us if we fall into the academicism which mistakes the signs for the realities they signify.

This statement is for a thomist trite and elementary, in theory; in practice it may too easily be forgotten. Books and systems should be mirrors of reality; not substitutes for reality. When we study thoughts instead of studying things by means of thoughts, thought itself is misused, and instead of opening the gateway to 'the other,' and thus enabling us to realise our selves, it imprisons the self in its own constructions; intellect, instead of being a means of life and liberation, becomes an instrument which stifles its possessor. The Renaissance contempt for the later Schoolmen, Kierkegaard's revolt against Hegel, Bergson's revolt against reason, were so many protests against this disastrous substitution of Thought for Thing—protests which, unhappily, too often threw out the baby with the bathwater. But a *Summa* should help us to know God and His world; we shall misuse it, and it will suffocate us, if we study it *instead of* God and His world.

Much criticism of rational thought in general, and of thomist thought in particular, is due to this fundamental misunderstanding: to the assumption that what is offered as means (*quo* and *in quo*) is offered as end and object (*quod*). The world, the argument commonly runs, is a continual flux of Becoming, ever changing and dynamic; conceptual thought presents us with changeless forms, static and inert. Bertrand Russell has likened the thomist view of the universe to a Dutch interior where all is stillness, neatness, order; beautiful but wholly regardless of the facts of existence, the dynamism, the movement, the conflicts of reality. Whitehead complains that Aristotelian Logic 'deals with propositional forms only adapted for the expression of high abstractions, the sort of abstractions usual in current conversation where the presupposed background is ignored.' Bergson picturesquely likens the concept to a single 'frame' or picture cut out from a cinematograph film, which totally ignores the movement and the drama from which it is extracted.

All this would be valid and decisive criticism were we indeed to confuse the means with the end, the 'species' with its object. But

<sup>2</sup> *Summa Theol.*, I. 25. 2.

the identification of the *modus cognoscendi* with the *modus essendi*—the way in which things are signified to our minds with the way they exist in reality—is a fundamental mistake against which St. Thomas constantly warns us. Our thoughts themselves tell us, and perhaps nowhere more forcefully than in the still pages of St. Thomas, that the world is indeed in constant movement, flux, conflict, striving, progress, regress, longing, attainment, enjoyment; it is a world of desire sometimes sated, sometimes unsated, but never wholly at rest. Only if we 'reify' our concepts—i.e. treat our thoughts as though they were the things of which they are the thoughts, and mistake the still mirror for the movement which it mirrors—shall we be tempted to suppose otherwise, and take refuge in a world of stagnant ideas from the changes, the hopes and loves and tragedies, of the world which they should disclose.

It is a mistake which St. Thomas never makes. The fact of Movement, Change, Becoming is for him the most fundamental and unquestionable of the facts of our experience; our very experience itself involves change—a passing from not experiencing to experiencing. The fact of Becoming (*motus*) is the basic datum of experience from the analysis of which his whole philosophy is inferred. Substance and Accident, Matter and Form, Act and Potency, Efficient and Final Causality, eventually even *Essentia* and *Esse* and the affirmation of a First Unmoved Mover whom men call God—all these are drawn from a process of reasoning whose starting-point is in the primitive and fundamental fact of change. His analysis of the human *psyche* into Substance, Form, Potentialities, Habits, Acts, and his whole ethical system as well, are the outcome of a phenomenological observation of specific types of movement which fall under our experience. His very metaphysic, abstracting though it does from the phenomena of change and decay, is constructed by the analogical application of concepts derived from the world of change and movement. The world in which we live, as St. Thomas sees it, is beyond all doubt a world of change and movement; impregnated, it would seem, with some deep discontent in which nothing can rest satisfied with remaining as it is; endowed with active forces and passive receptibility to change in substance, kind, shape, colour, position, duration.

Now the philosopher cannot rest content with merely recording the fact of change, nor with a bare discovery and description of the active and passive factors in nature which bring it about. He seeks the ultimate *why* of the phenomenon: what is the explanation of this radical mutability of the world of our experience? Why this seemingly universal need to change, even though it involves de-

struction, pain and decay? Why are creatures endowed with these powers to change and be changed?

St. Thomas finds the reason just where he found the reason for the presence in creation of beings endowed with knowledge; namely, in the insufficiency of each creature in its own limited particularity. All that is not God is not Being, but *a* being, limited, finite, self-enclosed. It is not All; it is some one particular thing which of its very nature cannot realise all the potentialities, let alone all the actualities, of Being as they are in the All; just because it is *some* thing, it lacks vastly more. Only the All is utterly changeless; God alone cannot become anything He is not, for He *is* All. In Him alone 'there is no change nor shadow of alteration' (Jas.i,17). But 'every creature groaneth and travaileth in pain' (Rom. viii, 22).

In each and every finite being, therefore, there is *potentiality*, the intrinsic possibility to undergo some sort of change, the capacity to become other than it is. To *know*, as has been said, is to become another without ceasing to be what one was; this belongs to some, not to all, creatures. But *every* creature is subject to change; to become another, and, to that extent, to cease to be quite the same as it was. It may be a change in place or position only, or a change in time; it may be a change in colour, size, weight; or a change only from not-being-such or not-acting-so to being-such or acting-so. It may be a change in the very nature of the thing; it may cease to be one sort of thing and become another sort of thing. It may be in response to an agency other than itself or within itself.

Now this intrinsic potentiality is more than just bare *possibility*. Just because no finite being is sufficient to itself, not its own good, its own end, it has a positive *inclination* to undergo change; and its inclination will be predetermined by its nature and properties—by the kind of thing which it is. Stones fall, smoke rises, seeds grow, birds fly, caterpillars become butterflies, snakes change their skin, men argue: it is their natural, or *connatural*, tendency; it is of their *nature* so to behave. Smoke does *not* tend to fall, nor stones to rise; leopards do *not* change their skins nor seeds argue, nor snakes fly nor birds become butterflies. . . .

This is very trite; but it is fundamental if we are to understand what *inclination* or *connaturality* means for St. Thomas: it is that tendency to which each finite being is determined by its nature and properties—whether these properties themselves belong immediately to its nature or are subsequently acquired or given from elsewhere. Each kind of being *tends* or *inclines* to change in a certain particular way in accordance with the sort of thing it is and the conditions in which it is found.

In our own human experience this inclination is expressed in what we call *desire, appetite, affect, love*. These are, properly speaking, purely psychological phenomena (*elicited* acts, the Schoolmen called them). But in common speech we still speak of sub-human things, and even inanimate things, as having desire, hunger, longing, love; of the desire of the moth for the star, of hungry flames, of thirsty earth, of the love of the river for the ocean.

This kind of speech may or may not have its origins in primitive animism (the alleged habit of primitive peoples to attribute psychological characteristics to inanimate objects); but it is not an unreasonable one as an apt description of this universal urge to change, to tend to this or that, this connaturality which is found in each according to its kind. So St. Thomas also will speak of everything in creation as instinct with desire, with longing and love for its own particular good or end. Plato and Aristotle, though each in somewhat different ways, had likewise found the ultimate explanation of all movement and change in the universe in love or desire for the Good.

We must now draw attention to the fact (which will be of some importance when we consider 'affective knowledge' in itself) that, as every change or movement can be considered in three stages, so also may the corresponding inclination, desire or love. The change may not yet have taken place—in that case, we have desire pure and simple, a bare inclination as yet unrealised. Or the change may be in process of taking place; there is movement towards the end desired, but this end is not yet attained—the desire or inclination is activated, but not yet fulfilled. Finally, the change may be consummated, the end realised—there we have desire fulfilled or gratified, issuing in repletion, rest, delight. I am hungry, and empty: it is an unrealised inclination. I am eating: my inclination is in process of realisation. I am full: my inclination is realised; my desire gratified. We shall see that it will be necessary correspondingly to differentiate affective knowledge according as the object is merely desired, is in process of attainment, or is actually possessed.

Another, still more relevant classification of 'inclination' has already been suggested and must now be made more precise. In the last article it was seen how finite beings may be broadly divided into two main classes: those which *know* and those which *do not know*. Correspondingly we must recognise that there are, very broadly speaking, two main classes of 'inclination' or 'connaturality' to be found in finite things.

Things-which-do-not-know plainly do not know what their in-

clinations are, what sort of change they will undergo or what the term of it will be. Blindly and unwittingly (so far as they themselves are concerned) they are drawn by their own or other agency to realise their own potentialities and inclinations according to their natures. It is a purely 'natural' appetite or desire that draws them.

But things-that-know have inclinations over and above the 'natural appetite' which is common to all finite things. The animal possesses not only the inclinations common to all material bodies (for instance, the tendencies consequent upon gravitation), but also additional tendencies consequent upon its perceptions. The dog desires the bone; this desire is consequent upon *perception* of the bone as something connatural to the dog and its particular requirements. 'Natural appetite is the inclination of anything whatsoever to something else which pertains to it of its very nature. But psychological appetite (*appetitus animalis*) is consequent upon a form which has been apprehended'—*i.e.* its object is the other recognised as other. St. Thomas goes on: 'For this sort of appetite a special potency of the *psyche* is required; apprehension alone does not suffice. For a thing is desired (*appetitur*) as it exists in its own nature; but it does not exist in its own nature in the cognitive faculties but only by some likeness of itself . . .'<sup>3</sup>

Things-that-know, therefore, *know* the objects of their inclinations; they also know their inclinations themselves. The dog does not only desire the bone, he does not only perceive the bone, he perceives that he desires it—and hence acts accordingly.

We have seen that there are, broadly speaking, two kinds of knowledge to be found in creation: sense knowledge and intellectual knowledge. Corresponding to this we must distinguish two kinds of 'psychological appetite,' the appetite (or its potency) which follows upon sense-knowledge, and the appetite that follows upon intellectual knowledge. The first of these is called by St. Thomas, 'sensitive appetite,' or merely *sensualitas*, of which there are many different forms and manifestations. The second is called *voluntas* or will. But it is important to remember that *will* for St. Thomas does not mean (as too often in current English) the effortful striving and activity *consequent* upon appetite, but that appetite itself, whether as act or as potency to that act. It is the power to be, or the act of being, drawn by an object apprehended by the mind; prior to, and distinct from, the operations of achieving it.

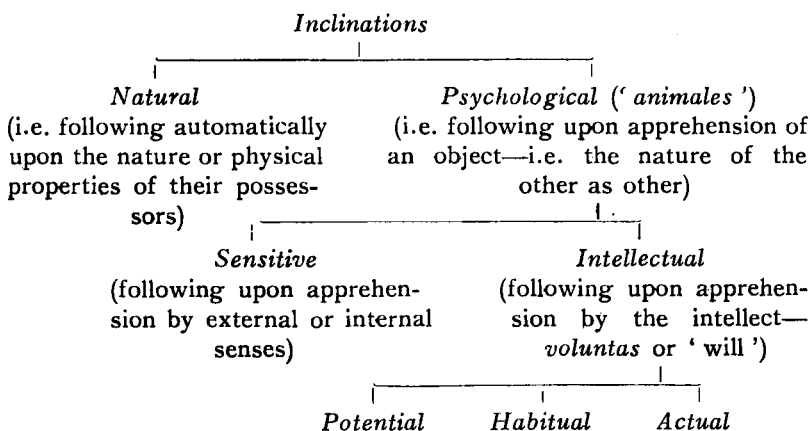
Of great importance for understanding St. Thomas's conception of 'affective knowledge' is his conception of *habitus* in the will. The word *habitus* simply means something *had*, or possessed. Now the

---

<sup>3</sup> Summa, I. 88. 1 ad. 3.

will is found not only in mere potency or in act, but also in an *habitual* condition of acting in a certain way or inclining towards a particular object: not only *can* I be drawn to a particular good which I have perceived, or actually *be* drawn towards it, I may also *have a disposition* (given or acquired) to be thus drawn. This is a *habitus* of the will; it is something more than mere potency but less than full act, but it is a positive and more or less constant quality which *inclines* me to be drawn towards a particular object or set of objects. If the object is a morally good one, we call this quality a *virtue*; if it is a morally bad one, we call it *vice*. These dispositions or *habitus* constitute a 'second nature' in their possessor. It is *connatural* (or merely 'natural') to the man with the virtue or *habitus* of justice to deal justly; he has a constant inclination to act in that way.

We may schematise matters, to the extent that they at present concern us, as follows:



Each of these may be inclinations towards an object (a) unattained, (b) in process of attainment, (c) already attained. Where there is 'psychological appetite' not only is there presupposed some perception of the object, there may also be subsequent perception of the inclination itself. In each case the inclination (since it is always an inclination to *real* change—or the avoidance of real change) is to the 'other' as it is in itself, in its own *modus essendi*, and not as it is apprehended in perception, in its *modus cognoscendi*. (Truly, the mind has a *natural* inclination to its own connatural activity; a point of considerable importance if we would interpret the phenomenon of 'aesthetic perception' in St. Thomas's terms. But it will be our contention that the delighted perception by the cognitive faculties

of objects which are pleasing to them *as such*, is something quite different from what St. Thomas calls 'affective knowledge' which is consequent upon an *inclinatio animalis*).

Two final points may be noted from St. Thomas's examination of 'inclinations.' Every inclination is an inclination towards a good; the 'good' is the object of inclination. Nothing is good except it reflects and 'participates' in absolute good—God. Every inclination, desire, love, is therefore implicitly a desire for God; for that on account of which things are desirable is more desirable and desired than that which is directly desired. 'All things love God above all else.' Evil cannot be desired for its own sake, but only incidentally to some good which is the real object of desire, but whose attainment entails evil. God alone is therefore the ultimate Motive, the Desired in all desires, the real Object (though not necessarily the consciously perceived object) of all love—the ultimate goal, therefore, of every inclination.

Finally, man is the microcosm; in man each and every kind of inclination which we have enumerated is to be found. As a material body he possesses the 'natural desire' to be found in all such. As an animal, with sense, life and functions, he possesses 'sensitive inclination' or appetites in their manifold forms. As endowed with sense-life and functions, he possesses 'sensitive inclinations' or appetites in their manifold forms. As endowed with intelligence, he has also will or *voluntas*; and this potentially, habitually and actually.

We must conclude this instalment with some apology for its dry catalogue of seemingly miscellaneous and incoherent information. It was an essential preliminary to an examination of our main subject; and we hope that in a later article it will be possible to piece together these disjointed fragments and to indicate the light they throw on St. Thomas's conception of 'affective knowledge' and to suggest the work that still needs to be done to develop his thought in this respect. We have been forced to confine ourselves to the bare assertion of St. Thomas's principal conclusions on the subject, without examining the premisses whereby he justifies and explains them. Readers who may wish to investigate the matter more thoroughly may be recommended to study Fr. James O'Mahony's *The Desire of God in the Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*<sup>4</sup>, where they will find a wealth of references to, and quotations from, the works of St. Thomas himself.

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

---

<sup>4</sup> Cork University Press, 1929.