Freedom in Aquinas

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Through a form of apparent givenness, our freedom allegedly emerges and exists as a basic datum within the experience of our human consciousness of self since, through our selecting of this or that choice from a set of possible alternatives, we choose this or that course of action which is to be implemented if we are to reach a particular object or desired goal.[1] In freedom allegedly exists all absence of any kind of compulsion or necessity[2] (*libertas a necessitate*) where here, through our acts of choosing and our individual choices, it is said that our free human willing or our free human acts are to be distinguished from any kind of will or willing that is not free as willing if we should refer to a simple act of willing which naturally and necessarily wills this or that end without attending to any means that could possibly lead us toward a desired hoped for end,[3] and which, for us, would exist as a species of prerequisite if, later, a free form of human willing is to emerge from within us where, now, we must make choices between alternative courses of action and which would suppose too that, prior to our choices, we must think about what best way could possibly lead us to realize a given end or goal which, in some way, is to be somehow reached and attained.[4] To be a human being is to exist with a freedom which is proper to our humanity. Not to be free is not to be human. We find or we should

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1*Sententia libri Ethicorum*, 3, 11, 496; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 83, aa. 3- 4; 1a2ae, q. 109, a. 2, ad 1; 3a, q. 18, a. 4. In his *The Incarnate Word*, unpublished manuscript translated 1989 by Charles C. Hefling, Jr. from the Latin of the *De Verbo Incarnato* (Rome: Gregorian University Press *ad usum auditorum*, 1964), p. 283, Bernard Lonergan briefly sketches the case for human freedom as follows:

> There is freedom where (1) it is possible to reach an end in many ways, (2) this multiplicity is known, and (3) the will of the one who chooses, willing the end, itself determines itself to choosing this one among those ways.

In greater detail, in *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St Thomas Aquinas*, eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), p. 96, Bernard Lonergan identifies four presuppositions that are basic to Aquinas's theory of freedom and which are mentioned with varying degrees of emphasis in the corpus of his different writings:

> A free act has four presuppositions: (A) a field of action in which more than one course of action is objectively possible; (B) an intellect that is able to work out more than one course of action; (C) a will that is not automatically determined by the first course of action that occurs to the intellect; and, since this condition is only a condition, securing indeterminacy without telling what in fact does determine, (D) a will that moves itself.

2J. Michael Stebbins, "What Did Lonergan Really Say About Aquinas's Theory of the Will?" *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 12 (1994): 287.

3*De Veritate*, q. 22, a. 5; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 83, a. 4.

4*Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 9, a. 6, ad 3; *De Malo*, q. 6, a. 1.

realize that, to some extent, we are in charge of our individual personal destiny,[5] where an act is voluntary or free; or, in other words, it would exist as an undetermined or as an un-necessitated act if it exists as an eminently good, reasonable kind of act:[6] if, in fact, it proceeds from our prior acts of understanding and judgment,[7] from a species of understanding and judgment that more profoundly understands and knows the ends to which we are ordained and directed as contingent, living, created beings,[8] and which also grasps a range of alternatives (a number of different possible options),[9] and then how, through our choices and decisions, means and ends can be related to each other in ways which can achieve maximal increments of good and reason[10] (in a manner, however, that is not to be contrasted with the virtue of obedience and the good of conforming our human acts of willing to an order of precepts that come to us from God and the divine willing and understanding which exists as

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5*Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 104, a. 1, ad 3, cited by Frederick E. Crowe, "Law and Insight," *Developing the Lonergan Legacy: Historical, Theoretical, and Existential Themes*, ed. Michael Vertin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 276. As Crowe translates the pertinent passage: "reason has a role in a human being, with regard to what pertains to that person, like the role a ruler or judge has in the state."

6*De Veritate*, q. 24, a. 2; q. 24, a. 12; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 20, a. 2, ad 3. See also the *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 17, a. 1, ad 2, as cited by Martin Rhonheimer, *Natural Law and Practical Reason: A Thomist View of Moral Autonomy*, trans. Gerald Malsbary (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), p. 252, n. 6:

> The root of freedom is the will as subject, but the reason, as cause. For the will can be moved toward diverse things because the reason can have diverse conceptions of the good. For this reason philosophers have defined the free will [*liberum arbitrium*] as the 'free judgment concerning reason,' as if the reason were the cause of freedom.

7*Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3, 111, 1; *Peri Hermeneias*, 1, 14, 5; *De Malo*, q. 16, a. 5; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 83, a. 1. The "natural judgments" of an animal are distinguished from the "rational judgments" of a human being since each proceeds from a different principle which compels a judgment to emerge in the way that it does. Where animals make judgments that are grounded in instinct (see *De Veritate*, q. 22, a. 4; Rhonheimer, *Natural Law and Practical Reason*, pp. 79-80), human judgments are determined by requirements that are strictly rational. Rational considerations impel or we say that they condition judgments to arise in the form that they assume. As Stebbins summarizes the gist of Aquinas's thesis, in "What Did Lonergan Really Say About Aquinas's Theory of the Will?", p. 297, "Aquinas's notion of freedom makes it abundantly clear that he does not conceive of free choice as being constituted by the will operating in isolation from the intellect." In an observation which confirms the value and the necessity of a link between our willing and knowing if our human choices are to be really and truly free, in the *Summa Theologiae*, 3a, q. 18, a. 4, ad 1, Aquinas notes that any hesitations or doubts about what we should do in a given situation (hesitations or doubts which are explained by our ignorance) should not to be seen as essentially constitutive of the freedom which exists in our human actions. Whenever our choices are linked with the condition of ignorance, the connection is purely accidental or coincidental. Ignorance does not exist as a necessary condition for the existence of our freedom. Cf. Lonergan, *Incarnate Word*, p. 283.

8*De Veritate*, q. 22, a. 4; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 6, a. 1. In the *Sententia libri Ethicorum*, 3, 13, 520, Aquinas adverts to the role and the task of our human responsibility with respect to the question of ends which we seek in the belief that the ends which we seek are really and truly

God).[11]

If a relation between ends and means is only perceived or experienced and if it is not grasped and understood by us, any actions which would ensue would not be seen to be entirely free or voluntary.[12] In some way, they would exist as determined specifications of being (as is the case, for instance, with animals who live out of their instincts and with human beings who lack any kind of understanding).[13] But, on the other hand, if the relation between ends and means is both perceived and understood, as human beings, we can then decide about how we intend, will or respond to a plurality of different alternatives and, by then making specific decisions or choices which select one alternative instead of another alternative, our freedom as human beings can then be brought into a fuller order of being and

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good for us. One person might want this; another, that. The context is a principle which frankly admits that "everyone desires what appears good to him" (#515). As Aristotle had so bluntly noted in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (3, 5, 1114a32), "the end appears to each man in a form answering to his character." For Aquinas, in dealing with the nature and the structure of our human cognition, this principle is translated in a way which says that "the thing known is in the knower according to the mode of the knower" (*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 12, a. 4). However, in a general statement of principle which encompasses these lesser principles as they relate to our practical and theoretical acts of human knowing, Aquinas avers that "whatever is received into something is received according to the condition of the receiver" (*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 75, a. 5). The apprehension of any desired end is always, to some extent, a function of each of us: a function of our individual historicity (who or what we are at a given time and place) and so, as we come to realize and know about this truth about ourselves, we readily and painfully realize that the form of our human nature is such that it is given to us as a task that needs to be realized and accomplished. To discover and know about our form or nature is to discover and know about the extent of our freedom as we realize that we must decide about the kind of human person which we should become if certain truths are to be known and certain goods are to be enjoyed. See Frederick E. Crowe, "Lonergan's New Notion of Value," *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea*, ed. Michael Vertin (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1989), pp. 58-59 for a fuller discussion of this topic. On the basis of Crowe's documentation and research, it would seem that Aquinas took a principle from Aristotle's ethics and, from it, he then postulated a cognitional principle which is grounded in a more general principle that covers understanding as it occurs in both its theoretical and existential dimensions.

9*De Veritate*, q. 22, a. 6; q. 24, a. 1; *De Malo*, q. 6, a. 1. As Aquinas argues, meaning or intelligibility (apprehensions of meaning or intelligibility) apply to many different things and this application does not predetermine exactly what concrete course of action a given person will choose and pursue as a particular good that one will achieve within a context of present circumstances in order to achieve some higher form of good. Many different courses of action can be grasped from a context which begins with the apprehension of some form of larger, general good.

10*Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 1, a. 1; q. 6, a. 2; 3a, q. 21, a. 4. Earlier, in the *Summa Theologiae*,1a, q. 82, a. 1, Aquinas had distinguished between a purely natural movement or inclination which occurs from within ourselves, and one which is strictly voluntary because it proceeds from an understanding and knowledge of ends and means and how they are related to each other. Cf. *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 15. Purely natural movement exists spontaneously although it is not irrational since it proceeds on the basis of a thing's form and the form of a thing exists as its intelligibility. But, in contrast, voluntary movement emerges as the fruit of our deliberation when we must think about ends and means and the proportion which exists between them and then, from there, make a choice about what means would be best for realizing a particular goal.

existence because of acts that we know about which are consciously self-determinative; hence, acts which would exist as voluntary or free acts.[14]

All of our human acts of willing are effectively free to the extent thus that, through them, we are aware of our own degree of willingness where this willingness points to an awareness of our personal role and responsibility and to the degree of self-determination which exists for us within a given context.[15] The self-determination immediately points to how it exists as a productive, effective, efficient cause: it brings other things (and ourselves) into a condition of being where, otherwise, certain things would not happen or exist.[16] For these reasons thus, exclusive of any considerations which would refer to the being and the subjectivity of angelic realities, it can be said about us as human beings that our human self-determination exists as the only instance of how a self-moving mover exists within the order of God's creation.[17] Divine causality works not only through causes in nature that must create certain effects *necessarily* but, at the same time too, it works through causes which act *contingently*:[18] through causes which may or may not create this or that effect. Every act is free when it comes from a decision where, from within it, we know that we can opt not to will or to perform a given possible, perspective act.[19] Lack of alternatives, as this exists in our understanding and judgment, points to an absence of

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11*Summa Theologiae*, 3a, q. 21, a. 4.

12*De Veritate*, q. 22, a. 4; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 6, a. 2; q. 13, a. 2.

13Thomas Aquinas, *Lectura super Ioannem*, I, lect. 3, no. 99, as cited by Rhonheimer, *Natural Law and Practical Reason*, p. 290, n. 16. Quoting Rhonheimer's summary:

> To illustrate the "perfection and dignity of this life, because it is intellectual and rational," there follows, as always, a comparison with the animals that "move by necessity, and not freely" (*ex necessitate moventur, et non libere*). Moved by this kind of principle, they "are act-ed" (*aguntur*) rather than "act" (*agunt*). But man, since he is the master of his own actions, moves himself freely toward everything that he wants; and thus man has a "perfect" (or "complete," *per-fectum*) life, just as any intellectual creature.

14*De Veritate*, q. 22, a. 4; a. 6, ad 1; *Sententia libri Ethicorum*, 1, 1, 3; *Peri Hermeneias*, 1, 14, 5.

15*Summa Contra Gentiles*, 4, 22, 5; Crowe, "Lonergan's New Notion of Value," *Appropriating the Lonergan Idea*, pp. 58-59.

16Stebbins, "What Did Lonergan Really Say About Aquinas's Theory of the Will?": 301, citing Bernard Lonergan, *Gratia Operans: A Study of the Speculative Development in the Writings of St. Thomas of Aquin*, p. 208.

17Patrick H. Byrne, "The Fabric of Lonergan's Thought," *Lonergan Workshop* 6 (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1986), p. 31.

18*Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3, 70; 3, 94; 4, 22, 5; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 19, a. 8; q. 23, a. 5; *In 1 Peri Hermeneias*, lect. 13-14, cited by Crowe, "The Future: Charting the Unknown with Lonergan," *Developing the Lonergan Legacy*, p. 368, n. 52. See also Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, pp. 81-82; pp. 109-111; J. Michael Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative: Grace, World-Order, and Human Freedom in the Early Writings of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), p. 258; pp. 261-262; Matthew L. Lamb, *Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians by St. Thomas Aquinas*, p. 288, n. 80.

19*Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 6, a. 3.

choice and to a sense that our human freedom is something which does not exist.

> On the compatibility of our human freedom with God's divine freedom or, to state the matter a bit differently, on the compatibility of God's divine causality with our human causality, it cannot be denied that a different understanding of causality emerges as we understand it from either a human or a divine perspective. From our human standpoint, if we restrict our inquiry to the data of our experience, our choices obviously emerge from a selection that is taken from a number of different options that we have individually discovered and which we have individually devised as various means that lead to a common end. We are free either to make a choice or to not make any kind of choice even if, admittedly, whatever is decided exists, in fact, as a choice. Making a choice between one thing or another exists as a decision that cannot be properly evaded and so, in this sense, it can be argued that our human freedom exists as a given. It does not have to be acquired or earned.
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> But, on the other hand however, from a divine viewpoint, it can be argued not only that an effect exists as much as it is the product of a proximate created cause as it is also the product of an uncreated, first cause; but, in addition too, it can be argued that an effect which accrues from a created, secondary cause is more an effect which accrues from the act of a prior uncreated cause than what it is as something which comes from a later, subsequent created cause.[20] As Aquinas argues in the *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 7, "the higher the cause the more common and efficacious it is; and the more efficacious it is, the more deeply does it penetrate into its effects."[21] As final or exemplary cause, God exists as the ultimate end of all things, as the terminus of activity; as efficient cause, God exists as the first or supreme mover of all things, as the starting point of activity; and through His actuation as pure act or operation, God's action being God's being as He exists in Himself, God is operative within every operation of nature and will within the created order of existing things.[22] As a primary cause orders secondary causes, God, as the primary cause, orders all the effects or the ends of secondary causes towards an effect or end which exists as the highest possible good, a good which can be none other than God as God exists in Himself.[23] Since, in addition, God moves all things toward their proper ends only through His intellect, through His understanding, *Deus agit per intellectum* (God's being being His understanding), for this reason, God's ruling and governing of all things can be identified with a loving care and solicitude which is supremely and essentially intelligent, knowing, and wise, and which refers to the order of His providence.[24] God's government exists as an essentially providential, good thing. It is

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20*De Veritate*, q. 22, a. 8; *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3, 17, 7; *Super Librum De causis*, prop. 1; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 19, a. 4; Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, p. 98; Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 248.

21My translation.

22*De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 7; *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3, 17, 7; 3, 67, 1-7; 3, 111, 1; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 105, a. 5; Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 185; pp. 226-227.

23*Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3, 17, 2.

24*De Substantiis Separatis*, 14, 129, as quoted by Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, p. 280, n. 62; & p. 287, n. 97; *Peri Hermeneias*, 1, 14, 16, as quoted by Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 240; Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, p. 286, n. 94.

marked by a desire and a care which works for the maximum goodness of all good things through a form of efficient causation that is purely intellectual and which works from an analogy that compares God to an artisan who has a form within his mind or understanding that is to be realized in the work that he does.[25] The end of all things exists in the beginning of all things as, in God and in and from the creation of all things, all things are moved towards ends that God intends and creates.[26]

However, if the greater efficacy of divine causality can be grasped as a reasonable conclusion when compared with the lesser efficacy of any kind of created causality, the immediacy of both forms of causation can present a puzzle with respect to the question

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25*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 15, a. 1; Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 15. It is to be noted that the argument which alleges the greater causality of a prior, uncreated cause employs a number of analogies where, perhaps, the most well known portrays God as a craftsman or artist and the universe, His creation or work of art (*Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3, 67, 5; 89, 5). A sculptor employs a chisel to carve a statue and, as an instrumental cause, the chisel creates something which is totally out of proportion to its own form and the operation which is its strict correlative. A chisel, admittedly, is not able to move itself but, in the hands of a skillful artist, by participating in the pattern of its motion or operation, it can do something which is far more wonderful than what its form warrants, in and of itself. Something of beauty emerges. And, so, since secondary causes exist as created causes and since they exist alongside other created causes in an order of things which transcends the intelligibility of any individual cause, the greater efficacy of divine causality presents itself as an obvious conclusion as long as we postulate *as a necessary condition* the fact that our human operations must be perfectly performed in their various acts of sensing, understanding, and willing. Defective operations immediately introduce a note of imperfection which, in turn, detracts from the form or the meaning of a given operation. An operation ceases to be what it is supposed to be as a mediating, instrumental cause and, instead, it becomes something that resembles a motion rather than an operation. But, if all human operations are performed in a manner that joyfully accepts divine help in terms of any proffered instances of operative and co-operative grace (*Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 111, a. 2), divine causality will display its power and glory in a more awesome manner than if it were to restrict itself to employing a set of causes that is incapable of any form of self-motion or self-government. God can accomplish more through using causes which can exert a degree of their own causality than though causes which cannot exert any form of causality. While, indeed, God could have created a world order which only functions through necessary causes, for reasons best known to God alone (*Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3, 97, 10), the divine wisdom thought and judged that it would be better, more wonderful, and glorious to create a world order where divine purposes and intentions are effected through causes that can also co-operate with these same divine purposes and intentions. In the human order of things (*Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3, 66, 3) and as an analogy that we can employ, it is an obvious fact for us that, in the arts and skills of leadership among persons in a society, greater understanding and wisdom is needed where we must work with other free agents to realize a commonly desired goal. If, in the exercise of political or military leadership, examples can be found of cases where no real distinction can be drawn between the free willing of subjects, on the one hand, and the free willing of superiors on the other hand, can any real reason be assigned for thinking that the absence of such a distinction cannot be applied to the relation which exists between God's predestining divine willing and our free willing as human creatures? See how Aquinas discusses this question in his *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 23, a. 5.

26*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 103, a. 2: *Cum finis respondeat principio, non potest fieri ut,*

> and the meaning of the immediacy which exists since secondary causes appear to be more proximate and immediate than primary causes. If we employ the analogy of a sculptor handling a chisel, a chisel immediately connects with what is being chiseled and so its immediacy surpasses that of a sculptor and, so, the causality of a sculptor presents itself as lacking in immediacy; hence, in a way, lacking in application. However, if we desist from an interpretation of immediacy which tries to picture or to imagine it as a form of material or physical proximity, the immediacy of a primacy cause presents itself in all its fullness when an immediacy of power (an *immediatione virtutis*) is distinguished from an immediacy of physical proximity, an immediacy of substance or supposit (an *immediatione suppositi*) which refers to the causality of an instrument cause.[27] And so, in speaking about the immediacy of a primary first cause, Aquinas refers to the functioning of first principles as this exists within the structure of intellectual activity which function as primary first causes of all reasoning activity. If, for instance, as an example, we were to attend to the principle of non-contradiction (from which all else flows in terms of subsequent first principles that are constitutive of understanding), we would find that this principle always immediately operates in understanding as, through our reasoning, our understanding tries to grasp relations and distinctions and then tries to connect evidence with prospective judgments. This immediacy in turn then suggests that first principles are not truly remote. They are not as remote as we might think or imagine and so the immediacy of their presence and influence in our understanding portends to how God is to be understood in the immediacy of his causality within the operations of created, secondary causes. God, as creator, has created forms which reveal what potencies can be put into effect in terms of subsequent operations but, at the same time too, as a cause who works from within the created order to elicit different operations, God functions within created causes to produce their effects. As Aquinas states his case, "God is for us the cause not only of our will, but also of our act of willing."[28]

If we think then about how our human freedom is conditioned by our acts of thinking, understanding, and deliberation, our human freedom emerges in a way which accordingly points, however, to why, in this context, it exists less and less as a presupposition and more and more as a task or as a labor that needs to be accomplished. It exists as something which we need to work towards (in some way) since an inclination or a desire does not compel or force us to move toward a given object or end.[29] In

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principio cognito, quit sit rerum finis ignoretur. "As the end of a thing corresponds to its beginning, it is not possible to be ignorant of the end of things if the beginning is known," my translation.

27*In 2 Scriptum super libros sententiarum*, d. 1, q. 1, a. 4, as cited by Rhonheimer, *Natural Law and Practical Reason*, p. 255, n. 20; *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 7; *Summa Theologiae*, 3a, q. 6, a. 1, ad 1; Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, p. 67 & n. 6; Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, pp. 228-229.

28*Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3, 89, 5.

29*De Malo*, q. 3, a. 3: "the will's object does not necessarily move the will." In the *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 82, a. 2, Aquinas draws a parallel with the structure and form of our theoretical acts of reasoning to argue that not every good that is apprehended by our desires will necessarily move us in our acts of willing towards any activity that would then seek to attain a good which we have apprehended as a good that can be possibly enjoyed. As certain truths are true even if there is no necessary connection or demonstration which can derive them as necessary conclusions from a set of apodictic first principles, certain goods are good in a like manner. One can get along without them and

addition too, an inclination or a desire that we can have for this or that object or end is not necessarily directed toward an object which properly belongs to the kind of intentionality that properly belongs to us as human subjects. Not every object or end comes to us from God as something which we should desire and work towards.[30] Hence, as we understand how certain means are better than other means if a proper fit is to exist between means and ends, and as we also understand how we can change our desires by using this mean and not this other mean as a catalyst or agent which would exist for us as a subsidiary species of end or goal, as human beings, we should in time find that we can begin to change ourselves and that we must begin to change ourselves if certain ends or goals are to be reached and attained: changing ourselves by what we can do and desire and so, by this doing and desiring, become a different kind of person: a kind of subject and person which, possibly, we would like to be in the lives which we are currently leading and living. In our self-determination and agency, our freedom can expand and flourish. It can grow in leaps and bounds while, in its absence or privation, a kind of death ensues. A kind of death comes through a form of enslavement or servitude which overcomes and which envelops us within the manner of our human living. We cease to act for ourselves as we begin to act in function only to how others are behaving and acting; how, in some way, we are being acted upon by the deeds and actions of others.[31]

While our human acts of willing, our human will, is, in general, directed toward good in its most general and unrestricted sense, good in general as *bonum in communi* (or good as allegedly the "common good"), the goodness of this maximal, general sense of good is such, however, that, as human subjects, we can choose among different, particular goods (be they few or many) which can perhaps share in the general or in the ultimate goodness which allegedly exists as the ultimate object of our rationally operative human desires.[32] A necessary orientation toward the good of things in general (as this is specified by the being of our "will as existing nature") is fully compatible with our having within us a free, contingent orientation that is directed toward the attainment of many particular goods (as these are specified by our willing or our "will as reason") where, through our individual human

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still know happiness or, perhaps, one can enjoy them as goods and not suffer the worse for it. In *Grace and Freedom*, p. 319, Lonergan also cites texts from *In 2 Scriptum super libros sententiarum*, d. 25, q. 1, a. 2, the *De Veritate*, q. 22, a. 6, and the *In 1 Peri herm*., lect. 14 to argue that Aquinas consistently denies that our human acts of willing are necessitated to move toward objects by judgements which would decide that a particular good is a good that can be desired and worked for. Cf. Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, p. 323, n. 91.

30*Quaestiones de quodlibet*, 1, q. 4, a. 2, ad 2; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 10, a. 4; q. 114, a. 9.

31*Summa Contra Gentiles*, 3, 112, 2. As Aquinas argues in the *Super secundam epistolam S. Pauli ad Corinthios Lectura*, c III, lect. 3, n. 112, as cited by Rhonheimer, *Natural Law and Practical Reason*, pp. 214-215.:

> He is free who is a cause of himself (*qui est causa sui*): the slave is subject to the disposing power of his master (*est causa domini*); but he who acts on his own (*ex seipso*), acts freely; on the other hand, he who acts being moved by another (*ex alio motus*) does not act freely. The person who avoids evil not because it is evil but because God has commanded it, is not free, but he who avoids the evil because it is evil, is free.

32*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 80, a. 2, ad 2; 1a2ae, q. 1, a. 4, ad 1; q. 9, a. 1.

decisions that are grounded in an ordering that is brought about by our prior acts of reasoning and understanding,[33] we can make choices and decisions about what particular goods are to be sought and attained in the belief that, in some way, they all somehow share and contribute to the general good which exists as the ultimate object of our human desires and acts of willing.[34] Until a choice of some kind is made (as the fruit of our thinking and deliberations), future events exist indeterminately and only in this way. We say that they exist in a potential or in a possible way,[35] and so it cannot be said that they will occur in either a necessary way or in a probable or likely way.[36]

On the relation which exists between our freedom and the necessity of our cognitive consciousness, as we have been already noting, our acts cannot be free (they would exist as only willful or arbitrary acts)

33As Aquinas argues in the *Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 91, a. 3, ad 2 (see Rhonheimer, *Natural Law and Practical Reason*, p. 74; p. 78), the ordering which occurs by way of our natural desires is to be distinguished from the ordering which occurs by way of our rational operations that begin to arise at a certain point in our human lives. Admittedly, natural inclinations which are proper to our human nature direct us as human beings toward certain goals and objectives that are specified *to some degree* by these same natural inclinations. These desires and inclinations create a context for our acts of human reasoning in the actuation of its different operations. Hence, in a way, it can be properly said that our human acts of reasoning are measured by these general, natural desires and not vice versa. To the degree then that our human reasoning and understanding is always rational, it cannot repudiate or act against the normative structure and orientation of those human desires which, by their very nature, are constitutive of us in our human life and existence. However, in the ordering of our natural desires and inclinations in a way which determines actions in a transition that moves us as persons from a condition of potency to a condition of act (from inclination to act), our human acts of reasoning become a measure which is far more strict and precise than the measuring which had been provided by the panoply of our natural human desires. Our human acts of reasoning, by their ordering, accordingly measure the actions which as human beings we perform but, by an ordering which occurs within our natural human desires and not from some kind of external standpoint. In this respect, our human acts of reasoning do not measure those desires and inclinations which exist "by nature" and which are essentially constitutive of the fabric of our human life and existence. See Rhonheimer, *Natural Law and Practical Reason*, p. 285. Natural inclinations, admittedly, in and by themselves, do not lead us toward virtuous acts or virtuous habits which serve as "second natures" that effect a repeated and a continuous doing of certain kinds of good deeds. However, a "natural inclination" exists as a right and proper beginning since, as a disposition, it exercises an ordering influence for the kind of potency that it happens to be. It exists as a potency that is receptive to the acceptance of certain forms. See *De Veritate*, q. 11. a. 1. From its state of potency, a natural inclination needs to be brought toward its proper, good end (which is a virtuous end) by an ordering of our reasoning and thinking which has come to a right and good understanding of things. On the basis of a difference which exists between potency and act, Aquinas is able to distinguish between our natural desires and, on the other hand, our sensitive and intellectual desires.

34*Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 10, a. 1, ad 3; David M. Gallagher, "The Will and Its Acts (Ia IIae, qq. 6-17)," *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002), p. 74. Later in the *Summa Theologiae*, 3a, q. 18, a. 4, as an example of how, in our human willing, our will or willing as nature is joined with our will or willing as reason or reasoning, Christ is cited as someone who, like other human beings, has a will and a willing that is determined with respect to its ends (the good) but who is free in choosing particular goods, whether it is this or that good.

if rational judgments cannot be somehow made. To belabor and to allude to the truth of a critical distinction which adds or which better points to the kind of freedom which properly belongs to us as human beings and subjects: while a thing's natural form can encourage a characteristic form of self-movement, when this self-movement occurs as a purely natural act (as an action which requires no sensitivity nor any kind of thought, deliberation, or decision), it occurs in a purely automatic or mechanical fashion.[37] In such a situation, the self-movement is both natural and unconscious, or it would exist as an unknowing type of self-movement[38] (as this happens, for instance, when a stone falls to the ground,[39] or when a sleeping figure shifts bodily positions without knowing about what is happening or occurring). When our self-movement, however, is increasingly both sensitive and conscious, it ceases to be merely or purely natural *qua* mechanical or automatic. That which is purely or merely natural (*qua* mechanical or automatic) is soon subsumed into a more sophisticated form of self-movement that now is both natural and conscious, and this form of self-movement accords with beings and subjects who possess a form of cognition that is initially defined by the demands of their sense perception.[40] Purely natural, instinctual movement is to be sharply distinguished from any type

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35*Peri Hermeneias*, 1, 13, 11.

36*Peri Hermeneias*, 1, 13, 9 & 11; 1, 14, 2-3. To understand the significance of choice in our human acts of deliberation as this was understood by Aquinas, a useful context is the fact that, in his commentary on Aristotle's *On Interpretation* (1, 13, 9; 1, 14, 7), Aquinas speaks about three different kinds of contingent being. One kind occurs purely by chance or at random. Chance variations jar with statistical projections which exist as anticipated, statistical probabilities: events sometimes occur which usually should not occur. A second kind of contingent being refers to events which occur in a probable or likely manner. These events, whether they are likely or unlikely, as they occur within the created order of things, exist in a way which is not entirely subject to our human control and calculation. However, if we move from these events which cannot be fully determined through the choices that we make, and as we turn toward the subject matter of our human history and our making of human decisions, we encounter a range of indeterminacy which always exists within our human present and which acknowledges an indeterminacy which is only overcome as we make definite decisions about what should be done in a given situation.

37*De Veritate*, q. 23, a. 1; q. 25, a. 1; *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 6, a. 1, ad 2; q. 19, a. 1.

38*Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 1, a. 2.

39*De Veritate*, q. 22, a. 1.

40*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 80, a. 1, ad 3;1a2ae, q. 10, a. 1, ad 1. At times, in a very precise or abstract way (as in the *De Veritate*, q. 22, a. 5, ad 6, ii; q. 25, a. 1), Aquinas very sharply distinguishes between a natural appetite or desire and a sensitive appetite or desire (which refers only to the consciousness of animals or to us as human beings where our desires are stirred and activated only through our acts of sensing as opposed to our acts of understanding and judgment). These two forms of desire are then sharply distinguished from an intellectual or rational appetite or desire which refers to our acts of human willing and which distinguishes human beings as human beings apart from other types and forms of existing things. In examining how these different types of appetite are to be distinguished from each other in connection with a question which asks about the being of a natural human desire for God, Stebbins, in the *Divine Initiative*, p. 151, argues that natural appetite or desire should be distinguished from sensitive and intellectual appetites and desires in terms of the difference which exists between potency and act. A natural appetite should be understood as a form which belongs to a thing and which exists in a state or condition of potency, relative to acts or operations that can be received as actuations or realizations of the form in question. Hence, "a stone, by its very nature, has a natural appetite for falling (at least within the context of Aristotelian physics), and human

of movement that requires some form of heightened consciousness (which is experienced as an awareness that is initially aroused by a self-presenting type of stimulus which reveals the otherness of some type of other object which could exist as another, distinct species of subject).[41] While some kinds of conscious self-movement are not essentially self-determinative if we should refer to the moral or the ethical life of a given subject (we compare the conscious self-movement of animals with the conscious self-movement of how we exist as human beings), this initial form of conscious self-movement is necessary and prerequisite for us if a self-determinative form of self-movement is to emerge in the wake of our making choices and decisions which are said to be rational since, through this form of self-movement and determination, we can freely change ourselves in the ordering that we give to how a given act is related to another act. We can freely change the flow and the expression of our subjectivity

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beings, by their very nature, have a natural appetite for knowing the universe of being." But, on the other hand however, as we attend to the question of actuation (as distinct from questions about form), the formal character and inclinations of a natural desire or appetite are fully revealed by the kinds of acts which it receives and which serve to actuate a given form. An act of falling, for example, reveals the natural tendency of a stone to fall to the ground while, similarly, an act of reflective judgment reveals the natural tendency of us as human beings to have an understanding and knowledge of things that are being asked about. Appetitive acts are to be thus distinguished from the potency of any natural desires since, by our appetitive acts, natural desires are revealed and realized through a shift which moves them from potency to act. As the sensitive curiosity of animals and the ratiocinative curiosity of us as human beings is activated by different agent objects that elicit sensitive and intellectual curiosity respectively in animals and human beings, elicited desire is distinguished from purely natural desire as a higher specification or application of natural desires even if it happens to be the case that a properly elicited desire is a desire that continues to be natural. It does not conflict with any desires that are purely natural. Hence, in a comparison of the two, elicited desire is an act while purely natural desire is but only the propensity or potency of a form to accept those acts which elicit desires that are entirely suited to the form and the inclination of the pre-existing natural desires which exist (*Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 6, a. 4 & ad 2). Elicited acts presuppose a corresponding species of potency which can be identified as appetitive potency although this specification of potency within our natural desires presupposes the potency of a purely natural desire as an *a priori* condition. From it, appetitive acts emerge as they are elicited by agent objects within a context that is defined by an interaction between inner and outer events. In the *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 80, aa. 1-2, Aquinas distinguishes between a natural inclination or a natural appetite, on the one hand, and a higher, superior form of inclination that is connected with knowledge on the other hand, since, as a consequence of our sensitive or intellectual consciousness which refers to some form of cognitive principle, as living beings we can receive sensible and intellectual forms that come from without and which can successfully elicit the interest of a sensing or knowing subject (as the case may be in dealing with respect either to animals or to us as human beings). While, from the standpoint of a natural necessity, a natural desire or appetite seeks things that accord with its own nature or form and so it tries to reduce things to itself through activities that assimilate a meaning to its form, an appetitive desire works for a form of union that tries to go beyond the being of a given self. Where, as before, the object is union with something which is beyond or outside the self, a thing is desired now not solely in terms of apprehensions that can grasp likenesses or images (as in acts of abstractive understanding) since, rather, the object is now a more total form of union which is existential: a union with something "as it exists in its own nature" (*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 78, a. 1 & ad 3) and not simply as it can be represented by an image or likeness. As Rhonheimer summarizes it (in his *Natural Law and Practical Reason*, p. 79), the activities of animals (including human beings) are explained by a combination of apprehension and appetite. Hence, when,

(and many objects and subjects who exist externally to ourselves) through our selecting or making this or that choice which virtuously perfects our desires which we could be possibly initially experiencing at a sensitive level.

While our human liberty or our human freedom is usually understood from within a moral or an ethical perspective (which attends to external actions which are moral because, as noted, they proceed from a foundation that is grounded in our acts of understanding and knowledge), it is a curious fact, however, and a fact that is not lacking in significance for us that our human liberty initially emerges as a datum within the experience of our human cognition since, from within our cogitating, from within our inquiries, as human persons we decide or we can decide whether to ask certain questions instead of certain other questions. Within a given sphere or order, we can decide not to ask any questions at all. Freedom, as a basic datum of our lives, can be said then to emerge and to exist from within our individual acts of cognition before it emerges for us in a more self-evident way through any inquiries which we can make which would be constitutive of our practical acts of human reason. At any point, we can always decide to cast aside or to ignore what our reasoning is trying to suggest or to imply to us. In a real sense, our human desires are not determined by our human acts of thinking and reasoning although, admittedly, the humanity of our desires is both a quality and a requirement which must at times turn to questions which ask about the reasonableness or the good of our desires as much as, apart from any decisions that we make, we experience these same desires within ourselves (within the kind of consciousness which belongs to us with respect to the order of our subjectivity).

The necessary starting point for any deliberations which belong to our practical acts of human reasoning is always the desired, intended object since, from its vantage point, we can then seek to determine the means that will best lead us toward its attainment.[42] A form of retrogressive analysis or resolution is required in our deliberations since, as we begin with an object that is desired and wanted and as the ends or goals begin to suggest their means or approach, we move back from the object that is desired through a chain of preceding apt causes (sometimes cited as secondary goods or secondary ends) which move from later or last causes (or causes which are most immediate to a good's attainment) toward initial or first causes that are most immediate in the doing which we must begin to

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for example, a stone falls to the ground and comes to rest below (on the ground), it gains or acquires nothing in and of itself as a being even if the stone's falling has been an activity that has been entirely proper and natural. But, when an animal or a human being engages in sensitive or intellectual activities (where, through its sensitive or intellectual apprehensions, it sensibly or intellectually assimilates something that is outer into something which exists within the life of an animal or human subject), it engages in these activities for a still higher and greater purpose which is to be understood as a union between two beings: the self as a subject and the self of the other as an object. And so, a sensitive or an intellectual being gains or grows in its own being and, in a way, it goes beyond itself, beyond what it once had been. If, for the sake of the good of understanding, natural desire can be compared to sensitive or intellectual curiosity and its apprehensions of sensing, understanding, and judging which occur within the subjectivity of an animal or a human being, appetitive desire can be compared to the self-giving of a subject which comes with its acts of willing that are quite rational if they are grounded in the prior apprehensions which come with our acts of sensing, understanding, and judging.

41*Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 59, a. 1.

42*Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 14, a. 5; 2a2ae, q. 47, a. 2, ad 3; a. 6; *Sentencia Libri De anima*, 3, 15, 821. As Aquinas expresses it, selecting the right means to reach an end is a "matter of counsel."

engage in if we are to reach the later doing which attains an intended, desired good.[43] Our analysis exists for the sake of a later form of gathering or composition which, in its enactment and application, points to how our understanding and apprehension of a farther, universal kind of thing is joined to our understanding of lesser, particular kinds of things as, through our acts of analysis, we have moved from that which exists as a species of intended, greater, universal kind of to that which exists as particulars of one kind or another.[44] Hence, as Aquinas notes, "the last thing that the practical reason considers [within the analytic order] is the first thing that has to be done [within the synthetic order of things]."[45] Determining the initial first step is absolutely crucial since an initial misstep (a failure to discover and to begin at the right starting point) can thwart any progress that can engage in any later actions whose value and success depends upon the existence and the fulfillment of prior conditions which have been created by our initial actions which, perhaps, we have taken and put into effect. In our deliberations, as we distinguish between different alternatives and possibilities and then, though a kind of comparison, as we weigh and evaluate their respective merits, the criterion which always grounds a given judgment of choice will always be a reason of some kind which joins a universally true, applicable, general first principle or precept that belongs to our practical acts of reasoning with an apprehension which grasps a specific concrete course of action that indicates what, now, we should do.[46] Be reasonable. Be responsible. Do this and not that.

To cite a few examples that Aquinas uses to illustrate the functioning of our practical acts of reason as these work from first principles, a universally valid precept avers, for instance, that "children ought to honor their parents."[47] But, such a first principle, as a first principle, does not exactly stipulate what is to be done in any given concrete situation if we are to honor our parents.[48] Proximate acts of understanding are also always needed[49] since what should be done in a given concrete situation cannot be simply deduced from the meaning of any general precept. Most especially is this the case when a situation presents itself which is totally out of context in terms of what have been our normal, typical expectations. Past expectations no longer apply and so, in such a situation, the need for a more judicious, fair response distinguishes conventional or common forms of prudence from varieties that call for a more profound type of understanding that can adequately deal with exceptional contexts and situations.[50] In an example that comes to us from Plato's *Republic*, while, for instance, it is just to pay a creditor what is owned to him or her and we ordinarily return what we have borrowed from another person, if a creditor is no longer sane and if he or she could use what is returned to him or her as a means for harming another person (and this person could be the former debtor), we should not do what

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43*Sententia libri Ethicorum*, 3, 8, 475-476.

44*Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae, q. 47, a. 3.

45*Sencencia Libri De anima*, 3, 15, 821; p. 244. See Edmund Dolan, "Resolution and Composition in Speculative and Practical Discourse," *Laval Théologique et Philosophique* 6 (1950): 19.

46*Sencencia Libri De anima*, 3, 16, 840-841. In paragraph 845, p. 250, Aquinas gives an example. The precept that "children ought to honor their parents" serves as a universally valid principle and, in a particular practical judgment which follows and which directly deals with a concrete situation, we decide that, in a given situation, we are a son (or a daughter) and so, in the here and now, we should honor our parents in a given way.

47*Sencencia Libri De anima*, 3, 16, 845.

48*Sententia libri Ethicorum*, 2, 2, 258-259.

49*De Veritate*, q. 14, a. 4.

50*Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae, q. 51, a. 4.

we would or should ordinarily do and simply repay what we have borrowed.[51] We must find another way, a better response. In implementing any general precept, we must combine the demands of a number of general precepts through sagacious practical acts of judgment which can determine what should be done within a given situation. With respect, for instance, to our honoring of parents, in a given set of circumstances, as a son or daughter, we should behave toward them in a way that truly honors and values them. We cannot do something that dishonors them in a given situation even if what is done is something that would honor them in a different set of circumstances.

To elaborate a bit more fully: while, in general, we cannot be *certain* that a particular means will bring about a particularly desired effect, judgments that are grounded in estimations of *probability* can be validly made about what will probably occur if a particular means is to be used to reach a particular end.[52] A given effect usually follows by applying this particular cause and not some other cause.[53] Amid the concrete circumstances of our life, probability serves as a sufficient criterion for the choices that we must make in trying to live a morally ethical life.[54] Whatever falls under a prescriptive precept "need not be complied with persistently and in every case, but only when the due conditions of persons, time, place, and situation demand its observance."[55] This lack of certainty in our moral cognition[56] in favor of probable or conjectural estimations accordingly explains why prudential decisions are associated more with apprehensions of opinion (*opinio*) than with apprehensions of truth (*veritas*) since opinion exists as something which is defined as a knowledge of things which could happen in more than one way.[57] If a strict, limited notion of science speaks about causes which must always apply in this way (and which must always exist in any given situation), causes which only occasionally exist (and which can exist only when certain conditions are met) can be known and acknowledged only through another form of understanding and judgment which prudentially leads us as human persons toward moral decisions about how contingently, in a given situation, we should best respond and act.

As our deliberations end with a judgment or a choice which selects and completely wills a particular means that is most apt in achieving a desired end,[58] an order of implementation and execution accordingly succeeds an order of desiring and intentionality as the performance of an initial act, serving as an initial means, leads us hopefully on our way toward a desired, intended end. A process of application takes over although, on the other hand, a species of application which follows choice can be distinguished from a first kind of application which precedes our making of a particular choice.[59] Prior to the making of a choice as the term of our practical acts of human reasoning, as cogitating subjects,

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51Plato, *Republic*, 1, 331c. While Aquinas in the *Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae, q. 51, a. 4, speaks about money that is owed by one state to another state and the foolishness of reimbursing a state who is planning a military attack, Plato speaks about this problem as it exists between individuals.

52*Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae, q. 47, a. 3, ad 2.

53*Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 96, a. 1, ad 3.

54*Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae, q. 49, a. 1.

55Disputations, *de Correctione Fraterna*, 1, quoted by Thomas Gilby, *St. Thomas Aquinas Philosophical Texts*, trans. by Thomas Gilby (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 361, n. 1056.

56*Sententia libri Ethicorum*, 2, 2, 259; *Summa Theologiae*, 2a2ae, q. 47, a. 9, ad 2; q. 49, a. 5, ad 2.

57*Sententia libri Ethicorum*, 6, 4, 1174.

58*Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 16, a. 4.

59*Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 16, aa. 1, 4.

we can and we must use or apply a variety of different acts: this or that act for the purpose of answering any questions which can possible arise for us as we encounter questions which, in some way, need to be answered. However, after making a choice in terms of a deed which we have now to do, in our use or application of different acts, we move into an application which exists as the doing which normally follows knowing (although the doing or the execution of a deed can lead to subsequent questions that ask for increments in the extent of our understanding and knowledge). Doing leads to knowing and then back to doing in a circular sequence that is ultimately geared toward an order that puts our doing after our knowing as the object or the purpose of all our moral acts of knowing and deliberation. Our human willing succeeds our knowing as it engages in operations which become the staple of the kind of doing which exists in execution. The doing of all these operations is their performance and with the actuation of all activities that are constitutive of means that lead to ends, our moral deliberation (as an inquiry whose ultimate term is an end that transcends our knowing) comes to completion in the good of realization and accomplishment.[60] With the meeting of a given desire for a given end comes a kind of delight, enjoyment, or rest although the experience of these satisfactions is essentially relative as other other, newer desires emerge for attaining other, newer ends and as these desires then bestir us to engage in new acts and activities. Complete rest and enjoyment only comes with reaching an end that cannot be transcended (an end which meets every kind of requirement).

60*Summa Theologiae*, 1a2ae, q. 16, a. 4, ad 1.