

Neothomism: Intelligence

§13. Transition to Judgment.

A transition provides an excuse for a summary of what has gone before. In the preceding ten sections (§§3-12), we have been distinguishing and relating.

There have been distinguished acts and their contents: sensation and sense data, perception and percept, imagining and image, direct understanding and idea, the act variously described as conceiving, thinking, defining, considering, meaning and its concept content which is variously named concept, thought, definition, or object of consideration definition, consideration, of meaning.

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These acts and their contents lie on two distinct levels. On a sensitive level are found sensation, perception, and imagination; on an intellectual level there are understanding and conception. But though distinct, the two levels are related. The initial bridge is the spirit of inquiry which transmutes sensible contents into the materials of questions and problems for intelligence. Now as the question or problem results from the combination of the desire of intelligence to understand but from this desire as specified by percepts or schematic images, so the act of understanding is the grasp of an idea or intelligible form that is emergent in the sensible presentation or representation. Finally, as inquiry and understanding do not occur without a sensible correlative, so also the activity of conceiving or thinking evokes its sensible complement in an expression, which may be linguistic or symbolic, spoken or written or merely imagined.

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Next, it is to be noted that insights are not isolated; they occur in constellations, complement one another, accumulate, and so develop into the habitual mastery of a subject. But as insights are to mastery, so concepts are to a system. For within a system one may distinguish between primitive terms and relations, which proceed from the basic insights, derived terms and relations, which are defined in by employing the primitive, basic propositions, which result from the various, immediate combinations of primitive terms and relations, and derived propositions, which are deducible from the basic propositions and proceed from the extension of the basic insights represent extensions of the basic insights into a mastery of a domain.

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Further, systems develop either internally or externally. Internal development is represented by mathematics in which sense data and percepts provide only an occasion. The proper process is from inquiry about schematic images through insight to theorems and solutions; again, through the symbolic representation of the processes of theorizing and solving, which supply as it were higher schematic images, to more general insights and more abstract relations theorems, which in turn may be symbolically expressed to provide still higher images.