It Takes One to Know One
Connaturality—Knowledge or Prejudice?

Catherine Green

The notion of connaturality in practical knowledge, as discussed by both Jacques Maritain and Yves R. Simon, is intuitively attractive. It seems to provide an account of the consistently good actions carried out and the bad actions avoided by the persons whom we tend to call both good and wise. Maritain follows the lead of Thomas Aquinas in his discussions of connatural knowledge. He argues that such knowledge is "experimental"[1] it is presupposed in real prudence[2] as well as in real art,[3] and it is the ground of knowledge achieved in mystical knowledge.[4] He also argues in *The Range of Reason* that the existence of connatural knowledge obliges us to realize the analogical character of knowledge itself.[5] Yves Simon takes up Maritain's interest in connatural knowledge and argues that it provides an objective certainty in practical knowledge that is analogous to the certainty found in scientific knowledge.[6] Connatural knowledge we are told is grounded in existence. The agent shares the ontological nature of the good that is sought and it is this ontological affinity that allows the agent to recognize the good in the other.

The problem that arises, however, is that the language used by both Maritain and Simon to describe such knowledge is poetic, a-rational and obscure. Maritain tells us that for the artist, "beauty becomes connatural to him, bedded in his being through affection, and his work proceeds from his

[1] Jacques Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, trans. Gerald B. Phelan (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), p. 263 and *Freedom in the Modern World* in *The Collected Works of Jacques Maritain*, Vol. 11, ed. Otto Bird (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), p. 15.

[2] *Freedom in the Modern World*, p. 15.

[3] Jacques Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism and The Frontiers of Poetry*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1974), p. 47.

[4] *Degrees of Knowledge*, p. 281.

[5] Jacques Maritain, *The Range of Reason* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 22.

[6] Yves R. Simon, *The Definition of Moral Virtue,* ed. Vukan Kuic (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), p. 116.

heart and his bowels as from his lucid mind."[7] Simon says that the "[a]nswer to the ultimate [practical] question was obtained by listening to an inclination. The intellect, here, is the disciple of love."[8] Maritain suggests variously that such knowledge is "not rational knowledge,"[9] "non-conceptual,"[10] it is "obscure and perhaps unable to give an account of itself."[11] Simon suggests that "[i]nasmuch as the ultimate practical judgment admits of no logical connection with any rational premises, it is, strictly speaking, incommunicable."[12]

How, then, are we to understand this "affective knowledge?" How is this ontological "recognition" a way of knowing as opposed to a simple physical or physiological attraction rather like the attraction of silver to chlorine or boy to girl? That is, if it is not conceptual, what makes it a form of knowledge as opposed to a form of ignorance? I am reminded of a New Yorker cartoon in which a rotund bald judge dressed in a black suit and sporting a broomstick mustache surveys a plaintiff with these very same characteristics and dress. The judge's verdict; "Surely, not guilty." This would seem to result from an ontological affinity. But it looks much more like what we would commonly call prejudice. Of course, the notion of connatural knowledge stemming from preconscious inclinations suggests precisely a "pre-judging." What is the difference, then between prejudice, a form of ignorance and the prejudgment that is essential to connatural knowledge? Second, if it is a kind of knowledge, how is it related to virtue? I am reminded of the "intuition" that the "good" scam artist has for his "mark" and the method of the "good" actor who attempts to take on the nature of the character he is playing in order to render a persuasive performance. These too seem to arise from a kind of knowledge by affinity. If connaturality is a kind of knowledge, does it admit of bad use? If it does admit of bad use, how could it provide any basis for moral certainty?

My goal in this paper, then, is to attempt to clarify the meaning and the analogous character of these connatural ways of knowing. Maritain argues that connatural knowledge obliges us to pay proper attention to the analogical character of knowledge. Yves Simon argues that the analogical ground of all knowledge is intentional existence and that knowledge by inclination can best be understood by examining the nature of intentional relations.[13] There-

[7] *Art and Scholasticism*, p. 47.

[8] Yves R. Simon, "Introduction to the Study of Practical Wisdom," *The New Scholasticism* 34 (1961), p. 21.

[9] *The Range of Reason*, p. 23.

[10] Ibid., p. 25.

[11] Ibid., p. 23.

[12] "Introduction to the Study of Practical Wisdom," p. 27.

[13] *The Definition of Moral Virtue*, p. 112.

fore, we will use Simon's discussion of the nature of intentional existence to help us explore this problem. Following the leads of Aquinas and Maritain, Simon argues that there are two distinct orders of existence.[14] The physical or entitative order is that in which things exist as they are and nothing else.[15] It is worth noting here that physical does not mean material but rather composite, that is, constituted by a matter and form unity. The intentional order of existence is that in which "what is and remains itself can also be the other."[16] The intentional order is necessary in order that existing things may be known by various minds and, may at the same time, maintain their own unique existence.[17]

Simon argues that the notion of intentional existence can only be understood analogically.[18] "Intentional existence" is primarily understood in the realm of formal causality, as the mode of existence assumed by the idea in the mind of the knower.[19] It also refers to the efficiency "of the principal agent present in his instrument," and in the realm of final causes, it refers to "the goodness that bestows dignity upon even the humblest of means."[20] We see in both Maritain and Simon that the good that ultimately allows a free agent to choose the good she desires is divine.[21] We will argue that these various realms of intentional existence correspond to the realms of connatural knowledge identified by Jacques Maritain. That is, metaphysical and intellectual knowledge is, of course, a kind of formal existence. Whereas, prudential and artistic connaturality are a kind of intentional existence determined by relation to the good and the beautiful, knowledge by way of final causality. Prudential connaturality can be understood by the character of the relation of the agent to the end as desired while artistic connaturality can be understood by the character of the relation of the artist to the beautiful both as object of knowledge and as object to be created. Finally, the connaturality of the mystic can be understood as a relation to divine efficiency in which the mystic is the instrument of divine charity.

We will begin by exploring Simon's understanding of the meaning and role of intentional existence. Next we will explore such existence in the realm

[14] Yves R. Simon, *An Introduction to the Metaphysics of Knowledge*, trans. Vukan Kuic and Richard J. Thompson (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990), pp. 9-10.

[15] Ibid. See also, Yves R. Simon, "To Be and To Know," *Chicago Review* 14 (Spring 1961), p. 87.

[16] *An Introduction to the Metaphysics of Knowledge*, p. 10.

[17] Ibid., p. 25.

[18] Ibid., p. 28.

[19] Ibid., p. 26.

[20] Ibid., pp. 26, 28.

[21] *Freedom in the Modern World*, p. 22 and Yves R. Simon, *Freedom of Choice*, trans. Peter Wolff (New York: Fordham University Press, 1969), p. 150.

of instrumental causality since it is here that Simon gives us the most developed discussions of the meaning of intentional existence. In light of what we have learned we will then briefly explore Maritain's discussion of the connatural knowledge of the mystic. We take this route because while practical knowledge is the area where connaturality is most familiar to everyday life, in both *The Degrees of Knowledge* and in *The Range of Reason*, Maritain gives his most thorough discussions of this knowledge in its relation to the mystic. From our understanding of what we will see is the instrumental character of mystical knowledge we will be able to develop a general outline of the role of connatural knowledge in moral action. We will conclude with a discussion of the possibility and nature of the steadfast and consistent recognition of the good found in prudence.

Simon tells us in *The Metaphysics of Knowledge* that "the intentional being of knowledge appears...as manifestation of a superabundance by which the divine generosity permits some creatures to be more than they are."[22] He is arguing here that intentional existence is found in things that can be known, where it is an excess of efficiency by which objects of knowledge can make themselves available to be known by a creature endowed with the ability to know. "It is this superabundance of creation that makes things spill over into or, better, radiate, ideas. The universe of nature so generously created is at the same time the universe of intentionality and that is how we are able to know it, and in knowing it to imitate divine infinity."[23] There are two realms of intentional existence here: the first, a kind of efficiency in the known thing "radiating ideas" to the knower and another in the knower where "[i]n the order of formal causality, the superabundance of being is shown in the ability of the knower to become the known in intentional existence."[24] He uses the term "intentional" to speak of that specifically immaterial kind of existence that the object of knowledge has in the soul of the knower.[25]

Our first problem, of course, is to clarify what he means by "intentional existence." In a note to this discussion he distinguishes "intentional" existence from other forms of superabundant existence. Intentional existence is an added existence that accrues to an active creature by virtue of an on-going relationship to a prior cause. It does not belong to the agent per se, but to the prior cause acting in or through the agent. Such existence is ephemeral and transient; gone when the prior cause is no longer present and acting on the agent. For example, the ability of a paintbrush to effect the precise idea of an

[22] *An Introduction to the Metaphysics of Knowledge*, p. 26.
[23] Ibid., p. 25. See also *The Degrees of Knowledge*, p. 118.
[24] *An Introduction to the Metaphysics of Knowledge*, p. 26.
[25] Ibid., pp. 12-13.

artist arises in the artist and culminates in the painting. When the artist takes a break, the paintbrush becomes simply a "a wooden stick with a tuft of hair at one end" with no ability to create such an effect on its own.[26] In the realm of final causes, he tells us that the means is given extra goodness from the end to which it is ordered. The good of hard work, for example, comes not simply from the action of working, but more from the good it strives to achieve, the house that is completed. As we all know, busy work has very limited good. Thus according to Simon, intentional existence can only be understood; 1. by its ultimate relation to divine power, 2. by its role as the means to knowledge in certain privileged creatures, and 3. by its continuing dependence on the prior cause from which it proceeds.

Now to better understand what Simon is arguing we will turn to his discussion of instrumental action. In *Metaphysics of Knowledge,* Simon examines the issue of instrumental causality in some depth in two contexts. In both he is interested to clarify its essential nature. This happens most completely in his discussion of the role of the image in the mind that produces the idea in the intellect.[27] Here he argues that there are two essential features of an instrument. An instrument must have an active nature of its own that serves as the proximate cause of both the ontological and specific nature of the effect.[28] Second, he argues that the essence of instrumental causality is that it is a matter of efficiency rather than specificity. He suggests here that an infinitely powerful agent could achieve any effect with any instrument.[29] But careful attention reveals that this is not strictly true. Simon is clear that an instrumental effect must proceed from some capacities that the instrument had prior to the action of the principal agent. Now an instrument as such has a potential to act in a specified way. For example lead cannot act as a buoy or channel marker because it cannot float and thus it could not be seen by sailors to warn them of danger. Simon's examples of various instruments and his references to St. Thomas all note that it is both the form and the efficiency of the instrument that is elevated by Divine power.[30] For example, baptismal waters cleanse the soul as well as the body, they lead to a rebirth of the soul as simple rain promotes the rebirth of plants after a drought.[31] To use a lead ball as a channel marker, then, would require not an elevation of existence

[26] Ibid., p. 27.
[27] Ibid., pp. 123-27.
[28] Ibid., pp. 123-24.
[29] Ibid., p. 124.
[30] Ibid., n. 42.
[31] Catherine Green, *The Intentionality of Knowing and Willing in the Writings of Yves R. Simon* (Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1996), p. 116.

but a change of nature. This, of course, is possible by divine power. But it would not then be an instrumental action at all. The use of an instrument as an instrument requires the use of its own specific and active nature to affect the particular end. Instruments, then, are the means by which the principal agent transfers the form of an action to an effect.

Beyond this, however, there is another issue. The instrument must also serve as the bridge by which the ontological character of the action is transferred. As we know, existing things have both a potency to act and a potency to be acted on. In physical or composite things the action of a prior cause is limited by the ability of the receiver to accept that form. Thus Thomas's dictum, "the received is in the receiver according to the mode of the receiver."[32] Therefore in order for the instrument to transmit an immaterial action from the agent to the effect, the instrument must have the potential to receive and transmit immaterial action. Thus, according to Simon, all created natures have an intentional as well as a physical existence in order that they might be able to be party to the knowing of certain privileged creatures.[33] All created natures may serve as the instruments by means of which they can be known. In action of composite creatures the action received is limited and thus altered by the receiver. The action issuing from the instrument then expresses that limitation. For example a paintbrush with coarse wiry bristles would not be able to effect accurately the fine and precise brush strokes envisioned by the artist. Thus the immaterial idea in the mind of the artist is transmitted through the paintbrush with some alteration to the canvas. The paintbrush itself is the proximate source of both the specific and ontologic nature of the painting. The more powerful the agent, the more limited would be the alteration of the form by the instrument. That is, the more powerful artist would use the nature of the instrument rather perfectly to express her ideas.

The nature of an instrument, then, is understood as transmitting both the specific and the ontologic character of the effect from the prior agent to the effect. The intentional and immaterial character of the instrument accrues to it from its potential to effect immaterial and intentional action given with its created nature and then is increased or given active existence by the efficiency of some prior agent in using the instrument to achieve a particular effect. The more powerful the prior agent, the more perfect will be the use of the formal and ontologic character of the instrument and the more perfect the effect. In any case, the intentional and immaterial activity of the instrument

[32] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I q. 84, a. 1.

[33] *An Introduction to the Metaphysics of Knowledge*, p. 25.

is limited by the availability and activity of the prior cause. Finally, instrumental activity is essentially a kind of efficiency. The activity and the instrument are ordered to the ultimate effect.

To review, then, we have seen that intentional existence has three necessary characteristics. It is ultimately related to divine power, it is the means to knowledge in creatures who are able to know, and it constantly depends on the prior cause from which it proceeds. An instrument takes on intentional existence in the realm of efficiency and by means of its own formal and ontological character it transmits the formal and ontological character of the idea of the prior agent to the effect he desires. The limitation of the instrument and the amplitude of the prior agent affect the precision of this activity.

We are now ready to turn our attention of Maritain's discussion of mystical knowledge. The problem Maritain is addressing is how to identify the "proximate principles of mystical experience."[34] How is such experience realized? He answers by saying that it is both a "suprahuman mode of knowledge" and it is "knowledge by connaturality."[35] He explains mystical knowledge as an experience where the term "experience" means "knowledge of an object as present, in which the soul undergoes an action exercised upon it by that object and perceives in virtue of this very passion."[36] Here the soul does not initiate the action, but rather "is moved and set into immanent action through God's grace alone operating within it as the living instrument of the Holy Ghost. He elevates it to a higher rule by suspending its human way of acting: that is why mystics describe it as a passivity and a non-acting."[37] What Maritain is suggesting is that the soul of human creatures is given an extra "intentional" existence and power by which it is able to know God, albeit in a limited way in what Maritain calls "ananoetic" or analogical knowledge.[38] Beyond this, however, Maritain tells us, "Grace bestows upon us, in a supernatural manner, a radical power of grasping pure Act as our object, a new root of spiritual operation whose proper and specifying object is the Divine Essence itself."[39]

It is important to understand the nature of immanent action to understand what this means. Immanent action is a kind of action that allows a knower to enter into a unity with the known that does not alter in any way the known while it perfects the knower as knowing. The known is made present

[34] *The Degrees of Knowledge*, p. 275.
[35] Ibid., p. 276.
[36] Ibid., p. 280.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid., p. 264.
[39] Ibid., p. 271.

to the knower as the goal of his action of knowing. In the presence of the object to be known, the knower forms his own faculty of knowledge in more or less exact correspondence to the form of the object.[40] In contact with the existence of the thing to be known, the knower moves to grasp the known and in intellectual knowledge to express that known in the mental word. In physical terms we might understand this as similar to the action of iron filings, conforming their active natures in correspondence with the active nature of a magnet brought close to them. Thus the knower unites with the object known without altering the known. The object provides the form for the action while the sensitive faculty provides the efficiency. There is thus formal identity while there remains existential distinction. Because the object is fully present to the faculty, the action is complete in itself. The faculty does not search for any end beyond this action, but rather simply attempts to grasp as fully as possible the object given.[41]

I would argue that we might understand Maritain's mystical knowledge in Simon's terms as intentional existence in the order of efficiency, that is, instrumental causality. We would not here have knowing or grasping of God as a formal concept, but rather as an active principal elevating our lives by His love. The divine Act adds the possibility of power to the human soul such that this soul in a state of grace is able to be the instrument of divine love in making itself present to the mystic. Maritain tells us that this state of grace is not simply given but is both given and received. That is, "there must be within the soul in a state of grace, sails all set to receive the wind of heaven, or, to use scholastic language, permanent dispositions or habitus which guarantee the possibility...of achieving this inspired knowledge."[42] Habitus, as we know, is not a first nature, but rather a second nature developed over time as a result of specific actions carried out for the sake of an end.[43] It is both a formal determination by a distinct object as well as an "existential readiness" to act in accordance with that object. In mystical knowledge this habitus would be the many acts of charity carried out by loving persons in the hopes of making themselves more like their God. "We are made connatural to God through charity."[44] "The connaturality of charity, under the motion of the Holy Ghost plays the formal part [of knowledge]."[45] What is essential here is

[40] *The Intentionality of Knowing and Willing in the Writings of Yves R. Simon*, p. 162.
[41] Ibid.
[42] *The Degrees of Knowledge*, p. 276.
[43] *Definition of Moral Virtue*, pp. 59-60.
[44] *The Degrees of Knowledge*, p. 277.
[45] Ibid., p. 281.

action formed by charity.

What the habitus of charitable activity does here is to prepare the person to receive the activity of the Holy Spirit in the immanent action of the mystical experience. Charity, of course, is the activity of giving of oneself to another. The immanent action of mystical experience is precisely a giving up of one's own active nature to the activity of the divine. The charitable soul under the power of divine efficiency conforms itself to divine will and serves as the "bridge" between heaven and earth. In the presence of a divine agent, the instrument of the mystic's soul most perfectly expresses divine love to the world. Since this is a union of efficiency the ultimate nature of the action is for the sake of the effect that will be given to the world, that is, for the specific acts of love expressed there. In so far as it is a specifically immanent action it is a union of the two radically distinct beings in which the mystic is perfected in her human nature while the divine nature remains unchanged.

Connaturality then can be understood as the forming of the soul of the mystic to be more charitable and thus Christ-like by virtue of many charitable actions. This results in the habitus of charity being present in the mystic. This habitus directed to the goal of knowing God prepares the being of the mystic to be ready to accept the divine activity in the moment of mystical knowing in which the connaturality of efficiency of the human by the divine is perfected ever more. The form here comes from the soul of the mystic formed by charity that is formally the same on earth as in heaven.[46] The efficiency is, of course, divine.

We are now ready to turn our attention to the nature of connaturality found in moral knowledge. Maritain tells us that "[w]hen a man makes a free decision, he takes into account, not only all that he possesses of moral science and factual information, and which is manifested to him in concepts and notions, but also all the secret elements of evaluation which depend on what he is, and which are known to him through inclination, through his own actual propensities and his own virtues, if he has any."[47] Simon puts it this way. The "[a]nswer to the ultimate question was obtained by listening to an inclination...The object of the practical judgment is one that cannot be grasped by looking at it. It is delivered by love to the docile intellect."[48] Quoting John of St. Thomas, he says, "'love takes over the role of the object.'"[49]

Simon argues that practical judgments are complex actions as are all acts of knowing. In an intricate interplay between desire and knowledge, we

[46] Ibid., p. 271.

[47] *Range of Reason*, p. 26.

[48] "Introduction to the Study of Practical Wisdom," p. 21.

[49] Ibid.

desire a good before we can seek the ways to achieve it. Having identified a good means, in fully chosen actions, it is necessary to evaluate this particular means in terms of its relation to the end desired: is it good enough? Finally, as a result of a "surplus of goodness" that accrues to the will by virtue of the natural desire all humans have for perfect and enduring happiness, the will produces the surplus of energy by which it elevates this particular means to the status necessary to make it good enough to determine an action here and now. "Because of [the will's] natural determination it possesses enough actuality to add to the least of particular goods all the surplus of goodness which it needs in order to be found constituted of absolutely desirable good."[50] Maritain says, the will "pours out upon that particular good, of itself wholly incapable of determining it, the superabundant determination it receives from its necessary object, good as such."[51] It is desire for complete and enduring happiness that sends the mind looking for ways to achieve this good. This desire and the power to effect it is given with our created human nature. Any particular object identified by the mind as good will always be radically inadequate to the task of achieving perfect happiness and thus could never by itself determine one to act. It is precisely by ignoring this limitation that one acts by simple habit or passion. However when we recognize this radical inadequacy, in making choices the natural will has the power necessary to make this inadequate means good enough for now and thus put the good idea into action.

It is clear that inclination is primary here in that desire is both the beginning and the end of this action. And it is clear that knowledge is present here since the mind first identifies the good and then evaluates it in terms of the good end. However, it is not so clear how connaturality functions. Simon tells us that connaturality here is a "harmony, a sympathy, a dynamic unity, a community of nature...between the virtuous heart and the requirements of virtue."[52] The knowledge of connaturality is not the cognitive identification of a good idea, or the comparison of the character of the particular good with the whole good. Rather it is the forming of the virtuous character of the person in consonance with the good desired. As we saw in our discussion of mystical knowledge, it was the habitus of charitable actions that made the mystical heart open to experience the act of divine charity. In the habitus of prudence the good character of the will which has been developed over time embraces the particular good as consistent with both its own character and

[50] *Freedom of Choice*, p. 150.

[51] Jacques Maritain, *A Preface to Metaphysics: Seven Lectures on Being* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1948), p. 103.

[52] "Introduction to the Study of Practical Wisdom," p. 24.

with the character of the good it seeks. Thus in the realm of final causes the Divine Good as the final end of all human action gives intentional existence to the human will to allow it to form itself, by means of its particular actions, in consonance with the good it seeks. This ontological relation to the good is like the ontological relation between the charity of the mystic and divine charity.

The connaturality of practical judgments, then, is this shared goodness found in the will that desires the good, the mind that identifies the means to achieve that good and the good itself. The will desires a good thing, the mind identifies a means to achieve it and an action is chosen. Enacting a particular good changes and forms the mind and the will to be more like the good desired, connaturality begins. If the good desired and enacted is consistent with what is truly good for the person as a particular human person, that is, if it is consistent with some aspect of the perfect and enduring good, a connaturality with good itself begins. However, since the relation of the final good is not absolutely determinative, we must choose particular means in order to achieve happiness. Therefore it is quite possible that certain actions or means chosen will not only be inadequate to meet that final goal, but they may also be radically mistaken in their direction. Simon uses an analogy of people walking on a path in the woods on their way to a particular house.[53] They know that they want to reach the house and they walk to achieve that goal. However, the lights of the house come in and out of view. It is not clear that the path he is on will take him where he wants to go. As a matter of fact the path seems at times to take him in the wrong direction. Similarly, while we all try to achieve happiness, we may be at times quite mistaken about what kinds of goods will achieve that happiness.

The scam artist is acting then to achieve his happiness, which he understands to be found in easy wealth. He desires to "relieve" his patrons of their cash, he looks for ways to do this and then acts to carry them out. In so doing he forms a habitus or state of character directed to this end. Where the particular actions necessary to achieve the end initially must be mediated by knowledge ("will this work or will another means be more effective?") over time the need for reflection decreases. What initially happened by reflection now happens by second nature. The nature of the scam artist becomes identified with the "good" he seeks. This connaturality of nature allows for the steady recognition of his end, that is, a good mark, with little or no reflection.

Aristotle notes that this is a kind of "cleverness." It is "the power to perform those steps which are conducive to a goal we have set for ourselves

[53] *Freedom of Choice*, p. 103.

and to attain that goal...this capacity [alone] is not practical wisdom, although practical wisdom does not exist without it."[54] Simon suggests that making ourselves connatural with our particular goal relieves us of much of the intricate decision making that would normally be necessary to achieve such goals and thus provides the "habits" of character that are the ground of real virtue.[55]

The "method" actor then may be using such "cleverness" in a way more consistent with real virtue. In any case, it is clear that connaturality in the realm of final causes is a relation to an end as good in which the agent has acted in consonance with that good consistently and has thus formed himself in relation to that good. As a result he is able to "see" the good in its existential character without carrying out a logical deduction about its nature. Connaturality is mediated by habitus that is itself both explicitly determined by thoughtful attention to the form of the end and an existential readiness to act to achieve that form.

Since a habitus of acting to achieve particular ends is developed over time, the stability of the readiness to act in consonance with the desired end also increases over time. Thus, the stability of action of the scam artist merely developing his "art" will be limited. Prudence as such, however, depends on the stable character of the agent in relation to the various aspects of virtue: including temperance, fortitude, justice and the like. Therefore, the stability of prudence as a readiness to act in accord with these virtues will be assured by their presence as existential characteristics of the agent.

Connatural knowledge, then in all its forms would be a result of habitus. The more perfectly this habitus is developed, the more consistent would be its expression. It is thus a thoughtful direction of our actions to achieve a specified end, as truth, as good, as charitable or as beautiful. This habitus brings into existence a second nature through which we consistently recognize that end in a non-discursive action. It is a way of existing by relation to another that is itself immanent action. We may form our nature in relation to the good and express that nature in the connatural recognition of and action in consonance with the good, we may form our nature in relation to divine efficiency and express that nature in recognition of and consistent actions of charity. We may form our nature in relation to the beautiful and express that nature in the recognition of and consistent expression of the poetic word or the created art. Connatural knowledge can be understood as knowledge since it is a forming of ourselves in relation to another in an action that perfects our

[54] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1144a25-29.
[55] *Definition of Moral Virtue*, p. 76.

own nature while leaving the other unaltered. It is a connaturality of existence since we take on some aspect of the efficient, the good or the beautiful existence of the other as our own.

While it is a pre-judging, that is a forming oneself and one's action in consonance with the existence of the other rather than with its intelligible form as such, what is expressed as a judgment is clearly not simply prejudice. That is, connatural knowledge occurs only after significant thoughtful judgments have prepared the way. In practical actions, since we are free to choose any means to the goal of happiness, a connaturality of good may be radically defective even as it is radically determinative of the actions of the agent. Since the intentional existence of instrumental action belongs properly to the cause, in mystical knowledge where the object of the charitable actions of the mystic is the love of God Himself, we find a connaturality of action and existence that is necessarily perfective.