

QUESTION 12

Intending

Next, we have to consider the act of intending (*intentio*). On this topic there are five questions: (1) Is intending an act of the intellect or an act of the will? (2) Is an act of intending directed only toward the ultimate end? (3) Can someone intend two things simultaneously? (4) Is intending an end the same act as willing the means to that end? (5) Does the act of intending belong to brute animals?

Article 1

Is intending an act of the intellect or an act of the will?

It seems that intending is an act of the intellect and not of the will:

Objection 1: Matthew 6:22 says, “If your eye is simple, then your whole body will be light,” where, as Augustine says in *De Sermone Domini in Monte*, ‘eye’ signifies the act of intending. But since the eye is the instrument of the visual power, it signifies an apprehensive power. Therefore, intending is an act of an apprehensive power and not of an appetitive power.

Objection 2: In the same work Augustine says that the act of intending is being called ‘light’ by our Lord when He says, “If the light that is in you is darkness” [Matthew 6:23]. But light pertains to cognition. Therefore, so does the act of intending.

Objection 3: ‘Intending’ designates a certain ordering toward an end. But it is reason’s role to do the ordering. Therefore, the act of intending belongs to reason and not to the will.

Objection 4: An act of the will is directed only to either an end or the means to an end. But an act of the will with respect to an end is called ‘willing’ (*voluntas*) or ‘enjoying’ (*fruitio*), whereas an act of the will with respect to the means to an end is called ‘choosing’ (*electio*). An act of intending differs from these acts. Therefore, intending is not an act of the will.

But contrary to this: In *De Trinitate* 11 Augustine says, “The will’s intending joins a body that is seen to the visual power and, similarly, it joins the species that exists in memory to the gaze of the mind’s interior thought.” Therefore, intending is an act of the will.

I respond: ‘Intending’, as the name itself suggests, signifies a tending toward something. Now both the mover’s action and the moveable thing’s movement tend toward something. But the fact that the moveable thing’s movement tends toward something stems from the mover’s action. Hence, intending pertains primarily and chiefly to that which *effects* movement toward the end; hence, we say that an architect, or anyone who is in charge, moves others by his command toward what he intends. But as was established above (q. 9, a. 1), it is the will that moves the other powers of the soul toward their end. Hence, it is clear that intending is, properly speaking, an act of the will.

Reply to objection 1: Intending is metaphorically called an ‘eye’ not because it has to do with cognition, but rather because it presupposes the cognition that proposes to the will the end toward which the will effects movement—in the same way that with the eye we see ahead to where we should tend with our bodies.

Reply to objection 2: Intending is called ‘light’ because it is manifest to the one who is doing the intending. Hence, the works are called darkness because, as Augustine explains in the same place, a man knows what he intends, but does not know what follows from his works.

Reply to objection 3: The will, to be sure, does not do the ordering, but it does tend toward something in accord with the order prescribed by reason (*secundum ordinem rationis*). Hence, the name ‘intending’ names an act of the will and presupposes the order by which reason orders something toward the end.

Reply to objection 4: Intending is an act of the will with respect to an end. However, there are three ways in which the will is related to an end:

First, it is ordered to an end absolutely speaking, and in this sense it is called *willing* (*voluntas*), as when we will health (or something else of this sort) absolutely speaking.

Second, the end is thought of insofar as one comes to rest in it, and in this sense it is the act of *enjoying* that is related to the end.

Third, the end is considered insofar as it is the terminus of something that is ordered toward it, and it is in this way that *intending* is related to the end. For we are said to intend health not only because we will it, but because we will to reach it through something else.

Article 2

Is intending directed only toward the ultimate end?

It seems that intending is directed only toward the ultimate end:

Objection 1: In *Sententiae* Prosperus says, “The heart’s intention is a cry to God.” But God is the ultimate end of the human heart. Therefore, intending always has to do with the ultimate end.

Objection 2: As has been explained (a. 1), the act of intending relates to an end insofar as the end is a terminus. But a terminus has the character of something ultimate. Therefore, the act of intending always relates to the ultimate end.

Objection 3: An act of enjoying relates to the end just as an act of intending does. But an act of enjoying is always directed toward the ultimate end. Therefore, so is an act of intending.

But contrary to this: As was explained above (q. 1, a. 7), there is a single ultimate end of human acts of will, viz., beatitude. Therefore, if an act of intending were always directed toward the ultimate end, then there would not be diverse human intentions. But this is clearly false.

I respond: As was explained above (a. 1), intending has to do with an end insofar as the end is a terminus of the will’s movement. Now in the case of a movement, ‘terminus’ can be taken in one of two ways, viz., (a) for the *ultimate terminus* itself, in which there is rest and which is the terminus of the entire movement, or (b) for some *point in between* that is the beginning of one part of the movement and the end or terminus of another part. For instance, in a movement that goes from *A* to *C* through *B*, *B* is a terminus, though not the ultimate terminus. And with respect to each of *B* and *C* there can be an act of intending. Hence, even if intending is always directed toward an end, it does not always have to be directed toward the ultimate end.

Reply to objection 1: The heart’s intention is called “a cry to God” not in the sense that God is always the object of an act of intending, but because He knows the intention.

An alternative reply is that the heart’s intention is called “a cry to God” because when we pray, we direct our act of intending toward God and this act of intending has the force of a cry.

Reply to objection 2: A terminus has the character of something ultimate, but it is not always ultimate with respect to the whole; instead, it is sometimes ultimate with respect to some part.

Reply to objection 3: Enjoying implies resting in an end, and this pertains solely to the ultimate end. But intending implies movement toward an end and not rest. Hence, the two arguments are not similar to one another.

Article 3

Can someone intend more than one thing at the same time?

It seems that one cannot intend more than one thing at the same time:

Objection 1: In *De Sermone Domini in Monte* Augustine says that a man cannot intend both God and bodily comfort (*commodum corporale*). Therefore, by parity of reasoning, neither can a man intend any other two things.

Objection 2: ‘Intending’ names a movement of the will toward a terminus. But one movement cannot have more than one terminus in a given direction (*ex una parte*). Therefore, the will cannot intend many things at the same time.

Objection 3: An act of intending presupposes an act of the intellect or reason. But according to the Philosopher, it is impossible to have intellectual understanding of more than one thing at the same time. Therefore, it is likewise impossible to intend more than one thing at the same time.

But contrary to this: Art imitates nature. But nature intends two uses for a single instrument; for instance, as *De Anima* 2 says, the tongue is ordered both toward tasting and toward speaking. Therefore, by parity of reasoning, art or reason can order a single thing toward two ends at the same time. And so someone can intend more than one thing at the same time.

I respond: A given pair of things (*aliqua duo*) can be taken in two ways, viz., either (a) as ordered to one another or (b) as not ordered to one another.

If they are ordered to one another, then it is clear from what has been said that a man is able to intend many things at the same time. For as has been explained (a. 2), the act of intending is directed not only toward the ultimate end, but also toward intermediate ends. But one intends a proximate end and its ultimate end at the same time, e.g., the preparation of medicine and health.

But a man can likewise intend more than one thing at the same time if the two things in question are not ordered to one another. This is clear from the fact that a man prefers one thing to another because it is better than the other. But among the criteria according to which one thing is better than another, one is that it is good for more than one thing (*ad plura valet*). And so it is possible for some one thing to be preferred to another by the fact that it is good for more than one thing.

And so a man clearly intends more than one thing at the same time.

Reply to objection 1: Augustine means that a man cannot simultaneously intend God and temporal comfort as ultimate ends, since, as was shown above (q. 1, a. 5), one man cannot have more than one ultimate end.

Reply to objection 2: A single movement can have several termini in a given direction if one is ordered to another, but a single movement cannot have two termini in a given direction if they are not ordered to one another.

Still, notice that what is not a single thing in reality can be taken as a single thing in thought. Now as has been explained (a. 1), the act of intending is a movement of the will toward something that has already been ordered by reason (*in ratione*). And so things that are many in reality can be taken as a single terminus of an act of intending insofar as they are one thing in thought—either because (a) the two things come together to form something that is an integrated single thing, in the way that a balance of hot and cold comes together for health, or because (b) the two things are included under some one general thing that can be intended. For instance, the acquisition of wine and of clothes is contained under the general heading of wealth (*sub lucro sicut sub quodam communi*); hence, nothing prevents someone who intends wealth from simultaneously intending these two things.

Reply to objection 3: As was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 12, a. 10 and q. 58, a. 2 and q. 85, a. 4), it is possible to have intellectual understanding of more than one thing simultaneously, as long as those things are in some sense one.

Article 4

Is intending an end one and the same movement as willing the means to that end?

It seems that intending an end is not one and the same movement as willing the means to that end:

Objection 1: In *De Trinitate* 11 Augustine says, “Willing to look at a window has seeing the window as its end, and that is different from willing to see passersby through the window.” But my willing to see passersby through the window involves an the act of intending, whereas my willing to see the window involves an act of willing the means to that end. Therefore, the act of intending an end is a movement of the will different from willing the means to that end.

Objection 2: Acts are distinguished by their objects. But the end is an object different from the means to that end. Therefore, intending an end is a movement different from willing the means to that end.

Objection 3: An act of willing the means to an end is called ‘choosing’. But choosing and intending are not the same thing. Therefore, intending an end is not the same movement as willing the means to that end.

But contrary to this: A means to an end is related to the end in the way that an intermediate point is related to the terminus. But among natural things, it is the same movement that passes through the intermediate point to the terminus. Therefore, it is likewise the case among voluntary things that intending an end is the same movement as willing the means to that end.

I respond: There are two ways to think of the will’s movement toward an end and toward a means to that end.

The first way is to think of the will’s being directed toward each of them absolutely and in its own right (*absolute et secundum se*); and in this sense there are, absolutely speaking (*simpliciter*), two movements of the will toward the two of them.

In the second way one can think of the will’s being directed toward the means to the end for the sake of the end. And in this sense a movement of the will that is one and the same in subject is tending both toward the end and toward the means to that end. For instance, when I say, ‘I will the medicine for the sake of health’, I am describing (*designo*) only a single movement of the will. The explanation for this is that the end is the reason for willing the means to the end. But it is the same act that covers both the object and the reason for the object—in the way that, as was explained above (q. 8, a. 3), it is the same act of seeing that is directed at both color and light. This is like the case of intellectual understanding. For if one considers the principle and the conclusion absolutely speaking, then thinking of the one is different from thinking of the other; but when one assents to the conclusion because of the principles, then there is just one act of intellectual understanding.

Reply to objection 1: Augustine is talking about seeing the window and seeing the passersby through the window insofar as the will is directed toward each of them absolutely.

Reply to objection 2: Insofar as an end is a certain thing, it is an object of the will different from the means to that end. But insofar as an end is the reason for willing the means to that end, it is one and same object.

Reply to objection 3: A movement that is one in subject can, as *Physics* 3 points out, differ in thought with respect to its beginning and end, as in the case of the ascent and the descent. So, then, insofar as the will’s movement is directed toward the means to the end as ordered to the end, it is called an act of *choosing*. On the other hand, the movement of the will that is directed toward the end insofar the end is acquired by the means to that end is called an act of *intending*. An indication of this is that there can be an act of intending the end even when the means—the object of the act of choosing—has not yet been determined.

Article 5

Do brute animals intend an end?

It seems that brute animals intend an end:

Objection 1: Nature in things that lack cognition is more distant from rational nature than is sentient nature, which is found in brute animals. But as is proved in *Physics 2*, nature intends an end even in those things that lack cognition. Therefore, *a fortiori*, brute animals intend an end.

Objection 2: The act of enjoying is directed to the end in the same way that the act of intending is. But as has been explained (q. 11, a. 2), the act of enjoying belongs to brute animals. Therefore, so does the act of intending.

Objection 3: The act of intending an end belongs to a thing that acts for the sake of an end, since intending is just tending toward another. But brute animals act for the sake of an end; for instance, an animal is moved to seek food or something else of this sort. Therefore, brute animals intend an end.

But contrary to this: Intending an end implies the ordering of something to that end, and this is the role of reason. Therefore, since brute animals do not have reason, it seems that they do not intend an end.

I respond: As was explained above (a. 1), intending is tending toward another, and this belongs both to *the mover* and to *what is moved*.

Thus, insofar as *what is moved* toward an end by another is said to ‘intend the end’, nature is said to intend its end in the sense that it is moved to its own end by God, in the way that an arrow is moved by an archer. And in this sense brute animals, too, intend an end insofar as they are moved toward something by natural instinct.

In the other sense, intending an end belongs to *the mover*, viz., insofar as the mover orders something’s movement—either its own movement or that of another—toward the end. This belongs only to reason. Hence, in this sense, which is the proper and principal sense of ‘intend’, brute animals do not intend an end.

Reply to objection 1: This argument goes through to the extent that intending belongs to *what is moved* toward an end.

Reply to objection 2: Enjoying does not imply an ordering of one thing to another in the way that intending does. Instead, enjoying implies an absolute rest in the end.

Reply to objection 3: Brute animals are moved to their end, not in the sense that they think that they are able to attain the end through their own movement—something that is proper to one who intends—but rather in the sense that, desiring the end by a natural instinct, they are moved to the end as if moved by another, just like the other things that are moved naturally.