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Thomas Aquinas on How Habits Affect Human Powers and Acts

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# Thomas Aquinas on How Habits Affect Human Powers and Acts

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The aim of this dissertation is to provide the groundwork for a deeper understanding of habits by considering in a systematic fashion some fundamental questions about the effects of habits on human powers and acts in light of Thomas Aquinas's philosophical writings. The opening chapters offer a general consideration of human powers and acts in the context of which I also explain Aquinas's account of why habits are necessary for the perfection of the human being. In the subsequent chapters, I explain how, on Aquinas's account, habits with rational objects can be present in powers of the soul with corporeal organs and why the will is in need of habits. I also offer an account of Aquinas's striking position that a habit in one power can affect the acts of a different power, even without the mediation of another act, giving special attention to Aquinas's account of knowledge by connaturality.

This dissertation by Blaise Edward Blain fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in philosophy approved by Tobias Hoffmann, Ph.D., as Director, and by Kevin White, Ph.D., and Angela Knobel, Ph.D. as Readers.

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For the glory of God,  
In honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, her most chaste spouse,  
And for the love of my wife and children

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## Table of Abbreviations

<i>De car.</i>	<i>Quaestio disputata de caritate</i>
<i>De card.</i>	<i>Quaestio disputata de virtutibus cardinalibus</i>
<i>De ebd.</i>	<i>Expositio libri Boetii De ebdomadibus</i>
<i>De ente</i>	<i>De ente et essentia</i>
<i>De malo</i>	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de malo</i>
<i>De pot.</i>	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de potentia</i>
<i>De spe</i>	<i>Quaestio disputata de spe</i>
<i>De spir.</i>	<i>Quaestio disputata de spiritualibus creaturis</i>
<i>De Trin.</i>	<i>Super Boetium De Trinitate</i>
<i>De ver.</i>	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de veritate</i>
DGC	<i>In librum primum Aristotelis De generatione et corruptione expositio</i>
DVC	<i>Quaestio disputata de virtutibus in communi</i>
ELP	<i>Expositio libri Peryermeneias</i>
ELPA	<i>Expositio libri Posteriorum</i>
<i>In de an.</i>	<i>Sententia libri De anima</i>
<i>In Metaph.</i>	<i>In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio</i>
<i>In Phys.</i>	<i>Commentaria in octo libros Physicorum Aristotelis</i>
<i>In Sent.</i>	<i>Scriptum super libros Sententiarum</i>
<i>In Sent.</i> (Earlier Redaction)	<i>Scriptum super tertio Sententiarum: Earlier Redaction</i>
QDA	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de anima</i>
<i>Quod. II</i>	<i>Quodlibet II</i>
<i>Quod. V</i>	<i>Quodlibet V</i>
<i>Quod. VIII</i>	<i>Quodlibet VIII</i>
<i>Quod. X</i>	<i>Quodlibet X</i>
<i>Quod. XII</i>	<i>Quodlibet XII</i>
SCG	<i>Summa contra gentiles</i>
SLE	<i>Sententia libri Ethicorum</i>
ST	<i>Summa theologiae</i>



# Introduction

## Habit: Principle of Human Perfection

According to Thomas Aquinas, human beings, unlike angels, do not acquire perfection all at once, but must instead be led by the hand from imperfection to perfection.<sup>1</sup> Whereas the angels merited eternal happiness by a single act, human beings must struggle to achieve beatitude by means of many actions. For humans beings to persevere in this struggle with greater ease and assurance, however, these acts are not sufficient by themselves. We also need to acquire stable dispositions to these acts, dispositions that Aquinas calls habits (in Latin: *habitus*). Without such habits, consistently excellent behavior is impossible from a practical point of view. The necessity of habits in human life is clearly appreciated by Aquinas, for twice in his writings, he devotes an entire article to arguing for the necessity of habits.<sup>2</sup> According to Aquinas, the need for habits is not restricted to moral activity alone; habits are also necessary for the life of the mind. For example, human beings need habits not only of justice and courage in order to act morally, but also of science and wisdom in order to know reality in a more complete and profound fashion. For this reason, habits are of great interest not only to students of ethics and moral theologians, but also to philosophers of knowledge and more generally to anyone wishing to perfect his or her human capacities, whether moral or intellectual.

While the importance of habits is evident, a deep understanding of them is more difficult to obtain,

<sup>1</sup> See for example SCG, IV, cap. 55.

<sup>2</sup> One article appears in his early commentary on Peter the Lombard's *Sentences*; the other appears in his *Summa theologiae* near the end of his career. See *In Sent.*, III, d. 23, a. 1 and ST, I-II, q. 49, a. 4. There are also several other discussions of the necessity of habits developed by Aquinas in other contexts. A more complete account will be given below in chapter one.

because they are not known directly but only by means of the actions to which they give rise.<sup>3</sup> One does not know what justice and courage are, for example, until one sees just and courageous acts. Yet in spite of their elusiveness, habits remain involved in a host of pressing ethical and psychological questions. Among these are questions such as whether there exist moral habits that always incline their possessor in the right way, how habits affect one's perception of and judgment about moral situations, and what influence habits can have or ought to have on our emotions. The difficulty of providing satisfactory answers to such questions is evident, not only because we lack an immediate experience of habits, but also because adequately answering such questions presupposes a highly developed philosophical account of human nature and action.

The philosophy of Thomas Aquinas provides a promising starting point from which to study habits, not only on account of his sharp mind and sound methodological principles, but also because he develops a philosophical account of habits against the backdrop of a detailed philosophy of human nature and action. However, even in the masterful work of Aquinas, certain of his teachings on habits are not immediately clear. In particular, important questions arise in connection with Aquinas's account of how habits perfect powers and acts of the soul.<sup>4</sup> In Aquinas's account, the perfection brought about by a habit generally involves multiple powers and acts of the soul. For example someone with the habit of courage feels fear in accordance with reason. This means that the habit is somehow related both to that person's capacity for fear and to his or her rational capacity. At the same time, Aquinas holds that the courageous person both correctly judges the amount of fear and daring that a situation demands and also feels fear in the right way and to the correct degree. Thus the habit of courage appears to have an influence on both affective and cognitive acts. Positions such as these illustrate the need for

<sup>3</sup> Cf. ST, I, q. 87, a. 2.

<sup>4</sup> It is worth mentioning that Aquinas speaks not only of habits in powers of the soul, but also of certain "habitual dispositions" of the body, such as health. (Cf. *ibid.*, I-II, q. 50, a. 1.) In this dissertation, however, I will remain principally focused on those habits which belong to powers of the soul, although I will briefly discuss the habitual dispositions of the body as well.

a deeper explanation of the relationship between habits and the powers and acts to which they are related. The goal of this dissertation is to provide the groundwork for a deeper understanding of habits by considering some fundamental questions about the effects of habits on human powers and acts.

## Some Major Themes in the Literature

Work on Aquinas's theory of habits has already been pursued on several fronts. Vernon Bourke, for example, has made two very thoughtful studies of habits in relation to Aquinas's theory of potency and act.<sup>5</sup> These works provide a helpful metaphysical foundation to which one can turn when asking psychological and ethical questions about habits. In his dissertation, Bourke also provides a detailed analysis of the intellectual virtues as paradigmatic cases of habits.<sup>6</sup> More recently, Bonnie Kent and Robert Miner have discussed the relationship of habits and human freedom in Aquinas. Kent maintains that Aquinas's position on the compatibility of habits and human freedom represents an important break from Aristotle, whereas Miner finds the accounts of Aquinas and Aristotle to be much closer than Kent would admit.<sup>7</sup> More specific psychological questions have been addressed in a very helpful study by Rolf Darge. In this study Darge undertakes a detailed analysis of a number of Aquinas' texts on how we come to know habits.<sup>8</sup> In the same work, Darge also discusses the role of moral habits

<sup>5</sup> Vernon J. Bourke, "Habit as a Perfectant of Potency in the Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1938) and "The Role of Habitus in the Thomistic Metaphysics of Potency and Act," in *Essays in Thomism*, ed. Robert E. Brennan (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1942), 103–109.

<sup>6</sup> See Bourke, "Habit as a Perfectant of Potency," chs. 4–6.

<sup>7</sup> Bonnie Kent, "Losable Virtue: Aquinas on Character and Will," in *Aquinas and the Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Tobias Hoffmann, Jörn Müller, and Matthias Perkams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 91–109 and Robert Miner, "Aquinas on Habitus," in *A History of Habit: From Aristotle to Bourdieu*, ed. Tom Sparrow and Adam Hutchinson (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2013), 79–80.

<sup>8</sup> Rolf Darge, *Habitus per actus cognoscuntur: Die Erkenntnis des Habitus und die Funktion des moralischen Habitus im Aufbau der Handlung nach Thomas von Aquin* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1996), part 1.

in human action.<sup>9</sup> In addition, numerous works have been written on various aspects of Aquinas's account of one of the most important kinds of habit, virtue.

## The Approach of the Present Work

While I will certainly draw upon the works cited above, the focus of this dissertation will be somewhat different. What I hope to add to the current literature is a more determinate understanding of the effect of habits on human powers and acts. My intention is to focus on several particularly difficult problems in Aquinas's theory of habits and propose solutions to these problems in light of his philosophical principles and texts, with the goal of bringing about a clearer understanding of Aquinas's account of habits and its philosophical implications.

In the first place are problems that deal with the effects of habits on the powers of the soul. Here I will focus on two particularly important problems. First, Aquinas claims that some of the sensitive powers of the soul can be ordered by habits to rational objects. For example, Aquinas claims that the virtue of temperance inclines the sense appetite to the good of reason, which is not the object of the sense appetite and in fact embraces more goods than the sensible good to which the sense appetite is naturally inclined. Such claims seem particularly strange because Aquinas firmly rejects the idea that powers in material organs can possess the immaterial forms necessary for engaging in intellectual cognition. Consequently, it seems odd to say that habits could order the sensitive powers of the soul to rational objects. The very material character of such powers seems to preclude the possibility of them being ordered by habits to anything more than physical objects. And so I must consider whether Aquinas can consistently maintain that habits with rational objects exist in such powers.

But this is not the only problem that arises in connection with Aquinas's account of how habits

<sup>9</sup> Darge, *Habitus per actus cognoscuntur*, part 2. A shortened version of one of the key parts of his discussion was later published as "Wie einer beschaffen ist, so erscheint ihm das Ziel: Die Rolle des moralischen Habitus bei der Beurteilung des Handlungsziels nach Thomas von Aquin," *Theologie und Philosophie* 72 (1997): 53–76.

affect powers of the soul. Aquinas also maintains that the power of the will needs some moral habits but not every moral habit. This claim is especially surprising because the will is a kind of principle of voluntary moral action, and so it seems that if the will needs a habit to perfect it in relation to one kind of moral act, it would need habits perfecting it for every moral act. For example, why would the will need to be perfected by a virtuous habit in order to act justly, but have no need of possessing a virtuous habit in order to perform an act of courage. Initially, Aquinas's account may appear inconsistent. Thus, I must investigate further Aquinas's explanation of why the will requires some habits but not others.

In the second place are problems regarding the effects of habits on human acts. Among the surprising claims Aquinas makes about the relationship of habits to acts is his contention that any given habit disposes towards only good or evil actions, such that there is no habit that inclines an agent to a set of acts containing both good and evil acts. This is striking claim, and one that is evidently deserving of closer scrutiny.

But perhaps even more striking is Aquinas's position that habits can directly affect powers besides the ones to which they belong. For example, Aquinas holds that temperance, a habit of the sense appetite, can have an influence on the moral judgments of the intellect and perhaps even how the intellect perceives a situation. Similarly, a habit in one's intellect can affect how one imagines certain objects. For example, if one has an intellectual habit disposing one to easily understand geometry, one's acts of imagination are thereby disposed to associate basic lines and figures in such a way that one can easily visualize geometrical diagrams. In themselves, such phenomena might not seem particularly remarkable. But Aquinas appears to hold that in examples such as those just given, the habit in question immediately affects the acts of another power even though it does not belong to that power. How a habit could immediately affect a power other than that to which it belongs is clearly a problem worth considering in greater detail.

Each of these problems is challenging in its own way, but I believe, that I Aquinas's position can

be consistently maintained and defended in each case. In so doing, I hope to provide deeper insight into Aquinas's account of habit and its effects on human power and acts.

## Method and Organization

In order to shed light on these problems, I intend to approach them by means of Aquinas's theory of human acts. As mentioned above, Aquinas has a rich and detailed account of human nature and human acts. He himself states on more than one occasion that habits are known through acts,<sup>10</sup> and I will follow his lead on this matter by considering habits in light of his theory of human acts. I will also consider carefully Aquinas's account of the order of our sensitive powers of cognition to our intellectual powers, because a proper understanding of this relationship is necessary in order to adequately deal with the problems faced. In general, I will observe the dictum of Aristotle to proceed from the more known to the less known and from the more universal to the less universal.<sup>11</sup> My approach, therefore, will be primarily systematic.

This dissertation will be divided into two major parts. The first part, consisting of chapters one and two, will consider Aquinas's account of human powers and acts in order to prepare the way for a deeper understanding of habits. The second part, consisting of chapters three and four, will examine his account of habits in order to show that Aquinas is able to maintain a consistent and philosophically compelling account when faced with the problems outlined above.

Chapter one will consider in general Aquinas's account of the objects of our powers and acts and the role of these objects in specifying powers and acts, along with Aquinas's teaching on the powers of the human soul, to the extent required for a more detailed account of human acts and habits. Special focus will be placed on rational powers and their objects since such powers and objects bear a distinctive

<sup>10</sup> ST, II-II, q. 18, a. 1 co.

<sup>11</sup> See Aristotle, *Physics, or Natural Hearing*, trans. Glen Coughlin (South Bend, Ind.: St. Augustine's Press, 2005), bk. 1, ch. 1.

relationship to the human being. Since Aquinas introduces habits as necessary intermediaries between acts and powers, I will also consider why the distinctive character of human powers and acts implies a need for the perfection of habits.

Chapter two will go on to present in some detail Aquinas's philosophical discussions of human acts. I will begin by considering the way in which Aquinas's theory of acts is based on Aristotle's account of natural motion before turning to a detailed treatment of human cognitive and appetitive acts. Special consideration will be given to the relationship between sensitive and intellectual powers and their acts in order to explain more fully the way in which the various powers and acts of the soul can be related to each other.

Chapter three will then turn to focus on how habits are related to the powers in which they exist, with an eye to resolving the two problems raised above regarding how habits with rational objects can exist in the sensitive powers and why the will needs only some moral habits. Here, I will also consider more fully Aquinas's principal account of habits in his *Summa*, developing further the discussion of habits begun in chapter one.

Finally, chapter four will discuss the problems regarding the effects of habits on human acts, namely, why each habit can only incline to good or evil and how a habit in one power affects the acts of other powers. In this context, I will consider some of the more interesting cases of habits affecting the acts of other powers, such as the effect of intellectual habits on the acts of the interior senses and the effect of moral habits on our practical apprehensions and judgments. I will also go into a bit more detail regarding how habits determine us towards specific kinds of acts by discussing the role habits play in perfecting our natural inclinations.

## A Brief Chronology of Aquinas's Most Pertinent Works

Because it will at times be useful in the course of this dissertation to make reference to the temporal order of Aquinas's work, it will be beneficial to provide a brief account of some of the more important historical facts here. The most important part of Aquinas's academic career stretches from his first arrival in Paris in 1245 to the end of 1273 when he ceased writing.<sup>12</sup> From 1245 to 1251 or 1252, Aquinas studied under Albert the Great first at Paris and then in Cologne. During this time he had access to a number of Albert's early works and, while in Paris, doubtlessly encountered the works and ideas of former Parisian masters. Another opportunity to draw upon the intellectual riches of Paris came when Aquinas returned to Paris in 1251 or 1252 as a bachelor in theology. During his time as a bachelor Aquinas would have begun lecturing on the *Sentences* of Peter the Lombard, lectures that would later be published as a commentary. He became a master several years later in 1256, although Torrell, following Tocco, believes that the commentary on the *Sentences* was not yet complete.<sup>13</sup> During this time as master, Aquinas also composed his *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, which, Torrell suggests, originally arose as private disputations held by Aquinas and his students that were later perfected in written form by Aquinas himself.<sup>14</sup> Aquinas left Paris for Italy in 1259, but before doing so, he may have supervised the publication of his *Sentences* commentary.<sup>15</sup> Before the publication of this commentary, Aquinas appears to have undertaken multiple revisions of the text.<sup>16</sup> What is remarkable about some

<sup>12</sup> For the details of the chronology of Aquinas's life, I am following Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Person and His Work*, trans. Robert Royal, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), esp. 327–329. With regard to the dating of Aquinas's works, I also follow the dating given by Torrell along with that of Giles Emery in his "Brief Catalogue of the Works of Saint Thomas Aquinas" included at the end of Torrell's work on pages 330–361.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>14</sup> See *ibid.*, 61–62.

<sup>15</sup> P. Gils contends that, if Aquinas did indeed supervise the publication of this commentary, it was before he left Paris; however, I have been unable to identify a source that gives definitive evidence for when the commentary was actually published. See P. M. Gils, "Textes inédits de st. Thomas: Les premières rédactions du "Scriptum super tertio Sententiarum"," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 45–46 (1961–62): 628, n. 155.

<sup>16</sup> A collection of representative texts of what Gils calls the first redactions were published by Gils about fifty years ago in *ibid.*



of the initial revisions is how much they differ from the corresponding passages of the work as it has come down to us. Although only some representative texts have been published, we are fortunate to find among them several important texts on habits, which I will discuss in more detail below.

During his time in Italy, Thomas composed a number of works. Those of most importance in relation to the present topic are his *Quaestiones disputatae de anima*, *Sententia libri de anima*, and the beginning of his famous *Summa theologiae*. Torrell follows Gauthier in suggesting that the *Quaestiones* on Aristotle's *De Anima* (c. 1265–66) were a means of preparing for the treatise on human nature found in the first part of the *Summa*.<sup>17</sup> This latter work appears to have been begun at roughly the same time, and the first part was completed before Aquinas returned to Paris.<sup>18</sup> The *Sententia*, which is a detailed commentary on the entirety of Aristotle's *De Anima*, is situated by Gauthier and Torrell at the same time as Aquinas's composition of the treatise on human nature. These three works provide a number of very important anthropological discussions that must be taken into account in the course of the discussion of habits.

It was during Aquinas's final stay in Paris (1268–72) that he produced some of the most important works for the present discussion. Not least among these is the second part of his *Summa*, which includes a detailed account of moral theology, including several questions directly concerning habits. During the composition of this work, Aquinas appears to have held several disputations on the virtues including his *Quaestio disputata de virtutibus in communi*, *Quaestio disputata de caritate*, *Quaestio disputata de spe*, and *Quaestio disputata de virtutibus cardinalibus*. According to Torrell, Aquinas's *Quaestiones disputatae de malo* were also probably composed towards the beginning of his time at Paris.<sup>19</sup> At the same time that he was holding these disputations, Aquinas was also composing a number of his Aristotelian commentaries, including those on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Physics*, *Posterior Analytics*, and *Metaphysics*.<sup>20</sup> These Aristotelian works

<sup>17</sup> Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Person and His Work*, 162.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 201–205.

<sup>20</sup> The exact dating of the commentary on the *Metaphysics* is a bit difficult to ascertain; it may not have been completed until after Aquinas left Paris. See *ibid.*, 231–233.

are of particular interest because (with the exception of the *Posterior Analytics*, which is important for other reasons) Aquinas explicitly references them in his discussions of habits. And so an investigation of the commentaries on these works can also be enlightening.<sup>21</sup>

## Note on Terminology

It is important to make a few remarks about the terminology to be employed in this dissertation. The first term to discuss is the Latin word *habitus* which is derived from the verb *habere* much as the corresponding Greek term *hexis* is derived from the verb *echein*. Translators of Aristotle's *Ethics*, generally use the words "state," "disposition," or "habit" to render this word into English, whereas Aquinas's readers generally translate the word *habitus* as "habit" or "disposition." Several scholars have noted the inadequacy of the term "habit" as a translation for the Latin word *habitus*.<sup>22</sup> Their primary concern seems to be that the English term "habit" frequently connotes an automatic, unthinking disposition to action, whereas for Aquinas, habits are the principles of intelligent and (in most cases) voluntary acts. On the other hand, as Robert Miner points out, the use of the alternative term "disposition" has its own drawbacks.<sup>23</sup> For the term "disposition" seems to more accurately translate the more general Latin word *dispositio*. Accordingly, I will employ the English term "habit" as a translation for *habitus*, while asking the reader to bear in mind that not every connotation of the English term fits with the

<sup>21</sup> It should be noted however that there is a concern among scholars that in these commentaries in can be unclear whether Aquinas is stating his own position or merely reporting a position of Aristotle with which he may not agree. See, e.g., John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), xx. Therefore, to the extent possible, I will attempt to corroborate interpretations drawn from Aquinas's commentaries with texts from other parts of his corpus whenever it appears doubtful whether the text from Aquinas's commentary represents his own view.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Bonnie Kent, "Habits and Virtues," in *The Ethics of Aquinas*, ed. Stephen J. Pope (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 116; Servais Pinckaers, "Virtue is Not a Habit," *Cross Currents* 12 (1962): 66–68; Yves R. Simon, *The Definition of Moral Virtue*, ed. Vukan Kuic (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), 55–61. Bonnie Kent notes similar difficulties in translating the corresponding Aristotelian term *hexis*. See, Bonnie Kent, "Dispositions and Moral Fallibility: The UnAristotelian Aquinas," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 29 (2012): 144–145.

<sup>23</sup> Miner, "Aquinas on Habitus," 69.

meaning of the Latin.

Since the purpose of this dissertation is to consider the effects of habits on human powers and acts. It is also necessary to consider the term “act” (*actus*) and the related terms “action” (*actio*), and “operation” (*operatio*). The most universal of these terms is the Latin word *actus*, which I will translate as “act.” For Aquinas, this term refers not only to actions but also to forms by which something actually exists. Indeed, in Aquinas’s writings the term “act” includes anything by which something actually exists. For this reason, only when context makes my meaning evident will I use the term “act” to refer to an action or operation. These latter terms, by contrast, refer more specifically to those acts by which some agent is acting. Occasionally, Aquinas uses the term “action” in a more restricted sense than the term operation. For example, in the course of distinguishing doing from making, Aquinas writes that “an operation remaining in the agent himself is called action, e.g., seeing, understanding, and willing, but an operation going out into exterior matter for forming something out of it is called making [*factio*], e.g., building, burning, and cutting.”<sup>24</sup> At other times, however, Aquinas seems willing to use the term “actio” even for acts that go out of the agent into an exterior effect.<sup>25</sup> In such cases, both the term “action” and the term “operation” have nearly the same scope.<sup>26</sup> For the purposes of the present work, I will not need to employ the term “action” in its more specialized sense, and so I will generally employ these two terms interchangeably.

Since I am specifically concerned in this dissertation with the acts proper to human beings, it is also necessary to briefly explain the meaning of the term “human act.” There seem to be three things that

<sup>24</sup> SLE, lib. VI, l. 3: “actio dicitur operatio manens in ipso agente, sicut videre, intelligere et velle, factio autem dicitur operatio transiens in exteriorem materiam ad aliquid formandum ex ea, sicut aedificare, urere et secare.” Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Latin and Greek are my own.

<sup>25</sup> *In Sent.*, I, d. 40, q. 1, a. 1, ad 1: “Operatio enim agentis quaedam est ut transiens in effectum, et haec proprie actio vel passio dicitur: et tali actioni semper respondet e converso passio; unde invenitur calefactio actio et calefactio passio, et similiter creatio actio et creatio passio.”

<sup>26</sup> But there is still perhaps one case for Aquinas in which both would not have the same scope. If the term “action” is understood in such a way that it implies a correlative passion, then there could be no action in God, although Aquinas admits the existence of operation in God.

might be meant by this term. First, a human act might be taken to be any act which a human performs such as digesting one's food. Second, a human act may be taken to be an act that belongs to human beings and not to animals, such as reasoning or making jokes. Third, a human act can be an act which is performed by a human and falls under the power of the human will. This third sense has nearly the same scope as the second; however, a few natural acts of intellect, such as the initial apprehension of first principles, are not necessarily human acts in the third sense. Aquinas himself uses the term "human act" in this third sense.<sup>27</sup> But for my purposes, it will be useful to employ instead the term in its second sense, so as to include every act of reason, not simply voluntary acts. Using the term in this slightly more general way will be helpful because I will be discussing habits not only in relation to voluntary acts, but also in relation to other acts that are proper to the human being.

But since I am not only discussing the effects of habits on human acts, but also their effects on human powers, a final term that must be explained is the Latin word for power: "*potentia*." This term can also have several senses, and can be translated in several ways. I will therefore proceed to take up a consideration of this term at the beginning of the first chapter, to which I will now turn.

<sup>27</sup> ST, I-II, q. 1, a. 1

# Chapter 1

## Objects, Powers, and the Necessity of Habits

As mentioned above, Aquinas holds that habits are needed to perfect human powers for operation. Therefore, before turning to a more detailed discussion of habits, I will first give some consideration to the human powers and acts that habits perfect. In this chapter, I will focus on the powers of the human soul and their objects, touching upon some general aspects of human acts. In the next chapter, I will go on to consider human acts in greater detail.

This chapter itself will be divided into two parts. First, I will discuss the powers of the human soul and their objects, drawing upon Aquinas's more general observations about powers, acts, and objects. In light of the discussion in the first part, I will go on in the second to discuss why the special character of human powers and acts renders habits necessary.

### 1.1 Objects, Powers, and the Complex World of Human Experience

#### *Powers*

It is clear from experience that natural things have capacities for various ways of existing and various actions. Water has a capacity to freeze; birds have the capacity to fly; dogs have the capacity to smell. In general one finds two types of capacity in the natural world: one is the capacity to be some sort of thing; the other is the capacity to perform some kind of activity. The word frequently used in Latin to

refer to such capacities is *potentia*, which can be translated by various English words such as “potency,” “ability,” and “power,” in addition to “capacity.” The English word “power,” however, generally has a more restricted sense than the Latin *potentia*, inasmuch as “power” does not usually refer to just any capacity but only to capacities for action, not to capacities for some sort of existence.<sup>1</sup> Translating *potentia* by a the more specific term “power” has advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, using this word makes it immediately clear that one is referring to a specific type of capacity; on the other hand, the specificity of the term may hinder fruitful reflection on the analogy between capacities for being and capacities for action. Since in this dissertation I am concerned with human capacities for action, I will generally employ the term “power” as a translation for *potentia*, but will sometimes use other translations, for instance, when a more general meaning is intended or reflection on the analogy between the different types of capacity is helpful.

Since there are two kinds of capacities, capacities for existing and capacities for acting, the question arises whether such capacities ever coincide so as to be identical. In other words, is there a case in which the capacity for existing is at the same time also a capacity for operating? According to Aquinas, an identity of a capacity for being and a power to act is impossible. He argues that such an identity is always impossible on two occasions in the context of answering more particular questions about whether an identity obtains between the essences and powers of living creatures. In each case, he adopts the same basic argument. He first notes that the diversity of capacities follows from the diversity of acts to which they are related. He goes on to point out further that in the case of a creature, the act of existence is diverse from the creature’s operation. Since a creature’s essence is in potency to the act of existence, while its power is in potency to operation, these two sorts of capacity must also be diverse, just as the acts to which they are related are diverse. By this means, Aquinas can show that the power of a living creature is distinct from its essence. But since the essence is in potency to being rather than

<sup>1</sup> For example, we may say that water has the power to become ice but we generally would avoid saying water has the power to be ice; instead we would say the power has the capacity or ability to be ice.

operation, he has shown at the same time that the two types of capacity (i.e. for being and for operation) are diverse. Moreover, this diversity is not limited to living creatures, for Aquinas has stated that the diversity between operation and the act of existence is found in all creatures. Thus, capacities for being and for operation are diverse in all creatures.<sup>2</sup>

But could the capacities for being and for operation be the same in the case of the uncreated divine being? Aquinas's metaphysics clearly rules this possibility out as well. Although he admits that in God, the act of existence and operation are not diverse,<sup>3</sup> the identity of being and operation do not in this case imply an identity between a divine capacity for existing and power to operate. The reason for this is that in God, there is no capacity for existing, but instead, according to Aquinas, God is so simple and unified that he is his own existence.<sup>4</sup> Thus the diversity of the two sorts of capacity is not compromised by God, but always obtains.

Now, while it appears evident that a creature's actions or operations are not the same as its existence,<sup>5</sup> one might wonder about the principle that diverse kinds of acts demand specifically diverse capacities. Though it is clear that Aquinas views the principle as universal, one might ask why the principle must be universal. In the texts considered above, Aquinas briefly defends the principle by

<sup>2</sup> See *De spir.*, a. 11, co. and *ST*, I q. 54, a. 3, co. Here I have followed the order of the argument as presented in the *Summa*; a slightly different order is observed in the *De spir.* A similar argument is given in his earlier *Quod. X*, q. 3, a. 1, co., but in this case Aquinas uses a slightly different principle that naturally, only one thing arises from one principle. For a discussion of these arguments along with more particular arguments whereby Aquinas defends a real distinction between the soul and its powers, see Pius Künzel, *Das Verhältnis der Seele zu ihren Potenzen* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 1956), 171–218, esp. 180–4 and 201–2. With regard to the particular question about the relation between the soul and its powers, Édouard Wéber has argued that under the influence of Siger of Brabant, Aquinas modified his position late in his career, denying the existence of a real distinction between the soul and the power of intellect. See Édouard-Henri Wéber, *La controverse de 1270 à l'Université de Paris et son retentissement sur la pensée de S. Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1970). I believe that this position is mistaken, but will not give a detailed argument in response here; rather, I refer the reader to the refutations of Bernardo Carlos Bazán and John Wippel. See Bernardo Carlos Bazán, "Le dialogue philosophique entre Siger de Brabant et Thomas d'Aquin," *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 72 (1974): 53–155 and Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 275–294.

<sup>3</sup> See for example, *ST*, I, q. 54, a. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, I, q. 3, a. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Nicholas Kahm points out one evident argument for this, namely, that creatures frequently exist without operating. See Nicholas Kahm, "Thomas Aquinas on the Sense Appetite as Participating in Reason" (PhD diss., The Catholic University of America, 2014), 32–33.

observing in one case that “act is proportionate to that of which it is the act”<sup>6</sup> and in the other that “capacity is said in reference to act.”<sup>7</sup> For Aquinas, the proportion between acts and capacities grounds the universal claim that diverse acts imply diverse capacities.

Indeed, suppose, if possible, two capacities were to share something in common, while still being related to diverse acts. Now since acts are proportioned to capacities, the corresponding acts would also necessarily share something in common, namely proportion to what the capacities share in common. And so the acts would not be entirely diverse. Accordingly, the supposition that two capacities can share something in common while still being related to diverse acts is necessarily false. Consequently, to the extent that acts are diverse, their corresponding capacities are also diverse. A similar argument can be made on the basis of the other principle that “capacity is said in reference to act.” Thus, one must conclude that capacities related to diverse acts must themselves be diverse. And therefore, inasmuch as the principle that diverse acts require diverse capacities is truly universal, Aquinas is clearly justified in maintaining a real distinction between capacities for existing and for acting.<sup>8</sup>

After dividing potencies into capacities for existing and powers for action and arguing for the real distinction between these sorts of capacity, one can see that capacities may be divided in a different way as well. Following Aristotle’s account in *Metaphysics* Δ, ch. 15 and Θ, ch. 1, Aquinas frequently divides powers into active capacities and passive capacities.<sup>9</sup> According to Aquinas, “an active capacity is a principle of acting on another,” whereas “a passive capacity is a principle of undergoing [*patiendi*] from another.”<sup>10</sup> Both types of capacity have the common feature that neither is necessarily acting but may only be in potency to acting.<sup>11</sup> The difference between the two lies in the fact that an active capacity

<sup>6</sup> *De spir.*, a. 11, co.: “actus proportionatur ei cuius est actus.”

<sup>7</sup> ST, I q. 54, a. 3, co.: “potentia dicatur ad actum.”

<sup>8</sup> The focus of this discussion has been on distinguishing the capacity to receive substantial existence from the capacity for operation; it is not clear that the arguments are sufficient to distinguish capacities for accidental existence and capacities for operation, as will become clear below.

<sup>9</sup> See for example *ibid.*, I, q. 25, a. 1, along with the corresponding sections of Aquinas’s commentary on the *Metaphysics*.

<sup>10</sup> ST, I, q. 25, a. 1: “potentia activa est principium agendi in aliud: potentia vero passiva est principium patiendi ab alio.”

<sup>11</sup> Of course, with respect to God’s immanent operation, the divine active power is always acting, but this is because



possesses some sort of actuality, whose likeness it is able to cause in another, whereas a passive capacity receives actuality from another.

These sorts of capacity will be discussed in greater detail below, but there are three general points which will be helpful to make now. First, the receptivity of a passive capacity can be one of two types: the capacity may either receive a form from something else which lasts beyond the action of the external principle or else it may merely receive a passion or undergoing from another which only lasts as long as an external principle is acting on the capacity. An example of the former appears when one makes an impression in solid wax: the form remains even after the external agent ceases acting. An example of the later is making an impression in liquid wax: such an impression disappears as soon as one's instrument is removed.

A second key point is that according to Aquinas, the existence of a natural passive capacity implies the existence of a corresponding natural active power, which can bring about a form or passion in the passive capacity.<sup>12</sup> Since my discussion of capacities will focus on natural capacities, it is helpful to note that every natural passive capacity is able to be actualized by a natural active power.

Finally, it is important to note that when we speak of capacities or powers as acting and being acted on, this language is somewhat imprecise according to Aquinas. This is because Aquinas holds that actions are properly ascribed to supposits, that is, to individual substances.<sup>13</sup> Powers, whether they be capacities for acting or for undergoing, are principles by which the individual substance acts;

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God is perfectly actual, not because he possesses an active power. Other active powers such as the agent intellect are not necessarily acting, for they only act in the presence of their proper object.

<sup>12</sup> See for example *De ver.*, q. 18, a. 2. As this text indicates, the principle has its roots in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Θ and Averroes' commentary on that text. A more detailed discussion of the principle may be found in Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters*, 2nd ed., Faith and Reason: Studies in Catholic Theology and Philosophy (Ave Maria, Fla.: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2010), 126–130.

<sup>13</sup> Alain de Libera gives a helpful list of the different formulations of this principle by Aquinas in “Les actions appartiennent aux sujets. Petite archéologie d'un principe Leibnizien,” in *«Ad Ingenii Acuitionem»: Studies in Honour of Alfonso Maierù*, ed. S. Caroti et al., Textes et Études du Moyen Age 38 (Louvain-la-Neuve: Fédération Internationale des Instituts d'Études Médiévales, 2006), 211. According to de Libera, this principle is frequently but incorrectly attributed by Aquinas to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, 981a16–17 due to an ambiguous translation of the text taken out of context. See *ibid.*, 214–219, esp. 219.

nevertheless, such powers are not properly speaking what act.<sup>14</sup> Thus, though I may for the sake of brevity speak of a power as acting or undergoing, what is truly meant is that the substance is acting or undergoing by means of that power.

Thus far, I have been focusing on a general account of capacities, but the capacities that are of most interest to the present work are the powers of the soul. These powers include the power of digestion, the senses, the imagination, the memory, the sense appetite, the will and the intellect, to name a few of the more prominent ones. One can see immediately that many of the general considerations undertaken above have relevance in a more particular consideration of the powers of the soul. To begin, note that some of these powers of the soul are active, whereas some of them are passive. For example, the power of digestion is active, bringing about a change in food in order to provide nourishment. On the other hand, the power of sensation is passive, for it receives impressions from sensible objects in the world. In the case of sensation, the passive power receives its actuality as an undergoing or passion, which only lasts as long as the sense object is acting on the sense power (as when a form remains in melted wax only as long as it is under the influence of the instrument that causes the form). For other passive powers, such as the memory, the actuality is received in a more permanent manner as a form that remains even after the action of the external active principle ceases (as when hardened wax receives an impression).

The active powers of the soul are clearly capacities for operation. But how should one classify those powers which receive their actuality as an undergoing or passion? While the term operation might appear to be more appropriate for the actions of active powers, Aquinas maintains that the actuality received as a passion can be called an operation as well, though the texts suggests that the

<sup>14</sup> For a brief discussion of Aquinas's position (that powers themselves are not what act) along with a consideration of two subsequent medieval reactions to this position, see Richard Cross, "Accidents, Substantial Forms, and Causal Powers in the Late Thirteenth Century: Some Reflections on the Axiom '*actiones sunt suppositorum*,'" in *Compléments de substance: études sur les propriétés accidentelles offertes à Alain de Libera*, ed. Christophe Erismann and Alexandrine Schniewind (Paris: J. Vrin, 2008), esp. 133–5.

use of the term “operation” should be reserved for passions which have a completing or perfecting character. For example, early in the *Sentences* commentary, Aquinas writes:

But there are certain passions which are not pure passions, but are at the same time both passions and certain operations, as is evident in the passions which are called operations of the soul: for sensing (as the philosopher wishes to say in the second book of the *De anima*) is a certain undergoing [*patis*]. But this is true insofar as sensing is completed through the fact that sight is moved by the sensible by receiving its species by which [sight], having been informed, exercises its proper operation . . . whence understanding is also a certain undergoing, and willing, and desiring.<sup>15</sup>

Here Aquinas makes it clear that the passion sensing can be called an operation precisely because the reception of the sensible species completes the operation of sensing. Nevertheless, Aquinas makes it clear in other texts that we must not identify operation as such with passion so as to identify them in all respects.<sup>16</sup> What Aquinas appears to think is that the actuality of a passive power, while remaining one actuality, can nevertheless in some cases be distinguished in reason as possessing both the intelligible features of a passion and those of an operation. Thus, if an undergoing or passion completes or perfects a power for action, that passion may be called an operation, and its corresponding power may be ranked among capacities for operation.

While this account clarifies the proper way to categorize the passions and their corresponding passive powers, a more serious difficulty arises with respect to those passive powers of the soul that seem to receive both forms and passions. Aquinas holds, for example, that the intellect both receives likenesses of what it knows as forms and also is moved by means of those forms to actual consideration of its objects.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the intellect has a capacity both to receive intelligible likenesses (which he calls

<sup>15</sup> *In Sent.*, II d. 36 q. 1 a. 2 co.: “Quaedam autem passionnes sunt quae non sunt purae passionnes, sed sunt simul et passionnes et operationes quaedam, sicut patet in passionibus quae dicuntur operationes animae: sentire enim, ut vult philosophus in II *De anima*, pati quoddam est; sed hoc verum est, in quantum sentire perficitur per hoc quod visus a sensibili movetur, recipiendo speciem eius qua informatus operationem propriam exercet . . . unde et intelligere quoddam pati est, et velle, et appetere.” Aquinas also identifies passions of the soul and operations in several of his Aristotelian commentaries. See ELP, lib. 1, l. 2 and SLE, lib. 2, l. 5, n. 4.

<sup>16</sup> *In Sent.*, IV, d. 49, q. 3, a. 1, qc. 1, co.

<sup>17</sup> ST, I, q. 77, a. 6 and q. 85, a. 2.

*species intelligibiles*) and to undergo a consideration of truth by means of these likenesses. This, however, appears to be a counterexample to the claim that capacities for operating and for existing are distinct, since the intellect has a capacity both for an operation (understanding) and for a form (an intelligible likeness) that gives new existence to the one who knows.

The solution to this difficulty lies in understanding the relation of the form to the operation in cases like this. According to Aquinas, in the case of the intellect, the form is in some way a middle between the power itself and the actual operation of understanding.<sup>18</sup> As a middle, the form itself is a sort of disposition to the operation and on account of this shares in some way in the actuality of the operation.<sup>19</sup> Because of this, one can say that there is a likeness between the form and the operation which follows from that form. Furthermore, insofar as both the form and operation are related to the same object, they have a likeness in their relation to the object.<sup>20</sup> Thus, complete diversity between the form and operation does not obtain in this case, and so there is no need for two different capacities, for as noted above, diversity of acts is the reason why two different capacities are postulated. Accordingly, in cases like this, there is one capacity that is ordered to both form and operation, insofar as both share something in common. And since the form is a kind of disposition on the way to operation, it is also clear that a capacity like the intellect is principally a capacity for operation and only in a derivative way a capacity for form.

Since I am concerned here with the distinction between capacities for existence and for operation, it is useful to distinguish as well between two types of existence, namely, substantial and accidental. Substantial existence is that in virtue of which something exists simply speaking. But what has substantial existence can nevertheless have a further capacity for existing in certain ways. This further

<sup>18</sup> ST, I, q. 79, a. 6, ad 3.

<sup>19</sup> Aquinas describes the one who possesses the intelligible likeness as *sciens in habitu* (ibid., I, q. 79, a. 6). I use the term disposition rather than habit when paraphrasing because I do not wish to presume without argument that Aquinas intends the phrase *in habitu* to refer to a habit. There is some doubt about whether individual intelligible species should be called habits.

<sup>20</sup> A more detailed consideration of objects will take place in the next section.

existence is called accidental existence; this sort of existence results from possessing accidental forms, which make a being exist in new ways, but which nevertheless determine an already existing thing.<sup>21</sup> Now it is important to recognize that when considering a capacity for both form and operation, the forms to which such a capacity is related do not bring a new substantial existence, but only a further accidental existence. For instance, a human being remains an individual human substance even when acquiring new intelligible likenesses, and thus the possession of these likenesses gives rise to a new existence that is merely accidental. But the argument of Aquinas presented above about the distinction between capacities for existence and for operation clearly aims to distinguish capacities for substantial existence and capacities for operation. Thus, finding a case in which the same capacity is a capacity both for accidental existence and for operation is no counterexample to the position of Aquinas precisely understood.<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, it remains reasonable to hold both that the powers of the soul are capacities for operation and that they are distinct from the soul, inasmuch as the human essence (which includes the soul) is a capacity for substantial existence.

Although they are distinct from the soul, the powers are not unrelated to it. In a discussion of how the powers of the soul flow from its essence, Aquinas distinguishes several ways in which the powers are related to the soul.<sup>23</sup> In a very fine discussion of this passage, Matthew Walz distinguishes three ways in which the powers of the soul are related to it.<sup>24</sup> Following Aquinas, Walz notes that the soul

<sup>21</sup> James Albertson points out that for Aquinas, accidental existence is not that whereby an accident exists, but rather an existence given by the accident to an already existing subject. Albertson particularly emphasizes the close connection of substantial and accidental existence of a subject, arguing that for Aquinas, accidental and substantial existence refer to the same act of existence considered in different respects. An attempt to contest his position has been made by Francis McMahon, who argues that a greater distinction between substantial and accidental existence is necessary, although it is unclear to me whether his disagreement is more than verbal. See James S. Albertson, “The *Esse* of Accidents According to St. Thomas,” *Modern Schoolman* 30 (1953): 265–278; Francis E. McMahon and James Albertson, “The *Esse* of Accidents: A Discussion,” *Modern Schoolman* 31 (1954): 125–132. At present, it is enough to point out that neither position seems to be incompatible with the account given here.

<sup>22</sup> Indeed, the very passions or undergoings that belong to powers of the soul bring about a kind of accidental existence, as is clear from the fact that those who are undergoing actions exist in a new way.

<sup>23</sup> ST, I, q. 77, a. 6.

<sup>24</sup> Matthew D. Walz, “Thomas Aquinas On The Human Will And Freedom: Toward a Scientific Understanding” (PhD

can be considered as a “material cause” of its powers insofar as the soul either by itself or together with the body receives as subject the powers. As Aquinas himself makes clear in the text of ST I, q. 77, a. 6, the powers themselves are accidental forms that bring accidental existence to the subject that receives them. But the soul is also a cause of its powers in two other ways, namely, as active principle of its powers and as final cause of these powers.

This last causal relationship will be important later in this dissertation, and so it is worth considering here the reason Aquinas gives for saying that the soul is the final cause of its powers. To reach this conclusion, he invokes the principle that “the less principal is for the sake of the more principal.”<sup>25</sup> Since an accidental form is less principal than its subject and the powers of the soul are accidents, the powers must be ordered to their subject, which is either the soul itself or the soul and body together. In this way, the powers are related to the soul as to their end.

If the powers of the soul are related to it as an end and thus provide some good to it, one wonders in what way the powers of the soul are good for the soul. The answer, on Aquinas’s account, is that the powers of the soul help the soul (and thus the ensouled being) to carry out the operations whereby the soul and indeed the whole being achieves its end.<sup>26</sup> The fact that these powers are necessary for an ensouled being to achieve its end follows from the distinction between capacities for substantial existence and for operation noted above. Since the essence of no creature by itself gives it a capacity for operation, added capacities are required so that creatures can operate and thus achieve their ends.

Clearly then, at least one power for operation is necessary in order for a creature to operate at all. But as noted above, living beings have many powers for operating. Now a multitude of powers might appear superfluous, and so one may ask why so many are necessary. One reason for many diverse powers in a living being is the diversity of the operations necessary for such a being to attain

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diss., The Catholic University of America, 2003), 110–124.

<sup>25</sup> ST, I, q. 77, a. 6: “minus principale sit propter principalius.”

<sup>26</sup> Aquinas contends in *ibid.*, I, q. 105, a. 5 that operation is the end of each created thing. Aquinas makes it particularly clear that the last end of the human being is itself an operation. See *ibid.*, I-II, q. 3, a. 2.

its perfection. According to Aquinas, this diversity of operations is itself a consequence of the greater perfection of living things:

According to the gradation of forms in perfection of existing is also their gradation in power of operating, since operation belongs to things existing in act. And therefore, the greater the perfection in giving existence that belongs to a form, the greater its power in operating. Whence more perfect forms have many operations which are also more diverse than those of less perfect forms. And thus it is that for diversity of operations in less perfect things, a diversity of accidents suffices; but in things more perfect there is further required a diversity of parts, and so much the more [diversity of parts] the more perfect the form is. For we see that diverse operations belong to fire according to diverse accidents, as being borne upwards according to lightness and heating according to heat, and thus with regard to the others. But nevertheless each of these operations belongs to fire according to each part of it. But in ensouled bodies, which have nobler forms, diverse operations are delegated to diverse parts: as in plants the operation of the root and of the trunk and of the branch are diverse [*alia*]. And the more perfect the ensouled body is, the greater the diversity in parts that must be found on account of the greater perfection. Whence, because the rational soul is the most perfect of material forms, in man is found the greatest distinction of parts on account of diverse operations; and the soul gives to each of them substantial being in that way which befits the operation of each one; the sign of which is that, when the soul has been removed, there remains neither flesh nor eye except equivocally.<sup>27</sup>

Aquinas's position in this text is quite clear. A more perfect natural thing has a greater power of operation and is thus capable of more diverse operations. Since diversity in acts requires a diversity

<sup>27</sup> QDA, a. 9. "Secundum gradum formarum in perfectione essendi est etiam gradus earum in uirtute operandi, cum operatio sit existentis in actu. Et ideo quanto aliqua forma est maioris perfectionis in dando esse, tanto etiam est maioris uirtutis in operando. Vnde forme perfectiores habent plures operationes et magis diuersas quam forme minus perfecte. Et inde est quod ad diuersitatem operationum in rebus minus perfectis sufficit diuersitas accidentium; in rebus autem magis perfectis requiritur ulterius diuersitas partium, et tanto magis quanto forma fuerit perfectior. Videmus enim quod igni conueniunt diuersae operationes secundum diuersa accidentia, ut ferri sursum secundum leuitatem, calefacere secundum calorem, et sic de aliis; set tamen quelibet harum operationum competit igni secundum quamlibet partem eius. In corporibus uero animatis, que nobiliores formas habent, diuersis operationibus deputantur diuersae partes: sicut in plantis alia est operatio radices, et stipitis et ramorum. Et quanto corpora animata fuerint perfectiora, tanto propter maiorem perfectionem necesse est inueniri maiorem diuersitatem in partibus. Vnde, cum anima rationalis sit perfectissima formarum materialium, in homine inuenitur maxima distinctio partium propter diuersas operationes; et anima singulis earum dat esse substantiale secundum illum modum qui competit operationi ipsorum; cuius signum est quod, remota anima, non remanet neque caro neque oculus nisi equiuoce." Here, I have benefited from reading Nicholas Kahm's translation before making my own. See Kahm, "Thomas Aquinas on the Sense Appetite as Participating in Reason," 42.

of powers, a plurality of powers necessarily follows, particularly for ensouled beings, insofar as they possess a high degree of perfection among natural beings.

Nevertheless, as Nicholas Kahm points out, this account of the increasing diversity of operations is only applicable to beings whose natures include matter, for Aquinas's account of angelic beings requires that such beings have fewer operations.<sup>28</sup> In *Summa Theologiae*, q. 77, a. 2, Aquinas gives a more comprehensive account of how the number and diversity of operations varies throughout the whole order of beings:

Those things which are lowest cannot pursue perfect goodness, but pursue some imperfect [goodness] by a few motions. But things superior to these attain perfect goodness through many motions. But higher than these are those things which attain perfect goodness through few motions. The highest perfection, however, is found in things which possess perfect goodness without motion. As they are least disposed to health who cannot pursue perfect health, but pursue some measure of health through few remedies; but they are better disposed who can pursue perfect health through many remedies. And still better those which [do so] by few remedies. Best, however, is he who, without remedy, has perfect health.

It should be said, therefore, that things below man, pursue certain particular goods, and therefore have few and determinate operations and powers. Man, however, is able to pursue universal and perfect goodness, because he can attain beatitude. He is nevertheless in the lowest rank, according to nature, of those things to which beatitude belongs, and therefore, the human soul needs many and diverse operations and powers. But to angels belongs less diversity of powers. In God, however, there is no power or action besides his essence.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Kahm, "Thomas Aquinas on the Sense Appetite as Participating in Reason," 42, n. 94. Given this point, it seems right to interpret the word "natural" in the previous quotation as restricting Aquinas's argument to the realm of material being.

<sup>29</sup> ST, I, q. 77, a. 2: "Quae sunt in rebus infima, non possunt consequi perfectam bonitatem, sed aliquam imperfectam consequuntur paucis motibus; superiora vero his adipiscuntur perfectam bonitatem motibus multis; his autem superiora sunt quae adipiscuntur perfectam bonitatem motibus paucis; summa vero perfectio invenitur in his quae absque motu perfectam possident bonitatem. Sicut infime est ad sanitatem dispositus qui non potest perfectam consequi sanitatem, sed aliquam modicam consequitur paucis remediis; melius autem dispositus est qui potest perfectam consequi sanitatem, sed remediis multis; et adhuc melius, qui remediis paucis; optime autem, qui absque remedio perfectam sanitatem habet.

"Dicendum est ergo quod res quae sunt infra hominem, quaedam particularia bona consequuntur, et ideo quasdam paucas et determinatas operationes habent et virtutes. Homo autem potest consequi universalem et perfectam bonitatem: quia pote[st] adipisci beatitudinem. Est tamen in ultimo gradu, secundum naturam, eorum quibus competit beatitudo, et ideo multis et diversis operationibus et virtutibus indiget anima humana. Angelis vero minor diversitas potentialium competit. In Deo vero non est aliqua potentia vel actio, praeter eius essentiam."



Here we find Aquinas claiming that the greatest diversity of powers and operations belongs to humans, with fewer powers (and presumably also fewer operations) belonging to higher beings like the angels. This does not imply that the angels are lacking in perfection; rather the perfection of the angels is manifested in the greater power with which they operate. The angels have fewer kinds of operation because they are so perfect that many operations are not requisite for them to attain perfection. But why is there this difference between men and angels such that in one case greater perfection results in more operations, whereas in the other case greater perfection results in more powerful operations? This difference appears to follow from the difference between human and angelic nature. Since human nature includes matter, human perfection is achieved in a way appropriate to material things. But material increase is according to increase in material parts. Accordingly, human perfection involves a multiplication of powers. Angels, by contrast, lack matter and thus the gradation of their perfection proceeds in the manner proper to immaterial forms, namely, by way of stronger or more intense powers. Thus the diversity of human powers follows from the diversity of human operations, which diversity in turn follows from the fact that humans are the most perfect of material beings. For a human being, many powers are necessary to reach perfection.

Since to this diverse array of powers and operations correspond many different sorts of objects, it is now necessary to give an overview of the objects of powers with an eye to understanding in more detail our powers and operations. Such a consideration will cast a brighter light on some of the important features of human powers and acts, preparing the way for an understanding of the importance of habits.

### *Objects*

Following Aristotle's position in *De anima* 2, ch. 4, Aquinas maintains that powers of the soul are known through their corresponding acts and objects. The word for object used by Aristotle is ἀντικείμενον, which literally means "that which lies against" and is frequently translated as opposite (in latin, *opposi-*

*tum*). According to Lawrence Dewan, the use of the word “object” as a translation for ἀντικειμένων is of medieval origin.<sup>30</sup> Given the wide range of applications of a general term like ‘opposite,’ Dewan notes the desirability of translating the Greek by a more precise term.<sup>31</sup> He points to the “one-way structure” that the word “object” connotes as capable of furnishing just such precision.<sup>32</sup> Whereas the word “opposite” suggests both a relationship to the opposite from what is opposed to it and a converse relationship from the opposite, to what is opposed to it, the word “object” can be used to precisely designate something to which powers of the soul are related, but which itself does not possess a real relation to those powers. Indeed, a one-way relationship (from power to object rather than from object to power) is necessary if the powers of the soul are to be made known through their objects. As Walz puts it, “if one describes an object in relative terms (e.g. the object of sight is what-is-seen, the object of hearing is what-is-heard), nothing new is revealed; such a description is redundant.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, it is clear that insofar as they give us a deeper understanding of the powers of the soul, the objects of these powers must be capable of being understood apart from the powers themselves. Now as Walz points out by means of a very fine analysis of the relevant Aristotelian texts, one can discern in Aristotle a sense of the term ἀντικειμένων which only implies a one-way relationship, and thus the term is justifiably applied to the objects of the powers of the soul.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, the usefulness of a less ambiguous term such as “object” is evident.

How exactly do the objects of human powers make known those powers? Aquinas addresses this question on several occasions.<sup>35</sup> Following closely the text of Aristotle’s *De anima*, Aquinas begins each

<sup>30</sup> Lawrence Dewan, “‘Obiectum’: Notes on the Invention of a Word,” *Archives d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 48 (1982): 37–96.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>33</sup> Walz, “Thomas Aquinas On The Human Will And Freedom,” 135. This concern seems to have led to John Philoponus’s misgivings about using the word ἀντικειμένων when considering powers of the soul; see the discussion by Dewan in “‘Obiectum’: Notes on the Invention of a Word,” 68–9.

<sup>34</sup> Walz, “Thomas Aquinas On The Human Will And Freedom,” 129–137. Walz points in particular to *Metaphysics*, Δ, ch. 15, 1021a26–1021b3 for evidence of the one-way relationship in Aristotle.

<sup>35</sup> QDA, a. 13; ST, I, q. 77, a. 3; *In de an.*, lib. 2, cap. 6.

discussion by making the point already alluded to above that powers are known through their acts. Aquinas bases this position on the fact that powers are ordered to acts. Since the role of a power is to make its possessor capable of acts, Aquinas takes it as evident that acts reveal to us their corresponding powers.

Taking Aristotle's lead however, Aquinas goes on to note that such acts themselves receive their species from their objects and are diversified in accordance with the diversity of their objects. Consequently, to completely understand the act of a power, one must understand the object of that act, since the object is the reason why the act is placed in a determinate species. This second claim, that acts are specified by objects, deserves more careful scrutiny.

Now as Joseph Pilsner points out, Aquinas describes two complementary ways in which actions are placed in species, drawing on an analogy with natural motion. On the one hand, Aquinas holds that motions are specified by the end or terminus to which they tend. On the other hand, motions are also specified by the active principle, that is, the active potency by which the agent causes the motion.<sup>36</sup> According to Pilsner, the compatibility of these two accounts arises from the fact that the active principles are forms that are directed to ends, and thus, either the active principle or the end suffices to account for the species of the action.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, since the terminus of a motion is the effect of the active principle and all effects are like their causes, the active principle and terminus of a motion possess a common likeness whereby either can be said to specify an action.<sup>38</sup>

But why cannot the species of motion be known directly, without reference to the active principle or

<sup>36</sup> For a more detailed account and defense of this position, see Joseph Pilsner, *The Specification of Human Actions in St. Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 37–46.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>38</sup> Dominic Bolin makes a very similar argument, although he says that “the active principle and term are specifically the same.” This seems to be an adequate way to characterize motions arising from univocal causes, where the cause and effect are the “same” in species. In order to give an account which also includes equivocal causes of motion, I have instead described the active principle and term as at least possessing some kind of “likeness,” even if they do not possess absolute “sameness.” See Dominic A. Bolin, “The Relation of the Moral Object to the Rational Good In Thomas Aquinas’s Theory of Action” (master’s thesis, The Catholic University of America, 2013), 14.

end? According to Pilsner, the very imperfection of motion makes it necessary to turn to something extrinsic to the motion, such as the end, in order to understand the motion. Pilsner highlights in particular two features of motion: first, every motion exists in another; second, every motion manifests development over time.<sup>39</sup> This latter characteristic implies that at no point in time can we grasp the motion as a whole, for we only experience one part of it. Even if we were to consider every part of the motion, a full understanding of it would elude us, for as Pilsner points out, the pathway of a motion does not by itself tell us what kind of motion it is.<sup>40</sup> What must be grasped is not simply the parts of the motion, but the order of these parts. But since every order implies a principle which gives unity to the order,<sup>41</sup> an understanding of the order demands an understanding of its principle. In the case of motion however, its principle exists outside it, for the principle of a motion is its end and terminus. Thus, an understanding of what a motion is demands an understanding of the terminus of the motion or of the likeness of that terminus as existing in the agent.

By analogy with motion, a similar account of specification can be given with regard to the acts that belong to powers of the soul. The text of Aquinas is quite clear:

The object is compared to the act of a passive power as principle and moving cause, for color, inasmuch as it moves sight, is the principle of vision. But to the act of an active power, the object is compared as terminus and end, as the object of the growing power is perfect size, which is the end of growth. But an action receives its species from these two things, namely from the principle or from the end or terminus.<sup>42</sup>

Here, the object, inasmuch as it is an active principle or terminus, gives a species even to acts of the soul.

Now although acts of the soul have more perfection than corporeal motions,<sup>43</sup> Aquinas still holds that

<sup>39</sup> Pilsner, *The Specification of Human Actions in St. Thomas Aquinas*, 39.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 39–40.

<sup>41</sup> ST, I, q. 42, a. 3, co.: “ordo semper dicitur per comparationem ad aliquod principium.”

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, I, q. 77, a. 3: “Obiectum autem comparatur ad actum potentiae passivae, sicut principium et causa movens: color enim in quantum movet visum, est principium visionis. Ad actum autem potentiae activae comparatur obiectum ut terminus et finis, sicut augmentativae virtutis obiectum est quantum perfectum, quod est finis augmenti. Ex his autem duobus actio speciem recipit, scilicet ex principio, vel ex fine seu termino.”

<sup>43</sup> For instance, Aquinas points out that sensation has more the character of a perfection than of an alteration or under-

they cannot be fully understood in themselves, but must be known through their objects. The reason in this case is not the imperfection of such acts, but rather the fact that part of what it means to be an action is to be related to some object. Sight, for instance, is of some color; desire is for some good. Therefore, a full knowledge of the act necessarily includes a knowledge of its object. Moreover, the object, whether end or principle, is a cause of the act and for this reason reveals the act to us. Even extrinsic causes can deepen our understanding of something, precisely because a thing has intrinsic features that are proportioned to its principle and end.<sup>44</sup> Since the principles and ends of acts of the soul are often more well known than the acts themselves, they are essential in helping us to understand these acts and thereby also to grasp the powers of the soul.

In each of the three main discussions of the Aristotelian dictum that powers are known by their acts and objects,<sup>45</sup> Aquinas finds it necessary to prevent a mistaken understanding of his position. What is accidental to the object, he tells us, does not contribute to the specification of acts or powers. Rather, the “object as object” or the “formal aspect” of the object is what helps us to understand an act or power. As he puts it when speaking specifically of powers, “a difference in that to which the power is essentially [*per se*] related” is what diversifies a power.<sup>46</sup> In other words, objects divide and hence specify powers precisely as objects of those powers, not in virtue of some accidental feature, but only by what is essential to the object as such. For example, the power of sight is related to objects precisely insofar as they are colored. What is essential if something is to be seen is not that it be a certain kind of animal or a certain temperature, but that it be something colored. As the texts indicate, Aquinas calls the essential aspect by which the object as object specifies a power or act the “formal” aspect. This

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going. See *In de an.*, lib. 2, cap. 11.

<sup>44</sup> “Obiectum autem, licet sit extrinsecum, est tamen principium vel finis actionis. Principio autem et fini proportionantur ea quae sunt intrinseca rei.” ST, I, q. 77, a. 3, ad 1. The principle that causes reveal their effects has value even when speaking of the specification of substances: the end of a creature is its operation (*ibid.*, I. q. 105, a. 5), and frequently, we only come to truly understand a substance by seeing it at work.

<sup>45</sup> QDA, a. 13; ST, I, q. 77, a. 3; *In de an.*, lib. II, cap. 6.

<sup>46</sup> ST, I, q. 77, a. 3: “differentia eius ad quod per se potentia respicit.”

terminology makes sense when one reflects on Aquinas's position that the form of a substance is the reason it is assigned to a particular species. By analogy, the formal aspect of the object is what gives powers and acts their species.

This initial description of the formal aspect, though it appears simple at first, nevertheless manifests complexity upon more careful analysis. As Pilsner points out, Aquinas sometimes speaks of a formal component of a formal aspect: for example, while Aquinas frequently notes that color is the object of sight, Pilsner points out that Aquinas also says that light is formal with regard to color.<sup>47</sup> Dominic Bolin proposes a helpful way to understand the relationship between the formal aspect and its formal component. He points out that the formal component of the formal aspect is a kind of principle or reason why the object relates to powers and acts. The illumination of light, for example, is a principle by which color is able to move the power of sight. Presumably because such a principle is an even more fundamental cause of the object's influence than the formal aspect, Bolin contends that the formal component is a more universal cause than the formal aspect. According to Bolin, this means that the formal component of the formal aspect will specify more universally, while the formal aspect itself will specify less universally. He gives two examples. First, a higher power, like the common sense, possesses a more universal object than the exterior senses. Second, a power such as the power of sight has a more universal object than the objects of its particular acts.<sup>48</sup>

Bolin's analysis draws our attention to an important fact about acts and powers. Some powers, while specifically one, are nevertheless principles of several different species of act. The sense appetite, for

<sup>47</sup> See for example, *De car.*, a. 3, ad 11. Note that Aquinas uses the Latin term "lumen" rather than "lux" when describing the light insofar as it exists in illuminated things. See his discussion of the difference between these terms in *In Sent.*, II, d. 13, q. 1, a. 3. For Pilsner's account, see *The Specification of Human Actions in St. Thomas Aquinas*, 97–99; he references multiple texts describing the relationship of light and color in n. 72.

<sup>48</sup> The idea here is that sight is related to color as illuminated, whereas the acts of seeing are related to particular colors. See Bolin, "The Relation of the Moral Object to the Rational Good," 16–18. Note that at least in one place in his early work (*In Sent.*, III, d. 33, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 1), Aquinas denies that the power of sight has specifically different acts. But the general point that powers can have multiple specifically different acts certainly seems true, even if there may be some question in this particular case. (Bolin provides some interesting evidence in support of his position.)

example, experiences many different passions such as love, desire, and joy, depending on the specific way in which it is related to the sensible good. One way to explain the diversity of acts in a single power is by distinguishing more and less universal formal aspects in the objects, correlating the power with the more universal aspect and the several acts with several less universal aspects (as Bolin proposed in the second example above). But one can also explain the fact that a single power can have several specifically different acts by considering the relationship between such powers and their acts. In the course of a discussion about whether powers can possess multiple habits, Aquinas provides just such an explanation. “Passive powers,” he tells us, “are compared to the determinate act of one species as matter to form in this way: that as matter is determined to one form through one agent, so also is the passive power by reason of one active object determined to an act that is one in species.”<sup>49</sup> Here, power, act, and object are clearly compared with the matter, form, and agent cause of a substance. Now just as matter may be determined by agents to different kinds of substance because matter is receptive of a multitude of different kinds of form, so also a passive power may be determined by objects to many specifically different acts. The reason here is that just as matter is of itself indeterminate, so also a passive power is indeterminate in relation to its acts. Thus, the various kinds of passive power determine their acts in only a generic way that is subject to further specification. This fact, Aquinas points out, is in perfect harmony with the analogy between substances and actions: “As in natural things, diversity of species is according to form, but diversity of genus is according to matter . . . , so also diversity of objects according to genus makes a distinction of powers . . . , but diversity of objects in species makes a diversity of acts according to species.”<sup>50</sup> Like the matter of substances, passive powers may

<sup>49</sup> ST, I-II, q. 54, a. 1: “Potentia autem passiva comparatur ad actum determinatum unius speciei, sicut materia ad formam: eo quod, sicut materia determinatur ad unam formam per unum agens, ita etiam potentia passiva a ratione unius obiecti activi determinatur ad unum actum secundum speciem.”

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 54, a. 1, ad 1: “Sicut in rebus naturalibus diversitas specierum est secundum formam, diversitas autem generum est secundum materiam, ut dicitur in V *Metaphys.* (ea enim sunt diversa genere, quorum est materia diversa): ita etiam diversitas obiectorum secundum genus, facit distinctionem potentiarum (unde philosophus dicit, in VI *Ethic.*, quod ad ea quae sunt genere altera, sunt etiam animae particulae aliae); diversitas vero obiectorum secundum speciem, facit

only be principles of generic unity, whereas their corresponding acts are sometimes subject to further specification. Consequently, a single passive power may be capable of several specifically different acts.

Active powers, on the other hand, need not have several specifically different acts, inasmuch as such powers are not related to their acts as matter to form but as active principles to form. Since every agent makes something like itself,<sup>51</sup> all active powers that are related to their acts only as univocal causes bring about acts which are specifically like them and thus have only one determinate species of act. Fire, for instance, by its own active principle of heat, produces heat by means of a single determinate act of heating. For active equivocal causes, however, the case is not so clear. God, for example, by his own single unified power, produces many different kinds of acts, so there is at least one case of an active equivocal cause that produces many different species of acts. However, it would be rash to assume that every equivocal active power can produce multiple species of acts, and thus the extent to which there exist active powers that produce several different kinds of act remains obscure.

One final remark about the relationship between active and passive powers will be helpful here. Since as noted above, the object of a passive power's act is its principle, whereas the object of an active power's act is its terminus or end, the actual existence and presence of the object is a necessary precondition for the operation of a passive power, whereas the separate existence and presence of the object of an active power is not a necessary precondition for its operation, since in this latter case, the existence of the object is an effect of the operation.<sup>52</sup> Accordingly, one can outline a few distinct characteristics of each sort of power: a passive power is one whose objects (1) are principles of its acts and (2) must be present for its acts; furthermore, (3) some such powers can have specifically distinct acts. By contrast, an active power is one whose objects (1) are termini or ends of its acts and (2) need

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*diversitatem actuum secundum speciem.*" Note that this text also mentions more and less universal aspects of objects, thus indicating a harmony between explaining several different species of acts by comparing passive powers to matter and explaining this fact by appealing to objects with more and less universal formal aspects.

<sup>51</sup> ST, I, q. 19, a. 4, co: "omne agens agit sibi simile." This dictum occurs frequently in Aquinas's works.

<sup>52</sup> It should be mentioned, however, that even in the case of active powers, the object must preexist in some way in the power or its instrument.



not be present before being constituted by its acts; moreover (3) such powers can only have specifically distinct acts if they are equivocal causes. These distinctions will be helpful going forward.

### *Rational Powers and Objects*

While for the most part, Aquinas' account of the relationship of powers, acts, and objects can be applied in a straightforward fashion, some unusual features come to light when his account is brought to bear on the powers proper to rational creatures. For this reason, Aquinas's account of rational powers and their objects deserves a more careful consideration. Moreover, Aquinas sees habits as having a special relationship to the rational powers of the soul insofar as the indeterminacy characteristic of rational powers demands perfection by means of habits.<sup>53</sup> Consequently, it is especially necessary for the purposes of this dissertation to consider in greater detail the rational powers of the soul.

Aquinas characterizes the rational powers in a number of different ways. Following the remarks of Aristotle in *Metaphysics* Θ, 2, Aquinas frequently notes that such powers are directed to opposites. In other texts, he focuses on the fact that rational powers have mastery over their own acts. On other occasions, he points out that rational powers are immaterial and, by contrast to natural powers, are not determinate to one. While the various characterizations of rational powers may appear unrelated, a careful examination of Aquinas's texts reveals a close connection between the properties of rational powers. In discussing the relationships between these properties, I will begin by focusing on the power of reason itself before turning to consider the will and sense appetites, which Aquinas also considers to be rational in a certain sense.

<sup>53</sup> I will discuss Aquinas's views on this relationship in the next section of this chapter.

## Reason

According to Aquinas, the degree to which a being is cognitive directly corresponds to how immaterial it is.<sup>54</sup> For in even the most basic cognitive acts of sensing, Aquinas recognizes that a certain immateriality of one's sense power is requisite for the senses receive the forms of sensible things without naturally existing as the sensible objects. For example, in the very act of perceiving heat, the sense of touch receives heat without becoming hot. Indeed, to the extent that its organ receives heat naturally, the sense of touch is impeded from sensing heat. The rational powers have an even greater degree of immateriality, so much so, that they do not exist in a material organ. The lack of an organ of perception explains reason's distinctive ability to reflect on itself and its own act. Because on the one hand, the intellect understands its objects by being united to them immediately rather than through the medium of an organ, while on the other hand, the intellect and its act of understanding are immediately present in act whenever one understands, the intellect is able to reflect directly on itself and its own act.<sup>55</sup>

By contrast, the senses are incapable of such reflection, precisely because their cognition is always mediated by an organ or instrument. Drawing upon an argument of Avicenna, Aquinas points out on several occasions that this mediation by an organ is what makes the senses incapable of self-reflection. Since a sense power and its act are present to that sense immediately rather than through the mediation of an organ, the sense is blind to itself and its act.<sup>56</sup> In other texts, Aquinas appears to take a weaker

<sup>54</sup> ST, I, q. 14, a. 1.

<sup>55</sup> For a more detailed consideration of how and why the intellect can reflect on itself and its own act, see Therese Scarpelli Cory, *Aquinas on Human Self-Knowledge* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), ch. 6, esp. 157–160 and 163–170.

<sup>56</sup> See Avicenna, *Liber de anima seu sextus de naturalibus IV–V*, ed. S. Van Riet, Avicenna Latinus (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), 93–98. For an early discussion of Aquinas focusing on the sense's inability to cognize itself, see *In Sent.*, II, d. 19, q. 1, a. 1, co. Bonaventure's commentary on the same distinction also mentions that material powers cannot reflect on themselves, although there is no explicit attribution of the argument to Avicenna. See Bonaventure, *Commentaria in Quatuor Libros Sententiarum*, vol. 1–4, Opera Omnia (Florence: Quaracchi, 1882–1889), II, d. 19, a. 1, q. 1, ad opp. 7, page 459. For Aquinas's arguments that sense is unable to cognize its own act, see *In Sent.*, III, d. 23, q. 1, a. 2, ad 3 and ST, I, q. 87, a. 3, ad 3 (and also *ibid.*, I, q. 78, a. 4, ad 2, although no argument for the claim is given here). Several texts from the *De veritate* and *De potentia* appear to be at odds with this account and to claim instead that the sense powers can know their own acts. In the case of the *De potentia* text (*De pot.*, q. 3, a. 7), the difficulty can be explained by interpreting Aquinas as discussing

position, arguing instead that the senses cannot perceive the nature of their own acts rather than being completely unable to perceive these acts.<sup>57</sup>

Whether he takes the weaker or the stronger position on the possibility of the senses cognizing their own acts, Aquinas consistently sees reason's more perfect capacity for self-reflection as explaining why intellectual beings alone can know truth as such.<sup>58</sup> As John Wippel points out, Aquinas holds that in the acts of the human intellect, truth is found most properly in an intellectual act of judgment.<sup>59</sup> But Aquinas goes beyond simply stating that truth is a property of our judgments. Because of the reflective character of the intellect, we can not only know something that is true but also know that this knowledge is true. In other words, the truth of our judgments may be explicitly known by the human intellect.<sup>60</sup> In the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas appears to propose further that it is in our very act of judgment that truth is known.<sup>61</sup> Judging does not merely consist in comparing two things, but also in recognizing that one's comparison is true, that is, that one's mind corresponds to reality in its act of comparison. This interpretation of Aquinas is also proposed by Wippel. As Wippel explains, the recognition of the truth of one's judgment is not accomplished by means of another judgment, but rather occurs in the very act of judgment.<sup>62</sup> Thus, in the act of judgment there is a simultaneous reflection on reality and self-reflection on one's own union with reality.<sup>63</sup>

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the sense powers in general; for Aquinas affirms that a power such as the common sense can know the acts of the proper senses. But the two texts from the *De veritate*, (q. 1, a. 9 and q. 10, a. 9) are more difficult to explain. One possibility would be to argue for a change in Aquinas' position; such an account is more plausible if the particular disputations in question were redacted prior to the final redaction of the *Sentences* commentary. For discussions of this problem, see François-Xavier Putallaz, *Le sens de la réflexion chez Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1991), 39–69 and Carl N. Still, "Aquinas's Theory of Human Self-Knowledge" (PhD diss., University of Toronto Centre for Medieval Studies, 1999), 132–7. Therese Cory suggests but does not explore the idea that there may be an explanation which does not simply explain the discrepancy in terms of doctrinal development. See Therese Scarpelli Cory, "Thomas Aquinas and the Problem of Human Self-Knowledge" (PhD diss., The Catholic University of America, 2009), 346, n. 38.

<sup>57</sup> These are the texts from the *De veritate* mentioned in the previous note.

<sup>58</sup> See *De ver.*, q. 1, a. 9 and ST, I, q. 16, a. 2.

<sup>59</sup> John F. Wippel, "Truth in Thomas Aquinas, Part II," *Review of Metaphysics* 43 (1990): 556–60.

<sup>60</sup> *De ver.*, q. 1, a. 9 and ST, I, q. 16, a. 2.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* *De ver.*, q. 1, a. 9 is not so explicit on this point, although nothing in the text need be read as proposing otherwise.

<sup>62</sup> Wippel, "Truth in Thomas Aquinas, Part II," 562–3.

<sup>63</sup> Wippel also concludes that the self-reflective character of the intellect is the reason why there need be only one act of

In another article of the *De veritate*, Aquinas argues that the self-reflective character of judgment is part of the reason why such judgments are in our own power:

Judgment is in the power of the one judging according to the fact that he is able to judge concerning his judgment. For we can judge concerning that which is in our power. But that an act of judging is about the judgment resulting from the very same act of judging belongs to reason alone, which reflects upon its own act, and knows the relations of the things concerning which it judges and through which it judges.<sup>64</sup>

Since the sense powers do not judge their own acts but only their objects, their acts cannot be said to be in their power. But reason can judge its own act on account of its self-reflective ability. Thus it is possible that reason's act be in its own power. Now, I do not believe that Aquinas intends here to say that self-reflection by itself is a complete explanation for our power over our acts of judgment. Indeed, although it appears possible to reflect on any of our judgments, Aquinas suggests in many places that there are certain judgments that we necessarily form as soon as we understand the meaning of the terms, and accordingly, it is not clear that in such cases we have power over our judgments.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, the self-reflective character of reason is clearly a necessary condition for having power over one's judgments, for one cannot be said to have power over what one cannot form judgments about.

If self-reflection is only one of the conditions for having power over one's judgment, what else is required for a judgment to be in our power? A consideration of the judgments that are not in our

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judgment. See Wippel, "Truth in Thomas Aquinas, Part II," 562–3.

<sup>64</sup> *De ver.*, q. 24, a. 2: "Iudicium autem est in potestate iudicantis secundum quod potest de suo iudicio iudicare; de eo enim quod est in nostra potestate, possumus iudicare. Iudicare autem de iudicio suo est solius rationis quae super actum suum reflectitur, et quae cognoscit habitudines rerum de quibus iudicat et per quas iudicat." Here I am taking *suo* strictly, so that it refers to the subject *iudicare*. This makes a literal translation very difficult, but the idea is that reason's act of judging judges concerning the very act of judgment which it produces. This reading of the text would confirm my contention (and Wippel's) that the act whereby the intellect judges about something is the very same act as the act whereby it judges its own judgment. It must be acknowledged, however, that it is possible to take *suo* as referring to the one who reasons. Either translation seems sufficient for the purposes of Aquinas's argument.

<sup>65</sup> But reflection on Aquinas's later works such as *De malo* q. 6 suggests that even in the case of such immediately evident judgments, we may at least have the power to avoid judgment by refraining from a consideration of the terms of the judgment.

power helps to show a second condition required for a judgment to be in our power. As mentioned above, Aquinas holds that some judgments are not immediately under our control: “It belongs to man that once he knows what a whole is and what a part is, immediately he will know that every whole is greater than its part, and likewise in other [cases].”<sup>66</sup> The reason, Aquinas tells us in an approximately contemporaneous text, is that the object which moves the intellect in such cases is something necessarily true.<sup>67</sup> He goes on to immediately point out that when an object is only contingently true, we can form a false judgment about it, evidently implying that we do not necessarily form judgments in such cases.<sup>68</sup> Even with regard to necessary truths, however, false judgments are sometimes possible. The reason why we can err even with regard to necessary truths is that correct judgments about such matters depend on an adequate understanding of the essences of the things about which we judge. But because we must sometimes use composition and division to understand the essences of things, we may be mistaken in our account of the essence of something, and so go on to form a faulty judgment.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, since it is possible to judge falsely even with regard to necessary matters, it is also reasonable to say that not every judgment about necessary truths is produced necessarily.

As in the case of contingent judgments, deficient judgments about necessary matters bespeak a deficiency in the evidence on which we base those judgments. In the case of contingent judgments, it is impossible to acquire sufficient evidence, and thus the intellect is not naturally compelled to judge one way or another about the contingent situation. In the case of judgments about necessary truths, we do not always have sufficient evidence for a judgment, even if it is possible to acquire such evidence. In both cases, the non-necessitation of intellectual judgment results from the limitations of the knowing power. Thus, another part of the reason why our judgments are in our power is the fact that our minds

<sup>66</sup> ST, I-II, q. 51, a. 1: “convenit homini quod statim, cognito quid est totum et quid est pars, cognoscat quod omne totum est maius sua parte: et simile est in ceteris.”

<sup>67</sup> *De malo*, q. 6, ad 10: “Intellectus ex necessitate mouetur a uero necessario, quod non potest accipi ut falsum.”

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*: “non autem a uero contingenti, quod potest accipi ut falsum.” He later states even more directly that we do form judgments about contingents by necessity. See ST, I, q. 82, a. 2 and I-II, q. 10, a. 2, ad 2.

<sup>69</sup> In *ibid.*, I, q. 17, a. 4, q. 58, a. 5, and q. 86, a. 6, Aquinas explains that we can mis-conceive what a thing is.

are not always possessed of sufficient evidence to form certain judgments.<sup>70</sup>

It is worth noting that the natural deficiency of the soul with respect to knowing is a necessary consequence of the fact that it is created. As created, the soul is not infinite, but instead is limited. Based on this limitation, Aquinas makes an important point: “since the essence of the soul is limited, it cannot through itself be likened to all the quiddities of understood things: whence it is necessary that such assimilation be perfected through receiving something from elsewhere.”<sup>71</sup> Since God’s creative power is infinite, a true knower must be capable of knowing an infinite number of things, a fact that requires it to be capable of being likened to every possible thing. But it is impossible that a limited creature be in its own essence actually likened to every possible thing, for that would require it to be essentially infinite. Consequently, it must merely be capable of receiving an infinite number of things (without being actually determined to them by its essence). This need to be receptive, while necessary, lies at the root of our mental deficiency. For it is possible that what is received may be received incompletely or deficiently. For this reason, we sometimes lack a sufficient foundation for the judgments we make.

The power of the mind over its act of judgment is thus explained by two different factors. On the one hand, the perfection of the mind gives it the power to reflect on its own acts of judgment and thus to assent to a relationship between two terms. On the other hand, the weakness of the mind explains why this power is not always moved by natural necessity, inasmuch as the mind can form judgments even when its objects supply insufficient evidence. Consequently, our mind has the power not only to form judgments, but even to assent to opposing judgments on a given matter.

To capture characteristics such as our ability to form opposing judgments or to exercise opposing

<sup>70</sup> See ST, I-II, q. 17, a. 6: “Sunt autem quaedam apprehensa, quae non adeo convincunt intellectum, quin possit assentire vel dissentire, vel saltem assensum vel dissensum suspendere, propter aliquam causam: et in talibus assensus ipse vel dissensus in potestate nostra est.”

<sup>71</sup> *In Sent.*, III, d. 14, a. 1, qc. 2, ad 2: “cum essentia animae sit limitata, non potest per eam assimilari omnibus quidditatibus rerum intellectuarum: unde oportet quod ista assimilatio compleatur per hoc quod aliquid aliunde recipit.”

acts of will, Aquinas sometimes notes that the rational powers are “related to opposites,” paraphrasing a passage from Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* Θ, 2. In his *De veritate*, Aquinas makes a distinction that clarifies precisely how this phrase is to be taken:

That the rational powers are the subject of contrary accidents is common to them and the others [i.e. the non-rational powers], since the same thing is the subject of all the contraries; but that they [i.e. the rational powers] are related to [*se habeat*] contrary actions is proper to them; for the natural powers are determinate to one. And in this way the Philosopher says that rational powers are related to opposites [*ad opposita*].<sup>72</sup>

What is distinctive about rational powers is not that they have contrary objects or receive contrary accidents. Instead, what sets rational powers apart is their ability to produce contrary acts. Contrariety of acts can arise in two situations: first, when two acts have the same relation to contrary objects and second, when two acts have contrary relations to the same object.<sup>73</sup> Now the term of an act of judging is a judgment in which the object of knowing is made present and by means of which the mind unites itself to reality either truly or falsely.<sup>74</sup> In an act of judging, the act always has the same relationship to its object, for it always attains to its object by positing and assenting to some judgment in which its object is made present. But the objects which are attained can be contrary, for though we always aim at attaining truth in our judgments, we sometimes instead accidentally end in falsehood.<sup>75</sup> Thus, by

<sup>72</sup> *De ver.*, q. 26, a. 3, ad 7: “Quod enim potentia rationalis sit subiectum contrariorum accidentium hoc sibi et aliis commune est, quia omnium contrariorum idem est subiectum; sed quod se habeat ad contrarias actiones, istud est sibi proprium; naturales enim potentiae sunt determinatae ad unum. Et sic loquitur Philosophus, quod rationales potestates sunt ad opposita.”

<sup>73</sup> Aquinas explicitly identifies the first type of contrariety in ST, I-II, q. 35, a. 4, co. The second type of contrariety is not explicitly mentioned in that place, but can easily be gathered from similar remarks about when motions are contrary, for example in *ibid.*, I-II, q. 40, a. 4 and *In Sent.*, III, d. 26, q. 1, a. 3, ad 3. (Note this last text has been corrected by M. F. Moos from an obviously faulty rendering in the manuscript.) The reason why there are two ways to obtain contrariety here appears to be that in things that are specified by relation to something extrinsic, both what is extrinsic and the relationship to the extrinsic thing can be specifying factors.

<sup>74</sup> As John Peifer argues, the concept is not what is known but that in which an object is known. See John Frederick Peifer, *The Concept in Thomism* (New York: Bookman Associates Inc., 1952), 165–79. But the judgment consists in a composition (or division) of conceptions. See Bernard J. Lonergan, “Verbum: Reflection and Judgment,” in *Verbum: Word and Idea in Aquinas*, ed. David B. Burrell (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967), 48–52. (A particularly helpful text cited by Lonergan is *De ver.*, q. 2, a. 7.) Thus, the judgment is not what is known but that by which we know.

<sup>75</sup> Aquinas argues that truth and falsehood are opposed as contraries in ST, I, q. 17, a. 4.

virtue of their contrary objects, such acts of judging are contrary as well. We can even form opposing judgments about the very same terms. For example, if we ask whether time is identical to motion, we may form either a true or false judgment about their relationship by means of contrary acts.

This distinctive contrariety of acts implies a special kind of indeterminacy that belongs exclusively to powers proper to intellectual creatures. While even non-rational passive powers of soul, such as the sensitive appetite of a dog, may be subject to various different kinds of acts depending on the diverse objects with which they interact, only powers that are in some way related to reason or intellect can in a given situation perform contrary acts with regard to the same object. Powers such as the dog's sensitive appetite are not determined until they are acted upon by an object, but once they are acted upon, they are determined to produce one specific kind of act. Rational powers, by contrast, even when their object is presented to them, are not always determined to produce a specific kind of act. Thus the rational and intellectual powers alone possess complete indeterminacy with respect to their acts.

## **Will**

Up to this point, I have focused primarily on the power of reason itself, but Aquinas also ranks the will as a rational power because it is the appetite that follows upon the perception of reason. Accordingly, when discussing the rational appetite or will, Aquinas finds notions such as “relation to opposites” and “indeterminacy” to be applicable.<sup>76</sup> However, the movement of the will to opposites belongs to that power only insofar as both members of the pair of opposites fall under the good, for the universal good is the formal object of the will:

A rational power is not ordered to pursuing any opposites whatsoever, but to those which are contained under its own suitable object, for no power pursues anything but its own suitable object. But the object of the will is the good. Whence the will is ordered to

<sup>76</sup> See for example ST, I-II, q. 5, a. 4, ad 2 and q. 13, a. 2, co.



pursuing opposites which are contained under the good, as moving and resting, speaking and keeping silent, and others of this sort, for the will is borne into each of these under the aspect of the good.<sup>77</sup>

Initially, this text suggests that the will has only a weak relationship to opposites. After all, the will appears to be related to opposites only materially, for the acts of will themselves are all still formally related to the good alone. Indeed, the will seems to be no more related to opposites than the sense appetite, which leads an animal to run or not to run depending on what appears good to the animal.

Now, it is quite true that only a weak direction to opposites belongs to the will when one considers the acts of the will simply insofar as they are related to will as an appetite. But one can also consider the acts of the will insofar as they proceed from the will as a rational power, that is, insofar as such acts are related to reason. Now, a careful examination of Aquinas's works shows that depending on which power one refers an act to, one will find different specific divisions: "a difference of objects makes a difference of species in acts inasmuch as it is referred to one active principle, which does not make a difference in acts inasmuch as it is referred to another active principle."<sup>78</sup> When one compares the acts of the will to reason, one finds further that such acts are diversified specifically into morally good and evil acts.<sup>79</sup> And thus in reference to reason, we find a formal distinction between good and evil acts. Consequently, precisely as a rational power, the will is related to formally opposite acts, just as the mind is.

<sup>77</sup> ST, I-II, q. 8 a. 1 ad 2: "potentia rationalis non se habet ad quaelibet opposita prosequenda, sed ad ea quae sub suo obiecto convenienti continentur: nam nulla potentia prosequitur nisi suum convenienti obiectum. Obiectum autem voluntatis est bonum. Unde ad illa opposita prosequenda se habet voluntas, quae sub bono comprehenduntur, sicut moveri et quiescere, loqui et tacere, et alia huiusmodi: in utrumque enim horum fertur voluntas sub ratione boni."

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 18 a. 5 co.: "aliqua differentia obiecti facit differentiam speciei in actibus, secundum quod referuntur ad unum principium activum, quod non facit differentiam in actibus, secundum quod referuntur ad aliud principium activum."

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.: "In actibus autem humanis bonum et malum dicitur per comparisonem ad rationem: quia, ut Dionysius dicit, IV cap. *de Div. Nom.*, bonum hominis est secundum rationem esse, malum autem quod est praeter rationem. Unicuique enim rei est bonum quod convenit ei secundum suam formam; et malum quod est ei praeter ordinem suae formae. Patet ergo quod differentia boni et mali circa obiectum considerata, comparatur per se ad rationem: scilicet secundum quod obiectum est ei convenienti vel non convenienti. Dicuntur autem aliqui actus humani, vel morales, secundum quod sunt a ratione. Unde manifestum est quod bonum et malum diversificant speciem in actibus moralibus: differentiae enim per se diversificant speciem."

Turning next to the indeterminacy of rational powers, one finds that the parallel between the intellect and the will continues. Just as reason can form opposing judgments based on the same evidence, so the will can make opposing choices in the same situation. In the *De veritate*, Aquinas explains this ability to make opposing choices by our ability to form opposing judgments:

if the cognitive judgment were not in someone's power, but were determined from elsewhere, neither would desiring [*appetitus*] be in his power, and consequently nor would motion or operation fully [be in his power]. But judgment is in the power of the one judging according to the fact that he is able to judge concerning his judgment. For we can judge concerning that which is in our power. But that an act of judging is about the very judgment resulting from the very same act of judging is proper to reason alone, which reflects upon its own act, and knows the relations of the things concerning which it judges and through which it judges: whence the root of all freedom is established in reason. Whence, as something is related to reason, so it is related to free decision [*liberum arbitrium*].<sup>80</sup>

Here, by “free decision” Aquinas is referring to the power of will in relationship to its act of choice.<sup>81</sup>

This freedom of the will in making choices is rooted in reason, specifically reason's power over its judgments. A later text from the *Summa* elaborates on just how reason is the root of freedom: “the root of liberty is the will as subject, but as cause, it is reason. For from the fact that reason can have diverse conceptions of the good, the will can be borne freely to diverse things. And therefore philosophers define free decision as free judgment of reason, as if reason were the cause of freedom.”<sup>82</sup>

<sup>80</sup> *De ver.*, q. 24, a. 2, co.: “si iudicium cognitivae non sit in potestate alicuius, sed sit aliunde determinatum, nec appetitus erit in potestate eius, et per consequens nec motus vel operatio absolute. Iudicium autem est in potestate iudicantis secundum quod potest de suo iudicio iudicare; de eo enim quod est in nostra potestate, possumus iudicare. Iudicare autem de iudicio suo est solius rationis, quae super actum suum reflectitur, et quae cognoscit habitudines rerum de quibus iudicat, et per quas iudicat; unde totius libertatis radix est in ratione constituta. Unde secundum quod aliquid se habet ad rationem sic se habet ad liberum arbitrium.”

<sup>81</sup> He makes this clear several articles later, where he writes: “Unde liberum arbitrium est ipsa voluntas; nominat autem eam non absolute sed in ordine ad aliquem actum eius qui est eligere.” *Ibid.*, q. 24, a. 6, co. See also ST, I, q. 83, a. 4. For a discussion of some of the different positions in the thirteenth century regarding *liberum arbitrium* along with a consideration of the shift from discussions centering on “free decision” to discussions of “free will,” see Bonnie Kent, *Virtues of the Will: The Transformation of Ethics in the Late Thirteenth Century* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), esp. 98 and following.

<sup>82</sup> ST, I-II, q. 17, a. 1, ad 2: “radix libertatis est voluntas sicut subiectum: sed sicut causa, est ratio. Ex hoc enim voluntas libere potest ad diversa ferri, quia ratio potest habere diversas conceptiones boni. Et ideo philosophi definiunt liberum arbitrium quod est liberum de ratione iudicium, quasi ratio sit causa libertatis.” The source of the definition of “liberum

For Aquinas, the ability to view a situation in multiple different ways is the cognitive ground of human freedom. As David Gallagher points out, in his later works, Aquinas refers to this ability as a power to “consider” possible courses of action in different ways.<sup>83</sup> Depending on how one considers a situation, one finds different motivations for acting. Because different motivations are possible in such situations, an agent’s judgments about how to proceed are not fully determined by the available evidence, and for this reason, an agent often has more than one course of action to choose from. For example, in some situations one may be able to view a chocolate cake as pleasant, healthy, unhealthy, secretly poisoned, and so forth. Depending on the ultimate judgment one makes about the cake, one will proceed to choose different courses of action, for example, eating the cake, avoiding it, or turning it in to the police. Thus, the ability to make different choices is founded on one’s power to consider situations differently.

The explanation of free choice advanced thus far is relatively uncontroversial among the commentators on Aquinas. What generates dispute is whether the various possible judgments and considerations occur deterministically or not. Some, such as Thomas Loughran, Jeffrey Hause, and Robert Pasnau read Aquinas as a compatibilist, maintaining that Aquinas believes that ultimately, our free choices are entirely determined by prior states of affairs.<sup>84</sup> Others argue that Aquinas is an incompatibilist who

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arbitrium” by the unnamed “philosophers” seems to be Boethius. See his *Commentarii in librum Aristotelis Peri Hermeneias*, ed. Karl Meiser, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1880), 3.9. However, Boethius’s version of the definition has the word “voluntate” instead of “ratione.” One might suspect a manuscript error, if it were not for the fact that the altered version of Boethius’s definition also appears in SCG, II, cap. 48 and the critical edition of *De ver.*, q. 24, a. 1, arg. 17 (which notes the discrepancy between the text and Boethius’s definition). It thus appears more likely that the altered form of the definition was being used by some of Aquinas’s contemporaries, especially because in his *In Sent.*, II, d. 24 and 25, he discusses the definition as reproduced by Peter the Lombard in its unaltered form.

<sup>83</sup> David M. Gallagher, “Free Choice and Free Judgment in Thomas Aquinas,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 76 (1994): 268–270.

<sup>84</sup> Thomas J. Loughran, “Aquinas, Compatibilist,” in *Human and Divine Agency: Anglican, Catholic, and Lutheran Perspectives*, ed. F. Michael McLain and W. Mark Richardson (New York: University Press of America, 1999), 1–39; Jeffrey Hause, “Thomas Aquinas and the Voluntarists,” *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 6 (1997): 167–182; Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), ch. 7. Other authors who make such claims include Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Thomas Williams, “Human Freedom and Agency,” in *Oxford Handbook to Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 189–

does not admit the possibility of free choices occurring by necessity. In my judgment, reading Aquinas as an incompatibilist is the correct interpretation of his texts. Indeed, recent work by Peter Furlong and Scott MacDonald has provided compelling evidence that Aquinas holds an incompatibilist theory of human freedom. Furlong bases his interpretation on Aquinas's rejection of a compatibilist account of human freedom in *De malo*, q. 6 and on Aquinas's treatment of the difference between human and animal freedom in *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 2.<sup>85</sup> This latter text serves as the basis for a similar argument by MacDonald.<sup>86</sup> For the purposes of this dissertation, it will be impossible to undertake a more detailed exploration of the dispute about whether Aquinas should be interpreted as a compatibilist or an incompatibilist. And so at present, I will accept the incompatibilist account on the basis of the arguments offered by MacDonald and Furlong, recognizing that much more would have to be said in order to fully defend this position.

But even when it is granted that Aquinas holds an incompatibilist libertarian position on human freedom, there is disagreement between authors such as David Gallagher and Scott MacDonald regarding whether the freedom in the judgment that directly precedes choice derives from the intellect or the will.<sup>87</sup> According to Gallagher, the act of choice is itself what determines the judgment that guides that act.<sup>88</sup> Thus the judgment does not occur by necessity but from a free act of the will. Gallagher's position is based on two considerations. First, Aquinas clearly maintains in the *De Veritate* that

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208; and Colleen P. Zoller, "Determined but Free: Aquinas's Compatibilist Theory of Freedom," *Philosophy and Theology* 16 (2004): 25–44.

<sup>85</sup> See Peter Furlong, "Indeterminism and Freedom of Decision in Aquinas" (PhD diss., The Catholic University of America, 2013), ch. 1. *De malo*, q. 6 is also used as a basis for ascribing an incompatibilist theory to Aquinas in Tobias Hoffmann and Peter Furlong, "Free Choice," in *Aquinas' Disputed Questions on Evil: A Critical Guide*, ed. Michael V. Dougherty (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming), sec. 3.

<sup>86</sup> Scott MacDonald, "Aquinas's Libertarian Account of Free Choice," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 52 (1998): 322–328. Other authors that argue for an incompatibilist reading of Aquinas include Colleen McCluskey, "Intellective Appetite and the Freedom of Human Action," *The Thomist* 66 (2002): 421–456; Kevin Staley, "Aquinas: Compatibilist or Libertarian?," *The Saint Anselm Journal* 2 (2005): 73–79; and Eleanore Stump, *Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>87</sup> See Gallagher, "Free Choice and Free Judgment in Thomas Aquinas" and MacDonald, "Aquinas's Libertarian Account of Free Choice."

<sup>88</sup> Gallagher, "Free Choice and Free Judgment in Thomas Aquinas," 276.

our judgments are free and that this freedom comes from the will.<sup>89</sup> Second, if the free production of a judgment were always traced to a different act of will than the act of choice corresponding to that judgment, then it appears one might be trapped in an infinite regress in which every judgment depends on a prior choice and every choice on a prior judgment.<sup>90</sup> MacDonald, on the other hand, maintains that the freedom of judgment must be traced to the intellect. MacDonald's rejection of the position that freedom of judgment depends on the will also depends on two considerations. First, the judgment of the intellect is a formal cause of the will's choice.<sup>91</sup> Second, there once again appears to be the danger of an infinite regress if we make every intellectual judgment the effect of an act of the will.<sup>92</sup> Therefore, MacDonald concludes that the intellect itself must be the source of its judgment's freedom.<sup>93</sup>

Now both of these authors provide evidence that the other is wrong. Since the judgment of the intellect is the formal cause of the choice of the will,<sup>94</sup> it is impossible that the will by its act of choice should efficiently cause that judgment; otherwise choice would be prior to its cause. On the other hand, locating the freedom of the judgment in the intellect alone goes against the position advanced by Aquinas in the *De veritate*.<sup>95</sup> Is it impossible, then, to grant that free judgment is the formal cause of choice and still to hold that the very freedom of that judgment is due to the will? I maintain that one can accept both of Aquinas's positions, so long as one rejects a mistaken presupposition implicit in the arguments of both Gallagher and MacDonald. Both authors appear to implicitly accept the notion that if the freedom of an act of judgment is traced to the will, this judgment must be exercised by means

<sup>89</sup> Gallagher points to *De ver.*, q. 24, a. 4; see "Free Choice and Free Judgment in Thomas Aquinas," 255.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 275–6.

<sup>91</sup> MacDonald, "Aquinas's Libertarian Account of Free Choice," 314.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 321–2.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 323–8.

<sup>94</sup> MacDonald cites ST, I-II, q. 13, a. 1, where Aquinas points out that a judgment of the intellect is the form of the act of choice. Several questions earlier, Aquinas makes the more general point that the intellect provides the formal principle for all acts of will: "Primum autem principium formale est ens et verum universale, quod est obiectum intellectus. Et ideo isto modo motionis intellectus movet voluntatem, sicut praesentans ei obiectum suum." *Ibid.*, I-II, q. 9, a. 1.

<sup>95</sup> See *De ver.*, q. 24, a. 4; Gallagher, "Free Choice and Free Judgment in Thomas Aquinas," 255.

of an act of free choice. Accepting this premise is what leads to concerns about an infinite regress and ultimately either to a rejection of the causal priority of the intellectual judgment over the act of choice, or to a denial of the will's responsibility for the freedom of the act of judgment. But I know of nowhere that Aquinas maintains that free judgment must be caused by a free choice. An alternative more faithful to Aquinas's writings is the view that the will can exercise free acts of judgment by means of prior acts of reason and will that are not choices. Such causally prior acts include the will's natural attraction to and intention of an end, along with the intellect's apprehension of various aspects of reality. Though not all these prior acts are exercised freely, they can nevertheless serve as a foundation from which free acts are exercised. Consequently, since the will need not always cause free judgments by means of choices, one can consistently grant both of Aquinas's positions: freedom to make judgments belongs to the will, and yet the formal causality of the intellect is present in every act of will.

Of course accepting both positions also implies that the formal principle whereby the will produces a free judgment cannot always be a free judgment. But nowhere have I found Aquinas maintaining the opposite. As presented, this account still leaves undetermined many of the details of the interaction of intellect and will in human decisions. My only goal here is to show that there are no obvious contradictions in Aquinas's account and consequently that one can consistently follow Aquinas in ascribing the exercise of a free judgment to the will without violating the principle that every act of will depends on reason or the fact that causes are prior to effects. A more detailed explanation of Aquinas's psychology of human acts will be deferred until the next chapter.

Here, a remarkable correspondence between Aquinas's theories of reason and will appears. As noted above, the created mind's openness to opposites was traced to both its perfection (in particular its ability to reflect on its own act) and its limitation (its lack of sufficient evidence in every case). In a parallel fashion the created will's openness to both good and bad choices follows from both its perfection and its limitation. Insofar as it is able to freely produce acts of choice, the will exhibits a

certain nobility. Yet insofar as it may be drawn to act outside the rule of reason, the will manifests imperfection and limitation. Thus, the special relationship of rational powers to the true and the false and to good and evil implies both their perfection and their weakness.<sup>96</sup>

### **The Sensitive Appetite**

To complete this tour of the rational powers, I must briefly mention the sensitive appetite, since Aquinas sometimes notes that it is rational by participation.<sup>97</sup> Here too, one finds an openness to opposites: precisely insofar as the acts of the sensitive appetite are considered in relationship to reason, these acts may be good or evil.<sup>98</sup> The sense appetite also derives a certain perfection from its participation in reason, inasmuch as by following reason's command, it can share in noble and virtuous acts.

I will consider the acts of specific powers of the soul in greater detail in the next chapter, but two general remarks about the relationship of the rational powers to their objects and acts must be presented here. Implicit in the above discussion is the peculiar relationship of rational powers and objects in the production of acts. In non-rational beings, passive powers are moved to their acts by their objects, whereas active powers, while containing the likenesses of their objects, produce these objects by means of their acts. The rational powers bear a resemblance to each sort of power. In a certain respect these powers behave passively: the intellect must receive evidence in order to judge, while the will must be presented with an apprehension of the good in order to desire. On the other hand, the rational powers also behave like active powers. The intellect does not just receive evidence; based on that evidence, it forms a judgment which makes one know something new, not just what one knew before. Likewise, the will is not simply attracted to the good, but begins to move towards the

<sup>96</sup> From these considerations, it is also clear why Aquinas will sometimes ascribe to the rational powers mastery over their own acts.

<sup>97</sup> A detailed consideration of Aquinas's position that the sensitive appetite participates in reason may be found in Kahm, "Thomas Aquinas on the Sense Appetite as Participating in Reason." I will consider this participation in more detail at the end of chapter 2.

<sup>98</sup> ST, I-II, q. 24, a. 1.

good by choice and intention. These features of the rational powers follow upon their perfection: they not only receive, but produce objects which in some way go beyond what they have received.

Another important consequence of the active-passive character of these powers is that the specification of their acts can be considered in two ways. Like the acts of natural passive powers, acts of rational powers are specified by objects which are active principles, but like the acts of active powers, acts of rational powers are also specified by the objects which are their termini. For example, an act of love produced by the will is specified both by the lovable thing as an end conceived by reason (functioning here as active principle) and the lovable thing as the term towards which one directs one's act of love. Likewise, the judging of reason that a whole is greater than its parts is specified both by the apprehension from which the act of judging proceeds and the truth to which it tends. Thus, in a peculiar way the rational powers partake both of activity and passivity, and consequently, their acts may be specified in two ways.

In the course of the above considerations, the complexity of the activity found in human life has become more and more evident. Not only do humans have the widest range of powers; their powers also contain a wide range of possible acts, including even contrary acts. Moreover, because the possession of rational powers implies freedom, this enormous ensemble of human acts is capable of being ordered in numerous different ways. When we consider the vast range and variety of human acts along with Aquinas's position that the various particular ends that we pursue must all be directed to a single overarching end of the human being,<sup>99</sup> the challenge of organizing our various powers and acts so as to achieve the human good appears daunting. It is this very challenge—the difficulty of ordering our lives to achieve happiness—that leads Aquinas to argue for the necessity of habits. Accordingly, before concluding this chapter, I will analyze Aquinas's arguments for this necessity.

<sup>99</sup> Aquinas explains this position quite clearly in QDA, a. 13, ad 7: “anima habet aliquem praecipuum finem, sicut anima humana, bonum intelligibile; habet autem et alios fines ordinatos ad hunc ultimum finem, sicut quod sensibile ordinatur ad intelligibile.”



## 1.2 The Necessity of Habits

In Aquinas's mind, the necessity of habits was clearly an important topic. Twice in his career, he devoted an entire article to a consideration of whether habits are needed. But he also included a discussion of the question in at least three other contexts. Moreover, the apparent lack of a detailed consideration of the topic in Aquinas's most famous contemporaries suggests that his discussion of the question was motivated by a personal conviction regarding the merits of such an inquiry.<sup>100</sup> Consequently, it is appropriate to consider with care his various writings on the topic, in order to properly grasp the role of habits in Aquinas's psychology.

Now as Aquinas notes in many places, the term "necessary" has more than one meaning. Therefore, before addressing his arguments, it is appropriate to consider what he means when he asks whether habits are necessary. He provides a helpful division of the types of necessity late in his *Summa*:

As the Philosopher teaches in *Metaphysics* 5, "necessary" is said in many ways. (1) Indeed, in one way as that for which it is impossible to be otherwise according to its own nature. . . . (2) In another way something is called necessary from something exterior. (2a) If this is an efficient or moving cause, it brings about necessity of coercion [or force], as when someone cannot go, on account of the violence of one who detains him. (2b) But if that exterior thing which induces necessity is an end, something will be called necessary from the supposition of the end, that is, when some end either can in no way be, or cannot fittingly be, except by something presupposed by such an end.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>100</sup> I have been unable to find evidence of any medieval author prior to Aquinas taking as seriously as he does the question of the necessity of habit. While Aquinas discusses the issue in book III, distinctions 14 and 23 of his *Sentences* commentary, the commentaries of Albert the Great and Bonaventure do not contain parallel discussions in the distinctions in question. A brief search through some of Albert's other early works has failed to turn up any precedent for Aquinas's considerable interest in the question. Given the great number of his medieval predecessors, it would be rash to assert with certainty that there is no precedent for Aquinas's treatment of the question. Still, the apparent absence of a similar treatment in Albert or Bonaventure suggests that Aquinas's detailed consideration of the necessity of habit may be an innovation.

<sup>101</sup> ST, III, q. 46, a. 1, co: "Respondeo dicendum quod, sicut philosophus docet in V *Metaphys.*, necessarium multipliciter dicitur. Uno quidem modo, quod secundum sui naturam impossibile est aliter se habere. . . . Alio modo dicitur aliquid necessarium ex aliquo exteriori. Quod quidem si sit causa efficiens vel movens, facit necessitatem coactionis: utpote cum aliquis non potest ire propter violentiam detinentis ipsum. — Si vero illud exterius quod necessitatem inducit, sit finis, dicitur aliquid necessarium ex suppositione finis: quando scilicet finis aliquis aut nullo modo potest esse, aut non potest esse convenienter, nisi tali fine praesupposito."

An example of the first type of necessity is the fact that it is necessary for a triangle to have three sides, for it is impossible that a triangle fail to have three sides. The second type of necessity obtains when a cold piece of metal is necessarily heated when placed beside a fire. An instance of the third type is evident when we say it is necessary to open one's eyes in order to see. The first two types of necessity (1 and 2a) do not fit the sense of the question about the necessity of habits. The question is not about whether habits are necessary beings or about whether something belongs necessarily to the nature of habits. Likewise, Aquinas is not asking whether something necessarily generates habits. Rather, he is asking whether habits are needed by some beings for some end, as will become quite clear when we turn to consider his argument.

It is worth mentioning that this last sort of necessity (which may be called conditional necessity) is of two kinds, according to Aquinas. On the one hand, we speak of something as necessary for an end when it is impossible to achieve the end without it. For example, one cannot perform a generous act without thinking about it. On the other hand, we say something is necessary for an end if one cannot obtain the end well without it. For example, one cannot read well at night without a sufficiently bright light. It remains to be seen whether Aquinas thinks habits are conditionally necessary in both ways (which I will call the stronger version of conditional necessity), or only the second way (which I will call the weaker version of conditional necessity).

Now, for Aquinas, there are two types of end for which habits may be necessary. First, habits may be needed to bring about an intrinsic perfection in capacities. But insofar as capacities have an order to acts, habits may also be required in order for acts to be performed in a perfect fashion. As will become evident, Aquinas makes reference to the perfection of both powers and acts in his discussions of the necessity of habit.

There are five important texts to consider when examining Aquinas's account of the necessity of habits. Some of the earliest are two considerations of intellectual habits in Christ. One of these, a

question from Aquinas's commentary on book 3, d. 14 of the *Sentences*, asks whether there is a created habit of knowledge in Christ. A slightly different question, "whether Christ's soul sees the Word through a habit," appears in Aquinas's *De veritate*. While the necessity of intellectual habits is addressed in the former text, the latter text contains a more general and indeed quite detailed consideration of why habits are needed. However, the most direct approach to the question in Aquinas's early work is in *In Sent.*, III, d. 23, where Aquinas asks whether we need habits for human operations. Now, it is worth noting that earlier and quite different drafts of the two discussions from the *Sentences* commentary exist. Thus, in the course of my consideration, it will occasionally be helpful to draw upon the account given in a draft version, particularly when it presents a complementary perspective or insight. Two later discussions of the necessity of habits are also helpful, for while they do not reject the position of the earlier texts, they provide some deeper insights into the question. One of these texts is a direct question about whether habits are necessary from the *Summa*, while the other occurs in the course of a discussion of whether virtues are habits in the approximately contemporaneous *Quaestiones disputatae de virtutibus in communi*. In examining these discussions, I will begin with the early texts, before turning to Aquinas's later considerations.

### *Early Texts*

In his consideration of the necessity of habits in the context of discussions of Christ's knowledge, Aquinas begins by pointing to a general need for perfection common to all passive potencies. Insofar as active powers already possess perfect actuality, they require no further perfection to act well, but passive powers need something added to them to perfect them for operation.<sup>102</sup> What is more difficult

<sup>102</sup> *In Sent.* (Earlier Redaction), III, d. 14, a. 1, qc. 2: "non est perfectum nisi ~~medi~~ postquam recipit impressionem activi, ideo huiusmodi potentiae non operantur nisi mediante aliquo addito." (A crossed out word indicates that it was deleted in the manuscript.) *In Sent.*, III, d. 14, a. 1, qc. 2: "nulla potentia passiva potest in actum exire nisi completa per formam sui activi." The text from the *De veritate* does not explicitly mention passive powers, but some degree of passivity is clearly implied: "quando potentia est ad talia obiecta ordinata quorum nullatenus ex se ipsa potest perfecte actum habere." (*De*

to see, however, is whether and in what cases the thing added to complete a power for action must be a habit. Frequently throughout his discussion of the necessity of habits, Aquinas distinguishes two ways in which something might be added to perfect a power.<sup>103</sup> In one way, a power can receive a temporary “passion” that only remains as long as the passive power remains under the influence of an active power. In another way, the power may be actualized in a more permanent fashion by means of a “form” that remains even when the passive power is not under the influence of another agent.<sup>104</sup> Only this latter sort of perfection may be called a habit. Thus, in the Christological questions, Aquinas must further indicate in what cases the addition of a habit is required.

One way to show that a habit rather than a mere passion is necessary, is by appealing to certain perfections belonging to a power’s action and mode of operating that can only be obtained by means of habits. For example, in the draft version of Aquinas’s commentary on *Sentences*, III, d. 14, the fact that acts proceeding from habits are produced “without difficulty and with delight”<sup>105</sup> provides an indication that greater perfection is obtained through habits than through mere temporary passions. One might wonder, however, whether the same result might not also be ascribed to passions. The beginning of an answer to this question is proposed in the final version of Aquinas’s discussion where he writes: “There is required in the intellect for its perfection that the impression of its active principle be in it not only through the mode of passion, but also through the mode of quality and perfect connatural form.”<sup>106</sup> He goes on to point out that the natural character of a habit has three beneficial results: first, the habit has a kind of permanence; second, it makes its possessor ready for action; third, the

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*ver.*, q. 20, a. 2) The earlier redaction of the *Sentences* commentary is the only text of the three to explicitly mention that active powers do not need habits added.

<sup>103</sup> I have already had occasion to discuss these two kinds of perfection in the more general discussion of capacities above. See page 17.

<sup>104</sup> See for example, *In Sent.*, III, d. 14, a. 1, qc. 2: “In intellectu autem requiritur ad ejus perfectionem quod impressio sui activi sit in eo non solum per modum passionis, sed etiam per modum qualitatis et formae connaturalis perfectae.” Of all the texts that I will consider, the only ones that do not mention this distinction are *In Sent.* (Earlier Redaction), III, d. 14, a. 1, qc. 2 and ST, I-II, q. 49, a. 4.

<sup>105</sup> *In Sent.* (Earlier Redaction), III, d. 14, a. 1, qc. 2: “Sine difficulata et cum delectatione.”

<sup>106</sup> *In Sent.*, III, d. 14, a. 1, qc. 2. See the text in note 104.

habit makes its corresponding acts delightful. In the *De veritate*, Aquinas expands this list, adding that habits also make one's operations easy to exercise.<sup>107</sup> In both these latter two texts, Aquinas grounds these benefits on the fact that the habit is “connatural,” by which he seems to mean it is a kind of second nature.<sup>108</sup> Because passions are not connatural in this way, they do not seem to be as beneficial as habits, and thus it is reasonable to say that habits are necessary, if one wishes one's powers to be perfected to act in the best way.

In these discussions, Aquinas also begins to give us some indication of the kinds of power that can possess habits. Some powers, like the external senses, don't seem to need habits, even in order to act with pleasure. Their natures already possess all that is necessary to act and indeed to act with consistency and delight as soon as the proper object is presented to them.<sup>109</sup> By contrast, such a characteristic does not appear to belong naturally to rational powers. In the *De veritate*, for example, Aquinas proposes that intellectual powers can be subjects of habits inasmuch as they can (but need not) be ready for their actions, unlike the senses, which always act with the promptness characteristic of instinct.<sup>110</sup> Aquinas also suggests in the draft of the commentary on d. 14 that any power that is subject to the ordination of the will can possess habits, appealing to Averroes's remark that a habit is “that by which we act when we will.”<sup>111</sup> Given the fact that what is subject to the ordination of the

<sup>107</sup> *De ver.*, q. 20, a. 2.

<sup>108</sup> Interpreting connatural as indicating a second nature is corroborated in the direct consideration of the necessity of habits a few distinctions later, where Aquinas follows Aristotle in arguing that habit becomes in a certain way natural: “. . . cum autem [haec qualitas] jam consummata est, et quasi in naturam versa, habitus nominatur.” *In Sent.*, III, d. 23, q. 1, a. 1, co. More detailed attention to the notion of “connaturality” will be offered later.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, III, d. 14, a. 1, qc. 2: “quia sensus non sentit nisi ad praesentiam sensibilis, ideo ad ejus operationem perfectam sufficit impressio sui activi per modum passionis tantum.”

<sup>110</sup> *De ver.*, q. 20, a. 2: “Ea igitur quae superadduntur in potentiis sensitivis non superadduntur per modum habitus sed per modum passionis; in potentiis vero intellectivae animae per modum habitus, quia sensitiva pars animae agitur instinctu naturae magis quam agat, intellectiva autem pars est domina sui actus, et ideo competit ei habere promptitudinem ad actus, ut possit operari cum libet.”

<sup>111</sup> *In Sent.* (Earlier Redaction), III, d. 14, a. 1, qc. 2: “Habitus enim dicitur proprie quando ex potentia adveniente illo addito sequitur ~~aliquid~~ operatio (non necessitate sed) secundum ordinationem voluntatis. Et ideo dicit Commentator (in tertio de anima) quod habitus est quo quis agit cum voluerit.” The first set of words in parentheses were added interlinearly. The second set in parentheses were added after the phrase had been written.

will appear able to act with greater or less readiness, Aquinas's conclusion is understandable. But the special relationship of habits to rational powers is even more clearly explained in the texts to come.

In his direct treatment of the necessity of habits in the commentary on book III, d. 23 of the *Sentences*, Aquinas argues from a slightly different perspective. Whereas the above arguments began from the passive character of powers, his argument in this text is based on the indeterminacy of powers.<sup>112</sup> Among powers, Aquinas argues, one finds two sorts. Some are "limited to determinate actions or passions."<sup>113</sup> For Aquinas, this sort would presumably include natural powers, such as the power of fire to heat, along with lower powers of the soul such as the sense of sight, which is limited to acts that are determined by the objects that come into its view. But there is a second kind of power to which belong capacities "not limited to one object or mode of operating."<sup>114</sup> Among such powers, Aquinas includes the rational powers and with good reason, for as I have argued above, rational powers are noteworthy in their ability to operate in contrary ways with respect to the same object. According to Aquinas, it is the very indeterminacy of this latter kind of power that makes habits necessary for them. The determinate powers, Aquinas tells us, "are sufficiently able to possess their goodness and rectitude from the very nature of the power."<sup>115</sup> Consequently, insofar as their nature is not defective, such powers are not in need of anything besides the presence of their object to act well. By contrast, indeterminate powers cannot in principle possess perfect goodness and rectitude in their own nature. The underlying explanation appears to be that it is impossible that naturally unlimited and undetermined powers be at the same time and in the same respect naturally limited. Thus Aquinas concludes that in the case of

<sup>112</sup> The earlier draft of this text helpfully points out that indeterminacy implies that a thing is in potency rather than in act. This indicates that indeterminate powers must be passive, since active powers are in act. Thus, the perspective taken in the commentary on d. 23 is in harmony with and indeed implies the perspective of the earlier account.

<sup>113</sup> *In Sent.*, III, d. 23, q. 1, a. 1, co.: "quaedam potentiae limitatae ad determinatas actiones vel passiones."

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*: "Potentiae vero altiores et universaliores, cujusmodi sunt rationales potentiae, non sunt limitatae ad aliquod unum vel objectum vel modum operandi."

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*: "quia naturae inclinatio semper est ad unum, ideo tales potentiae ex ipsa natura potentiae rectitudinem sufficienter habere possunt et bonitatem; malitia autem in eis contingit ex defectu potentiae."

such powers, “it is necessary that they be rectified by *receiving* rectitude.”<sup>116</sup>

Thus far, Aquinas has argued that indeterminate powers require a special reception of a rectifying principle that does not belong to them by nature. But as before, he must now show that the perfection required must be received as a permanent habit rather than as a transient passion. Here, the argument proceeds by excluding transient passions as sufficient rectifying principles. Whereas before Aquinas looked to the perfection that habits give to acts, in this place he begins by pointing to the imperfection of acts of indeterminate powers when they proceed from passions rather than from habits. He contends that when such powers are extrinsically forced to act in a determinate fashion, the resulting acts are performed with sorrow and difficulty.<sup>117</sup> This shows that transient passions imposed extrinsically cannot perfect powers, and thus what is needed is an intrinsic quality. Now, for Aquinas, only when this intrinsic quality is perfected such that it becomes a kind of nature is it called a habit. Aquinas does not explicitly explain why it is not enough to possess merely an imperfect intrinsic quality (which he calls a disposition). But one can gather from the subsequent discussion that one important reason why mere dispositions are insufficient is the fact that they are not as permanent as habits.<sup>118</sup>

At this point, the argument seems complete. But Aquinas goes on to confirm his position by noting the positive contributions of habits to the operation of powers, including several of the beneficial characteristics mentioned above, namely, the delight, ease, and readiness with which one is able to operate.<sup>119</sup> Thus, from a consideration of the indeterminacy of powers along with the sorts of perfection

<sup>116</sup> *In Sent.*, III, d. 23, q. 1, a. 1, co.: “quia secundum diversa et diversimode rectitudinem habere possunt. Et ideo ex natura potentiae non potuerunt determinari ad rectum et bonum ipsarum; sed oportet quod rectificentur, rectitudinem a sua regula *recipientes*.” My emphasis.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*: “quia in hoc quod aliquid patitur et nihil ad actum conferat, violentiae definitio consistit, ut patet in III *Eth.*, violentia autem et difficultatem et tristitiam habet, ut in V *Meta.* dicitur; ideo praedicta receptio rectitudinis non sufficit ad perfectam rectificationem potentiae regulatae.”

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*: “inde est quod in *Praedicamentis* dicitur dispositio facile mobilis, et habitus difficile mobilis; quia quod naturale est non cito transmutatur.” Both here and in the Christological texts, the greater permanence of habits is connected to Aristotle’s position that habits are difficult to change (*difficile mobilis*).

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*: “Et propter hoc etiam, signum generati habitus est delectatio in opere facta, ut dicitur in II *Eth.*, quia quod est naturae conveniens, delectabile est et facile. Et propter hoc habitus a Commentatore in III *De anima* definitur, quod est

needed for operation, Aquinas establishes once again that habits are necessary to perfect powers for operation.<sup>120</sup>

### *Later Texts*

While indeterminacy of powers remains a factor in later considerations of the necessity of habits, some additional considerations serve to sharpen and deepen Aquinas's account. In the *Quaestiones de virtutibus in communi*, for instance, Aquinas maintains that only an indeterminate power receives its virtue and goodness as a habit.<sup>121</sup> But in this text, the focus of his argument for the necessity of habits is on their positive contribution to operation. Accordingly, he proposes three reasons why habits are needed:

First that there might be uniformity in our operation; for those things which depend on operation alone are easily changed unless they are stabilized by some habitual inclination.

Second that one might be ready for a perfect operation. For unless a rational power is in some way inclined to one [*ad unum*] through a habit, when it is necessary to operate, it will always be necessary that inquiry concerning the operation occur first. As is evident regarding those who wish to consider [scientific truths] while not yet possessing the habit of science, as well as in the case of those who, lacking the habit of virtue, wish to act according to virtue. Whence the philosopher says in *Ethics* 5 that sudden [acts] are from habit.

Third, that a perfect operation might be performed with delight. This indeed comes about through habit, which since it exists after the manner of a certain nature, renders the operation proper to it natural (as it were) and consequently delightful. For conformity is a cause of delight; whence the philosopher in *Ethics* 2 proposes delight in a work to be a sign of habit.<sup>122</sup>

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quo quis agit cum voluerit, quasi in promptu habens quod operandum est.”

<sup>120</sup> For arguments that the indeterminacy of powers makes habits necessary, see Cyrinus Scharff, *L'habitus principe de simplicité et d'unité dans la vie spirituelle* (Utrecht: Dekker / Van de Vegt, 1950), 69–70 and Placide de Roton, *Les habitus: leur caractère spirituel* (Paris: Labergerie, 1934), 15–16.

<sup>121</sup> DVC, a. 1, co.: “Potentiae vero illae sunt agentes et actae quae ita moventur a suis activis, quod tamen per eas non determinantur ad unum; sed in eis est agere, sicut vires aliquo modo rationales; et hae potentiae complentur ad agendum per aliquid superinductum, quod non est in eis per modum passionis tantum, sed per modum formae quiescentis, et manentis in subiecto; . . . Harum potentiarum virtutes . . . sunt habitus.”

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.: “Primo ut sit uniformitas in sua operatione; ea enim quae ex sola operatione dependent, facile immutantur, nisi secundum aliquam inclinationem habitualement fuerint stabilita. Secundo ut operatio perfecta in promptu habeatur. Nisi enim potentia rationalis per habitum aliquo modo inclinatur ad unum, oportebit semper, cum necesse fuerit operari, prae-



Some of the benefits to operation mentioned here by Aquinas are already familiar, but this text is helpful because it not only maintains that habits provide these benefits, but also shows that such benefits cannot be consistently found if habits are lacking. If one has no habits, one can expect neither uniformity in, nor preparation for, nor delight in operation. The first benefit, uniformity or consistency, is particularly important because even if one might sometimes find certain operations naturally delightful or requiring little deliberation, being consistently prepared for and pleased by all the actions one ought to perform is not possible without a habit.

Two points considered in the earlier accounts are implicit in the discussion of uniformity. First, the fact that something needs uniformity in its operation, implies that it is indeterminately related to its acts. Thus, the current account is evidently in harmony with the contention that indeterminate powers stand in special need of habits. Second, the permanence of habits, especially the difficulty with which they are changed, is an implicit condition for uniformity of operation. Only because habits are permanent can they serve as sources of consistency in operation. Thus in DVC, one finds an argument for the necessity of habits that focuses on the role habits play in perfecting operation while drawing upon and developing earlier insights.

Perhaps the most unique of all the arguments for the necessity of habits may be found in the *Summa*, although even there, the notion of indeterminacy plays an implicit role. One of the unique features of this text is that in it, Aquinas does not restrict himself to considering powers that might need habits for operation, but rather deals with all capacities, whether they be capacities for existence or capacities for operation. In order to accomplish his goal, Aquinas posits a series of conditions that gradually narrows down the capacities that might be in need of habits. The first condition is that the putative possessor

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cedere inquisitionem de operatione; sicut patet de eo qui vult considerare nondum habens scientiae habitum, et qui vult secundum virtutem agere habitu virtutis carens. Unde Philosophus dicit in V *Ethic.*, quod repentina sunt ab habitu. Tertio ut delectabiliter perfecta operatio compleatur. Quod quidem fit per habitum; qui cum sit per modum cuiusdam naturae, operationem sibi propriam quasi naturalem reddit, et per consequens delectabilem. Nam convenientia est delectationis causa; unde Philosophus, in II *Ethic.*, ponit signum habitus, delectationem in opere existentem.”

of a habit must be something other than what it is disposed to.<sup>123</sup> By this condition, Aquinas rules out the idea that God might be in need of habits, since He is neither different from His operation nor composed of parts that might be disposed one to another.<sup>124</sup> Aquinas's second condition is that "what is in potency to another, can be determined in many ways and to diverse things."<sup>125</sup> By this condition, Aquinas rules out things like the heavenly bodies, which have only one motion and whose matter is not disposed to any other form.<sup>126</sup> Now one might think that these two conditions are sufficient to exclude capacities that do not need habits, particularly because in the *Sentences*, Aquinas proposed that powers "not limited to one object or mode of operating"<sup>127</sup> need habits, a claim that appears convertible with the second condition. But Aquinas will nevertheless go on to posit another condition.

One reason why Aquinas needs to add another condition is that although the first two conditions may be sufficient to identify powers of the soul that are in need of habits, the two conditions do not yet tell us whether a capacity for existence is in need of a habit. For example, the matter of a human being, needs to be perfected by the habitual disposition of health, which disposes the material of the body to the soul.<sup>128</sup> But the form of the element of fire does not seem to need a habit disposing its matter to fire-form. Nevertheless, each of these cases fits the first two conditions, for in each case, the matter is other than its form, and in each the matter is open to being actualized by many other forms. Thus, Aquinas must find another condition which explains why the matter of some substances and not

<sup>123</sup> ST, I-II, q. 49, a. 4, co.: "ut id quod disponitur, sit alterum ab eo ad quod disponitur."

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.: "Unde si aliquid sit cuius natura non sit composita ex potentia et actu, et cuius substantia sit sua operatio, . . . ibi habitus vel dispositio locum non habet, sicut patet in Deo."

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.: "quod est in potentia ad alterum, possit pluribus modis determinari, et ad diversa."

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.: "Unde si corpus caeleste sit compositum ex materia et forma, cum illa materia non sit in potentia ad aliam formam, . . . non habet ibi locum dispositio vel habitus ad formam; aut etiam ad operationem, quia natura caelestis corporis non est in potentia nisi ad unum motum determinatum."

<sup>127</sup> See p. 54, n. 114.

<sup>128</sup> Aquinas is wary of admitting habits in the fullest sense in bodies, because bodies cannot receive qualities in a permanent enough fashion. But he will admit that things like health and beauty are habit-like qualities that he calls "habitual dispositions." See *ibid.*, I-II, q. 50, a. 1, co.: "Si vero loquamur de dispositione subiecti ad formam, sic habitualis dispositio potest esse in corpore, quod comparatur ad animam sicut subiectum ad formam. Et hoc modo sanitas et pulchritudo, et huiusmodi, habituales dispositiones dicuntur. Non tamen perfecte habent rationem habituum: quia causae eorum ex sua natura de facili transmutabiles sunt."

of others needs a special disposition to form.

The third and last condition proposed by Aquinas is that “many things that can be proportioned in diverse ways come together (*concurrant*) in order that the subject might be disposed to one of the things to which it is in potency.”<sup>129</sup> What Aquinas means here is not immediately evident. To understand this condition, one must first see what the “many things that can be proportioned in diverse ways” are. Fortunately, Aquinas provides some examples, along with a clarifying passage from Aristotle:

we give the name disposition or habit to health, beauty, and other things of this sort, which imply a certain proportion of many things which can be proportioned in diverse ways; for which reason the philosopher says in *Metaphysics* 5 that “habit is a disposition” and disposition is “the order of something possessing parts, either according to place or according to power or according to species.”<sup>130</sup>

According to Aquinas, the things which are able to be proportioned are parts, which can be ordered or organized in relation to each other. Health is a clear example of this. For Aquinas, health brings about the proper proportion and order of the various humors of the body, a position that, although perhaps mistaken in some of the details, is not far from our contemporary understanding of health as requiring a proper proportion of various hormones, nutrients, and other molecules. But, while helpful for understanding habits of the body, this example does not yet perfectly indicate how to understand habits belonging to powers of the soul, since it is not so obvious in this latter case what the “parts” that a habit is supposed to order and proportion are.

To clarify this point, Vernon Bourke proposes the following solution: “St. Thomas understands it [the term ‘parts’] in reference to the multiplicity of acts toward which these potencies are naturally ordered, and a plurality of agencies which eventually occur in the determination of the subject toward

<sup>129</sup> ST, I-II, q. 49, a. 4, co.: “plura concurrant ad disponendum subiectum ad unum eorum ad quae est in potentia, quae diversis modis commensurari possunt.”

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.: “dicimus autem dispositiones vel habitus sanitatem, pulchritudinem et alia huiusmodi, quae important quandam commensurationem plurium quae diversis modis commensurari possunt. Propter quod Philosophus dicit, in V *Metaphys.*, quod habitus est dispositio, et dispositio est ordo habentis partes vel secundum locum, vel secundum potentiam, vel secundum speciem.”

one specific end.”<sup>131</sup> Now Bourke’s contention might be understood in two ways. On the one hand, he might mean that the very acts of a power are its parts. For example, Bourke might consider the will’s acts of loving God and loving neighbor to be distinct parts of the will. On the other hand, he might mean that the power has parts which cannot be known or understood distinctly except in reference to the acts which proceed from the power.<sup>132</sup> For example, the will’s aptitude for loving God and for loving neighbor might be taken to be distinct parts of the will. This latter position is more cogent both philosophically and as a reading of Aquinas’s texts. Since it is essential to habits to order and proportion “parts,” while people evidently possess habits of the soul even when not acting, the parts that habits order cannot be acts; consequently, it is more reasonable philosophically to consider these parts as belonging to a power of the soul. Moreover, the texts of Aquinas themselves indicate that he thinks that powers for operation can have parts. In a discussion of the habits of angels, for instance, Aquinas indicates that such creatures possess “parts according to power.”<sup>133</sup> The position that at least some operative powers can have parts is advanced even more clearly in Aquinas’s consideration of whether a power can have many habits, where he writes: “power [*potentia*], even if it is simple according to essence, is nevertheless many in aptitude [*virtute*], according to the fact that it extends to many acts different in species.”<sup>134</sup> This last text is particularly helpful because it shows that while the parts are really in the power, their multiplicity is understood in reference to acts, just as Bourke says. Thus the parts that are proportioned by habits of the soul are parts of powers, which belong to them insofar as they are able to relate to many different acts.

Returning again to a consideration of Aquinas’s third condition, one now sees that he is saying

<sup>131</sup> Bourke, “The Role of Habitus in the Thomistic Metaphysics of Potency and Act,” 105.

<sup>132</sup> This latter understanding of a power’s parts is more clearly advanced by Laurence Murphy. See Laurence T. Murphy, “The Role of Nature and Connaturality in Moral Philosophy according to St. Thomas Aquinas” (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 1964), 46.

<sup>133</sup> ST, I-II, q. 50, a. 6, ad 3: “in Angelis non sunt partes essentiae: sed sunt partes secundum potentiam, in quantum intellectus eorum per plures species perficitur, et voluntas eorum se habet ad plura.”

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 54, a. 1, ad 2: “potentia, etsi sit quidem simplex secundum essentiam, est tamen multiplex virtute, secundum quod ad multos actus specie differentes se extendit.”

that one only needs a habit if one has a plurality of parts that can be proportioned in diverse ways. I have already considered how this proportioning takes place in Aquinas's example of health, but it is worthwhile to consider a habit of the soul as well, in order to see how such a habit might proportion the parts of a power. The virtue of charity, which belongs to the will, is a particularly clear example. Because the will is related to many different acts of love such as love for God, love for one's parents, and love for one's spouse, Aquinas's position suggests that the will has different parts in relation to these acts. Since any of these various acts of love can be viewed as more important than the others, one of the parts of the will can predominate over the others, such that the will is always inclined more to the acts which belong to the predominating part. For example, one might be more strongly inclined to love one's spouse than to love God or one's parents. The habit of charity can institute a proportion between the various parts so that the various kinds of love are properly ordered. Indeed, Aquinas argues in several places that in the order of charity, love of God takes precedence over the other acts of love, which lesser acts of love in turn take precedence over each other in an ordered way.<sup>135</sup> The habit of charity can thus be understood as establishing a hierarchy among the various particular inclinations or parts of the will, a hierarchy that corresponds to the appropriate hierarchy among the acts of charity such that the inclination of the will to love God is ranked before all other loving inclinations, while these latter inclinations are ranked in turn according to the appropriate order. Now, the hierarchy established by the habit of charity consists in the proportioning of the various inclinations or parts such that certain parts are appropriately subordinated to others. Consequently, just as the various parts of the body may be proportioned to each other, so the parts of powers of the soul may also be proportioned to each other.

Now, Aquinas's third condition clearly requires not only that the possessor of a habit have parts but also that such parts be capable of being proportioned in diverse ways. The possibility of diverse

<sup>135</sup> See, for example, ST, II-II, q. 26, *De car.*, a. 9, and *In Sent.*, III, d. 29.

ways of proportioning, however, clearly depends on some sort of formal diversity of parts.<sup>136</sup> One indication of this is that we do not call things like bars of gold healthy or unhealthy, because their parts are homogeneous. Consequently, Aquinas's condition for needing a habit is that the recipient should have a plurality of formally diverse parts that can be capable of being proportioned in various ways. For such things, Aquinas holds that habits are a requirement for being well disposed.

The argument from the *Summa*, therefore, proposes that habits are necessary when three types of diversity are present: first, a diversity of a capacity and that act of which it is a capacity; second, a diversity between the capacity's acts and modes of acting; third, a formal diversity between the parts of the capacity. When all three diversities are present, a capacity needs a habit in order to dispose its parts well, thereby disposing it well to its various acts.

Now, although the last diversity may not be strictly necessary to consider when asking why powers of the soul require habits, Aquinas's discussion of this condition reveals an important aspect of habits that might not be apparent from what I have said so far. When Aquinas speaks of what the habit does to the power, he does not say here that the habit determines the power, but only that it gives the parts of the power a certain proportion. This suggests that while the habit is a kind of second nature, it does not deterministically dispose powers to their acts. Indeed, if habits were to have such an impact on powers, they would effectively change the natures of the powers, since indeterminacy belongs by nature to the rational powers.

The fact that, for Aquinas, habits do not compromise human freedom has been noted by Bonnie Kent on several occasions.<sup>137</sup> Indeed, Aquinas maintains that habits do not destroy freedom through-

<sup>136</sup> By the term "formal diversity," I mean to refer to difference in kind. This language is in keeping with Aquinas, who speaks of formally distinct parts in *In Metaph.*, lib. 7, l. 16: "Et hoc ideo, quia corpora animata sunt corpora organica habentia partes distinctas secundum formam; unde maxime sunt propinqua ad hoc quod sint actu." For a consideration of the way such parts exist, see Michael Storck, "Pars Integralis in St. Thomas Aquinas and the Parts of Living Substances," *The Thomist* 78 (2014): 379–399. The expression "formally diverse" should not be confused with the later notion of formal distinction used by medieval authors such as John Duns Scotus.

<sup>137</sup> See Kent, "Habits and Virtues," 118–9; "Dispositions and Moral Fallibility: The UnAristotelian Aquinas," 150–1;

out his career,<sup>138</sup> and his later works contain several arguments for this position. In one instance, he argues that habits cannot compromise freedom, because it is the nature of the rational powers to be masters over their acts.<sup>139</sup> Two other times, he appeals to the principle that everything is received according to the mode of the receiver to argue that habits received in various rational powers are received in a way that is compatible with the ability of such powers to perform free acts.<sup>140</sup> Thus, though habits are necessary aids to acting rightly, they do not force us to act well.

### Summary

Without doubt, Aquinas consistently argued for the necessity of habits throughout his career. Because of differences in context and argument, the various texts highlight different aspects of Aquinas's theory of habits. In each of these discussions, however, the important effect that habits have on both powers and acts becomes evident. From the early texts, one learns that habits perfect powers that are indeterminate and passive, while the *Summa* explains that this perfection occurs by way of proportioning. Along with the early texts, the text from DVC manifests how habits prepare their possessors for action and render their operations uniform, easy, and delightful. In this way it becomes clear that habits are needed to perfect both powers and acts.

It may appear, at first, that habits are only necessary in the weaker sense of conditional necessity, that is, in order to achieve the end well. But if one steps back for a moment and considers that the goal of human life is to consistently act well, it becomes clear that in fact, good habits are necessary if

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“Lovable Virtue: Aquinas on Character and Will,” 109.

<sup>138</sup> The earliest text I have found where Aquinas advances this position is: *In Sent.*, d. 30 q. 1 a. 5 ad 5.

<sup>139</sup> DVC, a. 1, co.: “ita tamen quod per eas [the *formas quiescentes* which are subsequently identified as habits] non de necessitate potentia ad unum cogatur; quia sic potentia non esset domina sui actus.”

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, a. 1, ad 12: “omnis forma recipitur in suo supposito secundum modum recipientis. Proprietas autem rationalis potentiae est ut in opposita possit, et ut sit domina sui actus. Unde nunquam per formam habitalem receptam cogitur potentia rationalis ad similiter agendum; sed potest agere vel non agere.” *De malo*, q. 3 a. 13 ad 6: “omnis autem forma est in aliquo secundum modum recipientis. De natura autem rationalis creaturae est quod sit arbitrio libera et ideo habitus virtutis vel vitii non inclinat voluntatem ex necessitate, sic quod aliquis non possit contra rationem habitus operari; sed difficile est operari contra id ad quod habitus inclinat.”

one is to achieve the end of human life at all. Given the necessity of habits, it is clear that they deserve further attention. But before I consider them in more detail, I will first present a more detailed account of the acts to which they are related, for habits of the soul are naturally acquired by means of acts, and it is for the perfection of our acts that habits are needed.



## Chapter 2

### Human Acts

In the previous chapter, I discussed some general aspects of Aquinas's theory of powers, acts, and objects, with special focus on the rational powers and their corresponding acts and objects. Based on the conclusions of that discussion, I considered Aquinas's position that habits are necessary, revealing the crucial role habits play in perfecting human acts and powers. In this chapter, I will turn to a more careful consideration of the acts with which habits deal, in order to prepare the way for a deeper understanding of habits and their effects.

Now, as Joseph Pilsner points out in his excellent study of the specification of human acts, much can be learned about Aquinas's theory of human acts by considering them in relationship to his account of natural motion.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, before considering Aquinas's understanding of the various acts that humans perform, I will first examine several key aspects of his more general account of motion, which has its basis in Aristotle's natural philosophy. In light of this consideration, I will go on to explore Aquinas's account of human acts, beginning with his discussion of our reception of the world by our cognitive acts and continuing with his account of our interaction with the world by appetite and practical reason. I will conclude with a consideration of the relationship between our sensitive and intellectual powers and acts as characterized by Aquinas.

<sup>1</sup> Pilsner, *The Specification of Human Actions in St. Thomas Aquinas*, 30 and 37–46.

## 2.1 Aquinas and the Aristotelian Account of Natural Motion

As is clear from an examination of his writings, Aquinas draws heavily on Aristotelian natural philosophy when considering motion. In this section, I will consider four of Aquinas's positions on natural motion particularly relevant to an understanding of his philosophy of human acts. These positions are: first, the definition of motion as the act of what exists in potency; second, the view that motion is an imperfect act; third, the position that a single motion belongs to both the mover and to the mobile, although in different respects; fourth, the notion that a natural mover gives a mobile inclination to, movement towards, and rest in its end.

### *The Definition of Motion*

According to Aristotle, motion may be defined as “the actuality of what exists in potency as such.”<sup>2</sup> The proper interpretation of this definition is a matter of dispute among interpreters of Aristotle.<sup>3</sup> Here, however, I will focus on explicating how Aquinas understands the definition.

In discussing the definition in his commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, Aquinas first notes that it is important to avoid circularity resulting from defining motion in terms of itself, for example, by defining it as “the not sudden going out from potency into act.”<sup>4</sup> A definition such as this is inadequate on

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, 201a10–11. There is some dispute about how best to render the definition. This translation is particularly helpful for my purposes because it renders the Greek in a way that also closely matches the Latin version available to Aquinas. See *In Phys.*, III, l. 2: “convenientissime Philosophus definit motum, dicens quod motus est entelechia, idest actus existentis in potentia secundum quod huiusmodi.” The Greek reads: “ἡ τοῦ δυνάμει ὄντος ἐντελέχεια, ἢ τοιοῦτον, κίνησις ἐστίν.”

<sup>3</sup> See for example: David Charles, “Aristotle's Processes,” in *Aristotle's Physics: A Critical Guide*, ed. Mariska Leunissen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 186–205; L. A. Kosman, “Aristotle's Definition of Motion,” *Phronesis* 14 (1969): 40–62; Rémi Brague, “Aristotle's Definition of Motion and Its Ontological Implications,” trans. Pierre Adler and Laurent d'Ursel, *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 13 (1990): 1–22; Joe Sachs, “Aristotle: Motion and Its Place in Nature,” in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. James Fieser and Bradley Dowden, accessed August 25, 2015, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/aris-mot/>; E. Alan Walsh, “A Defense of Aristotle's Definition of Motion” (master's thesis, The Catholic University of America, 1997). My view is that Aquinas's interpretation and explication is the correct one, but I will not argue for that position here.

<sup>4</sup> *In Phys.*, III, l. 2: “exitus de potentia in actum non subito.”

two counts. First, it defines motion by a type of motion, namely, “going out.” Second, it uses the term “sudden,” which is posterior to time and motion in definition.<sup>5</sup> By instead defining motion in terms of act and potency, Aristotle avoids defining motion by means of something consequent to it. Indeed, Aquinas argues that “act and potency are naturally prior to motion because they are among the first differences of being.”<sup>6</sup> It appears that Aquinas here numbers act and potency among the “first differences of being” because they do not follow upon some other more basic division of being but rather divide being as a whole. This fits with the text of Aristotle, who, immediately before giving his definition of motion, indicates that potency and act divide every genus of being rather than simply subdividing some more fundamental division of being.<sup>7</sup> Because act and potency divide being at the most basic level, they are prior to motion and can thus serve to define motion, helping us to understand motion on a deeper level.

Aquinas goes on to maintain that during motion, the mobile is midway between potency and act. In comparison to the starting point of motion, a moving thing is in act; but in comparison to the endpoint of motion, the moving thing is in potency. Aquinas gives the example of heating water. While water is heating up, it is compared to its starting point (at which it was merely potentially hot) as in act, insofar as the water possesses more warmth than at first. But in comparison to the final temperature to which the water is being heated, the water is still only potential. Thus, by calling motion the “act of what exists in potency,” Aristotle highlights two essential features of motion: (1) insofar as motion is an act, it puts the mobile beyond the mere potentiality of its starting point, while (2) insofar as it belongs in something that remains in potency to a further goal, motion requires that the mobile be not yet at the actuality of its end point.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *In Phys.*, III, l. 2: “Qui in definiendo errasse inveniuntur, eo quod in definitione motus posuerunt quaedam quae sunt posteriora motu: exitus enim est quaedam species motus; subitum etiam in sua definitione recipit tempus: est enim subitum, quod fit in indivisibili temporis; tempus autem definitur per motum.”

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*: “Potentia autem et actus, cum sint de primis differentiis entis, naturaliter priora sunt motu.”

<sup>7</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, 201a10.

<sup>8</sup> *In Phys.*, III, l. 2, n. 3. This interpretation of Aristotle is advanced by Glen Coughlin as well. See Glen Coughlin, “The

While Aquinas's interpretation of the definition appears to be in keeping with Aristotle, an important objection has been raised by Joe Sachs. According to Sachs, Aquinas's construal of Aristotle's definition of motion fails to distinguish between motion and rest in the middle between the starting and end points. For example, Sachs contends that "everything which Thomas says about the tepid water which is being heated can be said also of the tepid water which has been removed from the fire. Each is a coincidence of a certain actuality of heat with a further potentiality to the same heat."<sup>9</sup> In other words, the definition as interpreted by Aquinas is too broad, including rest in the middle as well as motion.

Now this objection is not considered by Aquinas in his commentary, and neither Aquinas nor Aristotle explicitly discusses how to distinguish motion from rest in the middle. However, Glen Coughlin has suggested that the phrase "as such" in *Physics* 201a10-12 is the key that shows how motion is distinct from a rest between the starting and end points. According to Coughlin, the phrase "as such" indicates that it is essential to the actuality of motion that it belong to a something with an unfulfilled potency. By contrast, it is not essential to resting at some point that the resting subject have an unfulfilled potency to be at some other point, even if it frequently happens that the resting body has such a potency. For example, it is not essential to resting at the temperature of seventy-five degrees that what has that temperature should also have the potential to be at one hundred degrees. Thus, Sachs's objection mistakenly takes what is essential to motion as also essential to rest.<sup>10</sup>

It is worth noting that the definition of motion conforms to the general criteria for defining accidents in the abstract presented by Aquinas in his *De ente et essentia*. In that work, Aquinas notes that to define abstract accidents, such as snubness, the accident's subject is used in place of the specific difference, since the subject is the proper principle of the accident.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, in the definition of

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Definition of Motion," in Aristotle, *Physics*, 249.

<sup>9</sup> Sachs, "Aristotle: Motion and Its Place in Nature," sec. 5.

<sup>10</sup> Coughlin, "The Definition of Motion," 249–50.

<sup>11</sup> *De ente*, c. 6.

motion, one finds that the proper subject of motion, i.e., what is existing in potency, is used in place of a specific difference in order to specify what kind of act motion is. Consequently, defining motion as the act of what exists in potency fits with Aquinas's more general account of definition.

### *Motion As Imperfect Act*

Because a mobile with an unfulfilled potency takes the place of a specific difference in the general definition of motion, it is hardly surprising to find that Aquinas and Aristotle both refer to motion as an imperfect or incomplete act. Indeed, Aristotle appeals to the imperfection of the mobile to explain the imperfection of motion, saying: "And motion seems to be some act, but imperfect. The cause is that what is potential, that of which motion is the act, is imperfect."<sup>12</sup> Likewise, in commenting on this text, Aquinas writes: "it is evident that the act is imperfect because that of which it is the act is a being in potency."<sup>13</sup> Consequently, the motion is only completed when the potency of its subject is fulfilled by the actuality of the terminus of motion, that is, when motion gives way to rest in the terminus.

### *Motion As Act of Mover and Mobile*

Up to this point, I have been focusing on motion in relation to the moveable thing, the starting point of the motion, and the end point of the motion. But it is important to also examine the relationship of motion to the mover. Now Aquinas points out two important features of the mover. First, motion is not in the mover as such. Aquinas's argument for this point is relatively straightforward. Since everything acts by a form through which it is in act, moving something belongs to a thing insofar as it is in act. But motion belongs to something insofar as it is in potency. Hence, even if a mover is itself in motion, motion does not belong to it as moving other things.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, Aquinas points out a

<sup>12</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, 201b31–33.

<sup>13</sup> *In Phys.*, III, l. 3.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, III, l. 4: "Omne enim agens agit in quantum est actu, sicut actu homo facit ex homine in potentia hominem actu: unde, cum unumquodque sit actu per formam, sequitur quod forma sit principium movens. Et sic movere competit

second key feature of the mover, namely, that it must have a proper act. This follows from the fact that like mobiles, movers are sometimes spoken of as potentially moving and sometimes as actually moving something. Consequently, though movers are not in motion as such, they nevertheless may be said to have acts of their own.<sup>15</sup>

This last point leads Aquinas to an important observation. Following Aristotle, Aquinas contends that the proper act of a mover is same as the motion of the mobile. This identity results from the fact that acting and undergoing share a common terminus. In this case, the common actuality caused by the mover and undergone by the mobile is motion itself. As Aquinas puts it, “something is called moving because it acts and moved because it undergoes. But what the moving thing causes by acting and what the moved thing receives by undergoing is the same thing.”<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, Aquinas concludes that the act which is in the mobile is the same as the act which is from the mover.<sup>17</sup> This conclusion is not difficult to accept, but it is of immense importance to bear in mind when considering Aquinas’s theory of human acts, for one must always ask whether the act of a power should be considered as belonging in that power, or as coming from and caused by that power.

### *Inclination, Movement, and Rest*

Now, the role of the mover in causing motion is immediately evident from everyday experience. However, Aquinas holds that the mover also plays a role in giving the mobile its initial inclination to an end as well as in bringing the mobile to rest in the end. This threefold task is lucidly expressed in a passage from the *Summa*:

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alicui in quantum habet formam, per quam est in actu. Unde, cum motus sit actus existentis in potentia, ut supra dictum est, sequitur quod motus non sit alicuius in quantum est movens, sed in quantum est mobile: et ideo in definitione motus positum est, quod est actus mobilis in quantum est mobile.”

<sup>15</sup> *In Phys.*, III, l. 4.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*: “Movens enim dicitur in quantum aliquid agit, motum autem in quantum patitur; sed idem est quod movens agendo causat, et quod motum patiendo recipit.”

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

Every mover in a certain way draws the one undergoing to itself, or repels [the one undergoing] from itself. Indeed, by drawing to itself, it does three things in it [i.e. in the one undergoing]. For first the mover gives the one undergoing an inclination or aptitude that it might tend into it [i.e. the mover], as when a light body, which is above, gives lightness to a generated body, through which it has an inclination or aptitude to being above. Second, if the generated body is outside its proper place, the mover causes [*dat*] it to be moved to the place. Third, the mover causes [*dat*] it to rest in the place once it has reached it, since something rests in place from the same cause through which it was being moved to the place.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, Aquinas traces the initial inclination, motion, and ultimate rest all to the mover.

While the mover's responsibility for motion is evident, its contributions of an initial inclination and ultimate rest require further consideration. Of these latter two effects, the rest of the mobile is more clearly traceable to the original mover. Since the terminus towards which the mover directs a mobile is some likeness of the mover which the mover causes in the mobile, it is clear that the mover is responsible for the terminus in which the mobile rests and for the fact that the mobile possesses that terminus. Since the possession of the terminus constitutes the rest of the mobile, the mover is clearly the reason for the resting of the mobile. Even if the mobile stops short of or overshoots the intended end, its resting may be ascribed to the principal agent insofar as some defect of the principal agent is a reason for the mobile resting too early or too late.

But one might object that in some cases, the mover simply stops acting rather than actively causing rest. For example, when I press the brakes to stop my car, it is true that the stopping of the car is a necessary condition for me coming to a rest at my destination. However, it does not seem true to say that the car causes me to be at rest. Indeed, if anything, the opposite appears to be true; by pressing the brakes, I cause the car to be at rest. Though counterexamples such as this may appear compelling,

<sup>18</sup> ST, I-II, q. 23, a. 4: "Omne enim movens trahit quodammodo ad se patiens, vel a se repellit. Trahendo quidem ad se, tria facit in ipso. Nam primo quidem, dat ei inclinationem vel aptitudinem ut in ipsum tendat: sicut cum corpus leve, quod est sursum, dat levitatem corpori generato, per quam habet inclinationem vel aptitudinem ad hoc quod sit sursum. Secundo, si corpus generatum est extra locum proprium, dat ei moveri ad locum. Tertio, dat ei quiescere, in locum cum pervenerit: quia ex eadem causa aliquid quiescit in loco, per quam movebatur ad locum."

Aquinas is able to overcome such objections by drawing a distinction between primary movers and secondary or instrumental movers:

It is true to say that the principle of motion to a terminus and rest in the terminus is the same, if one considers [*accipiatur*] the first principle of moving to the term. But if one considers some secondary and instrumental [mover]; certain things are principles of motion which stop [*cessant*] upon arrival at the terminus, as the ship and the impulse of the wind stop upon arrival at the port. And in this way charity, which is a first mover, remains in the terminus of beatitude, but not hope, which is a secondary principle belonging [*appropriatum*] to motion.<sup>19</sup>

This text is helpful because it clarifies that the responsibility for bringing a mobile to rest necessarily belongs only to a primary mover. Secondary and instrumental movers, inasmuch as they are only partially responsible for arrival at the terminus of a motion, are at most partially responsible for the mobile resting in the terminus. Thus, Aquinas may continue to ascribe to primary movers the capacity to cause rest.

It is more difficult, however, to see that the mover is always responsible for an initial inclination of the mobile to its end.<sup>20</sup> What is especially difficult about Aquinas's claim is not that the mobile's inclination must be traced to a mover. Rather, what is most unclear is why Aquinas maintains that every mobile needs an inclination prior to motion. As far as I am aware, Aquinas never explicitly defends this latter position. But nevertheless, his metaphysics clearly implies it. More specifically, a foundation for the claim that the mobile must be given an inclination before being moved may be found in Aquinas's position that although actuality is naturally prior to potency, "in one and the same thing that is changed from potency into act, potency is prior to actuality."<sup>21</sup> Applying this principle to the matter at hand,

<sup>19</sup> *De spe*, a. 4 ad 7: "si accipiatur primum principium movens ad terminum, verum est idem esse principium motus ad terminum, et quietis in termino. Sed si accipiatur aliquid secundarium et instrumentale; quaedam sunt principia motus, quae cessant, cum perventum fuerit ad terminum, sicut navis cessat, et impulsio venti, cum perventum fuerit ad portum. Et hoc modo caritas, quae est primum movens, manet in termino beatitudinis, non autem spes, quae est secundarium principium appropriatum motui."

<sup>20</sup> For a very helpful discussion of the notion of "inclination" in Aquinas, see Sean Cunningham, "Natural Inclination in Aquinas" (PhD diss., The Catholic University of America, 2013), esp. ch. 1.

<sup>21</sup> SCG, lib. 2, cap. 78: "in uno et eodem quod mutatur de potentia in actum, est prior potentia actu."



one can say that the potency for motion and its end must exist in the mobile prior to the motion itself.<sup>22</sup> Now as Sean Cunningham points out, the term “potency” is partially synonymous with the term “inclination.”<sup>23</sup> Both terms designate an intrinsic ordering towards something, but “inclination,” unlike “potency,” also implies an extrinsic incliner.<sup>24</sup> Thus it is reasonable to say, on the basis of Cunningham’s analysis, that every potency that is caused by an extrinsic agent is also an inclination. But, as I have just noted, motion requires a potency to the end of motion in the mobile. Moreover, this potency must be given by some agent, since neither a mobile nor its accidents are uncaused. Consequently, every mobile must be given an inclination to its end. Furthermore, since every effect is like its cause and the mover causes the end to exist in the mobile, the end is evidently a likeness of the mover, and so the inclination to the end is at the same time an inclination to the likeness of that end found in the active power of the mover.<sup>25</sup>

Now, in the case of violent motion, the inclination in question clearly follows upon some added form. For instance, according to Aquinas, when one throws a stone upwards in a violent motion, one gives the stone a power by which it moves upwards.<sup>26</sup> He speaks of this power as extrinsic, inasmuch as it is outside of the nature of the stone and is in fact opposed to the natural inclination of the stone. Nevertheless, the power truly belongs to the stone and inclines the stone upwards. Thus, the superadded power is the form by which the stone is inclined to a violent motion. In natural motions, by contrast, the inclining form is not something added from without but rather flows from the very nature of its substance. Nevertheless, it is clear that the inclining form must be distinct from the nature

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *In Metaph.*, lib. 5, l. 14: “Oportet autem illud, quod est possibile ad aliquid patiendum, habere in se quamdam dispositionem, quae sit causa et principium talis passionis; et illud principium vocatur potentia passiva.”

<sup>23</sup> Cunningham, “Natural Inclination in Aquinas,” 98.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 98–99.

<sup>25</sup> Thus, it is hardly surprising to find Aquinas contending in discussion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that a proportioning of the mobile to its mover is also always necessary: “Manifestum est autem quod omne quod movetur, necesse est proportionatum esse motori: et haec est perfectio mobilis in quantum est mobile, dispositio qua disponitur ad hoc quod bene moveatur a suo motore.” See *ST*, I-II, q. 68, a. 1, co.

<sup>26</sup> *De car.*, a. 1, co.: “Potest quidem lapidi dare virtutem, ex qua sicut ex principio extrinseco sursum naturaliter moveatur; non autem ut motus iste sit ei naturalis, nisi ei alia natura detur.”

of the substance from the previous discussion of the distinction between potencies for existence and for operation. The nature of iron, for example, must be distinct from the heaviness that flows from this nature and disposes the iron to fall downward, because the form of iron has a capacity for existence that cannot also be a capacity for downward movement. Consequently, although the inclinations to natural and violent motions differ based upon whether their sources are internal or extrinsic to the mobile, each kind of motion presupposes an inclining principle in the mobile.

Now although every motion presupposes an inclination, one might wonder whether Aquinas means to say that the thing giving the inclination is always identical to the cause of the motion. It appears superfluous, however, that some mover should give an inclination to something, if it already has that inclination. Thus, in cases where the mobile is already inclined to be moved to an end (whether by the author of its nature or by some other agent), the mover clearly need not provide an additional inclination. Nevertheless, if a mover possesses the power to cause a motion in a mobile even when it is not naturally inclined to be moved by that agent, the mover must also be capable of disposing the mobile to receive its motion. Accordingly, when Aquinas speaks of the mover giving “the one undergoing an inclination or aptitude,” it is reasonable to assume that he understands this to be necessary only when the mobile does not already possess the requisite inclination. In such cases, the mover provides the mobile not only the motion and rest themselves, but also the inclination to the motion and final point of rest.

Though clearly in keeping with Aristotelian natural philosophy, Aquinas’s ascription of three distinct tasks to the mover does not appear to be directly traceable to any single passage in Aristotle; rather Aquinas’s position represents the result of a philosophical tradition of careful reflection on Aristotelian physical and metaphysical principles and application of these principles to the motions we observe everyday.<sup>27</sup> But the mover’s role in providing inclination, movement, and rest is not restricted by Aquinas

<sup>27</sup> It is evident that Aquinas’s position is not entirely original. For example, one finds Albert the Great alluding to the

to the realm of immediately observable physical motions. Indeed, Aquinas's account plays a key part in his analysis of the internal appetitive movements of living beings. Before turning to Aquinas's account of appetitive acts, however, I must first present his account of cognitive acts, on which the movements of appetite are founded.

## 2.2 Motion from Things to the Soul:

### Sensitive and Intellectual Cognition

Some reference to the cognitive powers of the soul has already been made in the first chapter. Here, I will attempt a more complete discussion of the acts that belong to these powers, focusing on the order of lower forms of cognition to higher ones in the human soul. To this end, I will first consider acts of sensitive cognition in their various manifestations. Second, I will consider how the intellect derives its knowledge from the sensitive powers through abstraction. Finally, I will consider Aquinas's account of the various acts of reason, giving special attention to the way in which the acts of reason remain dependent upon other cognitive operations of the soul.

#### *Sensation*

The act of sensation, while in certain respects analogous to natural change, is nevertheless different in important ways. Both types of change involve the reception of a form from an external agent. In sensation, as well as other cognitive acts, this form is the principle by which one perceives an object.<sup>28</sup> But reflection on the way in which we receive forms cognitively reveals key differences between natural changes and the movements of the sense powers. First, in natural motion and change, the mobile

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triad of inclination, movement, and rest in his commentary on the *De Divinis nominibus* of pseudo-Dionysius. (See *Super Dionysium De Divinis nominibus*, vol. 27/1, Alberti Magni Opera Omnia (Münster: Aschendorff, 1972), cap. 4, l. 32.)

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, ST, I, q. 56, a. 1, co.: “species rei visae est principium formale visionis in oculo.”

receives a new nature which replaces whatever nature was previously possessed.<sup>29</sup> When an apple ripens, for example, the nature of green is replaced by the nature of red. The sense power, by contrast, does not lose its sensitive nature when it begins to sense, and therefore does not receive the form of a sensible object in such a way as to lose its own form.<sup>30</sup> Receiving a green perception does not entail losing the power of sight. A second difference between sensation and natural motion may be observed by considering the kind of existence provided by the resulting form. In a physical change, the subject of change comes to have the natural existence provided by the form. After ripening, the apple possesses redness in such a way as to be red by the nature of that color. By contrast, when a sense power possesses a form, that form does not give the sense the nature of that form.<sup>31</sup> To repeat a particularly clear example from the previous chapter, the reception by the power of touch of the sensible form of heat does not make the power of touch naturally possess the degree of heat sensed. In fact, if the organ of touch were to possess naturally that degree of heat, the object would no longer feel hot. For these reasons Aquinas must distinguish the kind of change that brings about sensation from natural change.

Aquinas, uses various terms in order to indicate the difference between these two kinds of change. For example, he sometimes calls the change wrought in an act of cognition a spiritual change (*transmutatio spiritualis*).<sup>32</sup> The appropriateness of this terminology is evident from a reflection upon the

<sup>29</sup> In the case of motions, Aquinas follows Aristotle in claiming that every natural motion is from one contrary to another, such that one contrary is replaced with the other. See *De ver.*, q. 26, a. 1, co. and *In Phys.*, lib. 5, l. 3: “Omnis motus est inter contraria.” With regard to natural changes, Aquinas again follows Aristotle in claiming that “every generation is the corruption of another, and every corruption is the generation of another.” See DGC, l. 9: “cum omnis generatio sit corruptio alterius, et omnis corruptio sit generatio alterius.” This position on generation and corruption is clearly Aquinas’s own view because he cites it in his own work. (See, for example ST, I, q. 72 ad 5 and III, q. 77, a. 5 co.)

<sup>30</sup> *In de an.*, lib. 2, cap. 11.

<sup>31</sup> In *ibid.*, lib. 1, cap. 10, for example, Aquinas distinguishes the natural existence that is the terminus of a physical motion from the spiritual existence that is the terminus of sensation.

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, ST, I-II, q. 22, a. 2, ad 3: “dupliciter organum animae potest transmutari. Uno modo, transmutatione spirituali, secundum quod recipit intentionem rei. Et hoc per se invenitur in actu apprehensivae virtutis sensitivae: sicut oculus immutatur a visibili, non ita quod coloretur, sed ita quod recipiat intentionem coloris. . . .” See also *In de an.*, lib. 1, cap. 10: “Minus uero proprie inuenitur motus in operationibus aniaie sensitivae. In hiis enim non est motus secundum esse

difference between the way forms exist spiritually and the way they exist materially. In matter, contrary forms exclude each other, whereas in spiritual things such as the intellect, contrary forms do not exclude each other but exist alongside each other. For example, the intellect can possess the forms of both white and black, though a material being cannot have a surface that is entirely white and entirely black. Therefore, since the forms in the senses (as well as in other cognitive capacities) do not replace the sense powers but rather exist alongside them, it is appropriate to describe the change of the sense as spiritual and to ascribe to the sensed objects a spiritual existence in the sense powers. At other times, Aquinas describes the forms existing in cognitive capacities such as the senses as having an intentional existence (*esse intentionale*).<sup>33</sup> Robbie Moser proposes that this second term highlights the fact that such forms have a representational character in the sense that they are the sort of forms that are apt to convey information to a knower.<sup>34</sup> By contrast, the natural forms of material beings do not exist in such a way as to represent other things.

But whether one describes sensation as involving a spiritual change or an intentional change, the account put forth by Aquinas faces an important difficulty. Aquinas sometimes describes the medium between a sense power and its object as undergoing a spiritual or intentional change.<sup>35</sup> But at another time, he also appears to posit the reception of the form of another as a sufficient condition for cognition, writing: “cognizers are distinguished from non-cognizers by the fact that non-cognizers have nothing but their own form; but a cognizer is apt to have [*natum est habere*] the form of another thing also, for the known species is in the cognizer.”<sup>36</sup> Together, these texts lead to a serious difficulty, for

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nature, set solum secundum esse spirituale, sicut patet in uisu cuius operatio non est ad esse naturale, set spirituale, quia est per species sensibiles secundum esse spirituale receptas in oculo.” Aquinas also speaks more generally of the species by which one knows as having “a spiritual or immaterial existence.” See *De ver.*, q. 3, a. 1, ad 2.

<sup>33</sup> See ST, I, q. 56, a. 2, ad 3, where Aquinas describes the formal principle of an angelic intellectual cognition as having intentional existence and *In de an.*, lib. 2, cap. 24, where he contends that the forms in the senses have spiritual and intentional existence. For a helpful discussion, see Robbie Moser, “Thomas Aquinas, Esse Intentionale, and the Cognitive As Such,” *Review of Metaphysics* 64 (2011): section 1.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, section 4.

<sup>35</sup> *In de an.*, lib. 2, cap. 20.

<sup>36</sup> ST, I, q. 14, a. 1, co.: “cognoscentia a non cognoscentibus in hoc distinguuntur, quia non cognoscentia nihil habent nisi

inasmuch as the medium between a sense and its object receives intentionally and spiritually another form besides its own, it appears necessary to conclude that the medium is itself cognitive.

Not surprisingly, this unusual conclusion is not congenial to scholars of Aquinas, but they have attempted to resolve the problem in different ways. Robert Pasnau, for instance, maintains that the ability to receive the form of another is a sufficient condition for cognition, while at the same time recognizing that we do not call the medium cognitive on account of its basically non-existent capacity to process information.<sup>37</sup> Pasnau's idea seems to be that the ability to possess the form of another comes in greater and lesser degrees and that once a certain degree is reached, we begin to call things cognitive.<sup>38</sup> But Pasnau's account is clearly insufficient, for on his account, a truly sufficient condition for cognition would have to set forth the degree at which the non-cognitive possession of the form of another becomes a cognitive possession of that form. Pasnau, however, does not show how Aquinas's text determines the transition point between the non-cognitive and cognitive and thus has no basis to continue calling the ability to possess the form of another a sufficient condition of cognition, in spite of the fact that the text *prima facie* appears to propose a sufficient condition. Two different approaches to the difficulty are suggested by Gabriele de Anna. First, he raises a doubt about whether Aquinas intends in the text above to imply that being apt to have the form of another is a sufficient condition for cognition.<sup>39</sup> He further proposes that Aquinas might intend "cognizer" to be taken strictly to refer only to the cognition of substances, not of accidents.<sup>40</sup> This latter position, however, does not appear to me to be well supported by the text. John O'Callaghan takes a different tack, contending that the phrase "natum est habere" should be translated by "of such a nature as to have."<sup>41</sup> O'Callaghan goes

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formam suam tantum; sed cognoscens natum est habere formam etiam rei alterius, nam species cogniti est in cognoscente.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 47–56.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>39</sup> Gabriele de Anna, "Aquinas on Sensible Forms and Semimaterialism," *Review of Metaphysics* 54 (2000): 61.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 61–62.

<sup>41</sup> John P. O'Callaghan, "Aquinas, Cognitive Theory, and Analogy: A Propos of Robert Pasnau's *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages*," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 76 (2002): 453–54.

on to propose that to determine which things are cognitive, we must consider their natures rather than merely appeal to an abstract criterion. Now O'Callaghan is clearly right to say this, but his account does not yet clarify why sensible media such as air and water are not cognitive, for it seems that they are by nature apt to have the forms of other things in them. Therefore to resolve the difficulty, more must be said.

A more complete solution to the above difficulty requires reading the phrase “a cognizer is apt to have the form of another thing also” to be referring to “having” in the strictest sense. In an early text from his *Sentences* commentary, Aquinas contends that “when something is participated not according to its perfect act but [only] in some way, it is not properly said to be had [*haberi*].”<sup>42</sup> In other words, to have something in the strictest sense is to have it perfectly. But Aquinas is equally clear that color (along with light) exists only in an imperfect fashion in the medium: “A form perfectly existing in matter makes it to be actually such, namely, fire or a colored thing: if, however, it does not make something to be such, it is in that thing imperfectly, as the form of color in the air as in a thing carrying [it] and as the power of the first agent in the instrument.”<sup>43</sup> Now though Aquinas speaks here in particular of color, it seems reasonable to also ascribe only imperfect existence to other kinds of sensible forms existing in the medium as well, since all such forms appear to exist in the medium only in the sense of being carried through it. It is thus possible to harmonize the most important parts of the theories put forth by Pasnau and O'Callaghan. On the one hand, one may say with Pasnau that Aquinas does indeed give a general and sufficient condition of cognition when he says “a cognizer is apt to have the form of another thing also,” provided that “have” is taken to mean “have perfectly.” On the other

<sup>42</sup> *In Sent.*, I, d. 15, q. 4, a. 1, ad 3: “quando aliquid participatur non secundum suum actum perfectum, sed secundum aliquem modum, non dicitur proprie haberi; sicut animalia habent aliquem modum prudentiae, non tamen dicuntur prudentiam habere, quia non habent actum rationis, qui proprie est actus prudentiae, scilicet ipsa electio; unde magis habent aliquid simile prudentiae quam prudentiam.”

<sup>43</sup> SCG, II, c. 50: “Forma autem perfecte in materia existens facit esse actu tale, scilicet vel ignem, vel coloratum: si autem non faciat aliquid esse tale, est imperfecte in illo, sicut forma coloris in aere ut in deferente, et sicut virtus primi agentis in instrumento.” Aquinas makes similar remarks about light in *In Sent.*, II, d. 13, q. 1, a. 3, ad 10 and *De pot.*, q. 5 a. 1 ad 6.

hand, equally necessary is O'Callaghan's proposal that to determine which beings are cognitive, we must reflect on the natures of the things which possess the forms, since it is only by considering each thing that we can come to determine whether it possesses the form of another perfectly or imperfectly.

Now since the causal account of the conveyance of a sensible form to a sense power through a medium shares important features with Aquinas's account of the abstraction of intelligible essences from the sense powers, it is worth reflecting a bit more on how sense perception through a medium takes place. As the texts above indicate, the medium's possession of a sensible form such as color is imperfect. But the aforementioned text from the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, also points out that the power of an agent exists in its instrument in an imperfect manner. This suggests that the medium itself may be viewed as a kind of instrument through which color moves the sense of sight or odor moves the sense of smell.

A general consideration, of Aquinas's notion of instrumental causality further supports treating sensation through a medium as involving this kind of causality. In a very helpful discussion, James Albertson highlights several key features of instrumental causes as understood by Aquinas. First, in causing an effect instrumentally, the instrument must exercise its own proper causality.<sup>44</sup> For example, when used instrumentally to make a bench, an axe performs its own proper and proportionate activity of cutting.<sup>45</sup> It is equally necessary, however, that the instrument produce something that transcends the power of its own nature.<sup>46</sup> The bench, though really caused by the axe in the hand of an artisan, is nevertheless more than simply something cut by an axe. The bench as such transcends the axe's proper power of cutting. This second feature of the instrumental cause implies a third: when it is acting, the instrument receives an additional, transient power from the principal agent to produce something

<sup>44</sup> See James S. Albertson, "Instrumental Causality in St. Thomas," *New Scholasticism* 28 (1954): 410–413. Among the texts advanced in support of this interpretation is SCG, II, c. 21: "Omne agens instrumentale exequitur actionem principalis agentis per aliquam actionem propriam et connaturalem sibi."

<sup>45</sup> See ST, III, q. 62, a. 1, ad 2.

<sup>46</sup> Albertson, "Instrumental Causality in St. Thomas," 413–419.



beyond what it produces by its own proper activity.<sup>47</sup> Following Aquinas, Albertson explains that the transient power to produce something beyond its natural capacities belongs to the instrument in only an imperfect way, insofar as the instrument is being used to produce the effect beyond its nature. The axe only possesses the power to produce a bench when it is being used by the artisan for precisely that end. In this way, the transient power to produce something beyond itself belongs to the instrument in a manner analogous to the way in which motion belongs to the mobile. Whether one speaks of motion in relation to the mobile or the transient power in relation to the instrument, each belongs to its subject imperfectly and only insofar as the subject is moved by an external agent.<sup>48</sup>

Now each of these features of the instrumental cause applies to the media through which sensible objects move our senses. First, since not every sort of thing can serve as a medium for a sensible form, it is clear that the specific nature of the medium contributes something of its own to the movement of the sense powers.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, the resulting movement of the sense powers transcends the causal power of the medium, for the medium cannot cause such impressions alone, but relies on being moved by sense objects. This means that the power to make impressions upon our sense powers must belong to the medium in an imperfect and transient way. Thus, it appears reasonable to maintain that the medium is an instrument by which the sense objects move the senses, for though it contributes something of its own to this movement, the medium possesses in only an imperfect and instrumental fashion the power to impress sensible forms, in contrast to the perfect ways in which the sense forms exist naturally in the world and intentionally in the sense powers.<sup>50</sup>

Though in their operations the external senses transcend the imperfection of corporeal motions

<sup>47</sup> Albertson, "Instrumental Causality in St. Thomas," 419–421.

<sup>48</sup> This sort of comparison is suggested by *De ver.*, q. 27, a. 4, ad 4, where Aquinas draws an analogy between the way a mobile possesses the power to move something and the way grace exists in the sacraments as instruments of divine action.

<sup>49</sup> For example, features such as the ability to be moved by and transmit light or sound waves clearly belong essentially to the medium and make the medium capable of moving the senses as an instrument of sense objects.

<sup>50</sup> Indeed, in *ibid.* Aquinas implies that colors exist in an imperfect way in the air insofar as it is moving the power of sight in an instrumental way.

because these operations consist in receiving sensible objects perfectly and completely,<sup>51</sup> the external senses are nevertheless the lowest in the cognitive order. In addition to the external senses, Aquinas distinguishes four internal senses, drawing upon prior accounts given by Aristotle and Avicenna.<sup>52</sup> These inner senses process information in a more complex fashion, identifying aspects of the sensible world significant for survival and organizing information in order to bring about a more complete grasp of the world. A full account of these powers and their operations is beyond the scope of the present study, and so I will here content myself with sketching an account of the order of the internal sense powers to acts of reason.

The first of these inner senses is the common sense power which correlates the perceptions of the exterior senses, forming them into a single unified perception of the external world. But in addition to the common sense power, Aquinas distinguishes three further inner senses, namely, memory, imagination, and the estimative power. This last power allows one to recognize suitable and harmful aspects of what one perceives, although such aspects or intentions are not apprehended by the exterior senses. In humans this power is considerably more powerful and therefore receives the name “cogitative power” or “particular reason.”<sup>53</sup>

Now as Daniel De Haan points out, the last three mentioned inner senses (memory, imagination, and the estimative or cogitative power) are sometimes referred to by Aquinas together as “imagina-

<sup>51</sup> While commenting on Aristotle’s discussion of sensation in the *De anima*, Aquinas explains that an act of sensation is called a passion insofar as it perfects the sensitive potency. See *In de an.*, lib. 2, cap. 11: “hoc modo dicitur passio non secundum quod fit quedam corruptio patientis, set magis secundum quod fit quedam salus, id est perfectio, eius quod est in potencia ab eo quod est in actu.” The term “perfection” is particularly appropriate here because unlike corporeal motion, which belongs to an unfulfilled potency, an act of sensation perfectly fulfills the potency of the soul for a given sensation.

<sup>52</sup> In the *sed contra* of ST, I, q. 78, a. 4, Aquinas cites Avicenna’s *De anima* as a source, though it is clear that he also relies on the discussion of the common sense and imagination in Aristotle’s *De anima* as an additional source for his full teaching on the inner sense powers. See Avicenna, *Liber de anima*, IV, c. 1–3 and *De anima*, bk. III, esp. chapters 1–3.

<sup>53</sup> For a helpful overview of the interior sense powers, see ST, I, q. 78, a. 4. Texts such as this one imply that the human cogitative power has a special power to compare its intentions, an ability which is not shared with animals.

tion.”<sup>54</sup> Similarly, Aquinas at one point refers to these three powers together as “particular reason.”<sup>55</sup> Therefore, some care must be taken when reading Aquinas so as not to mistake the general use of the terms “particular reason” and “imagination” for the particular. Perhaps one reason why Aquinas groups memory, imagination, and the cogitative power is the fact that these powers not only receive impressions (like the external senses and common sense), but also play a more active role insofar as they produce the species in which their objects are cognized. Aquinas says this most explicitly with regard to the imaginative power, which can form images from what has been sensed.<sup>56</sup> But it is not difficult to see from a consideration of the principles of Aquinas’s epistemology that a similar account should be given of memory and cogitative power. In the course of a discussion of divine cognition, Aquinas proposes that one reason the human intellect must form concepts is so as to make its objects in a certain manner present to it.<sup>57</sup> Though the principle is here applied to the particular case of intellectual cognition, the fact that an object must be in some way present to a cognitive capacity in order to be understood is clearly universal. But since both the memory and the cogitative power can consider their objects even when absent, they must also produce species in which their objects are made present. Thus, imagination, memory, and the cogitative power all produce the species in which they apprehend their objects.

Moreover, as De Haan points out, the species of each of these powers are called phantasms by Aquinas.<sup>58</sup> But Aquinas also clearly maintains that the phantasms are prepared by these three powers for being acted upon by the abstractive power of the agent intellect.<sup>59</sup> Consequently, the imagination, memory, and cogitative power all form phantasms representing their objects.

<sup>54</sup> Daniel D. De Haan, “Moral Perception and the Function of the *Vis Cogitativa* in Thomas Aquinas’s Doctrine of Antecedent and Consequent Passions,” *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale* 25 (2014): 301–302.

<sup>55</sup> ST, I-II, q. 51, a. 3: “aliud autem intellectus quem vocat Aristoteles passivum, qui est ratio particularis, idest vis cogitativa cum memorativa et imaginativa.”

<sup>56</sup> *Quod. V*, q. 5, a. 2 ad 1.

<sup>57</sup> SCG, I, c. 53. For a discussion of this argument, see Peifer, *The Concept in Thomism*, 147–149.

<sup>58</sup> De Haan, “Moral Perception and the Function of the *Vis Cogitativa*,” 302.

<sup>59</sup> See SCG, II, c. 60, 73, and 80.

The preparation of these phantasms so that they might be fit objects from which the intellect might draw its intelligible species is not discussed systematically and in detail by Aquinas. But it is clear that in general, this preparation involves drawing from the information presented by the external senses along with collecting and organizing this information in such a way that it may be more easily understood.<sup>60</sup> In this way, the operations of the inner senses prepare their objects for being grasped by the intellect.

### *Abstraction*

According to Aquinas, all natural intellectual cognition begins from species drawn, or more precisely, abstracted from the phantasms present in the inner sense powers. But unlike the phantasms, which represent things in a particular fashion, the species in the intellect represent things universally. Since according to Aquinas, matter is the principle of individuation,<sup>61</sup> the fact that intellectual species represent universally implies that they also exist in an immaterial fashion. However, at this point in Aquinas's account, Robert Pasnau raises an objection. Though it is clear from experience that our intellectual species represent in a universal and immaterial fashion, this does not mean that the species of necessity exist in an immaterial fashion. Pasnau contends that such an inference from an immaterial mode of representation to an immaterial mode of existence involves an unsupported and therefore fallacious movement from an epistemological claim to a metaphysical one.<sup>62</sup>

Some brief reflection on Aquinas's account of knowing shows how he can overcome Pasnau's objection. According to Aquinas, knowing consists in the union of the knower with the thing known,

<sup>60</sup> For a discussion of some of the aspects of this preparation, see Therese Scarpelli Cory, "Rethinking Abstractionism: Aquinas's Intellectual Light and Some Arabic Sources," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 53 (2015): 633–636. Cory points to texts such as ST, II-II, q. 173, a. 2 in which Aquinas explains that different dispositions of the phantasms lead to different intelligible species in the mind: "secundum diversam dispositionem phantasmatum resultant in intellectu diversae species intelligibiles."

<sup>61</sup> For further discussion of Aquinas' position that matter is the principle of individuation, see Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 351–375.

<sup>62</sup> Robert Pasnau, "Aquinas and The Content Fallacy," *The Modern Schoolman* 75 (1998): esp. 294.

such that the knower in a certain way becomes what is known.<sup>63</sup> Thus in the act of knowing some nature N, knowing N is being N. Consequently, to know N in a universal way is to be N in a universal way. Now since as I have already noted, existing universally implies existing immaterially, the very act of the intellect must be immaterial. But since “the mode of operating of each thing follows upon its mode of being,”<sup>64</sup> the intelligible species which is the principle of the act of knowing must itself have the same mode of being as the act of which it is the principle. Consequently, the species which serve as principles of intellectual acts must be immaterial, in order to produce immaterial acts.

Though this account solves Pasnau’s puzzle, it raises a new one. Since the species from which acts of understanding proceed are drawn from phantasms with a material mode of existence, how can such phantasms cause immaterial species in the intellect? To explain this process, Aquinas follows Aristotle in positing an agent intellect, which abstracts the content of the phantasms, and causes in the intellect immaterial likenesses of the objects represented by phantasms. Aquinas calls this latter intellect the possible intellect to distinguish it from the agent intellect.<sup>65</sup>

While the agent intellect is the principal cause of impressing an immaterial species on the possible intellect, the phantasm itself, according to Aquinas, plays an important role as an instrumental cause.<sup>66</sup> In so doing the phantasm exhibits the three aforementioned features of an instrumental cause. Insofar as the resulting effect is immaterial, the phantasm causes an effect that goes beyond its own proper nature, and thus receives from the agent intellect a transient immaterializing power that transcends its own natural causal power. At the same time however, like every instrument, the phantasm also contributes something proper to itself, namely, the potentially intelligible content that it contains. Thus

<sup>63</sup> ST, I, q. 12 a. 9 arg. 1: “intellectus in actu fit intellectum in actu, et sensus in actu sensibile in actu.” See also *In de an.*, lib. 2, cap. 12: “Cognitio autem omnis fit per hoc quod cognitum est aliquo modo in cognoscente, scilicet secundum similitudinem: nam cognoscens in actu est ipsum cognitum in actu.”

<sup>64</sup> ST, I, q. 89, a. 1: “cum nihil operetur nisi in quantum est actu, modus operandi uniuscuiusque rei sequitur modum essendi ipsius.”

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, I, q. 79, a. 2–3. For further discussion of this process, see Cory, “Rethinking Abstractionism: Aquinas’s Intellectual Light and Some Arabic Sources.”

<sup>66</sup> *Quod. VIII*, q. 2, a. 1 co. *De malo*, q. 16 a. 12 ad 3, and *De ver.*, q. 10 a. 6 ad 7.

the phantasm too is a necessary and real active principle of the intelligible species from which every natural act of intellectual cognition begins. Precisely because the phantasm is a principle of every natural act of cognition, the character of the phantasm will remain important in Aquinas's account of the various acts of reason, to which I will now turn.

### *Acts of Reason*

In the proemium to his commentary on Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*, Aquinas distinguishes three acts of reason insofar as it is speculative or theoretical. The first is the understanding of a simple indivisible thing, such as the nature of a daffodil. The second is the operation of composition and division. By this operation, we form judgments and propositions by bringing together or separating a subject and a predicate. The third act of reason occurs when reason sets out from what is known, advancing to new knowledge. This last act takes place when one syllogizes from two known premises to an unknown conclusion.<sup>67</sup> Since as I pointed out above, acts are specified by their termini, it is hardly surprising to find Aquinas in his *Summa* distinguishing three different termini corresponding to the three aforementioned acts:

just as in exterior acts, one may consider both (1) operation and (2) the thing done, for example building and the thing built, so in works of reason one may consider (1) the very act of reason, which is to understand or reason [*ratiocinari*], and (2) something constituted through an act of this sort. But indeed in speculative reason, the first [thing constituted] is definition, the second, enunciation, and the third, syllogism or argument.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>67</sup> ELPA, I, l. 1: "Sunt autem rationis tres actus. Quorum primi duo sunt rationis secundum quod est intellectus quidam: una enim actio intellectus est intelligencia indiuisibilium siue incomplexorum, secundum quam concipit quid est res, et hec operatio a quibusdam dicitur informatio intellectus siue ymaginatio per intellectum; et ad hanc operationem rationis ordinatur doctrina quam tradit Aristotiles in libro Predicamentorum; secunda uero operatio intellectus est compositio uel diuisio intellectuum, in qua est iam uerum et falsum; et huic rationis actui deseruit doctrina quam tradit Aristotiles in libro Peryermeneias. Tercius uero actus rationis est secundum id quod est proprium rationis, scilicet discurrere ab uno in aliud, ut per id quod est notum deueniat in cognitionem ignoti."

<sup>68</sup> ST, I-II, q. 90, a. 1, ad 2: "sicut in actibus exterioribus est considerare operationem et operatum, puta aedificationem et aedificatum; ita in operibus rationis est considerare ipsum actum rationis, qui est intelligere et ratiocinari, et aliquid per huiusmodi actum constitutum. Quod quidem in speculativa ratione primo quidem est definitio; secundo, enunciatio; tertio

Thus the three acts of reason, (1) understanding of something simple, (2) composition and division, and (3) movement from the unknown to the known, produce and are specified by three different termini, namely, (1) the definition, (2) the enunciation or statement, and (3) the syllogism or argument.

Now each of these acts depends in an important way on the phantasms in the inner sense powers. In the *Summa*, Aquinas contends that in our present life, the intellect cannot understand anything “except by turning to the phantasms.”<sup>69</sup> He appeals to two common experiences that support this claim. First, damage to the bodily organs in which the inner sense powers reside hinders understanding, a fact which indicates that they are necessary for acts of understanding. Second, when we come to learn something, we form phantasms as examples to help us grasp the truth with our minds. To explain the necessary dependence of the intellect on the phantasms, Aquinas appeals to the mismatch between the universality of our intellectual cognition and the particularity of the physical natures that serve as the mind’s proper object. To fully understand material things, Aquinas maintains, we must grasp them as they are, that is, as things which exist in the particular.<sup>70</sup> But the intellect by itself does not grasp the particularity of material things, because it proceeds from immaterial species which represent only universally. Consequently, the immaterial species are not sufficient principles of our knowledge of material things. The particular representations of the phantasms contained in the inner senses are also necessary principles of our acts of knowing.<sup>71</sup>

The force of this argument is especially clear in light of my earlier observations about the specification of acts. Like other acts, an act of reason may be specified either by its active principle or by its terminus. But the terminus of every natural act of reason is either a material thing or an immaterial thing known through material things. Consequently, every natural act of human reason is knowledge

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vero, syllogismus vel argumentatio.”

<sup>69</sup> ST, I, q. 84, a. 7: “impossibile est intellectum nostrum, secundum praesentis vitae statum, quo passibili corpori coniungitur, aliquid intelligere in actu, nisi convertendo se ad phantasmata.”

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.: “natura lapidis, vel cuiuscumque materialis rei, cognosci non potest complete et vere, nisi secundum quod cognoscitur ut in particulari existens.”

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

of or through material things. But given that natural knowledge has this character, such knowledge must also have a proportionate specifying active principle, namely, a phantasm that represents material things as such.

Besides the phantasm, the agent intellect also plays an important role in the various acts of reason. In the course of a discussion of the source of our intelligible species, Aquinas remarks that “our possible intellect is reduced from potency to act through a being in act, that is, through the agent intellect.”<sup>72</sup> Though at this point, the focus is on how the possible intellect acquires intelligible species as a first actuality, the principle seems equally applicable to the possible intellect insofar as it is in potency to the operation of actually understanding. An early text from Aquinas’s *Sentences* commentary confirms this interpretation. “Everything which is understood,” Aquinas tells us, “is not understood unless illuminated by the light of the agent intellect and received into the possible intellect.”<sup>73</sup> The light of the agent intellect is thus necessary not only for abstracting species from the phantasms, but also for actually engaging in acts of understanding on the basis of these species.<sup>74</sup>

Although the light of the agent intellect and the phantasms together form the active principles of natural acts of intellectual cognition, certain differences appear when we turn to consider the proper and proximate active principles of specifically different acts of cognition. This is perhaps most evident in the case of the conclusions drawn in specifically different sciences. According to Aquinas, “the whole power of demonstration, which is a syllogism that makes one know . . . depends on the middle. And therefore the diverse middles are as diverse active principles.”<sup>75</sup> But as Aquinas explains elsewhere,

<sup>72</sup> ST, I, q. 84, a. 4, ad 3: “intellectus noster possibilis reducitur de potentia ad actum per aliquod ens actu, idest per intellectum agentem, qui est virtus quaedam animae nostrae, ut dictum est: non autem per aliquem intellectum separatum, sicut per causam proximam; sed forte sicut per causam remotam.”

<sup>73</sup> *In Sent.*, I, d. 3, q. 4. a. 5: “omne quod intelligitur, non intelligitur nisi illustratum lumine intellectus agentis, et receptum in intellectu possibili.” Therese Cory also interprets Aquinas as holding that the agent intellect is necessary for actual thinking. See *Aquinas on Human Self-Knowledge*, 145–162.

<sup>74</sup> Indeed, in the *Summa* one finds Aquinas explicitly stating that an intellectual light is necessary for the formation of judgments. See ST, II-II, q. 173, a. 2: “Iudicium autem humanae mentis fit secundum vim intellectualis luminis.”

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, I-II, q. 54, a. 2, ad 2: “Tota autem virtus demonstrationis, quae est syllogismus faciens scire, ut dicitur in I



the objects of the sciences have specifically different degrees of abstraction.<sup>76</sup> Hence the middle terms in each science will be specifically distinct, inasmuch as these terms express objects with specifically different degrees of abstraction. Therefore, the scientific conclusions of the different sciences will be specifically distinct precisely because their active principles (that is, their middles) are specifically distinct.<sup>77</sup>

Now since an act can be specified by its principle or by its terminus, it is helpful to point out here that Aquinas also notes a specific difference in the termini of specifically different sciences. According to Thomas, the basic division of the sciences into metaphysics, mathematics, and physics corresponds to three distinct termini in different powers of the soul.<sup>78</sup> The physical sciences terminate in the senses, which means that the judgments formed in these sciences are about natural things insofar as they are known through the senses. By contrast, the mathematical judgments terminate in the imagination. For this reason, we form our mathematical judgments about circles and triangles not insofar as they are represented by the senses, but rather insofar as they are represented in a more idealized fashion by the imagination. Finally, we form scientific judgments about metaphysical objects as represented in the mind itself. Thus, the specific differences between the termini of the various sciences also lead us to see the specific differences between the conclusions drawn in the sciences.

But since the account of specification by the terminus must be compatible with the account of specification by means of the active principle, it is clear that more can now be said about the active principles of a scientific judgments. As already mentioned middle terms with different degrees of abstraction, when illuminated by the agent intellect, serve as the active principles of our scientific

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*Poster.*, dependet ex medio. Et ideo diversa media sicut diversa principia activa, secundum quae habitus scientiarum diversificantur.”

<sup>76</sup> See *De Trin.*, q. 5, a. 1, co.

<sup>77</sup> Here and below, I will frequently use terms such as “middle term,” “major term,” and “minor term” to stand for the objects expressed by these terms, to avoid cumbersome circumlocutions such as “the object expressed by the middle term.”

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 6, a. 2, co. “terminus cognitionis non semper est uniformiter: quandoque enim est in sensu, quandoque in ymaginatione, quandoque autem in solo intellectu.”

judgments. But we can now say further that the intelligible species denoted by the middle terms must be drawn from specific kinds of phantasms. The intelligible species of physics, for example, must be drawn from phantasms that represent material objects as they appear to the senses. By contrast, the intelligible species of mathematics must be drawn from objects purified and idealized by the imagination. Presumably, the intelligible species which form the basis for drawing metaphysical conclusions must in some way reflect a further idealization performed by the intellect. Indeed, though there is some disagreement about how we come to know the subject of metaphysics, being as being, both sides of the disagreement agree that this discovery is the result of an intellectual operation and simply disagree about which operations the discovery of being as being depends on.<sup>79</sup> In the case of each science, therefore, the various species corresponding to the middle terms are distinguished on the basis of their relationships to the phantasms.

To put this conclusion more generally, one might say that the different operations of scientific demonstration depend in unique ways on other powers of the soul and their objects. And though I have here focused on the conclusions of syllogistic demonstrations, it seems likely that a similar account must be given of all the acts of reason such that we can say universally that different acts of reason depend in unique ways on the other powers of the soul and the objects of these powers. It is for this reason that Aquinas will propose multiple different habits perfecting the intellect for its operations.

<sup>79</sup> Wippel, for instance, argues that an intellectual judgment of separation is necessary in order to even begin the science of metaphysics, whereas James Weisheipl thinks that an argument for the existence of immaterial being is also necessary. See Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 44–49 and James A. Weisheipl, “The Relationship of Medieval Natural Philosophy to Modern Science: The Contribution of Thomas Aquinas to Its Understanding,” *Manuscripta* 20 (1976): 194–196.

## 2.3 Motion of the Soul to Things:

### Appetite and Practical Reasoning

In the previous section, I considered the cognitive acts of the soul in preparation for a consideration of the habits that perfect the soul for its cognitive operations. But the value of habits is not restricted to their perfection of the soul for theoretical thinking, for habits are also needed to help us in our practical thinking and acting. In this section, therefore, I will turn to consider the acts of practical reason and of appetite as a prelude to a discussion of the habits that bear upon our moral lives.

I will proceed in two parts. First I will present a sketch of Aquinas's account of the passions of the soul which arise in the sensitive appetite, taking note of the relation of these passions to the will and reason. Second I will discuss Aquinas's account of the acts of the will and of practical reason.

#### *Acts of the Sensitive Appetite*

In the first part of the *Summa*, Aquinas distinguishes various levels of appetite found in beings. On the most basic level are purely natural appetites, such as the appetite for staying in existence, an appetite possessed even by inanimate objects. This kind of appetite is based on a form present in the being. But since as was noted above, cognitive beings can possess the sensible and intelligible forms of other beings in an immaterial and intentional fashion, Aquinas maintains that further appetitive inclinations follow upon the possession of these intentional forms, whether these forms are sensible or intelligible. Sensitive desires thus arise from the the possession of sensible forms while the rational desires follow from the possession of intelligible forms. The power which serves as the principle of sensitive desires is the sense appetite, whereas that which is the principle of rational desires is called the rational appetite or will.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>80</sup> ST, I, q. 80.

Now Aquinas divides the sensitive appetite into two distinct powers, namely, the irascible and concupiscible. According to Aquinas, the concupiscible power has for its object the sensible good or evil simply speaking, whereas the irascible powers are related to the sensible good (or evil) as difficult or arduous.<sup>81</sup> However, this distinction has been understood in different ways by scholars. Peter King, for instance, noticing the empirical and a posteriori character of Aquinas's account, suggests that "the distinction between the formal objects of the concupiscible and irascible appetites is not a strict differentia."<sup>82</sup> King goes on to claim even more strongly that the passions that follow upon these two appetites are "not organized into mutually exclusive and exhaustive classes of phenomena."<sup>83</sup> Here, King implies that Aquinas's division between the concupiscible and irascible appetites as well as between the various passions found in these appetites does not provide us specifically distinct kinds of powers or acts, but rather merely provides us with empirically derived classes which may sometimes overlap such that a passion might be called both concupiscible and irascible. King's reason for taking this position is the fact that the two supposed differentia (relating to the sensible good or evil simply speaking and relating to the sensible good or evil as difficult) are not defined by opposition.<sup>84</sup> By contrast, King thinks, true differentia exhibit opposition, as in the case of rational and irrational, opposed terms which serve to distinguish humans from other animals.

But King's reasoning here is clearly mistaken. As he himself admits, Aquinas appears to be dividing the sense appetite and its passions into distinct species which are both exhaustive and exclusive. And though every difference implies opposition, clearly it is not a requirement that differentia in definitions be set forth using terms that are opposites. For example, the difference between quadrilaterals and triangles are that one is four-sided and the other three-sided. But though such terms clearly exclude

<sup>81</sup> ST, I, q. 81, a. 2 and I-II, q. 23, a. 1.

<sup>82</sup> Peter King, "Aquinas on the Passions," in *Aquinas's Moral Theory: Essays in Honor of Norman Kretzmann*, ed. Scott MacDonald and Eleanor Stump (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998), 111.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 110–111.

each other they do not primarily signify opposition to each other.

Though King is mistaken, his error is valuable, for it highlights an important obstacle to understanding Aquinas's account. As noted above, Aquinas maintains that the division of powers by objects must be based on what is formal, not what is material. But the difference between the sensible good simply speaking and the sensible good as difficult at first glance might appear to be only material.<sup>85</sup> If the difference were only material, then there would be no true specific opposition between the concupiscible and irascible, and therefore, King's suggestion that the two might sometimes overlap would be plausible. Thus, if Aquinas really means to distinguish specifically distinct powers, as his texts appear to indicate, and if one is to understand Aquinas's account, one must see why he thinks the difference between the sensible good simply speaking and the sensible good as difficult is more than merely material.

To this end, Robert Miner proposes that we understand the difference between the concupiscible and the irascible on the basis of the difference between their objects. Since the useful and the pleasant are per se divisions of the good,<sup>86</sup> Miner suggests that we might divide the sensitive appetite on this basis. Since overcoming difficulties to obtain something good or avoid something evil is useful, whereas the object of sensitive desires simply speaking is something pleasant or unpleasant, Miner proposes that the concupiscible might be distinguished from the irascible by the fact that the former aims at pleasant sensible goods whereas the latter aims at useful ones.<sup>87</sup>

However, while I agree with Miner's general approach of trying to find the underlying per se difference between the objects of different sensitive appetites, I am not convinced that he has discovered the correct underlying principle of differentiation. For one thing, it seems that non-useful goods can

<sup>85</sup> Here and below, I will for the sake of simplicity frequently speak of such objects only as sensible goods, although it would be more precise to refer to such objects as what is sensibly good or evil.

<sup>86</sup> Aquinas divides the good into the virtuous (*bonestum*), the useful, and the pleasant in ST, I, q. 5, a. 6.

<sup>87</sup> Robert Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions: A Study of Summa Theologiae, 1a2ae 22–48* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 46–53.

be the objects of irascible passions. For example, it seems that an animal can have hope (an irascible passion) for food. But though food is certainly useful, animals don't seem to hope for food as useful. Moreover, Aquinas maintains that non-rational animals do not know the proportion of an act to an end.<sup>88</sup> But to recognize something as useful, animals would need to recognize this proportion. Hence animals cannot have useful goods as the *per se* objects of their desires. And so, since at least some non-rational animals do have irascible appetites, the useful cannot be what specifies the irascible power. Consequently, Miner's attempt to explain how the concupiscible and irascible are specifically different is insufficient.

A more careful look at Aquinas's account of the division of the sensitive appetite into concupiscible and irascible suggests a better way to argue for a formal difference between these two powers. Aquinas begins by observing that one finds two different kinds of inclination that arise in the sensitive appetite. Like natural things, sensing beings not only are inclined towards what is good and away from what is evil, but also are inclined to resist whatever hinders the acquisition of the good or causes evil for that being.<sup>89</sup> The first kind of inclination (towards the good or evil simply speaking) is a concupiscible act, whereas the second kind of inclination (towards an object perceived as arduous or difficult) is an irascible act. Aquinas evidently regards this division as formal. To see why, it is helpful to recall the difference between formal and material objects of the sensitive powers of apprehension pointed out in the first chapter. As Aquinas notes, the difference between a rock and a human being does not differentiate acts or powers of sense, because these objects are only accidentally related to proper objects of sense such as color or odor. By contrast, colored objects and smelly objects are different kinds of sensible objects and therefore specify formally different acts or powers.<sup>90</sup> This is particularly

<sup>88</sup> ST, I-II, q. 6, a. 2: "Imperfecta autem cognitio finis est quae in sola finis apprehensione consistit, sine hoc quod cognoscatur ratio finis, et proportio actus ad finem. Et talis cognitio finis invenitur in brutis animalibus, per sensum et aestimationem naturalem."

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., I, q. 81, a. 2.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., I, q. 77, a. 3: "non quaecumque diversitas obiectorum diversificat potentias animae; sed differentia eius ad

evident because as such, colored and smelly objects produce sensations, whereas as such, human beings and rocks do not produce sensations. Instead, such material objects of sense only produce sensations as colored or as smelly or as possessing some other essentially sensible characteristic. This indicates a general rule for distinguishing formal objects from material objects: an object of some act is the formal object of that act if and only if the object *as such* causes that act. Now it is clear that this rule applies in the case at hand, for as good simply speaking, an object of the sensitive appetite produces an inclination in the sensitive appetite. Likewise, as difficult, an object of the sensitive appetite also produces an inclination in the sensitive appetite. Consequently, the sensible good simply speaking and the sensible good as difficult are formally different objects of the sense appetite.

It is clear, then, that the sensible good, which serves as the object of the sense appetite, can be essentially divided into the sensible good simply speaking and the difficult sensible good. But Aquinas must take one more step in order to show that the essential division of the sensible good makes for a specific difference in the powers of the soul and not simply a difference in its acts. To show this, Aquinas points out that sometimes, opposing inclinations arise at the same time with regard to a difficult good.<sup>91</sup> When exercising, for example, a person may find one inclination opposed to the pain of the exercise and another which strives to continue on in the face of this difficulty. Because contrary acts cannot simultaneously belong to the same power, Aquinas is justified in proposing that the distinction between sensible goods simply speaking and difficult sensible goods makes for a specific difference not simply between acts of the sensitive appetite, but between the concupiscible and irascible appetites themselves.

Each of these appetites is subject to a number of different acts or passions. In dividing the passions,

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quod per se potentia respicit. Sicut sensus per se respicit passibilem qualitatem, quae per se dividitur in colorem, sonum et huiusmodi: et ideo alia potentia sensitiva est coloris, scilicet visus, et alia soni, scilicet auditus. Sed passibili qualitati, ut colorato accidit esse musicum vel grammaticum, vel magnum et parvum, aut hominem vel lapidem. Et ideo penes huiusmodi differentias potentiae animae non distinguuntur.”

<sup>91</sup> ST, I, q. 81, a. 2.

Aquinas draws upon the analogy between passions and natural motions to argue for the distinctions found between the various kinds of passion. Although some scholars seem to regard Aquinas's appeal to natural motion as merely a providing a model for categorizing the passions,<sup>92</sup> it seems more plausible to read Aquinas as presenting the specification of the powers of the soul on the basis of an analogy with natural motion. For he clearly thinks that his division of the passions into eleven kinds is a specific division, and goes so far as to say that passion is "a certain motion" and that diversity of the active principles that specify the passions of the soul has a likeness to the diversity found in natural agents.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, natural motions and passions possess the key similarity of being specified by their active principles and termini; hence we should expect the specification of the passions to be analogous to the specification of natural motions.

Aquinas's initial division of the passions is based on their contrariety. Passions such as joy and sorrow, for example, are stimulated by contrary objects, and consequently are specifically different. Similarly, hope and fear are specifically different insofar as the former passion has for its object a difficult good, whereas the latter has a difficult evil for its object. But as I noted in the first chapter, contrariety of acts can also follow upon a contrary relationship to the same kind of object, and thus it is not surprising to find that Aquinas will also distinguish specifically different passions on the basis of whether they approach or withdraw from a the same terminus. For example, hope and despair are passions which both regard a difficult good, but the former pursues the difficult good whereas the latter withdraws from the good on account of its difficulty. However, contrariety among objects or relationships to objects is not the only kind of principles Aquinas uses to distinguish the passions. In the case of the irascible passions, Aquinas also distinguishes them on the basis of whether their

<sup>92</sup> See Eric D'Arcy, introduction to *Summa Theologiae (1a2ae QQ22–30)*, by St. Thomas Aquinas, trans. Eric D'Arcy, vol. 19 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), xxvii. A similar view seems to be held by Peter King; see "Aquinas on the Passions," 112. Simo Knuutila also refers to Aquinas's categorization on the basis of natural motion as a model; see *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 243.

<sup>93</sup> ST, I-II, q. 23, a. 3–4.



objects are present or future. Anger, for example, is a reaction to a present evil, fear, to a future one. In dividing the concupiscible passions, Aquinas makes use of the principle mentioned above in the discussion of natural motion that every agent gives its mobile an inclination, movement, and rest. The sensible good simply speaking, for example, first gives us an inclination, the passion of love; next it gives us a movement, the passion of desire; finally it gives us rest in itself, a rest which corresponds to the passion of delight or pleasure. By applying these various principles of division, Aquinas ultimately distinguishes eleven different species of passion.<sup>94</sup>

In animals, these passions follow upon the perceptions of the estimative power, whereas in humans the passions follow upon the perceptions of the cogitative power.<sup>95</sup> However, the human intellect can also play a part in giving rise to passions. For example, in his discussion of anger, Aquinas notes that anger's inclination to vengeance presupposes an act of reason that compares the desired punishment with the injury.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, as I will discuss in greater detail below, Aquinas maintains that reason can command the various passions of the sense appetite.<sup>97</sup>

Now it is important to point out that, when speaking of the motion of the sense appetite, one can mean one of two things. On the one hand, one can indicate the very passion present in the sense appetite, the principle of which is the perception of the cogitative or estimative power. But since (as is especially clear in non-rational animals) the passions are principles of an animal's movement from place to place, one can also speak of the motion of the sense appetite as the motion caused by the sense appetite. This distinction is especially important to bear in mind when discussing human action because although Aquinas admits that the passions of the soul can arise spontaneously and outside the

<sup>94</sup> See ST, I-II, q. 23. For more detailed discussions of the various passions, see Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions*; Kevin White, "The Passions of the Soul (Ia IIae, qq. 22–48)," in Pope, *The Ethics of Aquinas*, 103–115; King, "Aquinas on the Passions."

<sup>95</sup> ST, I, q. 81, a. 3.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 46, a. 4.

<sup>97</sup> For one text among many in which Aquinas makes this point, see *ibid.*, I-II, q. 46, a. 4, ad 1.

command of reason in human beings,<sup>98</sup> he maintains that the external motions caused by the passions cannot arise without the consent of the will.<sup>99</sup> Consequently, in human beings both reason and will exercise a certain control over the sense appetites and the motions that arise from these appetites. Thus, for a complete account of human action, I must now turn to discuss the acts of the will and practical reason.

### *Acts of Will and Practical Reason*

Aquinas's account of the acts of practical reason and will is the subject of considerable scholarly discussion and dispute.<sup>100</sup> Indeed, those who write on Aquinas's ethics or philosophy of human nature must frequently touch upon some aspect or another of Aquinas's account of these acts. For this reason, it will be impossible in this limited space to give a complete treatment of Aquinas's theory or to fully discuss every point of dispute. Instead, I will restrict myself to providing a basic account of his theory of the acts of will and practical reason as presented in his texts, addressing points of contention only briefly.

Late scholastic reconstructions of Aquinas's theory of human acts by authors such as Billuart frequently propose that the theory involves six acts of intellect and six acts of will from the initial perception of an end all the way to its enjoyment.<sup>101</sup> More recently, this schematization has been criticized

<sup>98</sup> ST, I-II, q. 17, a. 7.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., I, q. 81, a. 3. This distinction is also recognized by Giuseppe Butera; see "Thomas Aquinas on Reason's Control of the Passions in the Virtue of Temperance" (PhD diss., The Catholic University of America, 2001), 157–158.

<sup>100</sup> See, for example, Thomas M. Osborne Jr., *Human Action in Thomas Aquinas, John Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014); Daniel Westberg, *Right Practical Reason: Aristotle, Action, and Prudence in Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Servais Pinckaers, "La structure de l'acte humain suivant saint Thomas," *Revue Thomiste* 55 (1955): 393–412; David M. Gallagher, "The Will and Its Acts (Ia IIae, qq. 6–17)," in Pope, *The Ethics of Aquinas*, 69–89; John E. Naus, *The Nature of the Practical Intellect according to Saint Thomas Aquinas* (Rome: Libreria Editrice dell'Università Gregoriana, 1959); Martin Rhonheimer, *Natural Law and Practical Reason: A Thomist View of Moral Autonomy*, trans. Gerald Malsbary (New York, N.Y.: Fordham University Press, 2000); Romanus Cessario, *Introduction to Moral Theology*, Catholic Moral Thought 1 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 118–122.

<sup>101</sup> This schematization, which may be found in neoscholastic manuals, has been traced by Servais Pinckaers to Billuart; see, Pinckaers, "La structure de l'acte humain suivant saint Thomas," 395–396.

by commentators for overcomplicating Aquinas's account and failing to adequately present the causal order between the acts of reason and will. Servais Pinckaers, for example, maintains that the orders found between acts of the will and between acts of practical reason are not orders of "psychological succession," but of causation.<sup>102</sup> Whether or not Pinckaers accurately portrays the late scholastic accounts need not concern us here, but as will be evident below, Pinckaers is surely correct to portray the order among the acts he discusses as more than a mere non-causal succession. Daniel Westberg, goes even further in his criticism, offering a more sparing account than that proposed by Billuart and his neoscholastic followers. According to Westberg, human action, as found in the intellect and will, can be reduced to only three or four "stages," each of which involves a cognitive and affective aspect.<sup>103</sup> But despite its laudable goal of avoiding complications not present in Aquinas, Westberg's account, I will argue, goes a bit too far in the other direction, oversimplifying Aquinas's theory. Now in order to see more clearly the order found among these acts of reason and will as well as the various stages found in the progression of a human act, it will be necessary to consider in detail some of the more important texts in which Aquinas distinguishes the various acts of the will and practical reason. To this end, I will begin by focusing on Aquinas's account of the acts of the will, before turning to his account of the acts of practical reason.

### **Acts of Will**

Aquinas's most complete and detailed account of the acts of the human will is found near the beginning of the second part of his *Summa Theologiae*. To more fully understand his division of acts of will, it is useful to refer once again to his principle that acts are specified by formal differences in their objects. Now before discussing the acts of the will, Aquinas makes some remarks about the involuntary and

<sup>102</sup> Pinckaers, "La structure de l'acte humain suivant saint Thomas," esp. 400. Naus supports this account in *The Nature of the Practical Intellect according to Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 174.

<sup>103</sup> Westberg, *Right Practical Reason*, chs. 8–12.

the voluntary that help show that his division of acts of the will is based on the formal aspect of the will's object. Following Aristotle, Aquinas maintains that in a certain sense, even animals perform voluntary acts. According to Aquinas, this is due to the fact that even non-rational animals act with some knowledge of the end and from an intrinsic principle.<sup>104</sup> What sets human beings apart, however, is that they alone among the animals have a perfect knowledge of the end insofar as they alone perceive the aspect of end and the order of the means to the end.<sup>105</sup> Because we exceed animals in both ways, Aquinas contends that human acts possess voluntariness in a more perfect fashion. This explanation is anticipated in an earlier discussion in the *De Veritate* in which Aquinas traces our special control over our decisions to our understanding of the aspect of end and the order of means to end.<sup>106</sup>

Earlier in the same *De Veritate* article, however, Aquinas appears to provide a different explanation when he maintains that in contrast to humans, non-rational animals lack control over their judgments because they do not know the reason for their judgments about what is to be done. Thus, it is reasonable to wonder how these two explanations of why human acts are more perfectly voluntary than those of animals fit together. In other words, how is the explanation based on animals not knowing the reason for their judgments related to the explanation based on animals not knowing the aspect of end and the order of the means to the end? In fact, both accounts provide the same explanation and merely highlight different aspects of that explanation. The reason for judging that a course of action should be taken is clearly the end for which that action is chosen. Now in order to know the end as a reason for undertaking an action, one must perceive both that the action is ordered to that end and that one's end is in fact a good to be pursued. But to know that an action is ordered to an end, is to understand the order of means to ends, while at the same time, seeing that one's end is a good to be pursued requires recognizing it as having the aspect of end. Thus, having both these cognitive advantages over

<sup>104</sup> ST, I-II, q. 6, a. 2.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.: "Perfecta quidem finis cognitio est quando non solum apprehenditur res quae est finis sed etiam cognoscitur ratio finis, et proportio eius quod ordinatur in finem ad ipsum."

<sup>106</sup> *De ver.*, q. 24, a. 2, co.

non-rational animals is a necessary condition for knowing the reasons for our judgments about what is to be done. Instead of being forced to form a judgment on account of a reason to which we do not have access, we are freely able to use or refrain from using our knowledge of ends to form or refrain from forming judgments about which actions to undertake.

One particularly important presupposition of this discussion of voluntariness is that among the cognitive powers of the soul, the human intellect alone perceives ends and means as such. Now the object of the human will is the good as known by the human intellect. But the division of the acts of will into formally different species on the basis of this object must be based on essential differences in the object. Consequently, insofar as understanding objects as means and ends is essential to and distinctive of the intellect, it is hardly surprising to find that Aquinas first divides the acts of the will into those that regard the good as an end and those that regard the good as a means.<sup>107</sup>

After establishing this general division, Aquinas goes on to divide the various acts of the will regarding the end and the means into more determinate species. Each kind of act, according to Aquinas, is divided into three subspecies. Of the acts of the will that are about ends, the three species are volition, intention, and enjoyment. The species that regard the means are consent, choice, and use. But here the principle on which he bases his subdivisions is not explained, leaving it to Aquinas's readers to piece together the reasoning behind his account. Fortunately, his subsequent discussion of the passions of the soul (which I discussed above) reveals an important clue regarding how the acts of the will are subdivided. As already mentioned, after dividing the concupiscible passions based on whether their objects are good or evil, Aquinas further divides these passions by analogy with the three effects of the mover on the mobile, namely, inclination, movement and rest. But this division admits of an analogous application to acts of the will as well. The analogy is particularly evident in the case of those acts of the will that have ends for their objects. The initial inclination to an end elicited by an object corresponds to

<sup>107</sup> ST, I-II, q. 8, pr.

the will's initial act of volition; the act which corresponds to movement is the will's intention, whereby the will goes beyond a simple attraction to its object and begins to actively seek that object;<sup>108</sup> finally, the will's rest in the end clearly corresponds to the act of enjoyment. A similar account can be given of the acts of the will which regard the means as their objects. The act of consent, for instance, is the act by which the will inclines itself to some means, insofar as it finds the means pleasing.<sup>109</sup> But it is only in the act of choice that the will moves towards one means in preference to others.<sup>110</sup> Finally, the act of using the means is analogous to rest insofar as the will's relationship to the means is completed once it uses them. As I turn to consider each of these acts in greater detail, Aquinas's implicit specification of will acts by analogy with natural motion and the concupiscible passions will become more evident.

Of the acts of will which concern the end, it is clear that intention plays a decisive role in our daily moral life, but there is some dispute about the degree to which volition and enjoyment are important. On the one hand, David Gallagher regards these acts as coming into play regularly in our moral life.<sup>111</sup> By contrast, Daniel Westberg points out that we only have enjoyment properly speaking in reference to our last end and demurs from including it in an account of the stages of human action.<sup>112</sup> Moreover, Westberg recommends that considering volition and intention as a single act is a more faithful interpretation of Aquinas.<sup>113</sup>

In the case of enjoyment, there is some merit to Westberg's account. Aquinas clearly states that "the enjoyment of what is not the ultimate end is improper, falling away, as it were, from the species of enjoyment."<sup>114</sup> Aquinas's reason for this claim is that enjoyment properly designates rest in an

<sup>108</sup> As Gallagher puts it, "in intending an end a person is committed to actually carrying out the actions needed to achieve that end." Gallagher, "The Will and Its Acts," 81.

<sup>109</sup> ST, I-II, q. 15, a. 1.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 15, a. 3, ad 3.

<sup>111</sup> Gallagher, "The Will and Its Acts," 81–83.

<sup>112</sup> Westberg, *Right Practical Reason*, 132, 178.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 133; Servais Pinckaers may be interpreted as making a similar claim: "L'intention n'est pas à proprement parler un nouvel acte qui s'ajouterait au vouloir comme une entité dynamique à une autre. L'intention, c'est le vouloir de la fin mis en relation avec les moyens." See Pinckaers, "La structure de l'acte humain suivant saint Thomas," 404.

<sup>114</sup> ST, I-II, q. 11, a. 4, ad 2: "eius quod non est ultimus finis, fruitio est impropria, quasi deficiens a specie fruitionis."

end, while complete rest can only be found in the last end.<sup>115</sup> True and perfect enjoyment comes only when we finally reach eternal beatitude, and thus Westberg rightly points out that this act is not an everyday occurrence in this life. Nevertheless, insofar as Aquinas can be interpreted as admitting a kind of improper rest in the goals that we achieve in our daily life, Gallagher may still be right to insist upon the existence of an improper enjoyment which we experience on a more regular basis as we reach intermediate goals on the way to our last end. What this discussion reveals, however, is that whether enjoyment be taken in the proper or improper sense, it is clearly a kind of rest analogous to the delight experienced when the concupiscible appetite of the soul rests.

Westberg's assimilation of volition and intention is more problematic. As Gallagher points out, there is a great difference between the simplicity of volition, which looks to the end taken absolutely, and the complexity of intention, whereby one desires "the end *as that which will be achieved by the means.*"<sup>116</sup> Indeed, Aquinas clearly distinguishes the act of intention from both volition and enjoyment, writing:

The will regards the end in three ways. In one way absolutely, and thus it is called volition [*voluntas*], inasmuch as we wish absolutely for health or anything else of this sort. In another way the end is considered according to the fact that the will rests in it, and in this way enjoyment regards the end. In a third way, the end is considered according to the fact that it is the terminus of something which is ordered to it, and in this way intention regards the end. For we are said to intend health not merely because we wish for it, but because we wish to arrive at it through something else.<sup>117</sup>

Moreover, as Gallagher also notes, these simple volitions include a whole set of natural acts of will that spontaneously arise in our day to day life, such as the simple inclinations to the goods of the various

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This statement is more fully explained in the preceding article.

<sup>115</sup> ST, I-II, q. 11, a. 3.

<sup>116</sup> Gallagher, "The Will and Its Acts," 80–81. See also ST, I-II, q. 12, a. 2, ad 4.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 12, a. 1, ad 4: "voluntas respicit finem tripliciter. Uno modo, absolute, et sic dicitur voluntas, prout absolute volumus vel sanitatem, vel si quid aliud est huiusmodi. Alio modo consideratur finis secundum quod in eo quiescitur, et hoc modo fruitio respicit finem. Tertio modo consideratur finis secundum quod est terminus alicuius quod in ipsum ordinatur, et sic intentio respicit finem. Non enim solum ex hoc intendere dicimus sanitatem, quia volumus eam, sed quia volumus ad eam per aliquid aliud pervenire." Thomas Osborne also argues against Westberg on the basis of this text. See Osborne, *Human Action in Aquinas, Scotus, and Ockham*, 117–118.

powers of the soul.<sup>118</sup> These volitions are natural not in the sense of arising prior to the apprehension of reason, but rather in the sense of arising spontaneously in the will when reason apprehends their objects. Whether or not every act of simple volition is natural is not yet clear, but it is evident that at least the naturally arising ones do not yet rise to the level of intention.

This distinction suggests an interesting connection between simple volition and love. According to Aquinas, “every agent whatsoever performs every action from some love.”<sup>119</sup> But in humans, natural love is presupposed to every other love.<sup>120</sup> Consequently, every human act must begin from natural love, that is, from love that is not chosen but arises spontaneously. At the same time, Aquinas’s account of volition suggests that it is the first act of the will in regard to the end, since a simple inclination to the end precedes a complex one. Thus, it is reasonable to see each simple natural willing as an initial natural love which comes before the more complex intention whereby the will tends to an end through some means.

Seeing volition as a kind of pre-intentional love or inclination further develops the analogy between the acts of the will and those of the concupiscible appetite. The spontaneous inclinations to ends arising in the will correspond quite neatly with the inclinations of sensitive love found in the concupiscible appetite, just as the will’s enjoyment of the end corresponds to the concupiscible power’s delight in the sensible good. This suggests that the will’s act of intention might be analogous to the concupiscible passion of desire. And indeed, in a discussion of prayer, Aquinas identifies the order of desire with the order of intention, which suggests that intention might even be a kind of desire.<sup>121</sup> To be sure, the intentions of the will and animal desires exhibit important differences. As Aquinas points out, beings

<sup>118</sup> Gallagher, “The Will and Its Acts,” 81. Gallagher lists some of the natural acts of will earlier on page 77, following the list given by Aquinas in ST, I-II, q. 10, a. 1.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 25, a. 2: “omne agens, quodcumque sit, agit quaecumque actionem ex aliquo amore.”

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., I, q. 60, a. 2: “voluntas naturaliter tendit in suum finem ultimum: omnis enim homo naturaliter vult beatitudinem. Et ex hac naturali voluntate causantur omnes aliae voluntates: cum quidquid homo vult, velit propter finem. Dilectio igitur boni quod homo naturaliter vult sicut finem, est dilectio naturalis: dilectio autem ab hac derivata, quae est boni quod diligitur propter finem, est dilectio electiva.”

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., II-II, q. 83, a. 9, ad 2: “. . . ordini desiderii sive intentionis, in quo prius est finis quam ea quae sunt ad finem.”



with intention can pursue an end through their own motion, whereas animals only pursue their ends as moved by another through their instincts.<sup>122</sup> But even this difference points to an underlying similarity; both intention and desire are conceived of as analogous to movement. Therefore, just as the acts of the concupiscible appetite are divided into love, desire, and delight on the basis of an analogy with the inclination, movement, and rest found in natural motion, so the acts of will begin with an inclining volition, proceed to an intentional movement, and are consummated in the rest of enjoyment.

Insofar as movement towards an end implies separation from that end, it is clear that the act of intention only remains as long as the end is not possessed. Moreover, movement towards an end which is not yet possessed implies movement towards the means, and indeed, Aquinas maintains that insofar as we conceive of the movement of the will to the means to have a further ordination to the end, there is but one motion to the end via the means.<sup>123</sup> Nevertheless, intention is not an act which regards the means as object, but rather regards the end “according to the fact that it is acquired by the means.”<sup>124</sup> That the end is the object of intention is particularly evident from the fact that “intention of the end can exist, even if the things which are ordered to an end [i.e. the means] have not yet been determined.”<sup>125</sup> For example, I may intend to take medicine to become healthy without yet determining which brand to purchase. Consequently, the object of intention is the end, not the means. And so, having considered all three acts of the will that regard the end, I must now turn to consider in more detail those which regard the means.

Now it is important to note the term “means” should here be taken quite broadly to include both

<sup>122</sup> ST, I-II, q. 12, a. 5, ad 3: “bruta animalia moventur ad finem, non quasi considerantia quod per motum suum possunt consequi finem, quod est proprie intendentis: sed concupiscentia finem naturali instinctu, moventur ad finem quasi ab alio mota, sicut et cetera quae moventur naturaliter.”

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 12, a. 4: “motus voluntatis in finem et in id quod est ad finem . . . potest considerari secundum quod voluntas fertur in id quod est ad finem, propter finem. Et sic unus et idem subiecto motus voluntatis est tendens ad finem, et in id quod est ad finem.”

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 12, a. 4, ad 3: “Motus autem voluntatis qui fertur in finem, secundum quod acquiritur per ea quae sunt ad finem, vocatur intentio.”

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.: “intentio finis esse potest, etiam nondum determinatis his quae sunt ad finem.”

external and internal means, that is, both the external instruments needed to achieve some end and the inner characteristics of an act needed to make it be a certain kind. For example, in order to achieve the end of generosity, I not only need the external means of money; I also need to give a determinate amount of money to the right person in the right way and so forth. These latter characteristics of the act, though intrinsic to the act, may nevertheless be called means to generosity insofar as these characteristics are chosen for the sake of achieving generosity. This broad understanding of what is ordered to the end has been advanced by prominent Aristotelian scholars in regard to Aristotle's use of the term τὰ πρὸς τὸ τέλος,<sup>126</sup> and it is clear that Aquinas intends a corresponding breadth in his use of the Latin version of the Aristotelian term: *haec quae sunt ad finem*.

Aquinas's division of the acts of will which regard the means bears a striking resemblance to the division of concupiscible passions and the acts of the will which regard the end. The first of the acts regarding the means is consent, which Aquinas describes as "the inclination [*applicatio*] of the appetitive motion to something to be done."<sup>127</sup> Now describing consent as a kind of inclination suggests that like the act of volition and the passion of love, the act of consent is to be regarded as an inclination that precedes acts of movement and rest. Further evidence for this claim arises from Aquinas's description of consent as an act in which the will finds the means pleasing. The word Aquinas uses to indicate the pleasing effect of the means to which one consents is the verb "*complacere*." Although this word or variants of it occur only eighteen times in the *prima secundae*, in four of these instances, the word is used in reference to consent. Of the remaining fourteen instances, twelve are used to describe the passion of love.<sup>128</sup> This strengthens the evidence that the act of consent is an inclination analogous to the act

<sup>126</sup> See, for example, Martha Nussbaum, "Practical Syllogisms and Practical Science," in *Aristotle's De Motu Animalium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 170–171, esp. n. 13. Nussbaum prefers to use the term "constituents" rather than "means" to refer to what I have called the "internal means."

<sup>127</sup> ST, I-II, q. 15, a. 2: "consensus importat applicationem appetitivi motus ad aliquid agendum." See also Aquinas's remark in the next article: "consensus nominat applicationem appetitivi motus ad aliquid praeeexistens in potestate applicantis"

<sup>128</sup> This word search was conducted using the online Index Thomisticus (<http://www.corpusthomicum.org/it/index>).

of volition and the passion of love.

But as Aquinas points out, we can sometimes consent to more than one means as worthy of pursuit. Consequently, a second act is needed whereby we determine ourselves to one of the particular means to which we have consented. This, Aquinas tells us, is the act of choice, by which we give preference to one means over all the others.<sup>129</sup> Whereas Aquinas describes consent as an “inclination of the appetitive motion,” he suggests that the act of choice is simply a kind of movement, writing: “choice is completed in a certain motion of the soul to the good which is chosen.”<sup>130</sup> This further supports the analogy between the acts of the will which look to the end and those which regard the means. Just as the act of intention is a kind of movement to the end, so the act of choice is a kind of movement to the means.

Thus far, the manner of specifying acts of the will regarding the means has appeared similar to the manner of specifying acts of the will regarding the end. At first sight, however, the final act of the will regarding the means, “use,” does not seem analogous to enjoyment, for whereas enjoyment implies rest in the end, use implies a lack of rest. But although the analogy here is imperfect, there is still a way in which the act of use is similar to enjoyment. When in the act of enjoyment, one rests in an end, one is no longer on the way to that end but rather possesses it. In a similar fashion, when one is using a means, one is no longer in the process of moving towards the means; rather, to the extent that one is using the means, one has the means in one’s power and in this sense can be said to possess the means. The completion found in the possession of the means by using them is analogous to the completion found in the act of enjoyment. Consequently, there is some reason to think that even this act is specified according to the same principle as other acts of the will. Therefore, the principle that every mover gives inclination, movement, and rest to what it moves can be used to specify the acts of the will that regard the means, provided that this principle is adapted to fit the distinctive character of

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age).

<sup>129</sup> ST, I-II, q. 15, a. 3, ad 3.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., q. 13, a. 1: “perficitur enim electio in motu quodam animae ad bonum quod eligitur”

the means. In light of this principle, consent, choice, and use can be understood as the initial inclination to, movement towards, and arrival at the means.

Now there is an especially important aspect of use that makes it notably different from other acts of the will. All the other acts of the will appear to be acts that are in the will itself. But Aquinas describes use as “the application [or inclination] of a thing to some operation.”<sup>131</sup> Aquinas goes on to explain that the will is a kind of “first mover” with respect to the other powers of the soul which serve as its instruments.<sup>132</sup> Now from what has been said above, it is clear that motion is from the mover, but in the moved. Hence the act of use, though coming from the will, is only in the will when the will happens to move itself. In every other instance, the act of use is in another power of the soul, which the will uses as an instrument.<sup>133</sup>

Having considered the specification of the six acts of the will, we must now turn to consider the order between these acts. The most important relationship is between the acts of the will which regard the end and those which regard the means. According to Aquinas, one’s willing of the end is a principle of one’s willing the means.<sup>134</sup> Since everything acts insofar as it is in act, it is precisely insofar as the will is in act that it is able to move itself. But, as Aquinas points out, the will is in act insofar as it wills the end; and on the basis of this act it is able to move itself to will the means.<sup>135</sup> Aquinas’s argument has an important implicit consequence, namely, that the will does not move itself towards an end as

<sup>131</sup> ST, I-II, q. 16, a. 1: “applicationem rei illius ad aliquam operationem.”

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.: “Unde manifestum est quod uti primo et principaliter est voluntatis, tanquam primi moventis; rationis autem tanquam dirigentis; sed aliarum potentiarum tanquam exequentium, quae comparantur ad voluntatem, a qua applicantur ad agendum, sicut instrumenta ad principale agens.”

<sup>133</sup> Stephen Brock also concludes that the act of use is in the power which is used, although he continues to refer to use as an interior act of the will. See *Action and Conduct: Thomas Aquinas and the Theory of Action* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark Ltd, 1998), 175–183; see also his “What is the Use of *Usus* in Aquinas’ Psychology of Action?,” in *Les philosophies morales et politiques au Moyen Âge: actes du IXe Congrès international de Philosophie Médiévale, Ottawa, du 17 au 22 août 1992*, ed. Bernardo Carlos Bazán, Eduardo Andújar, and Léonard G. Sbrocchi (New York: Legas, 1995), 654–664.

<sup>134</sup> ST, I-II, q. 9, a. 3, co.: “voluntas per hoc quod vult finem, movet seipsam ad volendum ea quae sunt ad finem.” See also *De malo*, q. 6, co.: “per hoc quod homo aliquid vult in actu, movet se ad volendum aliquid aliud in actu. Sicut per hoc quod vult sanitatem, movet se ad volendum sumere potionem.”

<sup>135</sup> ST, I-II, q. 9, a. 3, ad 1: “inquantum actu vult finem, reducit se de potentia in actum respectu eorum quae sunt ad finem, ut scilicet actu ea velit.”

such; consequently, acts of the will that regard ends that are not also means have God as the principle from which their actuality comes.<sup>136</sup>

Here, however, an important objection arises. According to Aquinas, the act of intention and the act of choice are the same act, differing only in how they are considered.<sup>137</sup> Insofar as one views this movement as a movement of the will to the end through the means, the movement is an intention, but insofar as one considers the movement of the will as a movement to “the means as ordered to the end” the will’s act is a choice.<sup>138</sup> This seems to pose a problem; for insofar as the intention of the will regards an end that is not a means to some further end, it cannot be caused by the will efficiently. And yet since this same act, as tending to the means, is a choice, it is caused by the will. Thus, the same act seems both caused by the will and uncaused by it.

To answer this objection, it is important to remember that Aquinas maintains that the act of intention is not necessarily immediately ordered to any determinate means.<sup>139</sup> Aquinas seems perfectly willing to accept that an indeterminate intention can exist before becoming related to some determinate means at a later time. This indicates that an intention, as such, does not depend on a choice of means to the intended end, such that even if the intention immediately involves a determinate means, one can still maintain that the movement of the will as an intention is prior in being, if not in time, to the movement considered as a choice. Because intention is prior in being, it no longer seems impossible that the intention might be the cause of the choice which fixes a determinate means to the intended end. Moreover, even if intention is not a causal principle of choice, one could ascribe the causal principle of choice as such to the will insofar as it is in act by its initial simple volition of the end. In other words, it may be that simple volition of the end gives the will sufficient actuality to bring about a choice. In

<sup>136</sup> ST, I-II, q. 9, a. 4 and 6.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 12, a. 4, ad 3.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.: “Sic igitur in quantum motus voluntatis fertur in id quod est ad finem, prout ordinatur ad finem, est electio. Motus autem voluntatis qui fertur in finem, secundum quod acquiritur per ea quae sunt ad finem, vocatur intentio.”

<sup>139</sup> See page 105, note 125 above.

any case, Aquinas can continue to hold that the will is an efficient cause of all those acts which regard the means. The general movement of the will can therefore be understood as a progression from an initial attraction to some end to a determination of itself to some particular means to that end.<sup>140</sup>

If the general motion of the will can be understood in this manner, it remains to ask what value there is in the more detailed consideration of the acts of the will which Thomas engages in. Of course, the division is interesting in its own right, but does it have any particular significance for Aquinas's overall moral project in the second part of the *Summa* or at least for his anthropology? More specifically, the value of the distinction between volition and intention, and the distinction between consent, choice, and use are particularly unclear. Therefore, I will make some brief remarks about the role of these distinctions in Aquinas's ethics and philosophy of human nature.

The distinction between volition and intention is important for helping explain why there can be moral responsibility for an act of the will which regards the end. When Aquinas evaluates moral actions, he looks not only to the chosen action itself (often called the moral object) but also the end for which the act is chosen in order to evaluate the act; only a good act chosen for a good end can be morally good.<sup>141</sup> But the spontaneously arising natural inclinations of the will to the end, for which we bear no responsibility, do not receive a moral evaluation. Therefore, Aquinas must distinguish from such volitions, another act of the will regarding the end that does receive moral evaluation, namely, the act of intention.

The distinction between consent and choice also has moral relevance, for Aquinas argues that even prior to a preferential choice, an act of consent is morally significant.<sup>142</sup> This is clear from experience as well. For example, a person who consents to the unjust actions of others, by that very act of consent,

<sup>140</sup> Thomas Osborne notes that in general contexts, Aquinas often speaks only of willing the end and choosing the means, rather than introducing his more detailed distinctions between acts of the will (*Human Action in Aquinas, Scotus, and Ockham*, 117 and 132). This suggests that for Aquinas, the relation between willing the end and willing the means is especially important.

<sup>141</sup> ST, I-II, q. 18, a. 2 and 4.

<sup>142</sup> See for example his remarks in *ibid.*, I-II, q. 74, a. 7–8.

begins to destroy the virtue in his soul and foster vice by inclining himself away from good actions and towards evil ones. Moreover, as already mentioned, the act of consent also plays a key role in Aquinas's account of will's control over the passions.<sup>143</sup> While the passions can spontaneously arise outside the will's control, they cannot use the motive power of the soul to cause external bodily movement without the will's consent. In this way too, the distinction between consent and choice emerges as an important one.

Distinguishing the act of use from consent and choice is also very important. As I have already noted, the act of use is the one act of the will that is not necessarily in the will. The act of use is the act whereby the will moves something else and thus belongs in the power which the will moves. If choice and use were not distinct, then either choices would not belong in the will itself or the effect of the will on other powers of the soul would be unexplained. The former alternative is impossible, for clearly we can make choices but delay executing these choices. Consequently, Aquinas appropriately posits the act of use to explain the will's effect on other powers of the soul. This distinction has clear import for Aquinas's moral theory because the delay between choice and use sometimes deserves moral reproach.

The distinction between choice and use is also necessary in order to adequately explain how the will moves itself to choose. If choosing an object were the same as using it, then every choice of the will would require a prior choice. For if choice and use are identical acts with the same object, then whenever the will uses itself to make a choice, it must also choose to make that choice. This would lead to an infinite regress of choices. The only way to avoid such a regress is to distinguish the act of choice from the act of use to account for the fact that the will can use itself without choosing to use itself. The distinction between choice and use is thus essential for Aquinas's account of human freedom to be successful.

Each act of the will, therefore, plays an important role in Aquinas's account of human action.

<sup>143</sup> ST, I, q. 81, a. 3. See page 98 above.

But the will does not direct human action by itself, but rather under the guidance of practical reason. Consequently, we must now turn to consider the role played by practical reason in human action.

### **Practical Reason: Source of Order and Specification**

It is a general principle in Aquinas's philosophy that acts of the appetitive powers of the soul follow upon acts of cognition.<sup>144</sup> This principle follows from his position that an appetitive act of the soul is simply an inclination that follows upon the apprehension of some form.<sup>145</sup> More specifically, acts of will necessarily follow the apprehension of reason, for the will is the appetitive power that follows upon rational cognition.<sup>146</sup> Therefore, in order to explain human action more completely, I will now consider the intellectual side of practical activity, by presenting Aquinas's account of the various acts of practical reason that precede acts of the will.

Before considering these acts of practical reason in more detail, it is important to emphasize a point made by Daniel De Haan regarding this power. According to De Haan, practical reason not only includes the intellect insofar as it is practical; practical reason also includes the cogitative power of the soul, which works in tandem with the mind in our practical thinking. As De Haan explains, the reason that both powers must work together is that practical reason does not simply deal with universal norms but rather applies these norms to the singular, which is only known through the cogitative power.<sup>147</sup> Consequently, when speaking of practical reason below, I will frequently use the term to refer to the cogitative power and intellect taken together.

In two late texts, Aquinas identifies four acts of practical reason:

There are four acts of reason in acting. Indeed, the first [is] the simple understanding of some end as good. . . . The second act is counsel about those things which are to be

<sup>144</sup> ST, I-II, q. 26, a. 1. For a discussion of this principle, see Kevin White, "Wanting Something for Someone: Aquinas on Complex Motions of Appetite," *Review of Metaphysics* 61 (2007): 3–5.

<sup>145</sup> See ST, I, q. 80, a. 1 and *De malo*, q. 16, a. 2, co.

<sup>146</sup> For this reason, Aquinas speaks of the will as a "rational appetite." See, for example, *ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> De Haan, "Moral Perception and the Function of the *Vis Cogitativa*," 305–307.



done on account of the end. . . . The third act is judgment concerning the things to be done. . . . The fourth act is the command of reason concerning acting.<sup>148</sup>

At other times, Aquinas only lists the final three of these acts, leaving out the first.<sup>149</sup> It would be mistaken, however, to think that Aquinas is changing his position, for the more abbreviated lists occur in the context of discussing prudence, a virtue which is immediately concerned with the discovery and execution of what ought to be done. The first act of practical reason, by contrast, consists in simply apprehending an end as good, rather than being about the actions ordered to that end. Consequently, the first act is in a separate class from the latter three.

Nevertheless, since understanding something as an end is one of the necessary conditions of a voluntary act, the first act is clearly a very important one. It is particularly important to recognize that this act of seeing something as an end for oneself depends not only on what is perceived but also upon the one who perceives. This follows from the fact that different kinds of creature have specifically different ends. Both the ultimate and proximate ends of a horse are quite different than those of a human being, on account of the differences in their natures. This means that although humans and horses encounter many of the same objects in the world, they do not always find the same objects attractive as ends. This indicates that for something to appear as an end to some creature, it is not sufficient that the creature perceive the natural characteristics of that thing. If finding something to be an end merely required the perception of some natural aspect of that object, anything perceiving that aspect would find the object attractive. But this does not always happen, as is especially clear in Aquinas's picture of the world. For on his understanding, angels have a much greater grasp of our proximate ends, such as the nourishing character of food,<sup>150</sup> but in many cases do not perceive our

<sup>148</sup> ST, II-II, q. 153, a. 5: "Sunt autem rationis quatuor actus in agendis. Primo quidem, simplex intelligentia, quae apprehendit aliquem finem ut bonum. . . . Secundus actus est consilium de his quae sunt agenda propter finem. . . . Tertius autem actus est iudicium de agendis. . . . Quartus autem actus est praeceptum rationis de agendo." A similar division is provided in *De malo*, q. 15, a. 4.

<sup>149</sup> See for example ST, I-II, q. 57, a. 6 and II-II, q. 47, a. 8.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, I, q. 57, a. 1 and 2.

ends as ends for themselves. Consequently, something within the creature is partially responsible for that creature finding a specific sort of good to be attractive.

In his discussion of the conditions necessary for an object to cause love, Aquinas identifies the intrinsic feature that contributes to finding an object attractive as a likeness (*similitudo*) that obtains between the creature and its object.<sup>151</sup> In certain cases, the attractiveness of an object is based on an actual similarity; for example, two musicians, in virtue of their similarity would see the attractiveness of the other. Aquinas, however, extending the meaning of likeness beyond its usual everyday use, suggests that one can be like another by having “in potency and in a certain inclination, that which another has in act.”<sup>152</sup> For example, a horse has a potential for receiving nourishment from oats and therefore can be said to have potentially a likeness to the oats. Together, these two kinds of likeness explain which objects creatures perceive as ends.

Now while Aquinas seems to give us an account of why different kinds of creature find different objects attractive, he leaves us with a puzzle. For we don’t find everything for which we have a potential attractive. For example, my prime matter has the potential for the form of mountain lion, but I hardly relish the idea of this substantial change. Likeness thus appears too broad to account for why we perceive certain objects as ends.

Fortunately, this objection admits of a simple solution, for though it is quite true that prime matter has an indiscriminate inclination to any substantial form, this inclination does not belong to the human being as such and so is not perceived by a human being as an end. Thus, among the various potencies of the human being, only those that are proper to the human being can serve as a basis for perceiving

<sup>151</sup> ST, I-II, q. 27, a. 3. See also *De ebd.*, l. 2: “omne autem diuersum in quantum huiusmodi repugnat appetitui; cuius ratio est quia simile augetur et perficitur suo simili; unumquodque autem appetit suum augmentum et perfectionem; et ideo simile in quantum huiusmodi est unicuique appetibile et pari ratione diuersum repugnat appetitui in quantum diminuit et impedit perfectionem. Et ideo dicit, quod omnis diuersitas est discors, id est ab appetitu discordans; similitudo vero est appetenda. Contingit tamen per accidens quod aliquis appetitus abhorret simile et appetit diuersum siue contrarium, nam, sicut dictum, est unumquodque primo et per se appetit suam perfectionem que est bonum uniuscuiusque et est semper proportionata perfectibili, et secundum hoc habet similitudinem ad ipsum.”

<sup>152</sup> ST, I-II, q. 27, a. 3: “habet in potentia et in quadam inclinatione, illud quod aliud habet in actu.”

human ends. Only what fulfills a specifically human potency is perceived by human reason as a human end.

Aquinas also describes the likeness in potency as a “certain inclination.”<sup>153</sup> According to Sean Cunningham, the term “inclination” adds to the concept of potency, the notion that the potency is conferred by an extrinsic agent who inclines the being that has the inclination.<sup>154</sup> Here, it is important to note that the one who inclines need not be a different being than the one who is inclined, but only needs to differ in some respect from the one who is inclined. For example, as a being with reason, I can control my sensitive appetites by inclining them in a certain direction. This is because my reason and sense appetites are different, and therefore as rational, I can move myself as possessing sense appetites.

The reference to likeness by inclination in this text points forward to Aquinas’s discussion of natural law later in the *Summa*, where he proposes that the natural law follows upon our natural inclinations.<sup>155</sup> This text is an object of much scholarly disagreement which cannot be discussed here. But it seems clear enough in light of the just mentioned text from q. 27 that the natural inclinations identified in the question on natural law serve as a basis of our grasp of the natural ends that govern human actions.<sup>156</sup>

Clearly then, likeness, whether actual or by way of potency and inclination, lies at the basis of practical reason’s grasp of ends as good. Yet it would be wrong to assume that these likenesses must themselves always be known in order for us to grasp ends as good. This is clear from experience, for we frequently come to know our inclinations to certain things on the basis of what we view as good, rather than deduce what must be good from our inclinations. I first notice that truth is a good worth pursuing and only afterwards deduce that I must therefore have an inclination and aptitude for

<sup>153</sup> ST, I-II, q. 27, a. 3.

<sup>154</sup> Cunningham, “Natural Inclination in Aquinas,” 98.

<sup>155</sup> ST, I-II, q. 94, a. 2.

<sup>156</sup> This position is also taken by Martin Rohnheimer. See *Natural Law and Practical Reason*, 74–75. Joseph de Finance, also recognizes that knowledge of an object as perfective depends on an inclination towards that object, although his way of speaking suggests that the inclining itself must be perceived, in order for the object of that inclination to be recognized as perfective. (See his “La motion du bien,” *Gregorianum* 39 (1958): 22–24.) I will go on to argue in the next paragraph that perceiving an end as good does not always require apprehending one’s inclination to that end.

the truth. Thus the rational act by which one apprehends something as an end, though dependent on one's likeness to that thing, is nevertheless not necessarily dependent on an actual awareness of this likeness.

Now because in this first act of practical reason we apprehend something as an end, this act must be at the root of all the acts of the will that regard the end, namely, volition, intention, and enjoyment. As already mentioned, Aquinas describes the apprehension of practical reason as the “formal principle” of an act of the will.<sup>157</sup> Thus, the motion of the will to an end should be thought of as receiving its form and direction from practical reason's apprehension of that object as an end. This apprehension is also the principle of the remaining acts of practical reason which are ordered to the discovery, determination, and execution of the means to the end. For such acts, insofar as they are about the means to ends, necessarily presuppose an initial apprehension of and desire for some end.

In order to explain the remaining acts more fully, I must briefly present Aquinas's account of the practical syllogism, which draws upon the account of the practical syllogism present in the works of Aristotle.<sup>158</sup> Now as Rolf Darge points out, one can distinguish in Aquinas's writings several kinds of practical syllogism.<sup>159</sup> The most important of these kinds, for present purposes, is the syllogism which concludes to a judgment that serves as the intellectual principle of choice.<sup>160</sup> Because this judgment is the formal principle of choice, Aquinas says that the choice itself is formally in reason, although it is materially in the will.<sup>161</sup> Now this judgment is related to choice as an active principle of the choice. Moreover, Aquinas explains that the object of choice is “something that is proposed as good.”<sup>162</sup>

<sup>157</sup> ST, I-II, q. 9, a. 1.

<sup>158</sup> Aristotle discusses the practical syllogism in three texts, namely, the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the *De anima*, and the *De motu animalium*. His account is the subject of much scholarly dispute. For discussion of the practical syllogism in Aristotle, see Nussbaum, “Practical Syllogisms and Practical Science,” 165–220.

<sup>159</sup> Darge, *Habitus per actus cognoscuntur*, 203–204.

<sup>160</sup> ST, I-II, q. 13, a. 1, ad 2 and a. 3, co.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, I-II, q. 13, a. 1.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*: “ille actus quo voluntas tendit in *aliquid quod proponitur ut bonum*, ex eo quod per rationem est ordinatum ad finem, materialiter quidem est voluntatis, formaliter autem rationis.” My emphasis.

Thus, because a likeness of the object of choice preexists in its active principle, the conclusion of the practical syllogism that serves as the active principle of choice may be formulated as: “this action is a good to be pursued.” Aquinas goes on to point out that the reason that the act is judged as good is the fact that “through reason it is ordained to the end.”<sup>163</sup> The minor premise of the practical syllogism, therefore, may be formulated as: “this action is ordered to the end.” From this we can gather a general schematization of the practical syllogism that results in a judgment of choice:

- This end is a good to be pursued. (major)
- This action is ordered to the end. (minor)
- This action is a good to be pursued. (conclusion)

It is worth pausing to note some important features of each premise. First, the major premise clearly expresses the intellectual principle of an act of intention. Therefore, the major premise expresses either the intellectual principle of some previous choice or the just discussed initial act of practical reason whereby we apprehend some end as an end. Turning to the minor premise, we must note that the term “ordered to” in this premise signifies not only the ability of the means to bring about the end; the term also signifies that reason has adopted and is actively ordering the means to the end. Reason must not only grasp the order of the means to the end; it must also cause this ordering to the exclusion of other alternatives.<sup>164</sup> Reason must order the means to the end in this strong sense because merely grasping the ability of the means to bring about an intended end does not necessitate pursuit of the means, though such a grasp is a necessary condition of pursuing the means.<sup>165</sup> Finally, it is helpful to note that each premise expresses part of what is necessary for a perfectly voluntary act. For the major premise

<sup>163</sup> ST, I-II, q. 13, a. 1: “per rationem est ordinatum ad finem.”

<sup>164</sup> According to Aquinas, reason brings about this ordering to the exclusion of other alternatives only under the influence of the will’s acceptance of the means. See *ibid.*, I, q. 83, a. 3, ad 2.

<sup>165</sup> From this it is evident that the syllogism as described cannot be theoretical, for the mere knowledge that the means can bring about the end does not necessitate that the means must be pursued. In other words, there is insufficient information in the premises to draw a conclusion by necessity, as occurs when one forms a theoretical syllogism.

depends upon grasping an end as such, while the minor premise depends upon seeing the order of the means to an end. The ensuing conclusion is consequently the intellectual principle of a perfectly and paradigmatically voluntary act.<sup>166</sup>

But though grasping the order of a means to an end is necessary for a perfectly voluntary act, such an apprehension does not always take place immediately. For example, upon deciding to cheer up an ailing relative, an appropriate means to this end may not be immediately evident. Perhaps arranging weekly house visits would be best, but perhaps visits in person would be too fatiguing, and the occasional phone call would be more appropriate. In such cases, the appropriate means is not immediately seen. For this reason, Aquinas must distinguish an act of practical reason called counsel (*consilium*).

According to Aquinas, counsel is the act whereby one searches for or inquires into the appropriate means to one's end.<sup>167</sup> In a very detailed discussion of this act, Thomas Osborne points out that in Aquinas, counsel is sometimes distinguished from the act of *deliberatio* (which Osborne translates as “thinking out”), while at other times seems to be identified with a certain kind of *deliberatio* that involves inquiry.<sup>168</sup> This ambiguity seems to result from the fact that *deliberatio* can be used to signify any discursive act of practical reason. But Aquinas clearly finds two different discursive acts in practical reason, namely, the inquiry whereby one searches for the appropriate means to an end and the practical syllogism whereby one concludes that some means ought to be pursued on account of some end. Because the word “counsel” refers only to the former type of *deliberatio*, it must be distinguished from the *deliberatio* that takes place when one forms a practical syllogism. But counsel may nevertheless be

<sup>166</sup> By formulating the practical syllogism that serves as a principle of choice in terms of means and ends, I am rejecting Westberg's attempt to restrict such syllogisms to the process of taking counsel and his move to instead identify the practical syllogism preceding choice as an application of rules to particular situations. See Westberg, *Right Practical Reason*, 149-50 and following. The already cited texts of Aquinas from ST, I-II, q. 13, a. 1 indicate that the end is the principle by which reason proposes some means as choiceworthy. Moreover, as I will show below, Aquinas clearly thinks that universal practical rules are principles of acts of counsel. Consequently, Westberg also appears to be mistaken in thinking that the application of universal rules to particular situations ought to be restricted to the decision making stage.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 14, a. 1. The term Aquinas uses is “*inquisitio*” which may be translated as “search” or “inquiry.”

<sup>168</sup> See *De ver.*, q. 29, a. 8, ad 1 and Osborne, *Human Action in Aquinas, Scotus, and Ockham*, 125–129. See also Kevin White, “Aquinas on Purpose,” in *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, vol. 81 (2008), 136–138.

identified as a kind of *deliberatio* taken in a general sense.<sup>169</sup>

To better understand counsel, it is worth considering it in relation to its principle and terminus. According to Aquinas, the act of counsel is itself caused by the will as its efficient principle.<sup>170</sup> Since the act whereby the will moves other powers is the act of use, one can infer further that the act whereby the will moves reason to take counsel is use. The formal principles of counsel are the end (as known), what we grasp by our senses, and any relevant universal practical or speculative knowledge.<sup>171</sup> Of these, the end itself is identified by Aquinas as a proper principle.<sup>172</sup> On the other hand, the ultimate terminus of counsel is a means that is “immediately in our power,” though Aquinas clearly finds room for using the act of counsel to reach intermediate means, that is, means standing between the end and the means immediately in our power.<sup>173</sup>

Now since, as was shown above, an act is specified by both its active principle and terminus, one might wonder about whether the account Aquinas gives here is consistent with this point. For the end and means are specifically different and would therefore seem to give the act of counsel two different species. To answer this difficulty, it is important to recall Aquinas’s account of color, mentioned in the first chapter.<sup>174</sup> According to Aquinas, the formal object of color has light as a formal component

<sup>169</sup> Moreover, although counsel cannot be identified with the practical syllogism that results in choice, it may involve other kinds of practical syllogisms. For example, while taking counsel, one might on the basis of certain syllogisms, reject various means because of their opposition to moral maxims. For instance, in searching for a way to make money, I might reject stealing from the bank on the basis of the syllogism: “theft is to be avoided,” “taking money from the bank would be theft,” and consequently, “taking money from the bank must be avoided.”

<sup>170</sup> *De malo*, q. 6 co.

<sup>171</sup> ST, I-II, q. 14, a. 6: “Accipitur enim in inquisitione consilii duplex principium. Unum proprium, ex ipso genere operabilium, et hoc est finis, de quo non est consilium: sed supponitur in consilio ut principium, ut dictum est. Aliud quasi ex alio genere assumptum . . . Huiusmodi autem principia quae in inquisitione consilii supponuntur, sunt quaecumque sunt per sensum accepta, utpote quod hoc sit panis vel ferrum; et quaecumque sunt per aliquam scientiam speculativam vel practicam in universali cognita, sicut quod moechari est a Deo prohibitum, et quod homo non potest vivere nisi nutriatur nutrimento convenienti. Et de istis non inquirat consiliator.”

<sup>172</sup> See the text in the previous note.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*: “Terminus autem inquisitionis est id quod statim est in potestate nostra ut faciamus. Sicut enim finis habet rationem principii, ita id quod agitur propter finem, habet rationem conclusionis. Unde id quod primo agendum occurrit, habet rationem ultimae conclusionis, ad quam inquisitio terminatur.”

<sup>174</sup> See page 30.

that serves as a principle of color's visibility. A similar account may be given of the object of the act of counsel, for the object of counsel is a means to some end. Here, the means is analogous to color, and the end, insofar as it is the principle by which the means become an object of counsel, is a formal component of this object that renders the means to be such an object; and thus the end is analogous to light. This description fits well with our experience of taking counsel. In taking counsel, the end as a principle, is brought to bear on what we grasp by our senses along with what we understand by our speculative and practical knowledge. Thus, the active principle of counsel is our knowledge and experience considered in light of some end, and the terminus of counsel is the means identified in our experience insofar as it is seen to have an order to the end. Consequently, the principle and conclusion of counsel, when understood more precisely, have a likeness to each other, and thus provide the same specification to an act of counsel.

An illustration will be helpful. James hears that his aunt recently contracted a rare but serious illness during her African vacation and decides to do what he can to help her. He begins taking counsel by considering his own knowledge and experience. He considers that with more money, his aunt might be able to obtain advanced treatment of her illness, but his practical moral knowledge that theft is wrong leads him to reject any form of theft, even to help his aunt. He next remembers that in a pathology class he took as a biology major in college, he had discovered a certain herb that decreases the reproduction rate of a certain family of viruses. While at the time, the knowledge was merely speculative, he wonders whether now this knowledge might be helpful in developing a treatment for his aunt. Of course, he will need to speak to his old biology professor, but he still has his professor's office phone number. Consequently, he realizes that calling his professor is one possible approach to helping his aunt. In this process of reasoning, by beginning with his knowledge of the end and his other knowledge and experience, he discovers the order of a certain act (i.e. calling his old professor) to his end (i.e. helping his aunt).



By identifying means that have an order to the end, the act of counsel prepares reason for forming the minor premise of the practical syllogism resulting in choice, namely, the premise that states “this means is ordered to the intended end.” But an act of counsel does not always result in the judgment that forms the minor premise of this syllogism. This is clear from the fact that the order of means to the end identified by counsel is more precisely described as an aptitude and suitability of the identified means for bringing about the intended end. Thus, the recognition of the order of means to end that results from counsel may merely be a source of the judgment that such means are suitable for the end. But this kind of judgment only immediately serves as the cognitive principle of the will’s consent to the means.<sup>175</sup> Only when the discovered means appears to be the only suitable way of achieving the end, does counsel right away lead us to form the minor premise and draw the conclusion of the practical syllogism that results in choice. To return to the previous example, when he sees calling his old professor as one among many ways to help his aunt, James can merely consent to this way of proceeding without choosing it. But if he sees that calling his professor is the only way to achieve his goal, he will have to either give up his goal or choose the means he has identified.

This discussion of counsel paves the way for a consideration of the next act of practical reason, namely, judgment. As is clear from what has been said, the act of counsel leads to a judgment about the means. But this judgment is clearly not the most important practical judgment, for the judgment about the order of means to an end is ultimately ordered to the judgment that some means ought to be chosen for some end. This latter judgment is the conclusion of the practical syllogism and the intellectual principle of the act of choice; as such, it is especially worthy of consideration.

Once again, it is helpful to consider this judgment in relation to its active principle and terminus. While I know of no text in which Aquinas specifically discusses both the active principle and the

<sup>175</sup> Aquinas clearly holds that there is a judgment that precedes consent. See ST, I-II, q. 74, a. 7, co.: “consensus importat iudicium quoddam de eo in quod consentitur.” See also *ibid.*, I-II, q. 15, a. 3, co.: “. . . consensus, in quantum motus appetitivus applicatur ad id quod ex consilio iudicatum est.”

terminus of the judgment of choice, an analysis of his remarks on speculative demonstrations suggests an analogous account of the practical judgment resulting in choice. As has already been mentioned, in one discussion of the active principle of speculative syllogisms, Aquinas identifies the middle (i.e. the object expressed by the middle term) as the active principle of such demonstrations,<sup>176</sup> while in another place, he points to a proposition known through itself as an active principle of the conclusions that we reach by such reasoning.<sup>177</sup> These accounts are clearly compatible, for the middle is a principle of the conclusion of a speculative demonstration only insofar as it has a per se relationship to what is signified by the major and minor terms. The terminus or object of a speculative conclusion, on the other hand, is the subject of that conclusion understood as united by means of the middle to whatever attribute the predicate expresses.

A helpful example of the principle and terminus of the conclusion of a speculative syllogism may be found in the following argument that every human being is mortal:

- Every animal is mortal. (major)
- Every human being is an animal. (minor)
- Every human being is mortal. (conclusion)

Here, animality serves as the principle by which we see that humans are mortal, but it does so only insofar as animality is seen to be essentially related to humanity and mortality. The terminus or object of the judgment that humans are mortal, on the other hand, is the human being understood as mortal by means of animality.

An analogous account can be given of the principle and terminus of the act of judgment that results from a practical syllogism. Since the end plays the role of middle in the practical syllogism that results in choice, the end is clearly an active principle of the conclusion drawn. But knowledge of the end is

<sup>176</sup> ST, I-II, q. 54, a. 2, ad 2.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 51, a. 2, co. and ad 3.

not sufficient by itself, for one must also know the order of the end to the objects signified by the major and minor terms in order to draw the conclusion. In other words, one must know that the end is a good to be pursued and that the means has an order to the end, if one is to conclude to the judgment of choice. As already noted, the former premise is arrived at either through the first act of practical reason, (apprehension of an end as good) or is the judgment of choice that resulted from a previous practical syllogism. The latter premise, if not immediately obvious, depends on the prior act of counsel, which discovers means ordered to the end. The conclusion of the practical syllogism that results in choice is an intellectual conclusion that is the formal principle of the choice which immediately follows.<sup>178</sup> The object or terminus of this concluding judgment is the means itself, understood as choiceworthy on account of its order to the end and the goodness of the end. As in the act of counsel, the end is again a kind of principle. In the case of practical judgment, the end is the principle in light of which the means is seen and judged to be worthy of pursuit. For example, James concludes that calling his old professor is worthy of pursuit only insofar as (1) this action is seen as ordered to an end such as helping his aunt and (2) he recognizes helping his aunt as a good to be pursued. Only in light of the end does he form his judgment about the means.

Alongside the intellectual principles of the conclusion of the practical syllogism resulting in choice, the will plays a role as an efficient cause. This is evident from the fact that according to Aquinas the will engages in an act of use when it moves itself to perform an act of choice.<sup>179</sup> But since the choice always follows the judgment of reason, the will, in using itself to make a choice, must also be using reason to draw the conclusion of the practical syllogism.<sup>180</sup> Moreover, since the judgment of choice is contingent (on account of the fact that no means ever appears good in every respect), what is grasped by the mind is not a sufficient principle of judging one way rather than another, or as Aquinas puts it,

<sup>178</sup> ST, I-II, q. 13, a. 1.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 16, a. 4, ad 3.

<sup>180</sup> Aquinas indicates that the will uses reason prior to choice in *ibid.*, I-II, q. 17, a. 3, co: “*usus eius quod est ad finem, secundum quod est in ratione referente ipsum in finem, praecedat electionem, ut supra dictum est.*”

the mind is open to opposites.<sup>181</sup> Consequently, the will must move the intellect in one way or another. And the act by which the will moves other powers of the soul is the act of use. Therefore, by the act of use, the will moves reason to draw the concluding judgment of the practical syllogism and in so doing, also moves itself to choose in accordance with this judgment.

Now, Aristotle holds that the result of the practical syllogism is action,<sup>182</sup> and this has led René Antoine Gauthier to argue that by adding a further act of command, Aquinas is inserting an unnecessary stage in the psychology of human action that is not to be found in Aristotle.<sup>183</sup> To see more clearly what might seem troubling about Aquinas's account of command, it is necessary first to consider Aquinas's own account of this act. According to Aquinas, the act of command is "ordering someone [or something] towards doing something with a certain intimating motion."<sup>184</sup> This ordering, Aquinas tells us, takes place by means of "intimating or announcing."<sup>185</sup> Because intimation and announcement are properly acts of reason, Aquinas concludes that command is properly an act of reason. A more fundamental explanation of this latter point is suggested by a remark of Aquinas at the beginning of his commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. There, Aquinas contends that "knowing the order of one thing to another belongs solely to intellect or reason."<sup>186</sup> But in order to order something or someone towards some action by a command, one must be capable of knowing this order. Consequently, only reason or intellect is capable of the ordering that is constitutive of an act of command.

Now, as described thus far, the act of command seems unlikely to cause consternation among those who might accuse Aquinas of overcomplicating matters. Indeed, who could dispute the view that the powers of the soul must be directed in accordance with the order of reason when executing

<sup>181</sup> ST, I, q. 83, a. 1. See my discussion of this openness to opposites in chapter 1, pages 33–47.

<sup>182</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 147a28–32.

<sup>183</sup> René Antoine Gauthier, "Saint Maxime le Confesseur et la psychologie de l'acte humain," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 21 (1954): 88.

<sup>184</sup> ST, I-II, q. 17, a. 2: "imperare nihil aliud est quam ordinare aliquem ad aliquid agendum, cum quadam intimativa motione."

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, I-II, q. 17, a. 1.

<sup>186</sup> SLE, lib. 1, l. 1: "ordinem tamen unius rei ad aliam cognoscere est solius intellectus aut rationis."

acts? What is problematic therefore, is not the discussion of an act of command, but rather the position that command is an act of practical reason that is distinct from the judgment of choice. Gauthier, for instance, argues for the identification of the command and the judgment of choice.<sup>187</sup> The idea here is that the judgment of choice sufficiently expresses the order found in the executive acts of the soul without requiring an appeal to another cognitive act.

This objection is not, as far as I am aware, directly addressed by Aquinas. Nevertheless, some remarks he makes in his initial discussion of the act of command in ST, I-II, q. 17, a. 1 point the way to a solution. In this article Aquinas points out that there are two ways that reason can intimate or announce:

In one way, absolutely, which intimation is indeed expressed by a verb in the indicative mood; as if someone should say to another “This is to be done by you.” In another way, however, reason intimates something to someone by moving him to this, and such an intimation is expressed by a verb in the imperative mood; for example, when it is said to someone “Do this.”<sup>188</sup>

This second kind of intimation or announcement is proper to command, for the one who commands intends to move who or whatever he commands by his words. By contrast, the first kind of intimation seems to correspond to any judgment, whether practical or speculative. The irreducibility of judgment and command can thus be seen in the irreducibility of one form of intimation to the other.

But perhaps one might wonder if the practical judgment that immediately precedes choice is a special case, especially because it does indeed state what ought to be done in the particular circumstances facing the agent. To answer this concern, it is important to note that while both the practical judgment and command have the means as the terminus at which they aim, the terminus to which the act of judg-

<sup>187</sup> Gauthier, “Saint Maxime le Confesseur et la psychologie de l’acte humain,” 88.

<sup>188</sup> ST, I-II, q. 17, a. 1: “Uno modo, absolute: quae quidem intimatio exprimitur per verbum indicativi modi; sicut si aliquis alicui dicat, *Hoc est tibi faciendum*. Aliquando autem ratio intimat aliquid alicui, movendo ipsum ad hoc: et talis intimatio exprimitur per verbum imperativi modi; puta cum alicui dicitur, *Fac hoc*.”

ment is ordered is the means as true (i.e. as “in conformity with right desire”),<sup>189</sup> whereas the terminus of the act of command is the means as existing.<sup>190</sup> But the means as true and the means as existing are specifically different objects, and consequently the acts of judgment and command are specifically distinct. Thus, Aquinas appears to be justified in distinguishing these acts from each other.

However, one might also object that as pointed out above, the judgment of choice is the intellectual principle of the will’s act of choice. And it is only by moving itself by means of this judgment that the will chooses anything. But the intellectual principle by which something is moved is the act of command. Consequently, the judgment of choice is also a command. However, closer inspection reveals that even in this example, the judgment and command have different objects, for in this case, the object of the judgment is some action, whereas the object of the command is not that same action but rather choosing that action. Therefore, even here, two specifically different acts must be distinguished.

Distinguishing judgment and command also helps explain why a command can be received in a non-cognitive power whereas a judgment cannot. Judgment, insofar as it is about the means as true, can only exist in an apprehensive power, since cognitive powers alone are receptive of the truth. But since the means can be the acts of many different powers, the order of a command can belong to many different powers of the soul.

Of course, not every power of the soul is subject to the command of reason in the same fashion. For example, the power whereby we move our limbs can be moved directly by the command of reason and the consequent use of the will.<sup>191</sup> On the other hand, the sensitive appetites are moved by reason and will only through the mediation of the more particular apprehensions of the inner senses.<sup>192</sup> The unique character of the command of the sensitive appetites is of particular interest in this dissertation

<sup>189</sup> ST, I-II, q. 57, a. 5, ad 3: “Verum autem intellectus practici accipitur per conformitatem ad appetitum rectum.” In the same place, Aquinas notes that only practical truth depends on this kind of conformity.

<sup>190</sup> Evidence of this difference is the fact that we call judgments true or false and do not call commands true or false.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., I-II q. 17, a. 9.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., I-II q. 17, a. 7.

because Aquinas maintains that habits play an important part in subordinating the sensitive appetites to the reason. But it is helpful to consider this subordination in the context of a more general discussion of the order between the sensitive and the rational. It is to this more general consideration of the relationship between the sensitive and the rational that I must now turn.

## 2.4 The Twofold Order of the Sensitive and the Rational

Having outlined both the practical and the theoretical acts of the human being in Aquinas's anthropology, it is now worth stepping back and considering the relationship between the acts of the sensitive part of the soul and those of the rational part of the soul, particularly because habits play a prominent role in integrating these acts for the good of the human being. Throughout his works, Aquinas uses three important terms to express the relationship between the sensitive and rational parts of the soul. Sometimes he speaks of a "continuation" between the sensitive and rational parts. Other times, he maintains that the sense appetites obey reason, often citing Aristotle's discussion of this obedience in *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. 1, ch. 13. Finally, Aquinas also maintains that certain sensitive parts participate in the reason. In what follows, I will briefly consider each of these three ways of considering the relationship between the sensitive and the rational.

### *The Continuation of the Sensitive and the Rational*

The first way of understanding the relationship between the sensitive and rational is as a kind of continuation. Aquinas, adopts this terminology in a question of his *De Veritate* about whether the human mind can know material singulars as such. There, Aquinas maintains that the human intellect can accidentally apprehend singular material beings on account of the continuation (*continuatio*) between intellect and sense. This continuation, Aquinas tells us, is twofold:

In one way, insofar as the motion of the sensitive part is terminated at the mind, as happens in the motion which is from things to the soul. . . . In another way according to the fact that the motion which is from the soul to things begins in the mind and proceeds into the sensitive part insofar as the mind rules over the inferior powers.<sup>193</sup>

The first of these ways has already been discussed in detail in the above account of abstraction. Because as instruments of the agent intellect, the senses move the possible intellect by a motion analogous to physical motion, they can be said to have a continuity with the mind analogous to the continuity between a physical mover and mobile.<sup>194</sup> The second kind of continuation is also explained by an analogy with physical motion. Here, however, the roles of mover and moved are reversed, for as the text and our own experience make clear, the mind can also move the sensitive part of the soul and therefore can be said to have a kind of continuity with the sensitive for this reason as well.

To illustrate this second kind of motion and continuity, Aquinas describes how in the practical syllogism, the universal premise in the mind is applied to a singular action by means of the singular apprehension of particular reason. In this example, the point of contact appears to be the object represented by the middle term of the practical syllogism, for this object is grasped universally by the mind and in its singularity by particular reason. Through the mediation of this object, the mind is able to apply the notions of “ought to be pursued” or “ought to be avoided” (which are conceived universally in the mind and are expressed by the major term) to the singular act expressed by the minor term of the practical syllogism and known by particular reason. Insofar as its apprehension is affected by the mind, particular reason may be described as moved by the mind.

In this text, the relationship between the sensitive and rational is considered primarily from a cognitive perspective, as is appropriate given the context. But it is important to note that the second kind of

<sup>193</sup> *De ver.*, q. 10, a. 5: “[Haec] continuatio est dupliciter: uno modo in quantum motus sensitivae partis terminatur ad mentem, sicut accidit in motu qui est a rebus ad animam. . . . Alio modo secundum quod motus qui est ab anima ad res incipit a mente, et procedit in partem sensitivam prout mens regit inferiores vires.”

<sup>194</sup> Aquinas appears to accept the Aristotelian claim that there is always contact between the mover and mobile. See *In Phys.*, lib. 7, l. 3. Cf. Aristotle, *Physics*, bk. 7, ch. 2. For a brief defense of this Aristotelian claim, see Glen Coughlin, “A Note on Contact between the Mover and the Moved,” in Aristotle, *Physics*, 278–279.



continuation helps explain the way in which the sensitive appetite is subordinate to reason's command, for the sense appetite is only moved by reason through the mediation of a sensitive apprehension. It is therefore appropriate to consider now in more detail the subordination of the sensitive appetite to the rational.

### *The Obedience or Subjection of the Sense Powers to Reason*

Following Aristotle's discussion in *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. 1, ch. 13, Aquinas routinely characterizes the sensitive appetite as obedient or subject to reason.<sup>195</sup> Translating the Latin term "*obedire*" as "to be subject to" is perhaps slightly better here because the English term "obey" frequently connotes subordination to a command. When Aquinas speaks of the subjection of the sense appetites to reason, however, it is clear from his text that he means to indicate that these appetites are subordinate to reason not only by being under reason's command but also in several other ways. For example, in considering whether the sense appetite is subject to (*obediat*) reason in the *De Veritate*, Aquinas claims that the sense appetites are subject to (*subduntur*) reason not only because reason can affect the sensitive apprehension but also because the movement of the rational appetite sometimes overflows into the sensitive appetite and because reason can check the sense appetite so as to prevent it from moving the motive power of the soul.<sup>196</sup> This last point is explained more precisely in a later text from the first part of the *Summa* in which Aquinas explains that the sensitive appetite cannot move the human being to act without the consent of the will.<sup>197</sup> Nevertheless, reason's ability to command the sense appetite by affecting the sensitive apprehension remains a prominent feature in this text of the *Summa*, as well as in the slightly later discussion of this command in ST, I-II, q. 17, a. 7.<sup>198</sup>

<sup>195</sup> For a list of some of these texts, see Kahm, "Thomas Aquinas on the Sense Appetite as Participating in Reason," 260, n. 78.

<sup>196</sup> *De ver.*, q. 25, a. 24.

<sup>197</sup> ST, I, q. 81, a. 3.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

In question 81 of the *prima pars*, Aquinas describes the intellect as commanding the sense appetites by means of the cogitative power (particular reason), whereas in *De ver.*, q. 25, a. 24 and ST, I-II, q. 17, a. 7, he identifies the imagination as the means by which reason commands. These descriptions are not necessarily opposed, however, since as I have already mentioned, the terms imagination and particular reason can sometimes be used generally to denote the powers of memory, imagination, and particular reason taken together.<sup>199</sup> But an important difficulty can be raised about Aquinas's account of reason commanding by affecting the apprehension of the inner senses. As noted above, at least one way in which reason influences the apprehension of the inner senses is by applying a universal consideration about the goodness or badness of an object to a particular apprehension via the practical syllogism. But it does not seem possible to affect the appetites in this manner, since the universal consideration of the mind is not apprehended by the inner sense and therefore cannot serve as the principle of any motion of the sense appetite.

On the other hand, even if it seems impossible for a universal apprehension to serve as the principle of the sense appetite's motion, experience seems to indicate the contrary. In a discussion of anger, for example, Aquinas points out that anger depends on reason denouncing an injury.<sup>200</sup> But understanding an injury as a slight clearly depends on an apprehension that goes beyond the cognitive power of even the inner senses. Perhaps even more clearly, the fact that some action will obtain honor is obviously not knowable by an inner sense power alone. And yet an action that brings honor can be desired quite intensely by the sensitive appetite.<sup>201</sup> Thus it seems that there must be some way in which what is not apprehended by the inner senses can nevertheless be an object of the sense appetite.

To solve this difficulty, I propose to take a middle way between the two alternatives by appealing to the notion of the formal component of a formal object discussed in the previous chapter. One

<sup>199</sup> See page 82 above.

<sup>200</sup> ST, I-II, q. 46, a. 4.

<sup>201</sup> Indeed, Aquinas holds that magnanimity, the virtue pertaining to honor, has the sense appetite as its subject. See *ibid.*, II-II, q. 129, a. 1, ad 1 and ad 2.

prominent example mentioned earlier was light, which was described as a kind of formal component of color. This example is particularly helpful because although we see by means of light, we frequently do not see light by itself, but rather the color illuminated by the light. Indeed, in this case only color is the formal object of the eye, while the light that serves as the formal component of this object is not seen except insofar as it is illuminating color. A similar account may be given of the objects of sensitive apprehension. Sometimes, the apprehension of reason may serve as a formal component of the apprehension of inner sense, making it to be the kind of object that motivates the sensitive appetite. For example, when one apprehends a sensible action as something to be pursued on account of the fact that it will bring honor, the object that the inner sense perceives and the appetite desires is not honor but rather an honor bringing action, just as the eye does not perceive light by itself but rather an illuminated object. In this way, the universal apprehension of reason neither represents the entire object of the sense appetite nor is utterly divorced from that object. Instead, the apprehension of reason serves as the formal component whereby a sensible object is made to be an object of the sense appetite. Thus, the intellect can command the sense appetite by providing the formal component of its objects.

Of course, as already mentioned, the sense powers are not unique in their subjection to human mind, for the motive powers of the soul are also subordinated to reason. Therefore, to see a bit more clearly the unique way in which the sense appetite is subordinate to reason, it is helpful to consider a third way in which the sensitive part of the soul is related to the rational, namely, by participating in it.

### *The Participation of the Sensitive in Reason*

In discussing the relationship of the sensitive appetite to reason, Aquinas frequently describes this appetite as participating in reason. The most thorough consideration of the participation of the sensitive appetite in reason has been provided in a recent work by Nicholas Kahm. Kahm contends that over

the course of his career, Aquinas shifted in his discussions of the participation of the sense appetite in reason from considering this participation principally in terms of formal causality to considering it more in terms of efficient causality. Kahm does not go so far as to say that Aquinas abandoned his earlier view, but suggests merely a shift in emphasis.<sup>202</sup> Kahm, however, focuses exclusively on the sensitive appetite, which leaves open an intriguing question. Do any sensitive powers of cognition also participate in reason, or are the sensitive appetites the only sensitive powers participating in reason?

An early text from Aquinas's commentary on the *Sentences* indicates that the powers of sensitive cognition do not participate in reason. This position is proposed in the context of an argument that the powers of sensitive cognition cannot be the subjects of virtue. In the text, Aquinas writes:

The apprehensive sensitive powers serve the intellect in a different way than the appetitive sensitive powers serve reason and will. For the apprehensive sensitive power serves the intellect by furnishing it with its own [i.e. the sensitive power's] objects, and therefore the intellect more participates something from sense than conversely; but the appetitive sensible power serves the will and reason as movers and thus it participates something from them; and therefore it is in some way rational, namely, in a participative way, but not the sensitive apprehensive powers. And for this reason, the apprehensive sensible power cannot be a subject of virtue as the appetitive sensible power is."<sup>203</sup>

Here, Aquinas argues that the fact that the sensitive apprehensive powers provide their objects to the intellect, rather than being moved by reason, shows that these powers do not participate in reason. This conclusion supports his principal contention that the sensitive appetites are not subject to virtue.

But although this text seems to clearly deny the participation of the cognitive sense powers in reason, a later text from Aquinas's commentary on the *De anima* suggests a different position. In the course of a discussion of the cogitative power, Aquinas writes that "the sensitive power at its highest

<sup>202</sup> Kahm, "Thomas Aquinas on the Sense Appetite as Participating in Reason," esp. 284–285.

<sup>203</sup> *In Sent.*, III, d. 33, q. 2, a. 4, qc. 2, ad 6: "apprehensivae sensitivae aliter serviunt intellectui quam appetitivae sensitivae rationi et voluntati. Apprehensiva enim sensitiva servit intellectui ministrando ei suum objectum, et ideo magis intellectus participat aliquid a sensu quam e converso; sed appetitiva sensibilis servit voluntati et rationi quasi moventi et sic participat aliquid ab ea; et ideo est aequaliter rationalis, scilicet participative, non autem vis apprehensiva sensibilis. Et propter hoc apprehensiva sensibilis non potest esse subjectum virtutis, sicut appetitiva sensibilis."

point participates something from the intellectual power in man.”<sup>204</sup> Moreover, when Aquinas takes up the question of whether the sensitive powers of apprehension can be subjects of virtue in the *Summa*, he does not give an argument that depends upon or implies that the powers of sense cognition do not participate in reason.<sup>205</sup> Finally, the participation of the sense appetites in reason as outlined in the just quoted text from the *Sentences* commentary traces this participation to the fact that the sensitive appetites are moved by reason and will. But Aquinas maintains that at least some of the inner senses such as the imagination, memory, and cogitative faculty can be moved by reason’s command;<sup>206</sup> consequently, the reason for participating in reason, as articulated in the *Sentences* commentary, would seem to apply to them as well. For these reasons, I am hesitant to conclude that for Aquinas the powers of sense apprehension do not participate in reason in any way.

The most likely solution to the question of whether such powers participate in reason is that participation can take place in various degrees and in various ways, such that depending on the sense power being considered, different kinds or degrees of participation in reason may be observed. For present purposes, further precision will not be necessary. Rather, I will speak in a general way of the participation of the sensitive powers of the soul in reason, recognizing that the character and extent of this participation may not be the same in every case, and that for some powers (such as the exterior senses) there may be no participation in reason at all.

A text from Aquinas’s discussion of law near the end of the *prima secundae* helps us to understand in a general way the participation of the sense powers in reason. In this text, Aquinas explains that “the members of the human body . . . do not participate in reason, because they do not have some apprehension ordered according to reason [*ordinatam ad rationem*].”<sup>207</sup> This text suggests that participa-

<sup>204</sup> *In de an.*, lib. 2, cap. 13: “uis sensitiva in sui supremo participat aliquid de vi intellectiva in homine.”

<sup>205</sup> See ST, I-II, q. 56, a. 5, which will be discussed more fully in the last chapter.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, I-II, q. 50, a. 3, ad 3.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, I-II, q. 93, a. 5 ad 2: “sicut membra corporis humani moventur ad imperium rationis, non tamen participant ratione, quia non habent aliquam apprehensionem ordinatam ad rationem.”

tion in human reason depends on two factors: (1) having some kind of apprehension and (2) having an apprehension that is ordered according to reason. This text thus rules out as non-participative two other kinds of power, namely, the motive powers of the soul and the appetites of untamed animals.<sup>208</sup> Insofar as they do not immediately proceed to act from an apprehension, the members of the body and the motive power of the soul, though they are subject to reason, clearly cannot be said to participate in it. The powers of untamed animals also do not participate in reason, for they act from an apprehension that is not ordered in accordance with human reason. By contrast, insofar as they can immediately act from an apprehension ordered by reason, the sensitive powers of the soul can be said to participate in reason.

Indeed, as non-rational powers that have an apprehension ordered by reason, the sensitive powers of the soul are aptly described by Aquinas as participating in reason. As Aquinas himself notes, participation indicates taking in a partial way what something else possesses in a universal way.<sup>209</sup> But as just touched upon, the objects of the sensitive powers of the soul can be partially constituted by an apprehension of human reason. For example, an external action that makes someone worthy of honor, while known to be honorable by reason, is nevertheless something apprehended in its singularity by the senses. Here, the singular apprehension of the sense power receives and is qualified by the universal consideration of reason so as to present a single object of consideration to a power of sensitive cognition and, consequently, a single object of desire to the sense appetite. Since the object is only partially rational, it can clearly be described as participating in reason. But since powers are specified by their objects, the very sensitive powers of the soul may also be described as participating in reason, for their objects participate in the apprehension of reason.

<sup>208</sup> Aquinas does admit, however, that animals participate in the divine reason (see ST, I-II, q. 93, a. 5 ad 2), and so he might agree that once tamed, animals do participate in human reason.

<sup>209</sup> *De ebd.*, l. 2: “Est autem participare quasi partem capere. Et ideo quando aliquid particulariter recipit id quod ad alterum pertinet universaliter, dicitur participare illud.” A helpful discussion of Aquinas’s account may be found in Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 96–110.

By contrast, the members of the human body and the motive power of the soul have proper objects that do not participate in reason. In an act of theft, for example, the proper object of the motive power is money (or some other possession) considered as a physical thing. To be sure, the object of theft is not simply a physical object, but is rather an object considered as ordered by reason to some apparent good. Nevertheless, the motive power only moves instrumentally towards money as an object ordered by reason. As noted earlier, an instrumental cause only brings about the effect of the principal agent by means of a transient power received from the agent. Therefore, when the motive power moves towards money considered not as a physical thing but rather as an object ordered by reason to some apparent good, the motive power is only moving insofar as it has received a transient power ordering it to a rational object. In itself, the motive power remains specified by a non-rational object. Thus, unlike the motive powers of the soul, the sensitive powers have truly rational objects that share in the ordering of reason. For this reason, the sense powers have a special kind of subordination to reason, namely, a participative one.

This way of characterizing the difference between the subordination of the sensitive powers and the subordination of other powers such as the motive powers and bodily members shows the appropriateness of the analogy by which Aquinas frequently illustrates the difference between the subjection of the sensitive appetite and the subjection of the bodily members. Drawing upon a comparison found in Aristotle's *Politics*,<sup>210</sup> Aquinas likens the soul's rule over the bodily members to the despotic rule of a master over his slaves and likens reason's rule over the sensitive appetite to the political rule of a king over free subjects.<sup>211</sup> The basic idea here is that the response of the bodily members to a command from the soul is immediate and without resistance, like that of a slave to his master. By contrast, the sense appetite, since it sometimes resists reason, behaves more like the free subjects of a regime, who

<sup>210</sup> See Aristotle, *Politics*, 1254b1-5.

<sup>211</sup> See for example ST, I, q. 81, a. 3, ad 2. A more complete list of the texts in which Aquinas appeals to this comparison may be found in Kahm, "Thomas Aquinas on the Sense Appetite as Participating in Reason," page 5, n. 16

sometimes resist their rulers. However, the analogy runs even deeper, for as I have pointed out, the sensitive powers, unlike the motive powers or bodily members, in a certain way receive and act from an apprehension of reason in which they share. In this way the sensitive powers of the soul are like the free subjects of a king, who grasp his commands and their purposes before acting upon them. On the other hand, the motive powers or bodily members do not grasp the command by which they are moved and so are more like the slave who does not need to understand the purpose of his master's command, but must only grasp what he must do. Consequently, the difference in subordination of the different powers is not simply based on whether or not they are able to offer resistance; more fundamentally, the difference between these powers is founded on whether or not the apprehension of reason is a principle of their own acts. In powers that participate in reason, the apprehension of reason is received in such a way that it partially constitutes the objects of these powers and serves as a principle of their own acts; but in the case of the non-participative powers, the apprehension of reason is not received, and so the proper acts of these latter powers do not have rational objects. For this reason, the kind of obedience found in these two different kinds of powers is fundamentally different.

### *Summary*

Clearly the sensitive and the rational are related in several ways. On the one hand, the sense powers can move the intellect under the influence of the agent intellect. On the other hand, the mind can move the sensitive powers of the soul in various ways, commanding their obedience and making use of their receptivity to the apprehension of reason. For the good of the human being, therefore, it is very important that the sensitive and intellectual powers of the soul be rightly ordered to each other, and habits play no small role in helping to bring about this order for the perfection of the human being. Therefore, having completed my consideration of distinctively human powers and acts, I will now go



on to examine more carefully Aquinas's thought on the effects of habits on the powers and acts of the human being.

# Chapter 3

## The Subject of Habit

Having set the stage with a discussion of Aquinas's account of human powers and acts, I will now consider in more detail how habits affect these powers and acts. In this chapter, I will focus especially on defending Aquinas's assignment of habits to the different powers of the soul. Though certain cases seem relatively unproblematic, other assignments are more controversial. Of particular concern are the two questions raised at the outset of this dissertation regarding the location of habits with rational objects in the sensitive powers of the soul, and regarding Aquinas's mature position that the will itself requires habits. Accordingly, this chapter will be divided into two main parts. First, I will consider how on Aquinas's account, habits with rational objects can be placed in the sensitive part of the soul. Second I will turn to consider why Aquinas ultimately held that the will itself is in need of habits.

### 3.1 Habits with Rational Objects and the Sensitive Part of the Soul

The question of the location of habits was by no means a universally agreed upon matter in Aquinas's own time. An attempt to reconcile Aristotle's account of the virtuous habits such as courage and temperance with Christian theological commitments set the stage for the medieval dispute. Indeed, though a *prima facie* reading of Aristotle's *Ethics* might suggest that virtues such as courage and temperance are located in the sensitive part of the soul, the great Parisian masters were divided on the issue.<sup>1</sup> Some,

<sup>1</sup> For an overview of this dispute between the medieval authors of this period, see Kent, *Virtues of the Will*, 199–245.

such as Bonaventure, held that properly speaking, virtues only belong to reason and will,<sup>2</sup> whereas Aquinas maintained throughout his career that some virtues, such as fortitude and temperance, can also belong to the sensitive appetite insofar as it participates in reason.<sup>3</sup>

Now although Bonaventure refused to allow for the possibility of virtues in the sensitive part of the soul, he did accept the possibility of *habilitationes* that are not virtues belonging to this part of the soul.<sup>4</sup> However, even if such *habilitationes* are habits, they are not virtues, and so it remains unclear whether Bonaventure would have admitted habits with rational objects in the sensitive part of the soul. Because I am not here directly concerned with the particular question of whether the habits in the sensitive part of the soul should be called virtues, but only with the more general question of whether any sensitive powers can possess habits with rational objects, I will leave to one side a detailed consideration of how Aquinas would respond to Bonaventure's critique. But I will nevertheless continue to speak of virtues existing in the sensitive part of the soul since virtues are, for Aquinas, the most important example of habits with rational objects.<sup>5</sup>

In contemporary philosophy, an even broader challenge has been issued to virtue ethics. Drawing upon data from empirical psychological studies, scholars such as John Doris and Gilbert Harman have argued that such research shows that there is no such thing as virtue as it is generally described.<sup>6</sup> Ac-

<sup>2</sup> Bonaventure, *In Sent.*, III, d. 33, a. 1, q. 3.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, *In Sent.*, III, d. 33, q. 2, a. 4, qc. 2 and ST, I-II, q. 56, a. 4. For a discussion of Bonaventure's and Aquinas's views, see Kent, *Virtues of the Will*, 212–224.

<sup>4</sup> Bonaventure, *In Sent.*, III, d. 33, a. 1, q. 3, ad 1.

<sup>5</sup> A representative text in which Aquinas is evidently responding to a position like Bonaventure's is DVC, a. 10, ad 5: "quando aliqua actio procedit ex pluribus agentibus ad invicem ordinatis, eius perfectio et bonitas impediri potest per impedimentum unius agentium, etiam si aliud fuerit perfectum: quantumcumque enim artifex sit perfectus, non faciet operationem perfectam, si instrumentum fuerit defectivum. In operationibus autem hominis quas oportet bonas fieri per virtutem, hoc considerandum est: quod actio superioris potentiae non dependet ab inferiori potentia; sed actio inferioris dependet a superiori. Et ideo ad hoc quod actus inferiorum virium sint perfecti, scilicet irascibilis et concupiscibilis, requiritur quod non solum intellectus sit ordinatus in finem ultimum per fidem, et voluntas per caritatem; sed etiam quod inferiores vires, scilicet irascibilis et concupiscibilis, habeant proprias operationes, ad hoc quod earum actus sint boni, et ordinabiles in finem ultimum."

<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, John Doris, "Persons, Situations, and Virtue Ethics," *Nous* 32 (1998): 504–507 and Gilbert Harman, "Moral Philosophy Meets Social Psychology: Virtue Ethics and the Fundamental Attribution Error," in *Proceedings of the*

According to Doris, unlike virtues, the habits manifested by people do not always incline their possessors to the right actions but only do so in particular situations in which the right circumstances obtain.<sup>7</sup> This position has come to be called situationism, because it ascribes patterns in moral behavior to situational factors rather than to stable internal dispositions such as habits. But though the empirical results clearly provide an insight into just how much situations influence moral agents, the more general claim of situationism that such results rule out the existence of virtues is an overstatement that has been clearly refuted by contemporary virtue ethicists. For it is generally acknowledged that perfect virtue, if it exists at all, is quite rare, and therefore could not be easily isolated and tested by the methods of empirical psychology.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, though the psychological evidence demonstrates a strong influence of situational factors on the moral decisions of many humans, the evidence does not destroy the possibility of at least some humans developing virtuous habits that dispose them to act well even in the face of widely varying situational influences.

But although the challenge of situationism fails, the argument can be reworked so as to pose a special difficulty for Aquinas's claim that habits with rational objects can exist in sensitive powers of the soul. For Aquinas admits that the sensitive powers of the soul are in natural material organs and yet also claims that nature is determined to one.<sup>9</sup> If this is so, then it seems that we must conclude that habits belonging to natural material powers are themselves ordered to determinate physical ends and therefore lack the flexibility necessary to incline the human being to an object determined by reason in every situation. For example, on this account of habits, an account which seems to follow from

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*Aristotelian Society*, vol. 99 (1999), 315–331.

<sup>7</sup> Doris, "Persons, Situations, and Virtue Ethics," 507. Harman goes even further, claiming that habits may not even be the true explanation even for consistent responses to particular situations; see "Moral Philosophy Meets Social Psychology: Virtue Ethics and the Fundamental Attribution Error," 326.

<sup>8</sup> See Gopal Sreenivasan, "Errors about Errors: Virtue Theory and Trait Attribution," *Mind* 111 (2002): 56–57; Nafsika Athanassoulis, "A Response to Harman: Virtue Ethics and Character Traits," in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, vol. 100 (2000), 217–218. For a slightly different kind of response to the situationist objection based on Aquinas, see Kent, "Dispositions and Moral Fallibility: The UnAristotelian Aquinas."

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, ST, I-II, q. 49, a. 4 ad 2.

Aquinas's own premises, one might be able to habituate oneself to eating a certain amount of food for breakfast every day. But such a habit would not be capable of giving a different inclination when reason called for it. For instance, if one were planning to undertake a particularly strenuous activity one day, reason might call for eating more food than usual. And yet insofar as it is determined to a single physical end the habit would not incline to the end set by reason.<sup>10</sup> Of course, one might be able to foster in oneself a more complex disposition, that would respond correctly to different situational factors. However, it does not seem possible for such a habit to become complex enough to correctly account for every possible variation in circumstances. Habits in material powers thus seem to lack the flexibility necessary to consistently order these powers to rational objects. At most, such material habits would incline us to a consistent set of behaviors for a determinate number of situations.

But though this objection to Aquinas's theory is much stronger, I believe that it can be overcome. In what follows I will present a solution to this difficulty and thereby explain how habits in material powers can nevertheless consistently order us to the rational good. My discussion will be divided into several steps. First, I will discuss two insufficient solutions to this difficulty and why they fail, in order to show the force of objection more clearly. Second, in order to prepare the way for an adequate solution, I will explain in greater detail Aquinas's account of habits, extending and developing the discussion begun at the end of the first chapter of this dissertation. Finally, I will explain how habits existing in material powers such as the sense appetites can nevertheless be habitually inclined to rational objects in a way that transcends the limitations of determinate physical ends.

<sup>10</sup> I owe this example to Butera and De Haan. See Giuseppe Butera, "On Reason's Control of the Passions in Aquinas's Theory of Temperance," *Mediaeval Studies* 68 (2006): 143–145 and De Haan, "Moral Perception and the Function of the *Vis Cogitativa*," 292–293.

### *Inadequate Responses to the Difficulty*

One might try to address the difficulty that habits in physical powers can only incline to determinate physical ends by treating habits with rational objects, such as perfect virtue, merely as ideals. This response would run as follows: If perfect virtue is only an ideal, then there is nothing unusual about the habits that approach this ideal giving a deterministic order to physical ends. Indeed, one might measure how close one's virtuous habit is to the ideal of perfect virtue by the number of situations in which the habit correctly inclines the appetite. Because situations admit of an infinite variety, one would never reach the ideal of a habit that inclines correctly in every instance, but constant experience and practice could bring one close enough to this goal for practical purposes.

The strength of this response follows from the fact that it does not require giving up a lofty idea of perfect virtue or the apparently sound claim that every habit in a physical power is determined to a set physical end in any given situation. However, this response falls short because it implies not only that in some situations, a virtuous habit does not incline a person rightly, but also that in some situations the habit inclines a person in the wrong way. For example, one might be inclined by habit to eat a healthy amount of food and no more. In many situations, such an action would be the appropriate one. But occasionally, it might be uncharitable to refuse food, even if eating such food would damage health. For instance, it might be wrong to refuse a second slice of apple pie from one's grandmother because it would hurt her feelings. But while it seems possible to call a habit a virtue (at least an imperfect virtue) when it often (even if not always) inclines one towards the right actions, it is hard to justify calling a habit even an imperfect virtue if in certain situations, such a habit inclines one's appetite wrongly. Thus the solution remains inadequate from Aquinas's perspective, for it ultimately concedes that habits in physical powers cannot have rational objects and so is incompatible with with Aquinas's theory of virtue.

Given the inadequacy of the above solution, one might take a different tack. Perhaps some habits in the sensitive powers of the soul do not positively incline one to appropriate acts, but merely render the appetite obedient to reason by suppressing any movements or inclinations of the appetite antecedent to the command of reason, leaving the appetite free to follow reason's dictates. This escapes the undesirable implication of the previous solution, according to which virtuous habits might sometimes incline the appetite wrongly and instead suggests a way in which habits might be said to be determined to something non-physical, namely, the dictates of reason. Nevertheless, this solution is also insufficient, for if all that habits with rational objects do is render the appetite subject to reason, then there is no intrinsic difference between virtuous and vicious habits. Indeed, both the virtuous and the vicious are characterized by possessing appetites that are obedient to reason, and so if a habit should merely render the appetite obedient to reason, it could be both a virtue and a vice depending on the goodness or malice of reason's dictates. In fact, this account implies that a change of mind would immediately result in a change of heart. But such an account flies in the face of common experience, which tells us that people with entrenched habits (whether good or evil) find it difficult to change their inclinations even after they have changed their minds about the goodness or malice of actions. Thus this second solution is also insufficient.

In sum, one cannot sufficiently answer the challenge to the possibility of habits with non-physical ends by arguing that such habits are merely an ideal to be approached more or less closely by habits that provide a deterministic order to physical ends. Nor can one claim that habits with non-physical ends merely check the urges of the sensitive powers of the soul, rendering them docile to the command of reason. A more complete answer is clearly required. In order to provide such an answer, I must first analyze Aquinas's account of habits more closely, before returning to the question at hand.

### *Aquinas's Account of Habits*

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I made a foray into Aquinas's theory of habit by means of a consideration of the necessity of habits for human beings. In this section, I will embark on a fuller consideration of Aquinas's theory of habit, without neglecting to reiterate and develop some of the points touched upon earlier, especially when such a development will help shed light upon the way in which habits affect human powers and acts.

#### **Nature and the Ontological Categorization of Habits**

The most important text for present purposes is questions 49–54 of the *prima secundae*, which comprise the most detailed and systematic treatment of habits in Aquinas's corpus. One particularly striking feature of this treatment is the fact that it is geared towards explaining not only habits that are ordered towards operation (which I will call operative habits) but also those ordered to the forms of physical beings (which are sometimes called entitative habits). This might appear surprising, given the fact that the most important source for Aquinas's treatment is Aristotle, who clearly devoted much more philosophical effort to a discussion of habits ordered to operation, especially the virtues. However, as a careful reader of the Aristotelian corpus, Aquinas finds Aristotle also referring to qualities such as health and beauty as habits.<sup>11</sup> By contrast with virtues and vices, these habits do not immediately dispose humans or other living beings to their operations. Rather, habits such as health and beauty (as well as their opposites, illness and ugliness) dispose their possessors to possessing their natural forms more or less perfectly. Thus, Aquinas is left with the task of explaining why such different kinds of

<sup>11</sup> Aristotle refers to health as a habit in *Metaphysics*, Δ, ch. 20, 1022b10–13. Aquinas finds him mentioning health along with beauty and strength as habits in *Physics*, bk. 7, ch. 3, 246b21–22. Note that this latter text has come down to us in two somewhat different versions. Consequently, the version Aquinas commented on differs from the one found in some contemporary translations. The Greek of both versions is available in *Aristotelis physica*, ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966). In *Categories*, ch. 8, 8b35–9a4, Aristotle refers to health as a more changeable disposition, although even there, he admits that health might be called a habit if it became sufficiently difficult to remove.



qualities can all be called habits.

Aquinas approaches this task in light of Aristotle's more general discussion of qualities in *Categories* 8 and Simplicius's commentary on that passage, which had been translated into Latin by William of Moerbeke in 1266, only a few years before Aquinas began the *prima secundae*.<sup>12</sup> In agreement with both Aristotle and Simplicius, Aquinas divides the category of quality into four species: (1) habit and disposition, (2) power or natural power, (3) passible quality, and (4) shape or figure.<sup>13</sup> But in discussing the principles by which habit is specified as a unique kind of quality, Aquinas ultimately rejects the explanation of the division of the category of quality proposed by Simplicius. Instead, he argues that habits along with dispositions (their more easily lost counterparts) belong to a distinct species of quality on account of their special relationship to nature.<sup>14</sup>

To reach this conclusion, Aquinas begins with the general claim that every quality somehow determines its subject, and so an essential difference in the mode of determination results in a distinct kind of quality.<sup>15</sup> Qualities in the species of figure, for instance, determine their subjects in relationship to quantity.<sup>16</sup> For example, the quality "curved," when possessed by a person's nose, would determine that nose to possess its extended surface in a curved way. Natural powers and passible qualities, on the other hand, determine their subject in relationship to the actions and passions which follow upon the natural principles of matter and form.<sup>17</sup> For example, the powers of the human soul relate the person to certain determinate actions or passions. According to Aquinas, what is essential to every habit

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the role of Simplicius's commentary in Aquinas's account of habit, see V. Boland, "Aquinas and Simplicius on Dispositions - A Question in Fundamental Moral Theory," *New Blackfriars* 82 (2001): 467–478. For the dating of Moerbeke's translation, see James A. Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas d'Aquino: His Life, Thought, and Works* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1983), 152.

<sup>13</sup> ST, I-II, q. 49, a. 2, co. For a general overview of Aquinas's account of the division of the category of quality, see Nicholas Kahm, "Aquinas on Quality," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 24 (2016): 23–44. Kahm makes some questionable claims, particularly regarding the third species of quality. However, I cannot address those claims here.

<sup>14</sup> ST, I-II, q. 49, a. 2, co.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

and disposition is that it determines its subject “in an order to the nature of the thing.”<sup>18</sup> Health, for example, gives a human person an order to human nature, in the sense of helping the person possess his or her nature more perfectly. The importance of the relationship of habit to nature is emphasized by Bernard Inagaki, who maintains that Aquinas is unique among the scholastics of his time in highlighting relationship to nature as the key characteristic of habits and dispositions.<sup>19</sup> Aquinas goes on to point out that the term “nature,” when used in the definition of habit and disposition, should be understood as an end or goal.<sup>20</sup>

But here an important question arises. In what way can a habit that belongs to a power of the soul be said to determine its subject “in an order to the nature of the thing”?<sup>21</sup> This question becomes especially puzzling when only one question after characterizing habits by their order to nature, we find Aquinas claiming that “a habit whose subject is a power does not imply order to nature but to operation.”<sup>22</sup> It seems as though shortly after highlighting the relationship of habits to nature, Aquinas is all too ready to abandon the universality of this characterization.

A way to harmonize the apparent contradiction can be found by reflecting on the already established principle that powers are specified by their acts and objects. Given this principle, it follows that the very nature of a power comes from its acts, which specify as extrinsic formal causes.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the acts or operations of a power may be said to possess in actuality the very nature of the power, while the

<sup>18</sup> ST, I-II, q. 49, a. 2: “in ordine ad naturam rei.”

<sup>19</sup> See Bernard Ryosuke Inagaki, “Habitudo and Natura in Aquinas,” in *Studies in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. John F. Wippel, vol. 17, *Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1987), 165–168 and “Virtue and Justification: A Consideration of Thomas Aquinas’ Treatise of Virtue,” in *L’Homme et son Univers au Moyen Âge*, ed. Christian Wenin, vol. 2 (Louvain-La-Neuve: Editions de L’Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, 1986), 793–795.

<sup>20</sup> ST, I-II, q. 49, a. 2. Cf. Inagaki, “Habitudo and Natura in Aquinas,” 168.

<sup>21</sup> ST, I-II, q. 49, a. 2.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, I-II, q. 50, a. 2, ad 3: “habitus cuius potentia est subiectum, non importat ordinem ad naturam, sed ad operationem.”

<sup>23</sup> Following some of Aquinas’s scholastic commentators, James Maloney maintains that acts themselves are specified by objects as extrinsic formal causes. And it is clear that something similar may be said regarding the relationship of powers to their acts and objects. See James R. Maloney, *The Formal Constituent of a Sin of Commission* (Somerset, Ohio: Rosary Press, Inc., 1947), 31–36.

power itself must be identified as this nature existing only in a state of potentiality. In other words, the very nature of a power exists actually only in its acts.<sup>24</sup> If, therefore, Aquinas is right that every habit determines a subject to its nature, then every habit existing in a power will determine that power to its acts or operations, for in these acts will be found the nature of the power in actuality. Consequently, when Aquinas says that habits in powers of the soul imply an order to operation rather than an order to nature, we should take him to be saying that such habits do not imply an immediate order to the nature of the substance to which they belong but rather to the nature existing actually in the operations of the power to which they belong. The key here is to determine precisely what the nature is to which a habit is related. Operative habits immediately order powers to the nature of the power as existing in its acts, not to the nature of the substance to which the powers belong.

But though the nature to which operative habits immediately dispose powers is not the nature of the substance, such habits are not unconnected with the nature of the substance. For as I noted in the first chapter, the powers of the soul, like every accident, exist for the sake of the substance to which they belong.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, for the powers to operate well and achieve their ends they must achieve what is good for the substance to which they belong by engaging in operations that befit the nature of the substance. Consequently, whether a habit disposes its power well or badly depends on whether the operations to which habits order their powers are befitting or unbecoming to the nature of the substance.

Now according to Aquinas, because habits have an essential order to nature, they are distinguished not only by their objects (as the powers of the soul are), but also by their relationship to nature. Because habits can provide either a fitting or unfitting order to nature, habits can be essentially divided into good and evil genera depending on the kind of order that they give to their subject. In the case of operative habits, the good ones are called virtues and the evil ones vices. And since virtues and vices

<sup>24</sup> In *Aquinas on Human Self-Knowledge*, 157–60, Cory indicates that the intellect exists actually in its acts. But from the fact that powers are specified by acts, one can say more generally that the nature of any power exists actually in its acts.

<sup>25</sup> See page 22 above.

are distinguished by their order to nature, it is clear that human virtues and vices will be distinguished on the basis of whether they dispose us to operations in accordance with our rational nature or in opposition to it.<sup>26</sup>

However, operative habits not only dispose their powers to operation, they also dispose these powers to their active principles. To see this, it is important to note that according to Aquinas, such habits only belong to powers that are passive.<sup>27</sup> The reason Aquinas gives for this claim is that nothing is received in active powers as such.<sup>28</sup> Since such powers are passive, they must be moved to their operations by active principles. Now because the active principle is a cause of the operation, the operation must be like the active principle, for as I have already pointed out, effects must be like their causes. And therefore any disposition to a given kind of operation will at the same time be a disposition to the likeness of that operation in the active principle. Consequently, by disposing a power to operation, a habit at the same time disposes that power to be moved by its active principle.

The virtues themselves are excellent examples of habits that dispose their powers to be moved by their active principles. Indeed, in the course of an explanation of why there are virtues in the sensitive appetite, Aquinas himself indicates that virtuous habits dispose the sensitive appetites not only to operations but also towards active principles. There, he points out that “the good disposition of a power that is a moved mover is observed to take place according to its conformity to the moving power.”<sup>29</sup> From this it follows that, as a good disposition, virtue not only orders its power to fitting acts, but also orders its power to being moved to such acts by the active principle.

<sup>26</sup> ST, I-II, q. 54, a. 2 and 3.

<sup>27</sup> DVC, q. 9, ad 10.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.: “ad actionem hominis concurrunt virtutes activae et passivae; et licet a virtutibus, in quantum activae, fiat emissio, et in eis nihil recipiatur; tamen passivis in quantum passivae, competit acquirere aliquid per receptionem. Unde in potentia quae est tantum activa, ut in intellectu agente, non acquiritur aliquis habitus per actionem.” Cf. ST, I-II, q. 51, a. 2. It has already been pointed out in my discussion of the necessity of habits that only passive powers need operative habits. But the text from DVC further explains that passive powers alone can have such habits.

<sup>29</sup> ST, I-II, q. 56, a. 4: “bona dispositio potentiae moventis motae, attenditur secundum conformitatem ad potentiam moventem.”

For example, according to Aquinas the virtue of chastity disposes the concupiscible appetite to acting well with regard to sexual pleasures.<sup>30</sup> But this virtue also orders the concupiscible power to being moved well by the active principle of such acts. In this case, the active principle of the virtuous movement of the concupiscible appetite is reason insofar as it commands an appropriate movement in the concupiscible appetite. Only when the concupiscible power is disposed to readily receive the appropriate commands of reason regarding sexual pleasures is it well disposed to acting well in regard to sexual matters.

Thus far, I have shown that habit is categorized by Aquinas as a kind of quality that determines its subject to nature considered as an end. Moreover, among the different kinds of habit, the operative habit has been shown to dispose a passive power both to the active principle of its operations and to the very nature of that power as actually existing in its operations. But before concluding this discussion of habits, I must consider a bit more carefully the way in which operative habits order their subjects to operations.

### **How Habits Dispose Their Subjects to Operations**

I have already discussed to some extent how habits order their subjects to operations in the context of my consideration of the necessity of habits in chapter 1, but it is worth returning to this theme in a bit more detail in order to explain the effect of habits on powers, especially because we are faced with an objection to the possibility of habits disposing a sense power to operations aiming at rational objects. Before beginning however, it will be helpful to briefly discuss the term “disposition” (*dispositio*), which according to Aquinas, has several different senses:

“Disposition,” however, may be taken in two ways: (1) in one way as the genus of habit, for in *Metaphysics* V, disposition is placed in the definition of habit; (2) in another way as something divided against habit. And “disposition” in this proper sense can be understood

<sup>30</sup> ST, II-II, q. 151, a. 3.

as divided against habit in two ways. In one way (2a), as the perfect and imperfect in the same species, as evidently something is called a disposition (retaining the common name) when it belongs imperfectly such that it is easily lost, but [it is called] habit when it belongs perfectly such that it is not easily lost. And thus disposition belongs to habit as boy to man. In another way (2b), they [habit and disposition] can be distinguished as diverse species of one subordinate genus, such that the name “disposition” is given to those qualities of the first species [i.e. the species of quality that contains habits] whose proper definition [*ratio*] includes the fact that they are easily lost because they have changeable causes.<sup>31</sup>

“Disposition” thus can be used to signify (2a) a partially formed habit that can still be easily lost, (2b) a dispositional state that by the very nature of its causes is easily lost, and (1) the genus that includes disposition (taken in its two more proper senses) as well as habit. Because this more general term refers in common to both habits and dispositions (in the more particular sense), it is evidently another name for the first species of quality, which has been referred to above as habit and disposition. In what follows, I will for the most part use the term “disposition” in this more general sense (sense 1), making it clear by context when I intend to use the term in a more specific sense.

Having clarified the senses of the term “disposition,” I will now go on to consider how habits dispose powers of the soul to operation. It is helpful to begin by noting an important difference between the way Aquinas speaks about dispositions and the way he describes the other species of quality. As noted above, Aquinas conceives of every kind of quality as determining a subject to something, but when he speaks of the determining relationship, one notices important differences in how he refers to dispositions as opposed to the other kinds of quality. When speaking about figures, for example,

<sup>31</sup> ST, I-II, q. 49, a. 2: “Dispositio autem dupliciter accipitur, uno modo, secundum quod est genus habitus, nam in V Metaphys. dispositio ponitur in definitione habitus; alio modo, secundum quod est aliquid contra habitum divisum. Et potest intelligi dispositio proprie dicta condividi contra habitum, dupliciter. Uno modo, sicut perfectum et imperfectum in eadem specie, ut scilicet dispositio dicatur, retinens nomen commune, quando imperfecte inest, ita quod de facile amittitur; habitus autem, quando perfecte inest, ut non de facili amittatur. Et sic dispositio fit habitus, sicut puer fit vir. Alio modo possunt distingui sicut diversae species unius generis subalterni, ut dicantur dispositiones illae qualitates primae speciei, quibus convenit secundum propriam rationem ut de facili amittantur, quia habent causas transmutabiles” Cf. Aristotle, *Categories*, 8. For a discussion of the notion of “disposition” in Aristotle’s texts, from which Aquinas evidently draws many of his ideas, see Rémi Brague, “De la disposition: A propos de diathesis chez Aristotle,” in *Concepts et catégories dans la pensée antique*, ed. Pierre Aubenque (Paris: J. Vrin, 1980), 285–307.

Aquinas says they determine their subjects with respect to [*secundum*] quantity. Likewise, natural powers and passible qualities are said to determine their subjects with respect to [*secundum*] action and passion. But habits and dispositions are described as determining their subjects “in an order to [*in ordine ad*] the nature of the thing.”<sup>32</sup> Here, the determination of the subject is not described by the more general term of relation “*secundum*.” Instead, the determination is referred to as an *ordo* or order. Thus, operative dispositions are not simply principles of relation; they in fact constitute an order in a power of the soul.

Aquinas’s understanding of the distinctive relationship of order to the first species of quality (as opposed to the other species of quality) appears to have been a later development in his thought, perhaps influenced by Simplicius’s commentary on the *Categories*. For in his commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* Δ, Aquinas includes the fourth species of quality, figure, as a kind of disposition involving order,<sup>33</sup> whereas by the time of the *Summa*, he no longer interprets Aristotle’s text in a way that renders figure as kind of order, instead following a different interpretation proposed by Simplicius.<sup>34</sup> So, while I have not found evidence that Aquinas ever rejected the notion of disposition as an order, he seems to only have recognized the distinctive relationship of dispositions to order rather late in his career.

Now according to Aquinas, order presupposes distinction.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, this is evident from experience. The order between the members of a football team presupposes that they are distinct from each other; likewise, the order between the musical notes of a symphony demands their distinction. Clearly, then, whatever is the subject of an order must also be in some way distinguished into different parts. It is not surprising, therefore, to find Aquinas readily accepting Aristotle’s description of disposition as “an order of a thing that has parts.”<sup>36</sup>

In the first chapter, I established on both textual and philosophical grounds that the parts ordered

<sup>32</sup> ST, I-II, q. 49, a. 2: “in ordine ad naturam rei.”

<sup>33</sup> *In Metaph.*, lib. V, l. 20.

<sup>34</sup> ST, I-II, q. 49, a. 1, ad 3.

<sup>35</sup> *In Sent.*, I, d. 20, q. 1, a. 3 qc. 1, co.

<sup>36</sup> ST, I-II, q. 49, a. 1 arg. 3 and ad 3: “dispositio est ordo habentis partes.” See *Metaphysics*, 1022b1: “Διάθεσις λέγεται τοῦ ἔχοντος μέρη τάξις.”

by an operative habit are parts of the very power in which the habit resides. Moreover, since powers are known through their acts, I noted that the diversity of parts in powers is only grasped distinctly in relation to the diversity found in their acts. At that time, I observed that the differences in the kinds of acts produced by a power point to different parts in the power itself. For example, different acts of love such as loving God and loving one's spouse point to different parts in the will relating to each act. As a consequence, I argued that one way operative habits might be understood as providing order is by appropriately ranking the power's inclinations towards these different acts, for instance, by inclining one more strongly towards love of God than towards love of one's spouse. This interpretation is supported by Aquinas's discussion of how the theological virtue of charity disposes a person to love certain persons more deeply than others. Similarly, in his discussion of the various acts belonging to the virtue of religion, Aquinas argues that devotion is the principal act of this virtue, followed by prayer, with exterior acts such as sacrifice and oblation coming last in this order.<sup>37</sup> Thus the different parts of a power that an operative habit orders may be understood in relation to different kinds of acts.

However, further reflection on the texts of Aquinas suggests that powers possess a second kind of diversity of parts as well. This diversity can also be grasped by means of the acts of a power. But here, the distinction of parts does not follow from different kinds of acts, but from differences within individual acts. For according to Aquinas, the circumstances of an act are, in a certain extended sense, parts belonging to an act.<sup>38</sup> In his *Sentences* commentary, for example, Aquinas speaks of "circumstances, which are as it were [*quasi*] parts of a virtuous act."<sup>39</sup> The idea here seems to be that taken together, the circumstances in a certain way help to make up whatever action is done. Although there is a specific focus on virtuous acts in this text, Aquinas does not appear to be restricting to virtuous

<sup>37</sup> ST, II-II, q. 83, a. 3, ad 1: "post devotionem, quae pertinet ad ipsam voluntatem, oratio, quae pertinet ad partem intellectivam, est praecipua inter actus religionis."

<sup>38</sup> For a general discussion of Aquinas on the circumstances of acts, see Pilsner, *The Specification of Human Actions in St. Thomas Aquinas*, ch. 7.

<sup>39</sup> *In Sent.*, IV, d. 49, q. 5, a. 2, qc. 3, co. "circumstantias, quae sunt quasi partes virtuosus actus."



acts alone the notion that circumstances are parts.

Now this might seem strange, because circumstances such as the time and place of an action seem to be extrinsic to the action itself, whereas parts are intrinsic to the whole they compose. For example, if someone steals from a church on Christmas, the circumstance of place (in a church) and time (on Christmas) do not seem to be parts of the very act of stealing. But Aquinas's position appears more plausible in light of the analogy he draws between natural substances and human action. When speaking of natural substances Aquinas maintains that the complete individual being or *suppositum* includes both the substantial nature and its accidents.<sup>40</sup> But according to Aquinas, the circumstances of an action are accidents that are "outside the substance of the act, and nevertheless in some way belong to [*atingunt*] the human act."<sup>41</sup> Consequently, one can say that by analogy with substances, a complete individual act includes both the substance of the act and its accidents, namely, its circumstances. To be sure, the comparison here is only by way of analogy, but it helps to shed some light on why Aquinas would treat the circumstances of an act as parts of it. Moreover, Aquinas himself clearly understands that his description is analogical, for in every case in which I have found him speaking of circumstances as parts of an act, he qualifies his claim with the word *quasi* (as it were). Thus, it appears reasonable to accept that the circumstances of an act can be called parts of it in a qualified sense.

In his later commentary on Aristotle's *Ethics* Aquinas again speaks of the circumstances of a virtuous act, noting that operations according to virtue "are beautiful according to a due order of circumstances as if [*quasi*] of certain parts, for beauty consists in a due commensuration [*commensuratione*] of parts."<sup>42</sup> This text is especially helpful because it highlights the fact that the circumstances of an act

<sup>40</sup> *Quod. II*, q. 2 a. 2 co.: "suppositum autem non solum habet hec que ad rationem speciei pertinent, sed etiam alia que ei accidunt; et ideo suppositum significatur ut totum, natura autem siue quidditas ut pars formalis." Cf. *In Sent.*, lib. 3 d. 6 q. 2 a. 2 co.: "nec natura rei nec partes ejus proprie dicuntur esse, si esse praedicto modo accipiat; similiter autem nec accidentia, sed suppositum completum, quod est secundum omnia illa."

<sup>41</sup> ST, I-II, q. 7, a. 1: "extra substantiam actus, et tamen attingunt aliquo modo actum humanum."

<sup>42</sup> SLE, lib. 1, l. 13: "pulchrae autem sunt secundum ordinem debitum circumstantiarum quasi quarundam partium, nam in debita commensuratione partium pulchritudo consistit."

can be set in a certain order with each other. Consequently, just as a diversity in the kinds of acts makes it possible to introduce an order among them, so a diversity in the various parts of a single act makes ordering these parts possible.

Moreover, since powers are known through their acts, one can find a diversity in a power corresponding to the diversity found among the various parts of one of its acts. Therefore, just as a habit can give order to the parts of a power that correspond to the different kinds of acts that power is capable of eliciting, so too a habit can give order to the parts of a power that correspond to the parts of a single act. For instance, chastity disposes one's appetite to desire sexual pleasure in the right way, at the right time, and so on with regard to other relevant circumstances of the act, such that each circumstance is duly ordered to the goodness and beauty of the entire act. In some cases, it may be that habits dispose both kinds of parts in a power of the soul. For example, it seems reasonable to say that charity, as described by Aquinas, demands loving one's neighbor in the right way and at the right time (ordering the circumstances of an act) with a love that is subordinate to the love of God (subordinating one act of charity to another). Thus the parts ordered by habits may be taken in reference to different kinds of act, in reference to distinct parts within a single act, and perhaps even in reference to both different kinds of act and the parts of a single act.

Thus far, I have been focusing on the distinction of parts, in order to show how "distinction," as a general property of every sort of order, should be understood in the case of the order introduced by habits. I have shown that the distinct parts ordered by habits are parts of powers taken in reference to acts. But according to Aquinas, distinction is not the only necessary condition of order, for as he points out in the *Summa*, "order is always said by comparison to some principle."<sup>43</sup> In this text, Aquinas seems to be advancing another aspect of order, namely, that it is always understood in reference to a principle or source of that order. For example, the integers greater than the number one are ordered

<sup>43</sup> ST, I, q. 42, a. 3, co.: "ordo semper dicitur per comparationem ad aliquod principium."

based on how many units they are made up of, for which reason it is clear that the number one serves as a principle of this order. Since every order implies a principle, one wonders what the principle is in the particular order constituted by an operative habit.

The answer to this question is suggested by the very definition of habit as a quality that determines its subject “in an order to nature.” As I have already noted, Aquinas understands the nature to which an operative habit is immediately ordained to exist in the act of the power to which that habit belongs. Moreover, Aquinas understands the nature as found in this act as kind of end.<sup>44</sup> Thus, that to which an operative habit orders its subject is an act considered as an end. But the end to which some order is directed is a principle of that order, and therefore the principle of the order constituted by an operative habit seems to be an act considered as an end. Moreover since an end is something taken as good, the principle of the order constituted by this kind of habit is an act considered as good.

This account fits well with the descriptions Aquinas gives of particular kinds of habits. Virtues, for example, are described as inclining powers of the soul towards particular kinds of good operations such as generous, chaste, or patient acts. Vices, on the other hand, incline the powers towards evil acts which nevertheless appear good. Lust, for example, inclines one’s appetite to take unbridled delight in sexual pleasures.<sup>45</sup> A similar ordering to the good is found in habits of the intellect. A scientific habit such as geometry orders one to the act of grasping geometrical truth in light of the principles of geometry. Since understanding geometrical truth is a good of the intellect, the habit of geometry orders one to the good of the power to which it belongs.

Gathering together the various elements of this discussion of habits, one can distill two particularly important aspects of habit to bear in mind moving forward. First, unlike natural powers, which determine their subjects to actions and passions, every habit determines its subject to nature considered as an end. To be sure, operative habits do indeed incline their powers to actions or passions, but they

<sup>44</sup> ST, I-II, q. 49, a. 2.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., II-II, q. 153, a. 1.

incline their powers to these actions and passions as certain natures, not as actions or passions. Second, the parts of powers that are ordered by habits can be understood by reference to distinctions found in the acts of these powers. Because a power can produce many distinct kinds of act and any given act can have many distinct circumstances, the power itself can be understood to possess many different parts. By ordering the parts of the power, a habit at the same time disposes the power towards operations that possess a similar order as well as towards the active principles of such operations. These conclusions regarding habits will remain important as I proceed to consider the effects of habits on human powers and acts.

### *The Order of Habits in the Sensitive Part of the Soul to the Rational*

Having given an overview of Aquinas's theory of habits, I will now return to the question at hand: how can habits with rational objects exist in the sensitive appetite? To fully answer this question, I will first give a positive argument on the basis of Aquinas's principles in order to show that any habits existing in the sensitive powers of the soul must be ordered to rational objects. Second, I will show how Aquinas can solve the objection raised earlier.

To show why habits in the sensitive part of the soul have rational objects, I must begin by recalling some important points about the relationship between the sensitive and the rational established at the end of the previous chapter. There, I maintained that in contrast to the motive powers of the soul, the sensitive appetite and perhaps even some of the inner senses participate in reason on account of the fact that their objects are partially rational. Because the very nature of a power is specified by its acts and objects, such powers participate in reason by their very nature.

Now as just noted in the discussion of habits above, because the powers of the soul are specified by their acts, the very nature of such powers exists actually in the operations of those powers. But operative habits dispose powers of the soul in an order to their nature as expressed in their operations.

Therefore, habits that exist in sensitive powers of the soul that participate in reason must necessarily order those powers to acts which participate in reason. Moreover, since such acts are specified by their objects, the objects of such acts must share in reason as well. And so habits which belong to sensitive powers that participate in reason also order these powers to acts and objects that share in reason. For example, the concupiscible appetite can be ordered by a habit of chastity to desire and take delight in sexual acts according to the order of reason. Here, the object of the appetitive acts is sexual activity insofar as it conforms to the order of reason such that all the circumstances relating to sexual activity conform to the order of reason. Even the opposing vice of lust orders the appetite to the sexual act as conforming to an ordering of reason. Of course in this case, the order of reason is based on a false conception of what is truly good, such as the opinion that all pleasure is to be pursued. But in both cases, the habits have objects that are not merely sensible goods but are also constituted as good by reference to an apprehension of reason. Thus, if a habit is received into a sensitive power insofar as it participates in reason, that habit is ordered to a rational object.

Now Aquinas does suggest that even powers that participate in reason, such as the sensitive appetites, can be considered simply as sensitive. For example, in the *De virtutibus in communi*, he speaks of “the irascible and the concupiscible considered according to themselves,”<sup>46</sup> and in the *Summa* he points out that “the irascible and the concupiscible do not obey reason immediately, but have their own proper motions.”<sup>47</sup> But considered simply as sensitive, such powers are not receptive of habits, as Aquinas tells us in a text from the *Summa*:

The sensitive powers can be considered in two ways. In one way, according to the fact that they operate from natural instinct; in another way, according to the fact that they operate from the command of reason. Therefore, according to the fact that they operate from natural instinct they are to this extent ordered to one as also nature [is ordered to one].

<sup>46</sup> DVC, a. 4, ad 11: “irascibilis et concupiscibilis secundum se consideratae .” Cf. Ibid., a. 1, co.

<sup>47</sup> ST, I-II, q. 56, a. 4, ad 3: “irascibilis et concupiscibilis non ad nutum obediunt rationi, sed habent proprios motus suos.”

And therefore as in natural powers, there is not some habit, so also there is not some habit in the sensitive powers according to the fact that they operate from natural instinct.<sup>48</sup>

Considered according to themselves, that is, insofar as they operate from natural instinct, the sensitive powers are already determined to their proper operations. In this respect, therefore, such powers cannot receive a habitual determination to their natural operations precisely because they already possess this determination naturally.

Thus, Aquinas's principles lead to two important conclusions. First, every habit that belongs to a sensitive power insofar as it participates in reason is ordered to a rational object. Second, sensitive powers considered not insofar as they participate in reason, but only insofar as they operate from natural instinct are not susceptible of habits. Moreover, it is evident that these two ways of considering the human sensitive powers—namely, as participating in reason or as operating from natural instinct—are exhaustive, such that there is no third way of considering such powers that is not reducible to one or the other of these two ways.<sup>49</sup> From these premises, it follows that if there are any habits in the sensitive powers of the human soul, they have rational objects.

But if the objection raised earlier is correct, and there are no habits with rational objects in the sensitive powers of the soul, then it would be necessary to conclude that there are no habits at all in the sensitive powers. Therefore, I will now turn to address this objection.

The objection results from a misapplication of Aquinas's axiom "everything that is received in something is received in it according to the mode of the receiver."<sup>50</sup> According to the objection,

<sup>48</sup> ST, I-II, q. 50, a. 3: "vires sensitivae dupliciter possunt considerari: uno modo, secundum quod operantur ex instinctu naturae; alio modo, secundum quod operantur ex imperio rationis. Secundum igitur quod operantur ex instinctu naturae, sic ordinantur ad unum, sicut et natura. Et ideo sicut in potentiis naturalibus non sunt aliqui habitus, ita etiam nec in potentiis sensitivis, secundum quod ex instinctu naturae operantur."

<sup>49</sup> Note that I make this claim only with regard to the natural order. Perhaps in the supernatural order, there is a third way of considering the sense appetites, namely, as moved supernaturally by God. However, I will not here consider this possibility, since I am immediately concerned with what is the case from a purely philosophical perspective, abstracting from supernatural influences.

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, *ibid.*, III, q. 54, a. 2, ad 1: "omne quod recipitur in aliquo, recipitur in eo secundum modum recipientis." This axiom appears throughout Aquinas's work. For a particularly detailed treatment of this axiom, see John

because the sensitive powers of the soul are powers that exist in physical matter, any habit received into them would be received in a physical way, by the aforesaid axiom. But every physical material thing is determined to one physical end. And so any habit received in a physical sense power would necessarily also determine it to one physical object.

Aquinas, however, has distinguished between the sense powers considered as operating by natural instinct and considered as commanded by or participating in reason. Thus, Aquinas does not hold that habits are received into the sense powers as physical; rather he contends that such habits are received into the sense powers as participating in reason. A text from the *De virtutibus in communi* clearly indicates that this is Aquinas's position:

It should be said that there is found in forms a certain gradation. For there are certain forms and powers [*virtutes*] totally impressed into matter, the every action of which is material; as is evident in the case of the elemental forms. But the intellect is totally free from matter; whence its operation is without the participation [*communione*] of the body. The irascible and concupiscible, however, have a middle place. For the fact that they use a bodily organ is shown by the bodily change which is joined to their acts; on the other hand, the fact that they are in some way elevated above matter is shown through the fact that that they are moved by a command and obey reason. And thus virtue is in them insofar as they are elevated above matter and obey reason.<sup>51</sup>

Much the same point is made in parallel discussions in the *Summa*<sup>52</sup> and the *Sentences* commentary.<sup>53</sup>

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Tomarchio, "The Modus Principle in the Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas" (PhD diss., The Catholic University of America, 1996).

<sup>51</sup> DVC, a. 4, ad 4: "Ad quartum dicendum, quod in formis invenitur quidam gradus. Sunt enim quaedam formae et virtutes totaliter ad materiam depressae, quarum omnis actio materialis est; ut patet in formis elementaribus. Intellectus vero est totaliter a materia liber; unde et eius operatio est absque corporis communione. Irascibilis autem et concupiscibilis medio modo se habent. Quod enim organo corporali utantur, ostendit corporalis transmutatio, quae earum actibus adiungitur; quod iterum sint aliquo modo a materia elevatae, ostenditur per hoc quod per imperium moventur et quod obediunt rationi. Et sic in eis est virtus, id est in quantum elevatae sunt a materia, et rationi obediunt."

<sup>52</sup> ST, I-II, q. 56, a. 4: "irascibilis et concupiscibilis dupliciter considerari possunt. Uno modo secundum se, in quantum sunt partes appetitus sensitivi. Et hoc modo, non competit eis quod sint subiectum virtutis. — Alio modo possunt considerari in quantum participant rationem, per hoc quod natae sunt rationi obedire. Et sic irascibilis vel concupiscibilis potest esse subiectum virtutis humanae: sic enim est principium humani actus, in quantum participat rationem." Cf. *ibid.*, I-II, q. 50, a. 3.

<sup>53</sup> *In Sent.*, III, d. 33, q. 2, a. 4, qc. 2, ad 2: "sensibilis appetitus, secundum quod in natura sua consideratur, dicitur sensualitas, et sic est perpetuae corruptionis et secundum ipsum non differt homo a brutis nec potest esse subiectum

Thus, according to Aquinas, habits are received into the sensitive powers as participating in reason, not as physical. It is therefore a mistake to say that such habits are determined to physical objects because they are received in physical powers, for they are received in the sensitive powers not as physical but as participating in reason.

However, this solution gives rise to another difficulty. For it seems that one of the roles of habits is to diminish the instinctual inclinations of the sensitive appetite, so that they do not interfere with the ordinance of reason. Indeed, several recent commentators have established that for Aquinas, one important effect of virtues found in the sense appetite is the suppression of passions that arise prior to the judgment of reason.<sup>54</sup> But the description of habits in the sensitive powers given above suggests that such habits are not necessarily contrary to the instinctual inclinations at all. For example, the concupiscible appetite has a natural instinctual inclination to sexual acts insofar as they appear pleasant. But the virtue of chastity inclines the appetite to desiring and delighting in such pleasures as duly ordered by reason. Because their objects are not contrary, the virtues and instinctual inclinations are also not contrary, at least not in general. And therefore, it does not seem that the possession of virtues ensures the elimination of all or even most instinctual urges. The aforesaid solution to the objection therefore seems to save the possibility of virtues (and other habits with rational objects) existing in the concupiscible appetite only at the price of emptying the virtues of their effectiveness in suppressing appetitive urges.

To answer this difficulty, it is necessary to distinguish the physical instinctual inclination of the sensitive appetite from the passion resulting from this inclination. There is a difference, for exam-

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virtutis; non autem secundum quod est participans aliquantulum ratione, et ideo nihil prohibet sic in eo esse virtutem sicut in proximo subjecto.”

<sup>54</sup> See R. K. Mansfield, “Antecedent Passion and the Moral Quality of Human Acts According to St. Thomas,” in *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, vol. 71 (1997), 229; Butera, “On Reason’s Control of the Passions in Aquinas’s Theory of Temperance,” 139–157; Steven Jensen, “Virtuous Deliberation and the Passions,” *The Thomist* 77 (2013): 193–227; Kahm, “Thomas Aquinas on the Sense Appetite as Participating in Reason,” 290–293. For further discussion, see De Haan, “Moral Perception and the Function of the *Vis Cogitativa*.”



ple, between being naturally inclined to sweet foods and actually experiencing passions with regard to these foods. This difference is evident from experience, and is a necessary consequence of the fact that passions that arise in the appetite insofar as it is operating from natural instinct follow upon a prior instinctual judgment,<sup>55</sup> whereas the instinctual inclinations of the sense appetite exist even before an instinctual judgment is formed. Given this difference between instinctual passions and instinctual inclinations to passion, it now appears possible that habits might suppress the former while not eliminating the latter.

Some remarks made in a discussion of the infused moral virtues suggest that Aquinas himself might take this position.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, in order to explain why acts performed by means of the infused moral virtues do not always give an agent pleasure, Aquinas maintains that the coexistence of virtues and opposing inclinations is possible:

sometimes it happens that someone possessing a habit experiences difficulty in operating and consequently does not feel delight and pleasure [*complacentia*] in the act, on account of some supervenient extrinsic impediment, as one who has a habit of knowledge experiences difficulty in understanding on account of sleepiness or some infirmity. And likewise habits of infused moral virtues for some time [*interdum*] experience difficulty in operating on account of some contrary dispositions left behind from previous acts, which difficulty does not in fact occur in acquired moral virtues because through the acts by which they are acquired, contrary dispositions are also taken away.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Aquinas makes it clear that the movement of the sensitive appetite of animals depends on a natural and instinctual judgment of the interior apprehensive sense powers. See SCG, II, c. 47: “inquantum vero ipsum appetere de necessitate sequitur in eis [animalibus brutis] ex formis acceptis per sensum et iudicium naturalis aestimationis, non sibi sunt causa quod moveant.” The same can be gathered from other texts in which he traces the movements of animals to natural judgments, since judgments can only cause animals to move by means of the animals’ sensitive appetites. See e.g. ST, I, q. 83, a. 1, co.; *De ver.*, q. 24 a. 1 co.; DVC, q. 24, a. 1, co.

<sup>56</sup> Here and below, I will use the phrase “infused virtues” to indicate those virtues which are not only infused by God but also order the human being to supernatural rather than merely natural goods.

<sup>57</sup> ST, I-II, q. 65, a. 3, ad 2: “Ad secundum dicendum quod quandoque contingit quod aliquis habens habitum, patitur difficultatem in operando, et per consequens non sentit delectationem et complacentiam in actu, propter aliquod impedimentum extrinsecus superveniens: sicut ille qui habet habitum scientiae, patitur difficultatem in intelligendo, propter somnolentiam vel aliquam infirmitatem. Et similiter habitus moralium virtutum infusarum patiuntur interdum difficultatem in operando, propter aliquas dispositiones contrarias ex praecedentibus actibus relictas. Quae quidem difficultas non ita accedit in virtutibus moralibus acquisitis: quia per exercitium actuum, quo acquiruntur, tolluntur etiam contrariae dispositiones.” Cf. *De card.*, a. 2, ad 2.

Here, Aquinas makes it clear that supernatural virtues infused by God can coexist, albeit uneasily, with opposing inclinations. For example, after converting to Christianity, a reformed alcoholic would receive from God the virtue of sobriety, restraining him from immoderate indulgence, but the alcoholic would still have to struggle against the inclinations remaining from his former way of life. And it is clear from Aquinas's example of sleepiness hindering the use of the habit of science that opposing inclinations arising from natural causes (as well as the remains of former habits) can also be found in an uneasy coexistence with opposing habits.

What is especially helpful about this text is that it indicates that the opposing dispositions are taken away by means of contrary acts rather than directly by the virtues. This means that as a rule, people who acquire virtues naturally will have greatly reduced opposing physical inclinations. But this will be directly due not to the virtues themselves but to the acts whereby the virtues were produced.

Even in the case of acquired virtues, however, Aquinas maintains that the instinctual inclinations cannot be wholly eliminated by human effort alone. He makes this particularly clear in a text from the *De virtutibus in communi*:

The complete rebellion of the irascible and concupiscible against reason cannot be taken away by virtue; since from their very nature, the irascible and concupiscible sometimes resist reason with regard to what is good according to sense; although this can come to pass by divine power, which is able even to change natures. Nevertheless, through virtue that rebellion is diminished to the extent that the aforesaid powers are accustomed in order that they might be subject to reason; that thus they may have what pertains to virtue from something extrinsic, namely, from the dominion of reason over them; from themselves, however, they retain something of their own motions, which are sometimes contrary to reason.<sup>58</sup>

Here, it is clear that the very nature of the human sense appetites inclines them in such a way that human

<sup>58</sup> DVC, a. 4, ad 7: “tota rebellio irascibilis et concupiscibilis ad rationem tolli non potest per virtutem; cum ex ipsa sui natura irascibilis et concupiscibilis in id quod est bonum secundum sensum, quandoque rationi repugnet; licet hoc possit fieri divina virtute, quae potens est etiam naturas immutare. Nihilominus tamen per virtutem minuitur illa rebellio, in quantum praedictae vires assuefiunt ut rationi subdantur; ut sic ex extrinseco habeant id quod ad virtutem pertinet, scilicet ex dominio rationis super eas; ex seipsis autem retineant aliquid de motibus propriis, qui quandoque sunt contrarii rationi.”

acts cannot entirely rob them of their own proper inclinations. Thus in the process of acquiring virtue we can only weaken the instinctual inclinations of the concupiscible and irascible appetites.

For this reason, it is hardly remarkable to find Aquinas insisting elsewhere that on certain occasions, even the virtuous find themselves surprised by passions arising from the natural instinct of the sensitive appetite.<sup>59</sup> In the *De veritate*, for example, Aquinas insists that “those who have the virtues of a purified soul are in some way free from passions inclining to the contrary of what virtue chooses.”<sup>60</sup> But he goes on to argue in the next article that even in such virtuous souls, there are certain imperfect passions:

It should be known, therefore, that in men in this life, if they are sinners, there are passions both regarding good and regarding evil, indeed sometimes not only foreseen but also sudden and intense and frequently also complete [*perfectae*]; whence they are called “followers of passions” in *Ethics* I. But in the just they are never complete [*perfectae*] because in them [i.e., the just] reason is not lead astray by passions; . . . in the perfect [i.e., the just] [the passions] are weak, since the inferior powers are restrained through the habit of moral virtue; nevertheless, they have passions not only foreseen but also sudden, and not only regarding good but also regarding evil.<sup>61</sup>

The truly virtuous (whom Aquinas here calls the perfect or the just) do indeed experience sudden passions of a certain sort, though they are weak and incomplete. Aquinas calls them incomplete because they do not affect the judgment of reason.<sup>62</sup> Following the usage of Jerome, Aquinas uses the term *propassio* to refer to such incomplete passions in distinction to the complete passions that affect human judgment.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, he clearly admits that virtuous do not fully eliminate sudden passions much

<sup>59</sup> See Mansfield, “Rationalized Passion and Passionate Rationality,” 229. Mansfield cites as evidence the texts from the *De veritate* which I am about to discuss. But Aquinas holds the same view later in his career, as is evident in ST, I-II, q. 17, a. 7, co.

<sup>60</sup> *De ver.*, q. 26, a. 7, ad 6: “illi qui habent virtutes purgati animi, sunt aliquo modo immunes a passionibus inclinantibus in contrarium eius quod eligit virtus.”

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*, q. 26, a. 8, co.: “Sciendum est ergo, quod in hominibus in statu viae, si sunt peccatores, sunt passiones et respectu boni et respectu mali quandoque quidem non solum praevisae sed etiam subitae et intensae et frequenter etiam perfectae; unde dicuntur “passionum sectatores” in I *Ethicorum*. In iustis vero numquam sunt perfectae, quia ratio in eis numquam deducitur a passionibus; sunt tamen vehementes in imperfectis, sed in perfectis sunt debiles, inferioribus viribus per habitum virtutum moralium refrenatis; habent tamen passiones non solum praevisae sed etiam subitas, et non solum respectu boni sed etiam respectu mali.”

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 26, a. 8, co. He does not cite Jerome in this text, but does so other places such as ST, III, q. 15, a. 4, co. See

less every instinctual inclination to such passions.

Here there emerges a certain harmony between the psychological experiments brought forward by the situationists and Aquinas's account of habits in the sensitive appetites. For Aquinas seems to be saying that even perfect virtue in this life does not fully eliminate opposing inclinations. Thus, in certain situations, especially sudden and unfamiliar ones, even the virtuous may have some appetitive inclinations against the good towards which virtues incline. This fits with the psychological evidence that in certain situations, one finds that otherwise decent people are inclined the wrong way. At the same time, however, Aquinas clearly distinguishes such inclinations from the virtues themselves. Thus, he can also say that in these situations, the truly virtuous are also inclined the right way by their habits. Therefore, by distinguishing the inclinations of virtue from the natural inclinations of the appetite, Aquinas is able to maintain that even the virtuous sometimes face opposing inclinations.

One small difficulty still remains, however. If the instinctual appetitive inclinations and opposing habits can coexist, this is only because their objects are materially and not formally contrary. For example, a person might have a natural inclination to sexual relations with another's spouse while being inclined away from such actions by a virtuous habit because the objects of these two inclinations are not formally contrary. In this example, the natural inclination is ordered towards sexual pleasure simply speaking, whereas the virtue is ordered toward sexual pleasure in accord with reason. Thus, the object of the virtue is formally opposed not to sexual pleasure but to sexual pleasure that is not in conformity with reason. Accordingly, the virtue of chastity and the instinctual inclination are not formally opposed, and so can coexist in the same power of the soul. But if this is the case, then it seems that Aquinas is mistaken to think that virtuous acts can suppress disordered natural inclinations. For it seems that only a formally contrary act could begin to destroy a contrary inclination.

To this difficulty, Aquinas can respond that whereas habits and instinctual inclinations are directed

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Jerome, *Commentariorum in Evangelium Mattaei ad Eusibium libri quatuor*, ed. J.-P. Migne, vol. 26, *Patrologia Latina* (Paris, 1845), columns 38 and 197.

towards certain kinds of acts, the acts themselves are singulars which always have some natural species in addition to their moral species.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, although a habit in itself may not incline towards a natural species but rather towards a moral one, the concrete act which is produced by means of a habit necessarily possesses some natural species as well. Insofar as it possesses this natural species, it can weaken or repress opposing natural instincts. For example, the act of suppressing a lustful passion is at the same time an act opposed to an instinctual desire for sexual pleasure. Consequently, the merely material opposition between a habit and an instinctual inclination is no obstacle to the suppression of that instinctual inclination by means of acts elicited by that habit.

In conclusion, then, it is clear that Aquinas is justified in positing habits in certain sensitive powers of the soul. The success of his account follows from the fact that some of the sensitive powers of the soul participate in reason and can thus receive modifications both as participating in reason and as operating from natural instinct. As participating in reason, the appetite is receptive of habits that incline us to the good of reason in a non-physical way. Thus, we need not ascribe to such habits a deterministic inflexibility in the face of varying situational factors. At the same time, because these habits modify sense powers as participating in reason, regularly exercising them does lead to the suppression of contrary physical inclinations, even though the acts whereby we form and use such habits cannot completely eliminate contrary physical inclinations. Aquinas's position, therefore, does not commit him to denying the possibility of temptation or failure even in the virtuous; even the best among us still have some lingering instinctual inclinations.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, such inclinations are less troublesome

<sup>64</sup> Aquinas makes it clear that actions and passions can be in more than one moral species. With regard to actions, see ST, I-II, q. 18 a. 7, ad 1: "actus qui secundum substantiam suam est in una specie naturae, secundum conditiones morales supervenientes, ad duas species referri potest." With regard to passions, see *ibid.*, I-II, q. 24, a. 4: "sicut de actibus dictum est, ita et de passionibus dicendum videtur, quod scilicet species actus vel passionis dupliciter considerari potest. Uno modo, secundum quod est in genere naturae: et sic bonum vel malum morale non pertinet ad speciem actus vel passionis. Alio modo, secundum quod pertinent ad genus moris, prout scilicet participant aliquid de voluntario et de iudicio rationis. Et hoc modo bonum et malum morale possunt pertinere ad speciem passionis, secundum quod accipitur ut obiectum passionis aliquid de se conveniens rationi, vel dissonum a ratione: sicut patet de verecundia, quae est timor turpis; et de invidia, quae est tristitia de bono alterius."

<sup>65</sup> Bonnie Kent argues that Aquinas's claim that we are able to lose virtues is a thesis that sets his theory of virtue

in the virtuous, not only because past acts of virtue have weakened these inclinations, but also because virtues provide a positive inclination to actions that run counter to the instinctual inclinations. Of course, I have yet to explain in detail how such an inclination might infallibly incline someone to a rational object. But for now, I will postpone a fuller discussion of how habits dispose us to acts with rational objects, reserving this discussion for when I consider the effects of habits on acts in the next chapter. At present, I must turn from this consideration of habits in the sensitive powers to consider the relationship of habits to the human will.

### 3.2 The Will's Need for Habits

From the beginning of his career, Aquinas maintained that from a theological perspective, the will has need of the habit of charity disposing it to a supernatural love of God.<sup>66</sup> However, as I will show momentarily, Aquinas appears to have initially thought that the will needs no naturally acquired habits, before ultimately revising his views later in his career.<sup>67</sup> The goal of this section is to show Aquinas's reasons for ultimately accepting the need for certain acquired habits in the will. I will begin by discussing his early rejection of naturally acquired habits in the will, before turning to consider his reasons for abandoning this view in favor of admitting certain habits in the will. In developing this topic, I will primarily focus on the virtue of justice—which is, for Aquinas, a common example of a virtue in the will—with the understanding that what is said about justice could equally be said of any other moral virtue required by the will.<sup>68</sup>

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apart from Aristotle's. While agreeing with Kent's interpretation of Aquinas, Robert Miner brings up interesting evidence suggesting Aristotle's theory on this point might be closer to Aquinas's than Kent supposes. See Kent, "Lovable Virtue: Aquinas on Character and Will" and Miner, "Aquinas on Habitus," 79–80.

<sup>66</sup> See, for example, *In Sent.*, I, d. 17, q. 1, a. 1 and III, d. 27, q. 2, a. 3, ad 5.

<sup>67</sup> The development of Aquinas's thought on this issue seems to have been missed by Bonnie Kent, who claims that he consistently ascribed justice to the will throughout his career. See Kent, *Virtues of the Will*, 217.

<sup>68</sup> Note that when I say that for Aquinas, the will "needs naturally acquired habits," I mean this only from a purely philosophical perspective in abstraction from a consideration of the supernatural end of humans. Depending on one's theory of the relationship between the acquired and infused moral virtues, one might say that given Christianity, the will

*Earlier Texts: A Reason to Doubt the Existence of Habits in the Will*

Very early in his career, Aquinas maintained that the will was not in need of any naturally acquired habits on account of the will's natural desire for the good "proportionate to human nature."<sup>69</sup> In the *De veritate*, for example, Aquinas argues that habits are only necessary for two reasons: "first, because the operation which is elicited through the power exceeds the strength of the power although it does not exceed the strength of the whole human nature; in another way, because it exceeds the strength of the whole nature."<sup>70</sup> Because loving God as a friend exceeds the power of the will and indeed human nature itself, Aquinas freely admits that the second reason implies the need for a supernatural habit of charity in the will. But Aquinas goes on to deny that any natural operation exceeds the power of the will:

The higher affective part does not need some habit in this way [i.e. to perfect it for natural operation], because it naturally tends to the good connatural to it as to its proper object; whence for willing the good, nothing is required except what is shown to it through the cognitive power. And therefore philosophers do not posit in the will some natural or acquired habit.<sup>71</sup>

Because the will naturally desires whatever good is shown to it by reason, no habit is necessary to ensure its good operation. For the will is already sufficiently inclined to this good by its very nature.

A similar argument appears in the earlier redaction of Aquinas's *Sentences* commentary in which he

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only needs infused moral virtues, not acquired ones. I do not here intend to take a position on the relationship between the acquired and infused moral virtues. For a discussion of some different approaches that attempt to articulate this relationship, see Angela Knobel, "Two Theories of Christian Virtue," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 84 (2010): 599–618.

<sup>69</sup> *In Sent.* (Earlier Redaction), III, d. 27, q. 2, a. 3, ad 5.

<sup>70</sup> *De ver.*, q. 24, a. 4, ad 9: "duplici ratione aliqua potentia habitu indiget: primo quidem quia operatio quae est per potentiam educenda excedit vim potentiae, quamvis non excedat vim totius naturae humanae; alio modo quia totius naturae vim excedit."

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 24, a. 4, ad 9: "Affectiva autem superior non indiget hoc modo aliquo habitu, quia naturaliter tendit in bonum sibi connaturale sicut in proprium obiectum; unde ad hoc quod velit bonum non requiritur nisi quod ostendatur sibi per vim cognitivam. Et ideo philosophi in voluntate non posuerunt aliquem habitum neque naturalem neque acquisitum, sed ad dirigendum in operativis posuerunt prudentiam in ratione, et temperantiam et fortitudinem et alias virtutes morales in irascibili et concupiscibili; sed secundum theologos in voluntate ponitur habitus caritatis propter actus meritorios."

also excludes naturally acquired virtues from the will. The text comes in the course of an answer to an objection against the existence of charity in the will:

The will has the good for its object, whence in itself, it is naturally determined to the good which is proportionate to human nature. But a defect can exist from the fact that reason does not rightly show the good, since the will is of the good or of the apparent [good]; or [a defect can exist] from the fact that the sensitive appetite is drawn to what is good according to sense but not according to reason. And therefore philosophers do not place some virtue in the will as in a subject but either in reason, as prudence, or in the concupiscible and irascible, as temperance and fortitude.<sup>72</sup>

Here again, we find Aquinas claiming that the will is already naturally inclined to any good which is proportionate to human nature. Since virtue is needed only to give just such an inclination, the inclination of virtue in the will would be superfluous.

One particularly interesting feature in this manuscript is that the word *iustitiam* (justice) was written and then struck out just before the word *prudentiam* (prudence). Apparently, Aquinas was initially drawn to place the virtue of justice in reason, but decided instead to include only prudence in the power of reason. Of course, this leaves open a question regarding which power of the soul justice ought to be assigned to, if not to reason. Perhaps this question was partially responsible for Aquinas's reconsideration of his view and his ultimate conclusion that in fact, naturally acquired virtues such as justice can belong to the will. It is to this revised position that I will now turn.

<sup>72</sup> *In Sent.* (Earlier Redaction), III d. 27 q. 2 a. 3 ad 5: "Voluntas autem habet bonum pro obiecto, unde quantum in se est, naturaliter est determinata ad bonum quod est naturae humanae proportionatum. Sed defectus potest esse ex hoc quod ratio non recte demonstrat bonum, cum voluntas sit boni vel apparentis; vel ex hoc quod appetitus sensitivus trahitur in id quod est bonum secundum sensum non autem secundum rationem. Et ideo philosophi non posuerunt aliquam virtutem in voluntate sicut in subiecto, sed vel in ratione, sicut ~~iustitiam~~ prudentiam, vel in concupiscibili et irascibili, sicut temperantiam et fortitudinem. Sed finis quem theologi considerant est supra facultatem naturae, et ideo voluntas secundum suam naturam non est determinata ad illud; propter quod oportet quod per aliquam virtutem ad illud determinetur. Et ideo ponunt aliquam virtutem in voluntate sicut in subiecto."



### *Later Texts: Why the Will Needs Naturally Acquired Habits*

By the time of the last revision of the *Sentences*, Aquinas had modified his position on the possibility of naturally acquired virtues in the will. Indeed, he rewrote the just mentioned response to the objection so as to explicitly assign the virtue of justice to the will. To make the case for the necessity of naturally acquired virtues in the will, Aquinas distinguishes between means and ends. With respect to natural ends, the will is sufficiently determined to the good, for the good is its object. But with regard to means, further determination is necessary by habits such as justice.<sup>73</sup> A similar argument is made a few distinctions later when Aquinas directly considers what power of the soul justice belongs to. In this text, he again argues that the will is disposed by virtues such as justice to the means rather than the end, for he continues to maintain that the will has a natural desire for the end.<sup>74</sup>

But though Aquinas has changed his position on the possibility of naturally acquired virtues in the will, it is not so clear that he has come up with a complete argument for his position. Indeed, in the last mentioned text, he faces a difficult objection:

the will is related equally to all the works of virtue, because all virtues are voluntary habits. Therefore, by the same account, either all virtues are in the will or none. But not all

<sup>73</sup> *In Sent.*, III, d. 27, q. 2, a. 3, ad 5: “Ad quintum dicendum quod virtutes, ut supra dictum est, sunt nobis necessariae ad hoc quod potentiae naturales determinentur ad bonum. Unde in illis in quibus potentiae naturales sunt ex sui natura ad bonum determinatae, non requiruntur aliae virtutes. Voluntas autem habet bonum, quod est finis, pro objecto; unde quantum in se est, naturaliter est determinata ad bonum quod est finis humanae naturae proportionatus. Et ideo in voluntate respectu finis ultimi, philosophi nullam virtutem posuerunt. Tamen oportet ponere aliquam virtutem acquisitam in voluntate secundum quod est eorum quae sunt ad finem, scilicet justitiam, ut infra dicetur, quae est circa bona quae in usum vitae veniunt, et tamen inter morales computatur; quia voluntas quamvis secundum suam essentiam in rationali per essentiam sit, tamen quantum ad similitudinem actus convenit cum irascibili et concupiscibili quae dicuntur rationales per participationem; et ipsa etiam voluntas aliquantulum rationem participat, in quantum a ratione apprehensiva dirigitur.”

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, III, d. 33, q. 2, a. 4, qc. 3, co.: “justitia non potest esse in irascibili et concupiscibili sicut in subjecto, cum non sit circa passiones. Ad ipsam enim non pertinet moderari passiones, sed exteriores actiones quae sunt ad alterum. Unde oportet quod sit in illa potentia sicut in subjecto ad quam pertinet usus rerum exteriorum in ordine ad alterum. Uti autem actus voluntatis est secundum Augustinum; sed non absolute secundum quod voluntas est finis, sed secundum quod praesupponit collationem rationis ordinantis ad alterum. Et ideo in voluntate hoc modo accepta, est justitia sicut in subjecto. In voluntate enim, secundum quod est finis, non potest esse aliqua virtus moralis, quia ad bonum civile et naturale hominis, voluntas naturalem inclinationem habet sicut in proprium objectum. Sed secundum quod voluntas est eorum quae sunt ordinata ad finem, sic in voluntate potest esse moralis virtus, scilicet justitia, sicut et prudentia in ratione cognitiva.”

virtues are in the will, because fortitude is in the irascible, temperance in the concupiscible. Therefore justice is not in the will . . .<sup>75</sup>

The difficulty, for Aquinas, is that it is unclear why the will would not need virtues ordering it to every kind of means, including the acts of the irascible and concupiscible appetites. And yet Aquinas is committed to placing virtues perfecting the acts of the sensitive appetites in the sensitive appetites themselves.<sup>76</sup> Aquinas responds as follows:

although the will has command equally over all matter and acts of virtue; nevertheless, certain virtues' matter, such as the passions, pertains also to other powers more immediately. And therefore the virtues which are about those kinds of matter are in the those powers as in a subject.<sup>77</sup>

According to Aquinas, the fact that the passions more immediately belong to the sense appetites is the reason why the sense appetites possess virtues such as fortitude and temperance rather than the will. But it isn't clear that the response Aquinas gives to this objection is sufficient. For one thing, while Aquinas has made a case that the sense appetites need to be disposed by virtues such as temperance and fortitude, he has not given a clear reason why the will would not need such habits as well. Certainly, one should not posit extra virtues unnecessarily, but if the will really is indeterminately related to the means, then it is presumably indeterminately related to the acts of the sense appetite, and thus needs virtues determining it to such acts. Perhaps the virtues belonging to the sense appetites can somehow also serve to determine the will, but Aquinas has not made it clear how this might take place. Even more seriously, on Aquinas's account, justice might appear to take over part of prudence's role in

<sup>75</sup> *In Sent.*, III, d. 33, q. 2, a. 4, qc. 3, arg. 3: "voluntas se habet aequaliter ad omnia opera virtutum, quia omnes virtutes sunt habitus voluntarii. Ergo eadem ratione vel omnes virtutes sunt in voluntate, vel nulla. Non autem omnes virtutes sunt in voluntate, quia fortitudo est in irascibili, temperantia in concupiscibili. Ergo iustitia non est in voluntate . . ."

<sup>76</sup> Indeed, he has just argued for this position in the preceding quaestio. See *ibid.*, III, d. 33, q. 2, a. 4, qc. 2.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, III, d. 33, q. 2, a. 4, qc. 3, ad 3: "quamvis voluntas aequaliter habeat imperium super omnes materias et actus virtutum; tamen materiae quarumdam virtutum, sicut passiones, pertinent etiam ad alias potentias immediatius. Et ideo virtutes quae sunt principaliter circa passiones, sunt in illis potentiis sicut in subjecto. Sed materiae quarumdam virtutum non pertinent ad aliam potentiam nisi ad voluntatem. Et ideo virtutes quae sunt circa illas materias, sunt in voluntate sicut in subjecto."

determining the means to an end.<sup>78</sup> For if justice really inclines us to the means as such, it would seem that we would no longer need prudence to help us discover the means. Consequently, while the distinction between ends and means constitutes a good beginning, further argument is needed to fully establish Aquinas's position.

In later texts from the *De virtutibus in communi* and the *Summa*, we find just such an argument. In these texts Aquinas combines the best arguments from his previous texts into a coherent picture that accounts for why the will needs certain virtues but not others. Already in one of the opening arguments of the *De virtutibus in communi* an important distinction emerges. "Will," the argument states, "is not only of the ultimate end, but also of other ends. But regarding the desire of these other ends, it happens that the will acts [*se habere*] both rightly and not rightly. For the good set before themselves good ends, but the evil, evil ones . . ." <sup>79</sup> This argument develops the distinction between the end and the means further. For now we see that certain means to the end are themselves ends. Granting that the will needs no determination to the ultimate end, one might nevertheless think that the will requires virtues regarding other ends.

In the corpus of the article, Aquinas proceeds to explain in which cases the will requires virtues. He returns to his early insight that the will naturally desires certain goods, but there is a significant difference between the phrasing of the early redaction of the *Sentences* commentary and the phrasing of these later texts. In the early redaction, Aquinas had spoken of the will as being "naturally determined to the good which is proportionate to human nature."<sup>80</sup> But in this later text, Aquinas speaks instead of the will tending to "the good which is proportionate to it [i.e. to the will itself]."<sup>81</sup> In a parallel

<sup>78</sup> In *ST*, II-II, q. 47, a. 6, Aquinas maintains that prudence's role is to determine the means to our ends.

<sup>79</sup> *DVC*, a. 5 arg. 2: "voluntas non solum est finis ultimi, sed etiam finium aliorum. Sed circa appetitum aliorum finium contingit voluntatem et recte et non recte se habere. Nam boni praestituunt sibi bonos fines, mali vero malos . . ."

<sup>80</sup> *In Sent.* (Earlier Redaction), III d. 27 q. 2 a. 3 ad 5. See the text in note 72 above.

<sup>81</sup> *DVC*, a. 5: "voluntas non indiget aliquo habitu virtutis inclinante ipsam ad bonum quod est sibi proportionatum, quia in hoc ex ipsa ratione potentiae tendit." Similar phrasing was used in the early text from the *De veritate*, even before Aquinas's position shifted. See the text in note 71 above.

text from the *Summa*, Aquinas speaks in a similar way of the object of the will as “the good of reason proportionate to the will.”<sup>82</sup> The significance of this shift in wording is not to be underestimated, for the object to which the will naturally tends has been narrowed from any good proportionate to human nature to only those goods proportionate to the will itself. This leaves room for Aquinas to posit some habits in the will, but not others.

To this end, Aquinas distinguishes two ways in which an end exceeds the object proportionate to the will. First, as Aquinas has held all along, if a good surpasses the good proportionate to human nature (e.g. friendship with God), then a supernatural virtue (e.g. charity) is required.<sup>83</sup> But because Aquinas now holds that the will only tends naturally to the good proportionate to it, he must conclude that even certain goods proportionate to human nature demand a virtuous inclinations in the will. Which goods are proportionate to human nature but not to the will itself? Aquinas maintains that those goods which surpass the good of the individual, such as the good of our fellow human beings, are not proportionate to the will.<sup>84</sup> To be sure, they are still good for the human being and the human will.<sup>85</sup> But the will does not possess a sufficient natural tendency to such goods. In such cases, therefore, virtues such as justice are required to make up for what is lacking in nature. Thus, because the will has for its object only the good of reason proportionate to it, the will needs both supernatural and moral virtues.

Aquinas’s position that the will is not sufficiently inclined by its nature to the good of others is surely borne out by common experience. But in a discussion of the natural love of angels in the *Summa*, Aquinas also provides the reason why we are not by nature sufficiently inclined to the good of others. In this text, Aquinas establishes that for both angels and human beings, there is a natural

<sup>82</sup> ST, I-II, q. 56, a. 6: “obiectum voluntatis sit bonum rationis voluntati proportionatum, quantum ad hoc non indiget voluntas virtute perficiente.”

<sup>83</sup> See DVC, a. 5 and ST, I-II, q. 56, a. 6.

<sup>84</sup> See DVC, a. 5 and ST, I-II, q. 56, a. 6.

<sup>85</sup> Charles DeKoninck makes the important point that the common good, although it surpasses the private good of an individual, is nevertheless truly a good for the individual. See Charles De Koninck, *De la primauté du bien commun contre les personalistes* (Montréal: Éditions Fides, 1943), 8.

love for self, others, and God. However, in the context of his discussion of love for others, he argues that though we love others in a fashion similar to the way in which we love ourselves, we nevertheless naturally love ourselves more than others: “Since natural love is founded upon natural unity, a being naturally loves less what is less one with it. Whence a being naturally loves what is one in number with it more than what is one [with it] specifically or generically.”<sup>86</sup> Because we are more one with ourselves than others, we are naturally drawn to love ourselves more than others. Consequently the will is not sufficiently proportioned to the good of others, and so the will needs to be perfected by habits such as justice in order to ensure that we care sufficiently about the good of others.<sup>87</sup>

But according to Aquinas, there are still certain goods to which the will is proportionate, and consequently, regarding these goods the will needs no virtuous inclination. In particular, Aquinas points out that moderating the passions in accordance with reason is the proper good of the individual person, and accordingly, the will is already duly proportioned to such actions. Thus, by distinguishing those goods which are proportionate to the individual from those which are proportionate to human nature, while at the same time providing evidence that the will only has a sufficient natural tendency to the goods proportionate to the individual, Aquinas is able to show why the will requires some virtues but not others.<sup>88</sup>

But here an important objection arises. If the object of the will is “the good of reason proportionate to the will,”<sup>89</sup> then how is it possible for it to desire goods that are not proportionate to the will?

<sup>86</sup> ST, I, q. 60, a. 4 ad 2: “Cum enim dilectio naturalis super unitatem naturalem fundetur, illud quod est minus unum cum eo, naturaliter minus diligit. Unde naturaliter plus diligit quod est unum numero, quam quod est unum specie vel genere. Sed naturale est quod similem dilectionem habeat ad alium sicut ad seipsum, quantum ad hoc, quod sicut seipsum diligit in quantum vult sibi bonum, ita alium diligit in quantum vult eius bonum.”

<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, the natural inclination to love others is surely the foundation of the virtue of justice, a point that has been suggested in a recent work by Dominic Farrel. But Farrel seems to go a bit too far insofar as he maintains that this natural love “amount[s] to a sense of justice.” On the contrary, justice requires treating others equally, whereas the will of an individual is naturally inclined more to the good of that individual. See Dominic Farrel, *The Ends of the Moral Virtues and the First Principles of Practical Reason in Thomas Aquinas* (Rome: Gregorian / Biblical Press, 2012), 194.

<sup>88</sup> ST, I-II, q. 56, ad 3.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, I-II, q. 56, a. 6.

As far as I know, Aquinas does not directly address this objection, but the analogy between the will and the power of sight suggests an answer. The proper object of sight, as I have already noted, is illuminated color. However, when emerging from a dark building on a bright sunny day (especially when there is snow on the ground), one at first experiences pain and difficulty trying to see. This might seem odd, given the fact that illuminated color is the object of sight, but one can apply Aquinas's analysis of the will to this situation as well and say that in a certain sense, the object of *this* eye is illuminated color that is proportioned to it. But because of its disposition, the brightly illuminated outdoor colors are not proportionate to the eye of one who has just come forth from darkness. Consequently, one can ask the same question regarding the power of sight that was asked regarding the will: how is it possible for the power of sight to see things that are not proportionate to it? In this case, the answer is a bit clearer. The disproportionate object slowly proportions the powers of sight to itself by acting upon this power. It seems reasonable to say that an analogous process might occur in the will. Now the object of the acts of will that regard the end is evidently the end apprehended as good by reason. So in the case of actions to which the will is not naturally proportioned, such as just actions, it seems that the rational apprehension of these actions as good slowly proportions the will to these actions, ultimately fostering in the will a habit that inclines and proportions the will to these actions. The key is to see that in both the power of sight and the will, the impediment to being inclined to an object does not result from a disproportion of the nature of the power to its object but from a disproportion that belongs to each power as singular. This kind of disproportion can be remedied by the action of the disproportionate object on the power of the soul. Thus, the will can be proportioned to acts that go beyond the proper good of the individual when reason presents such acts to the will as good.

One question still remains however. As I have already argued, apprehending an act as good depends on having an inclination to that act.<sup>90</sup> But the will has no inclination to acts disproportionate to it, such

<sup>90</sup> See pages 114–116 above.

as acts of justice. How, then, can reason apprehend such an act as good at all?

To answer this objection, it is necessary to say that even if the human will as such does not have a natural inclination to such a good, human nature is inclined to such acts. Indeed, Aquinas mentions in his discussion of natural law, that humans have a “natural inclination . . . to live in society.”<sup>91</sup> Consequently, even if the will itself has no natural inclination to justice, Aquinas may well think that human nature itself inclines us to act justly. And so reason’s apprehension of just actions as good can be founded on such an inclination instead.

### *Summary*

By the end of his career, Aquinas provides us with reasons to believe both that the will has no need of virtues inclining it to moderate passions and that the will still stands in need of other virtues, such as justice, to incline it towards goods that surpass the good of the individual. He bases his argument on the position that the will is naturally inclined to the good proportionate to human nature, but does not possess an inclination (or at least a sufficiently strong one) to the good of others. Since human beings naturally love themselves more than others on account of being more closely united with themselves, this position appears well grounded. Nevertheless, more remains to be said about how habits such as justice could incline us to act against our natural preferences for our own individual goods. I must therefore turn to explore in greater detail some fundamental questions about how habits incline us to operations.

<sup>91</sup> ST, I-II, q. 94, a. 2: ”naturalem inclinationem . . . et ad hoc quod in societate vivat.”

## Chapter 4

# Habit As Principle of Acts

Since the end of every operative habit is action, it remains for me to consider in this chapter how habits serve as principles of our acts. Now we can immediately distinguish two cases in which habits affect our acts of judgment. First a habit can affect the act of the very power to which it belongs by inclining that power to its act. For example, the habit of wisdom inclines the intellect to the exercise of its own acts. Second, a habit can have an influence upon the acts of powers to which it does not belong. In one way, this can happen when the act of the power to which a habit belongs is the cause of the act of a different power. For example, the habit of justice might incline the will to a just action, which ultimately is performed by the motive power of the soul. Here, justice immediately inclines the will to intend the just end, but the just action of the motive power is an effect of the will's intention. But Aquinas's account of habits also implies another way in which a habit in one power can be the principle of the act of another power, namely, when a habit in one power is an immediate principle of the act of another power such that the habit does not need to cause the act of its own power to bring about the act of the other power. Perhaps the most common example of such immediate influence that is described in Aquinas's works is the judgment formed through connaturality. Indeed, I will argue below that for Aquinas, the virtues in the various appetites can serve as principles of acts of judgment about the objects of these virtues, even without the mediation of an appetitive act. Consequently, one can distinguish three basic ways in which a habit may be a principle of acts: first, by affecting the acts



of the power to which it belongs; second, by affecting the acts of a different power by means of the acts of the power to which it belongs; and third, by immediately affecting the acts of a power to which it does not belong.

Of these three ways in which habits affect acts, the first and the third are clearly of greatest interest. For once it is clear how a habit influences the acts of its own power, it is not difficult to see the way in which it influences other powers by means of the acts of its own power. Consequently, I will not spend a great deal of time discussing the second way in which habits are principles of acts, but instead will focus on the first and the third way. Accordingly, I will begin this chapter by considering the first of these ways, reflecting on how habits incline their own powers to operation. I will then turn in the second part of this chapter to consider the third way, inquiring into how habits immediately affect powers to which they do not belong.

## **4.1 The Influence of Habit upon the Acts of Its Own Subject**

In my general discussion of habits in the previous chapter, I already reached some important conclusions about the effects of habits on human operations. In particular, I concluded that habits incline their powers to operation by ordering the parts of those powers to the good (or apparent good). Moreover, I have identified the parts of a power in relation to distinctions within the acts to which it is related, whether these distinctions are between different kinds of acts or between the quasi-parts of single acts. So as to clarify further how operative habits incline, however, a few more observations are in order. In particular, it remains to explain why habits incline infallibly towards a single kind of good or evil operation rather than towards both good and bad actions and how habits modify the natural inclinations of the powers to which they belong.

*Habit: Infallible Inclination to Good or Evil*

In contemporary work on human character, Christian Miller has proposed a novel alternative to the traditional division of moral dispositions into virtues and vices. Without rejecting the possibility that some few of us may possess true virtues and vices, Miller nevertheless maintains that most humans possess “mixed traits,” which combine inclinations to act in accord with virtue in certain circumstances with inclinations to act against virtue in other circumstances.<sup>1</sup> For example, a woman might be inclined to be generous with her children and friends but disposed to be stingy with strangers. Now although this position does not explicitly rule out the existence of virtuous or vicious traits that dispose us to only good or evil actions, it does give rise to a certain problem: how can we be sure that there are habits that always incline us well or badly? Could it be that every habit is really a mixed trait?

Now Aquinas, himself, clearly denies that all habits are mixed traits, for he numbers both virtues and vices among the habits of the soul. Moreover, his arguments indicate not simply that some habits are not mixed traits, but more generally that no habits are mixed traits. As I have already noted, Aquinas understands every habit to order its subject to nature considered as an end. And since the end of each thing is its good, it is clear that by Aquinas’s definition, habits are essentially related to the good. Now one’s relationship to nature considered as good is either a suitable or unsuitable relationship. And so Aquinas maintains that habits are essentially divided into good and evil species based on whether they constitute a suitable or unsuitable ordering.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, because every habit by definition orders its subject to nature, every habit must incline to either good or evil acts.

But even if a quality that meets Aquinas’s definition of habit must be either good or evil, one might still wonder whether we have reason to think that humans actually form such habits. Is it possible that

<sup>1</sup> For a summary of Miller’s position, see Christian B. Miller, “The Mixed Trait Model of Character Traits and the Moral Domains of Resource Distribution and Theft,” in *Character: New Directions from Philosophy, Psychology, and Theology*, ed. Christian B. Miller et al. (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2015), 164–174.

<sup>2</sup> ST, I-II, q. 54, a. 3.

the traits we develop do not really meet Aquinas's definition of habit?

To see why the existence of such habits is plausible, it is important to consider Aquinas's account of the generation of habits. Here, it is helpful to recall Aquinas's general principle that every effect is like its cause. But according to Aquinas, habits are naturally acquired by means of human acts.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, every habit must have a likeness to the acts by which it is caused.

The texts of Aquinas himself suggest that habits are like the acts from which they are generated. In the *Summa*, for instance, Aquinas draws on an analogy between the action of fire impressing its likeness upon a combustible object and the formation of human habits by means of human acts.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, he interprets an ambiguous text of Aristotle's *Ethics* to be indicating a similarity between acts and the habits they produce. In discussing how habits come to be in us, Aristotle writes that "from like actions, habits come to be."<sup>5</sup> This text is ambiguous because it is unclear whether the actions are like each other or like the habit which they engender.<sup>6</sup> Aquinas eliminates the ambiguity by adding an extra word in his commentary, writing: "from like operations come to be *like* habits."<sup>7</sup> For Aquinas, then, Aristotle should be read as claiming that habits are like the acts that produce them. Thus, based on both Aquinas's principles and his texts, we have reason to hold that habits are formed by acts which these habits are like.

Now such acts are ordered to objects by which they are specified. And as I already noted in the first chapter, Aquinas maintains that "a difference of objects makes a difference of species in acts inasmuch as it is referred to one active principle, which does not make a difference in acts inasmuch as it is

<sup>3</sup> ST, I-II, q. 51, a. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 51, a. 3, co.

<sup>5</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1103b21–22: "ἐκ τῶν ὁμοίων ἐνεργειῶν αἱ ἕξεις γίνονται."

<sup>6</sup> Terrence Irwin notes this ambiguity and while admitting the other possibility, translates the text to be indicating only a likeness between actions. See Terrence Irwin, notes to *Nicomachean Ethics*, by Aristotle, trans. Terrence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1999), 193, §8. The ambiguity in the Greek is not eliminated in the Latin text upon which Aquinas relied.

<sup>7</sup> SLE, lib. 2 l. 1: "ex similibus operationibus fiunt similes habitus." My emphasis.

referred to another active principle.”<sup>8</sup> But as Aquinas (following pseudo-Dionysius) goes on to point out, moral acts are called good and evil in comparison to reason. Consequently, insofar as the objects of moral acts are taken in reference to reason as an active principle, they essentially divide these acts into good and evil species.<sup>9</sup> An analogous argument can be made regarding cognitive acts, although as far as I am aware, Aquinas never makes this argument explicitly. In comparison to things themselves, which are the active principles of our cognitive acts, cognitive acts are said to be true or false. Therefore, our cognitive acts are specifically divided into true and false acts depending on how the objects of these acts are related to things themselves. But whether speaking of moral acts or cognitive acts, an important similarity emerges: in both cases the acts are divided into good and evil, for truth is the good of the cognitive powers.

Sometimes, Aquinas describes the goodness or evil of such acts in terms of a relationship to a rule or measure, which seems to be another way of describing the active principle of such acts. For moral acts, the rule and measure is reason (or more remotely, the divine law),<sup>10</sup> whereas for cognitive acts, the rule and measure is things themselves.<sup>11</sup> Insofar as they conform to their measure, such acts are good, but insofar as they fall short of or exceed their measure, such acts are evil. But a general feature common to all these acts is that they are evaluated in relationship to their rule and measure.

Now as I have already pointed out, such acts are the causes of habits which are like them. Aquinas does not tell us whether this likeness is a similarity in species or merely a more generic similarity. But

<sup>8</sup> ST, I-II, q. 18, a. 5: “differentia obiecti facit differentiam speciei in actibus, secundum quod referuntur ad unum principium activum, quod non facit differentiam in actibus, secundum quod referuntur ad aliud principium activum.”

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 64, a. 1: “Mensura autem et regula appetitivi motus circa appetibilia, est ipsa ratio. Bonum autem cuiuslibet mensurati et regulati consistit in hoc quod conformetur suae regulae: sicut bonum in artificiatu est ut consequantur regulam artis. Malum autem per consequens in huiusmodi est per hoc quod aliquid discordat a sua regula vel mensura.” Aquinas speaks of the divine law as a remote measure among other places in *ibid.*, I-II, q. 19, a. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 64, a. 3: “bonum alicuius rei consistit in medio, secundum quod conformatur regulae vel mensurae quam contingit transcendere et ab ea deficere, . . . Verum autem intellectus nostri absolute consideratum, est sicut mensuratum a re, res enim est mensura intellectus nostri, ut dicitur in X *Metaphys.*” Aquinas speaks here only of the intellect, but it is evident that his claim can be extended to the powers of sense cognition at least insofar as in they are ordered to the intellectual grasp of the truth in human beings.

since the most generic aspect of each act considered as moral or cognitive is its relation to the rule and measure, it is evident that the habits generated by these acts are at least like them in being evaluated in relation to the rule or measure. This implies that habits too are divided into good and evil, since the character of something's relationship to its rule and measure is the principle by which something is judged to be good or evil. Consequently, traits which are produced by moral or cognitive acts as such aim at either good or evil.

To be clear, however, only traits that are caused by moral or cognitive acts as such meet Aquinas's definition of habit. Insofar as these acts are considered in their natural species, they might sometimes form mixed traits such as those described by Miller. Such traits would not be infallibly ordered to good or evil in the way that habits are.

Now to say that the traits caused by moral or cognitive acts are infallibly ordered to human acts is not to say that they are strongly ordered. Indeed, as noted above, Aquinas points out that the word "disposition" can be used to describe a habit that has not yet reached perfection. This suggests that Aquinas would admit weaker inclinations to good or evil actions, that can be slowly strengthened by repeated actions. But, if the above arguments are sound, even such weaker dispositions, insofar as they belong to the genus of habit, would be ordered to good or evil alone. Consequently, Aquinas's position on the infallibility of habits and dispositions appears defensible.

### *Habit: Perfecter of Natural Inclination*

I must now turn to consider what habits contribute to operation above and beyond the contribution of the naturally present inclinations of the powers of the soul. In his helpful study of natural inclinations in Aquinas, Sean Cunningham carefully distinguishes the natural inclinations of powers of the soul from elicited ones.<sup>12</sup> For example, the natural inclination of the will to happiness is distinct from an

<sup>12</sup> Cunningham, "Natural Inclination in Aquinas," 321–334.

elicited desire for some good by which it intends to obtain happiness. But based on the texts regarding the will's need for justice in the previous chapter, it is important to distinguish further the natural inclinations of a power of the soul from the natural inclinations of human nature itself. Indeed, the will does not have a sufficient natural inclination toward the common good, although human nature is inclined towards the common good. Consequently, simply being a power of the human soul does not entail possessing every natural inclination that belongs to human nature.

Nevertheless, as Cunningham also argues, the inclinations of human nature are the "standard" by which reason governs the inclinations of other powers (and presumably also its own actions).<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Cunningham points out that the hierarchy in these inclinations of human nature gives reason a kind of template by which it is able to judge which acts are to be given precedence over others.<sup>14</sup> For example, because the inclination to the common good takes precedence over the inclination to the private good, reason can see that in cases of necessity, one ought to sacrifice for one's community.

From these observations, it follows that although human nature is inclined to definite goods in a fixed hierarchy, not every power of the human soul is naturally inclined in keeping with this hierarchy, since insofar as these powers have certain natures of their own, they only have natural inclinations to the objects proper to them. Consequently, we must by our actions supplement the natural inclinations of the various powers of the soul with habitual inclinations that integrate the various inclinations of the powers of the soul into the hierarchy found in the natural inclinations proper to human nature itself.

Now, Aquinas's texts indicate that the natural inclinations of a power of the soul can be divided into two kinds. On the one hand, every power is naturally inclined to its proper object. Thus, the intellect has a natural inclination to truth and the will to the good in general. On the other hand, Aquinas also describes some powers as having natural inclinations to certain principal goods contained under their proper objects. For example, the concupiscible appetite has an especially strong inclination towards the

<sup>13</sup> Cunningham, "Natural Inclination in Aquinas," 312–313.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 313.

pleasures of touch.<sup>15</sup> And as I have already noted, the will itself has a special inclination to “the good of reason proportionate to the will.”<sup>16</sup> It is therefore worth considering how habits might supplement each kind of natural inclination.

Turning first to the general natural inclination of powers of the soul to their proper objects, it is clear that this inclination does not necessarily imply a sufficient inclination to the different kinds of acts that are contained under this object. For example, the will’s natural inclination to the good in general does not imply a natural inclination of the will itself to more particular goods, such as the good found in buying and selling or the good found in the worship of God. Similarly, the intellect’s inclination to the truth does not necessarily imply a sufficient inclination to mathematical truth or metaphysical truth. Thus, one effect operative habits can have is to determine powers of the soul to more specific kinds of the object to which they are naturally inclined. In this way, the inclination of habit serves as a less universal inclination to a certain kind of operation to which the power itself was already determined in general.

However, the natural inclinations of powers of the soul to certain principal objects of these powers are supplemented by habits in a different way. In this case the inclinations of powers must be properly ranked in conformity with the natural hierarchy of human ends so that they do not incline us to sacrifice more important ends to less important ones. There appear to be two ways in which this can happen. In some cases, the natural hierarchy of human ends demands that a person be equally inclined to the principal good to which a power inclines and some other good. In such cases, the power must be habituated so that it is inclined to both goods, presumably by having an increased inclination towards the good to which the power is not naturally inclined, such that the inclination to this later good becomes equal in strength to the natural inclination of the power. For example, the will must be inclined by particular justice so that a person cares equally for the good of others and his or her own

<sup>15</sup> ST, II-II, q. 141, a. 1 and 4.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 56, a. 6.

good in external affairs.<sup>17</sup> But sometimes, the natural hierarchy of human goods indicates that an end is more important than the principal good to which the power naturally inclines. In this case, a habit is necessary to incline the power more towards the higher end. For example, by general or legal justice, the will is inclined more to the common good than to the private good.<sup>18</sup> In both these ways, however, the power's natural inclination is made more determinate. By inclining the will to the good of another, particular justice makes the natural inclination of the will to its own proper good more determinate such that it inclines only to the private good of the individual insofar as it is in conformity with the good due to another. General justice further determines both the natural inclination to one's own good and the habitual inclination to the good of another such that both are only desired insofar as they are in conformity with the common good.

Consequently, with regard to both the universal natural inclination of a power and its more particular inclination to some object, habits exercise a determining function. But the kind of determination is different in each case. On the one hand, good habits perfect the general inclination of a power by directing it to more specific kinds of objects and action. On the other hand, good habits perfect the more particular inclinations of powers either by ordering these inclinations to higher goods or limiting the scope of these inclinations such that they do not interfere with the appropriate inclinations other goods. By contrast, evil habits determine the general inclination of a power to evil actions, or reverse the order of ends by setting on par higher and lower inclinations and ends, or even subordinating higher inclinations and their ends to lower ones.

Whether one considers good or evil habits, however, it is important to note that for Aquinas, the end towards which a habit is related is more particular than the general object to which a power is naturally inclined. This makes it possible for there to exist more than one habit in the same power. For example, Aquinas ascribes both chastity and liberality to the concupiscible appetite because there

<sup>17</sup> ST, II-II, q. 58, a. 7.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., II-II, q. 58, a. 5.



is more than one particular kind of action that can be ordered towards the concupiscible good in accordance with reason.<sup>19</sup> Thus habits are dispositions towards more particular matters than those towards which the universal inclinations of powers are directed.

But according to Aquinas, although every habit determines its power towards a particular kind of action, some habits are unable to do so without the assistance of other habits. Aquinas makes this particularly clear in his account of the connection of the moral virtues, an account which appears in a number of his works.<sup>20</sup> One of his principal arguments for the connection of the virtues is based on the reciprocal dependence of the moral virtues and prudence on each other.

The dependence of the moral virtues upon prudence follows from the interconnectedness of moral matters. As Aquinas points out, “the principles of moral things are ordered to each other, thus that through a defect of one, there follows also a defect in the others.”<sup>21</sup> Now the moral principles of which Aquinas here speaks seem to be the ends of the moral virtues insofar as they are grasped by reason.<sup>22</sup> Aquinas goes on to illustrate how lacking a proper grasp of the end of one virtue affects the acts corresponding to another moral disposition: “if someone falls away from the principle that sensual desires [*concupiscentias*] are not to be followed, which pertains to concupiscence, it would sometimes follow that by following concupiscence, he would do injury and thus violate justice.”<sup>23</sup> For instance,

<sup>19</sup> ST, I-II, q. 60, a. 5.

<sup>20</sup> See *ibid.*, I-II, q. 58, a. 5 and q. 65; *De card.*, a. 2, ad 4; *Quod. XII*, q. 15; SLE, lib. 6, l. 11; *In Sent.*, III, d. 36, q. 1. While Aquinas proposes multiple ways to understand the connection of the virtues, I will for present purposes focus on the connection of the virtues insofar as they are considered as specific kinds of habits with distinct kinds of objects, and I will only consider his arguments to the extent that they illustrate the dependence of one habit upon another. For more detailed discussions of the connection of the virtues, see Thomas M. Osborne Jr., “Perfect and Imperfect Virtues in Aquinas,” *The Thomist* 71 (2007): 39–64 and Jean Porter, “The Unity of the Virtues and the Ambiguity of Goodness: A Reappraisal of Aquinas’s Theory of the Virtuous,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 21 (1993): 137–63.

<sup>21</sup> *De card.*, a. 2, ad 4: “principia moralium sunt ordinata ad invicem, ita quod per defectum unius sequeretur etiam defectus in aliis.”

<sup>22</sup> Aquinas describes the particular moral principles of human action as the ends of the moral virtues in ST, I-II, q. 58, a. 5, co. For further discussion of these principles, see Tobias Hoffmann, “Prudence and Practical Principles,” in Hoffmann, Müller, and Perkams, *Aquinas and the Nicomachean Ethics*, 165–183, 175–182.

<sup>23</sup> *De card.*, a. 2, ad 4: “si quis deficeret ab hoc principio quod est concupiscentias non esse sequendas, quod pertinet ad concupiscentiam, sequeretur interdum quod sequendo concupiscentiam faceret iniuriam, et sic violaretur iustitia; sicut

lacking a grasp of the importance of observing chastity, a person might be led by his passions to violate justice as well by an act of adultery. From this example, it is clear that being disposed to act justly in every case depends on a proper rational grasp of the ends of other moral virtues such as temperance. But the position is clearly more general for Aquinas: possessing a moral virtue requires that reason properly grasp the ends of all the moral virtues and indeed the order found in the whole hierarchy of human ends in order to determine the human being towards actions that observe this hierarchy. According to Aquinas, the habit of prudence is what inclines reason to determine specific acts in accordance with the hierarchy of human goods. Thus, the moral virtues depend upon prudent reason in order that they might correctly incline their powers. In order to properly dispose the appetites to good acts, good moral habits in appetitive powers depend upon the habit of prudence in reason. Consequently, the inclination provided by a habit to its power sometimes depends upon habits in other powers.

Moreover, as already noted, Aquinas also contends that in disposing reason towards rightly ordering human actions, prudence also depends upon the moral virtues. More specifically, Aquinas maintains that perfectly grasping the goodness of the ends of the moral virtues is itself dependent upon the possession of these virtues.<sup>24</sup> An explanation of why reason's grasp of the goodness of the ends of the moral virtues depends upon the possession of these virtues must be deferred until the next section of this chapter. But it is evident that if Aquinas is right to hold that grasping the goodness of the ends of the moral virtues in a perfect fashion depends on the possession of these virtues, then the habit of prudence depends upon these habits in order to incline practical reason appropriately. For it is clear

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etiam in una et eadem arte vel scientia, puta in geometria, error unius principii inducit errorem in totam scientiam. Et inde est quod non potest esse aliquis sufficienter prudens circa materiam unius virtutis, nisi sit prudens circa omnes."

<sup>24</sup> See ST, I-II, q. 58, a. 5: "ad hoc quod [homo] recte se habeat circa principia particularia agibilium, quae sunt fines, oportet quod perficiatur per aliquos habitus secundum quos fiat quodammodo homini connaturale recte iudicare de fine. Et hoc fit per virtutem moralem, virtuosus enim recte iudicat de fine virtutis, quia qualis unusquisque est, talis finis videtur ei, ut dicitur in III *Ethic*. Et ideo ad rectam rationem agibilium, quae est prudentia, requiritur quod homo habeat virtutem moralem." Cf. *De card.*, a. 2 and ST, I-II, q. 65, a. 1: "prudentia non potest haberi nisi habeantur virtutes morales: cum prudentia sit recta ratio agibilium, quae, sicut ex principiiis, procedit ex finibus agibilium, ad quos aliquis recte se habet per virtutes morales."

that one can be disposed to prudent action only if one correctly perceives the ends of the moral virtues, that is, only if one grasps these ends as good. And so one again finds Aquinas maintaining that the determination a habit gives in inclining its own power sometimes depends upon habits in other powers.

Now since habits in one power sometimes depend upon habits in other powers, it is not difficult to see that the acts of one power will also depend upon the habits in other powers. Accordingly, I must now turn to consider in more detail how the habits of one power of the soul influence the acts of other powers.

## 4.2 How Habits Affect the Acts of Powers to Which They Do Not Belong

As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, habits not only affect the acts of their own powers; they also affect the acts of other powers. Sometimes Aquinas describes the effect of habits on the acts of other powers by saying that such habits belong to the other powers in a secondary way. For example, Aquinas maintains in the *Summa* that intellectual habits can belong to the inner sensitive powers in a secondary sense on account of the fact that these powers prepare objects for the intellect.<sup>25</sup> A few questions later, in the course of discussing whether a virtue can be in two powers of the soul, Aquinas makes the same point more generally. There, he denies that a habit can belong to two powers equally, but he goes on to suggest that the habit can belong to another power in a secondary sense:

Something can be in two or many, not equally, but in a certain order. And thus one virtue can pertain to many powers so that it is principally in one and extends itself to others by way of diffusion or by way of disposition; to the extent that one power is moved by

<sup>25</sup> ST, I-II, q. 50, a. 4, ad 3: “Ad tertium dicendum quod, quia vires apprehensivae interius praeparant intellectui possibili proprium obiectum; ideo ex bona dispositione harum virium, ad quam cooperatur bona dispositio corporis, redditur homo habilis ad intelligendum. Et sic habitus intellectivus secundario potest esse in istis viribus. Principaliter autem est in intellectu possibili.”

another and one power receives from another.<sup>26</sup>

In this latter text, Aquinas appears to distinguish two ways in which a virtue can “extend itself” to other powers, namely, by “diffusion” and by “disposition.” The text that immediately follows then appears to explain when each kind of extension can take place. A virtue, it seems, extends itself by diffusion when “one power is moved by another,” whereas a virtue extends itself by disposition when “one power receives from another.”

Here it is important to note that receiving from another is a different kind of relationship than being moved by another. For everything that is moved by another clearly receives something from that other, whereas not everything that receives from another is moved by it. For example, the intellect receives its intelligible species from the phantasms provided by the inner sense powers, but it is not directly moved by these powers, but rather by their objects.<sup>27</sup> Thus, it appears that a virtue affects another power by diffusion when it disposes its own power to move the other power. On the other hand, a virtue affects another power by “disposition” when it influences the way in which another power receives either an object or an act of its own power. Consequently, it seems reasonable to say that every diffusion is a disposition, but not every disposition is a diffusion.

Now as noted at the beginning of this chapter, the diffusion by which the habit in one power causes an act in another power through the act of its own power is relatively easy to grasp. What is more difficult to see exactly how habits might affect the acts of powers to which they do not belong without the mediation of other acts. In considering this question, I will begin by offering a brief general explanation, before turning to some particularly interesting cases raised in Aquinas’s work to provide

<sup>26</sup> ST, I-II, q. 56, a. 2 co. “Alio modo potest esse aliquid in duobus vel pluribus, non ex aequo, sed ordine quodam. Et sic una virtus pertinere potest ad plures potentias; ita quod in una sit principaliter, et se extendat ad alias per modum diffusionis, vel per modum dispositionis; secundum quod una potentia movetur ab alia, et secundum quod una potentia accipit ab alia.”

<sup>27</sup> This point becomes apparent in Aquinas’s explanation of the effect of the passions on reason. See *ibid.*, I-II, q. 9, a. 2 and q. 77, a. 1. Aquinas makes it particularly clear that this is not a case of the sensitive part of the soul directly moving the rational part in *ibid.*, I-II, q. 77, a. 1, ad 2: “superius non movetur ab inferiori directe: sed indirecte quodammodo moveri potest, sicut dictum est.”

textual support for and further explanation of the general account.

### *A General Account*

As far as I am aware, Aquinas never directly explains in a general way why a habit in one power might be able to affect the acts of another power apart from directly causing the acts of the other power by means of the acts of its own power. Nevertheless, his principles suggest an answer. It is helpful to consider separately cases in which the affected power is an active power and cases in which it is a passive power.

Now every active power, as such, is the active principle of its own act, and so insofar as a power is active, it does not seem possible that it be affected by any habits, whether of its own or of another power, except if a habit were to supply an object for the active power to work upon. For example, in some sense the habits in the possible intellect might be said to supply objects that the agent intellect causes us to actually think about. For instance, the habit of mathematics, insofar as it is an order of the parts of a power, might institute an order among the various mathematical intelligible species in the intellect. This order could then be actually thought about by the application of the agent intellect to such objects. And so in this way, one may speak of the acts of the agent intellect as affected by habits in the possible intellect.<sup>28</sup> By providing the objects of active powers, habits may be said to affect the acts of these powers even when they do not belong to them.

But it is of particular interest how habits affect the acts of passive powers to which they do not belong. Now, as is evident from the above account of passive powers, the active principle is a cause of a passive power's act. And so whenever a habit in another power of the soul affects this active principle, it necessarily also affects the passive power's act. But it remains to consider how a habit in one power

<sup>28</sup> Indeed, reflections such as these seem to have led Aquinas to speak of the theological virtue of faith as belonging not only to the intellect but also in a certain way to the will, which is an active principle of acts of faith. See *De ver.*, q. 14, a. 4, co. and ad 7: "Ad septimum dicendum, quod duarum potentiarum non potest esse unus habitus ex aequo, sed potest esse unius secundum quod habet ordinem ad aliam; et sic est de fide."

of the soul affects the active principle of another power's acts without doing so by means of the act of its own power. To show how this takes place, I will turn to consider some particularly interesting cases highlighted by Aquinas.

### *Specific Cases*

Two especially striking cases may be observed in Aquinas's work. First, one finds Aquinas holding that intellectual habits can affect the acts of sensitive powers of apprehension. Second, Aquinas also holds that habits in the appetitive powers affect the judgment of practical reason. In considering each of these cases, it will become clearer just how habits can affect the active principles of other powers' acts.

### **The Influence of Intellectual Habits on the Sense Powers**

Aquinas's account in the *Summa* of the relationship between habits and the soul's cognitive inner sense powers initially appears unclear and perhaps even contradictory. At first, Aquinas admits habits in the inner senses insofar as they can be commanded by reason.<sup>29</sup> But only a few questions later, he appears to deny this position, writing that although these powers can be accustomed to acts, "that which is acquired by custom in memory and the other apprehensive sensitive powers is not a habit per se."<sup>30</sup> For Aquinas, the difficulty seems to be that the good or bad disposition of the inner sense powers must ultimately be judged not in relation to objects of the sense powers, but rather in relation to the objects of reason, to which the objects of sense are ordered. Indeed, Aquinas goes on to state that:

<sup>29</sup> ST, I-II, q. 50, a. 3, ad 3: "magis convenit quod habitus sint in viribus sensitivis appetitivis quam in viribus sensitivis apprehensivis: . . . Quamvis etiam in ipsis interioribus viribus sensitivis apprehensivis possint poni aliqui habitus, secundum quos homo fit bene memorativus vel cogitativus vel imaginativus, unde etiam Philosophus dicit, in cap. *de Memoria*, quod consuetudo multum operatur ad bene memorandum: quia etiam istae vires moventur ad operandum ex imperio rationis."

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 56, a. 5: "id quod ex consuetudine acquiritur in memoria, et in aliis viribus sensitivis apprehensivis, non est habitus per se." For a discussion of the difference between "custom" (*consuetudo*) and "habit" (*habitus*), see Miner, "Aquinas on Habitus."

if there are some habits in such powers [i.e. the inner sense powers], they cannot be called virtues. For virtue is a perfect habit, to which nothing except performing a good work belongs, whence it is necessary that virtue belong to the power which completes the good work. However, cognition of the true is not completed by the apprehensive sense powers; but powers of this kind are as it were preparatory for intellectual cognition. And therefore, in powers of this kind, there are no virtues by which we know the true; but rather in the intellect or reason.<sup>31</sup>

If there is a habit in a sense power of apprehension, the order it constitutes among its objects is good or bad for a human being only to the extent that it contributes to the order in the acts of the intellect. Because such a habit would not dispose us directly to a human good, but only to an object instrumental to a human good, Aquinas denies that such a habit could be called a virtue.

Clearly then, Aquinas has reason to deny the existence of virtues in the inner sense powers of apprehension. But why then does Aquinas say that a quality “acquired by custom” in these powers “is not a habit *per se*”? Perhaps, in this case, the term *per se* (through itself) is meant to be contrasted not with the term *per accidens* (by accident or incidentally), but rather with the term *per aliud* (through another), such that while denying that the quality is a habit *per se*, Aquinas nevertheless admits that it might be a habit through another. More specifically, perhaps Aquinas means to say that the quality acquired by custom is not a habit through itself, that is, simply in relationship to its own act, but rather through another, that is, in relationship to the act of the intellect to which its own act is ordered. If this interpretation is correct, then Aquinas does not simply contradict himself by first admitting and then denying the existence of habits in the inner senses, but rather, after a brief initial discussion, proceeds to characterize these habits more precisely as essentially related to acts beyond their own proper acts. In this way, habits in the sense power have a certain influence over the act of the intellect, insofar as

<sup>31</sup> ST, I-II, q. 56, a. 5: “si qui sunt habitus in talibus viribus, virtutes dici non possunt. Virtus enim est habitus perfectus, quo non contingit nisi bonum operari: unde oportet quod virtus sit in illa potentia quae est consummativa boni operis. Cognitio autem veri non consummatur in viribus sensitivis apprehensivis; sed huiusmodi vires sunt quasi praeparatoriae ad cognitionem intellectivam. Et ideo in huiusmodi viribus non sunt virtutes, quibus cognoscitur verum; sed magis in intellectu vel ratione.”

their objects have an essential relationship to the acts of reason.

But if this is the case, the habits of the inner sense powers only contribute to the acts of the intellect by means of the acts of their own powers. For it is by preparing their objects and presenting them in an ordered way to the intellect that the inner sense powers affect its acts. What is more pertinent to my present task is the way in which habits in the intellect affect the acts of the sensitive powers of apprehension.

Aquinas discusses this latter case in another text in the second part of the *Summa* in the course of a question about whether there are habits in the intellect. There he writes:

because the interior apprehensive powers inwardly prepare the proper object for the possible intellect; therefore, from a good disposition of these powers, with which the good disposition of the body cooperates, man is rendered apt (*habilis*) for understanding. And thus intellectual habit can be in these powers in a secondary way. But principally, it is in the possible intellect.<sup>32</sup>

This discussion of powers possessing the same habit to different degrees has already been mentioned. But it is appropriate to take a more careful look at this specific case.

According to Aquinas, an intellectual habit is principally in the intellect, but can be secondarily ascribed to the inner sense powers, because they prepare objects for the intellect. One of the most important ways in which the inner sense powers prepare these objects is by associating the relevant phantasms for a given thought. For example, if I wish to consider a simple geometrical proposition such as the Pythagorean theorem, I must call up phantasms of a right triangle and squares, and relate them together in my imagination such that a square is formed on each side of the right triangle. Aquinas seems to be claiming that the habit of geometry in my intellect in some way disposes my imagination to ordering its phantasms in this way. Let me consider, therefore, how this might take place.

<sup>32</sup> ST, I-II, q. 50, a. 4, ad 3: “quia vires apprehensivae interior praeparant intellectui possibili proprium obiectum; ideo ex bona dispositione harum virium, ad quam cooperatur bona dispositio corporis, redditur homo habilis ad intelligendum. Et sic habitus intellectivus secundario potest esse in istis viribus. Principaliter autem est in intellectu possibili.”



Insofar as a habit orders the parts of its power, it is evident that a habit in the intellect, such as geometry, will order intelligible species to each other in definite ways in the intellect. But as is evident from my discussion of cognitive acts in the second chapter, the phantasms in the inner sense powers, insofar as they are principles from which understanding takes its beginning and in which the object of understanding is found, are ordered to the intelligible species.<sup>33</sup> Now it appears that even when one is not thinking, the objects stored in the inner senses are in some way naturally joined or ordered to the intelligible species. For when we think about things, we turn to the phantasms of the objects stored in the senses, and if there were no connection between these objects and the intelligible species, the intellect would not be directed to any specific phantasm in which to understand its object. Consequently, even before actual thinking, the objects stored in the inner senses must be connected to the intelligible species. Therefore, a habitual order among the intelligible species implies an order among the objects of the inner senses insofar as these objects are joined to the intelligible species. And since the objects of the inner sense powers are principles of their acts, a habit in the intellect disposes the inner sense powers to ordered acts by causing an order among these objects.

Now it is clear that in this case, the order among the objects of the inner senses is not directly caused by an act produced by the intellectual habit.<sup>34</sup> On the contrary, the very act of the intellectual habit, insofar as it depends on the phantasms of the inner senses, is preceded by an ordered act of the inner sense power. Consequently, the order found in the act of the inner sense power cannot be directly ascribed to the intellectual act itself, but only to the intellectual habit.

At this point, however, one might raise an important objection. Perhaps the order among phantasms should not be ascribed to the intellectual habit but to the accustoming of the sense power by means of the just discussed habits that can exist in them. Indeed, it might seem better to say that when

<sup>33</sup> Cf. ST, I, q. 84, a. 7.

<sup>34</sup> Of course, if the act produced by the intellectual habit increases that habit, it may indirectly strengthen any order among the objects of the inner senses wrought by the habit. But here I only intend to deny that the act could cause such an order in a more direct way.

we first form a geometrical conclusion, the order found in the intellectual judgment is a principle of the intellectual habit, while at the same time, the imaginative act of associating the phantasms to which the intellect turns in forming its judgment is the source of a different habit in the imagination. Thus, the habituation of the imagination ought to be referred to a different habit.

To answer this objection, it is important to point out first that what I have said above in no way precludes the possibility of beginning to form associative habits in the inner sense while forming intellectual habits in reason. However, it is still important to distinguish the habit formed by association in an inner sense power from the disposition to act that this power receives from the intellectual habit. That these two are distinct is indicated by an important text of Aquinas on the generation of habits, where he suggests that scientific habits in the intellect are generally formed more quickly than habits in the inner senses, which require many repeated acts.<sup>35</sup> Given this fact, it is evident that the disposition of an inner sense power to its acts by means of an intellectual habit comes about before the generation of a complete habit of association in the inner sense.

Here then, I have presented a concrete example of a way in which a habit can affect the act of another power by means of the principle of that power. Insofar as the intelligible species in the intellect are disposed by a habit, the objects of the inner senses connected with these species are also disposed to each other. And thus the inner senses, inasmuch as their acts proceed from these objects, are disposed to these acts by the habit of another power. Therefore, having considered one instance in which the habit in one power affects the act of another power by means of that latter power's principle, it remains to consider a second case in which this takes place.

<sup>35</sup> ST, I-II, q. 51, a. 3: "habitum autem scientiae possibile est causari ex uno rationis actu, quantum ad intellectum possibilem. — Sed quantum ad inferiores vires apprehensivas, necessarium est eisdem actus pluries reiterari, ut aliquid firmiter memoriae imprimatur."

## The Effect of Appetitive Habits on Practical Reason

One of the most important instances of habits affecting powers to which they do not belong may be observed when appetitive habits influence the judgments of practical reason. Now, as I have already pointed out, these judgments can be influenced by a number of important factors, such as our grasp of the relevant circumstances of our situation, along with our more general practical and speculative knowledge. However, Aquinas also holds that these judgments can be affected by our habits as well. Indeed, Aquinas states that “the fact that someone defines something well in virtuous works properly proceeds from the habit of virtue.”<sup>36</sup> He immediately proposes as an example the chaste person who “rightly determines those things which pertain to chastity.”<sup>37</sup> This particular phenomenon appears to be a consequence of a more general principle, which Aquinas has already identified: “That something appears good and befitting comes about from two things, namely, from the condition of what is proposed and of the one to whom it is proposed.”<sup>38</sup> According to Aquinas then, the condition of the agent is a relevant factor in perceiving something as “good and befitting.”<sup>39</sup> For Aquinas, appetitive habits are a specific example of a condition of the agent that affects judgments of value.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup> ST, II-II, q. 60, a. 1 co. “Quod autem aliquis bene definiat aliquid in operibus virtuosus proprie procedit ex habitu virtutis.”

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.: “sicut castus recte determinat ea quae pertinent ad castitatem.”

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 9, a. 2: “Quod autem aliquid videatur bonum et conveniens, ex duobus contingit: scilicet ex conditione eius quod proponitur, et eius cui proponitur.”

<sup>39</sup> Hence, throughout his career, we find Aquinas citing with approval Aristotle’s claim that “as each one is, in such a way the end appears to him.” (See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 111a32–b1: “ὅποιός ποθ’ ἕκαστός ἐστι, τοιοῦτο καὶ τὸ τέλος φαίνεται αὐτῷ.”) Some representative texts of Aquinas include *In Sent.*, II, d. 7, q. 1, a. 2, co., d. 15, q. 1, a. 3, co., and d. 25, q. 1, a. 1, ad 5; SLE, III, l. 13; *De ver.*, q. 24, a. 10, co.; SCG, IV, cap. 95; ST, I-II, q. 9 a. 2 co., q. 58 a. 5 co., II-II, q. 24 a. 11 co.; *De malo*, q. 2, a. 3, ad 9 and q. 6, co.; *De car.*, a. 12, co.; *De card.*, a. 2, co. For further discussion of the application of this saying in Aquinas’s moral philosophy, see Darge, “Wie einer beschaffen ist, so erscheint ihm das Ziel.”

<sup>40</sup> ST, II-II, q. 51, a. 3, ad 1: “Quod autem virtus cognoscitiva sit bene disposita ad recipiendum res secundum quod sunt, contingit quidem radicaliter ex natura, consummative autem ex exercitio vel ex munere gratiae. Et hoc dupliciter. Uno modo, directe ex parte ipsius cognoscitivae virtutis, puta quia non est imbuta pravis conceptionibus, sed veris et rectis: et hoc pertinet ad synesim secundum quod est specialis virtus. Alio modo, indirecte, ex bona dispositione appetitivae virtutis, ex qua sequitur quod homo bene iudicet de appetibilibus. Et sic bonum virtutis iudicium consequitur habitus virtutum moralium.”

Aquinas describes the judgments influenced by habits as formed “by way of inclination”<sup>41</sup> and “on account of a certain connaturality [*connaturalitatem*] with those things concerning which one must now judge.”<sup>42</sup> This way of knowing has received considerable scholarly attention in the past hundred years.<sup>43</sup> Among the questions addressed in the scholarship, that of particular interest to this dissertation is precisely how habits serve as principles of this way of knowing.

However, one finds in the literature differing accounts of how judgment on account of connaturality occurs. Jacques Maritain, for example, maintains that judgments that proceed by means of inclination do not come about “by virtue of conceptual connections.”<sup>44</sup> This suggests that knowledge of the inclination or of the act proceeding from this inclination is not a prerequisite for the judgment formed by inclination. Others, such as Rafael-Tomas Caldera, maintain that an affective act, which is itself a kind of inclination, serves as a principle of our acts of judgment because this inclination is perceived by reason.<sup>45</sup> And so it not immediately clear whether the actual apprehension of an inclination is necessary for the judgment made by inclination in the specific case at hand (i.e. the case in which habits affect our moral judgments).

Caldera’s position seems to rest on the fact that one’s affective acts of joy and desire in response to the apprehension of an object are signs of the goodness of that object. Caldera points in particular to Aquinas’s appeal to the sense of taste as an analogy for the judgment by connaturality.<sup>46</sup> Indeed,

<sup>41</sup> ST, I, q. 1, a. 6, ad 3: “per modum inclinationis.”

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., II-II, q. 45, a. 2: “propter connaturalitatem quamdam ad ea de quibus iam est iudicandum.”

<sup>43</sup> A review of some of the pertinent scholarly literature from the earlier part of this period may be found in Helen Virginia Keane, “Knowledge by Connaturality in St. Thomas Aquinas” (PhD diss., Marquette University, 1966), 4–30. Another study written around the same time is Murphy, “The Role of Nature and Connaturality.” More recent discussions include Rafael Tomas Caldera, *Le jugement par inclination chez Saint Thomas d’Aquin* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1980), esp. 101–104; Taki Suto, “Virtue and Knowledge: Connatural Knowledge According to Thomas Aquinas,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 58 (2004): 61–79; Hoffmann, “Prudence and Practical Principles.”

<sup>44</sup> Jacques Maritain, “On Knowledge through Connaturality,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 4 (1951): 473.

<sup>45</sup> See Caldera, *Le jugement par inclination*, 70–71, 80–89. This position is also advanced by Hoffmann; see Hoffmann, “Prudence and Practical Principles,” 179. Caldera identifies the desire (*desiderium*) of the appetite for an object and its delight (*delectatio*) in that object as inclinations by means of which the judgment by inclination may be formed. See Caldera, *Le jugement par inclination*, 77–78, 82.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 75–6.

Aquinas writes that “as taste judges flavor according to its own disposition, so the mind of a man judges concerning something to be done according to his habitual disposition.”<sup>47</sup> In the case of taste, however, Caldera finds Aquinas noting that the flavors discerned by taste are “signs of the fittingness of the nourishment.”<sup>48</sup> Caldera therefore maintains that just as the reaction of the sense of taste indicates the suitability of its object for nourishment, so the acts of appetite are signs of the goodness of the objects to which they tend such that by apprehending these acts, a person comes to discern the goodness of which these acts are the signs.<sup>49</sup>

Of course, the fact that the acts of appetite are signs of the goodness of the objects to which they tend does not by itself necessarily imply that knowledge by inclination demands knowledge of these acts, for it might be possible to reach a judgment by connaturality from different principles. Indeed from what I have already said, it is clear that one can grasp the goodness of an end on the basis of a likeness to that end in such a way that the likeness itself need not be known.<sup>50</sup> Perhaps the judgment by inclination can proceed in a similar fashion.

However, there is another reason to think that the judgment by inclination demands actual knowledge of the act by which one is inclined. In one of his texts on knowledge by inclination, Aquinas explicitly adopts from Aristotle the notion that the good person is a kind of “rule and measure” of his or her acts.<sup>51</sup> By saying this, Aquinas means that the virtuous person’s character is a standard by which

<sup>47</sup> ST, II-II, q. 24, a. 11: “Sicut enim gustus diiudicat saporibus secundum suam dispositionem, ita mens hominis diiudicat de aliquo faciendo secundum suam habitualement dispositionem.”

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., II-II, q. 141, a. 5, ad 1: “Ad primum ergo dicendum quod etiam ipse usus ciborum, et delectatio essentialiter ipsum consequens, ad tactum pertinet: unde Philosophus dicit, in II *de Anima*, quod tactus est sensus alimenti, nutrimur enim calido et frigido, humido et sicco. Sed ad gustum pertinet discretio saporum, qui conferunt ad delectationem alimenti, in quantum sunt signa convenientis nutrimenti.” Caldera, *Le jugement par inclination*, 76.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 76-77, 83.

<sup>50</sup> See page 115 above.

<sup>51</sup> ST, I, q. 1 a. 6 ad 3: “Contingit enim aliquem iudicare, uno modo per modum inclinationis: sicut qui habet habitum virtutis, recte iudicat de his quae sunt secundum virtutem agenda, in quantum ad illa inclinatur: unde et in X *Ethic.* dicitur quod virtuosus est mensura et regula actuum humanorum.” The citation itself is an amalgamation of Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. 3, 1113a33–34, in which Aristotle identifies the serious person (ὁ σπουδαῖος) as a rule and measure (κανὼν καὶ μέτρον), and *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. 10, 1176a18, in which Aristotle identifies the good person and his or her virtue as a

the person can judge the goodness or malice of actions. But the tools of measurement we commonly use in everyday life seem to only provide us information insofar as they are themselves known. For example, I can only use a yardstick to measure the length of my sofa when I can see the yardstick itself. Similarly, it appears reasonable to assume that I can use my virtuous inclinations to judge actions only when I am seeing or grasping these inclinations themselves. But such habitual inclinations are only apparent once they have given rise to an action. Consequently, such virtuous habits seem only able to help us form judgments measuring the moral value of an action insofar as the acts proceeding from these habits are grasped by reason.<sup>52</sup>

But though such an account may seem compelling at first, it is in fact mistaken. To see this, it is important to point out that there is more than one act of practical reason that depends upon inclination. Of these acts, it is immediately evident that the initial apprehension of an end as good cannot depend on actually perceiving an appetitive act performed by means of a habit. For, as I have already noted, every act of appetite presupposes an act of reason; and so, any appetitive movement towards a good depends upon a prior apprehension of that object as good. Consequently, the initial apprehension of something as good cannot depend on a prior appetitive act, for such an apprehension would no longer be an initial act of reason, but would depend on a prior appetitive act and a prior rational act serving as the basis of the appetitive act. Instead, as I have already explained, the initial apprehension of an end as good depends not on an appetitive act, but upon a certain likeness of the agent to the object.<sup>53</sup>

Now it is clear that for Aquinas, habits have a kind of likeness to the acts they produce. I have already noted that the acts which produce habits are like them, but Aquinas indicates that the acts

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kind of measure.

<sup>52</sup> Caldera himself does not develop his position along these lines, although he clearly accepts the idea that for Aquinas, the virtuous person is a measure of his or her acts. See Caldera, *Le jugement par inclination*, 74-76, 88, 89. Moreover, he clearly maintains that the affective reaction of the appetite is the measure by which we form the judgment by inclination: “C’est dans la réaction que réside le mesurage de l’objet par rapport au sujet.” Ibid., 88.

<sup>53</sup> See page 115 above.

which proceed from habits are like them as well.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, insofar as a habit is midway between the potentiality of its power and the actuality of the power's operation,<sup>55</sup> the habit is related to the operation which follows from it as potency to actuality. Therefore, a habit is related to its act as having a likeness by way of inclination and potency.<sup>56</sup> Thus, insofar as they give their agents an inclinational likeness to objects, habits serve as principles of the initial apprehension of these objects as good by practical reason.

So far, however, it is not clear that Caldera would object to my argument, for he too maintains that the initial apprehension of the goodness of an object as good does not depend upon the apprehension of an appetitive act.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, I have no wish to deny that we do indeed perceive our own appetitive acts and can form judgments after reflecting on them.<sup>58</sup> But unlike Caldera, I do not believe that the acts of judgment that serve as principles of our acts of intention and choice necessarily result from our appetitive acts insofar as they are known and grasped by us. Instead, I maintain that while our habits and appetitive acts influence our judgments that certain objects are good, our reflective knowledge of these inclinations is (with one exception) not a principle of such judgments.

Several considerations lend themselves to my position. First, if as I have argued, inclinations can help us apprehend the goodness of objects even when these inclinations are not themselves objects of knowledge, it is unclear why such inclinations, whether habits or affective acts, would need to be objects of knowledge in order for them to serve as principles of further intellectual acts, such as acts

<sup>54</sup> Aquinas makes this point explicitly in reference to fortitude, but the argument is general in character, such that it can be applied equally to any operative habit. See ST, II-II, q. 123, a. 7.

<sup>55</sup> See *ibid.*, I-II, q. 71, a. 3: "habitus medio modo se habet inter potentiam et actum." Cf. SCG, I, c. 56.

<sup>56</sup> The inclinational character of such a likeness also follows from the fact that every habit inclines towards nature considered as an end, which in the case of an operative habit, is the very operation of the power to which the habit belongs.

<sup>57</sup> See, Caldera, *Le jugement par inclination*, 83. Here, he also refers to likeness, but principally in order to argue that likeness is a principle of the appetitive act rather than to propose the stronger claim that likeness is a principle of the cognitive apprehension preceding the act of love.

<sup>58</sup> For a discussion of the apprehension of our acts of appetite in Aquinas, see *ibid.*, 84–87. For further discussion particularly of how we know the appetitive acts that proceed from our habits, see Darge, *Habitus per actus cognoscuntur*, part 1.

of judgment. Why would judging that an object is good require knowledge of our inclinations when apprehending that object as good does not require such knowledge?

Moreover, in the actual decision-making process, people do not always base the judgments by which they evaluate objects upon knowledge about how their appetites are reacting to these objects. For example, it seems unlikely that a person who courageously rescued a drowning child would say that the knowledge that she desired to help the child was a factor in her decision. Indeed it would seem odd if such a person were to say that she knew it would be right to jump into a river to save the child because she knew she desired to save the child. Of course, there is one obvious exception to this account of the process of making decisions. People frequently judge that they should pursue courses of action which they observe to be causing acts of delight and pleasure in their appetites. But even this exception supports my general position, for it is only insofar as the affective response of delight itself becomes an object of desire that this delight becomes a principle of a judgment of practical reason. In other words, as known, the act of the appetite serves as a principle of practical judgment in precisely the same way as any other end one apprehends. But the apprehension of other ends as good, is not what causes our practical judgment to be a judgment by inclination. Consequently, our apprehension of our appetitive act, even when it serves as principle of one of our judgments, is not the reason why that judgment is a judgment by inclination. From these considerations, it is evident that the judgment by inclination does not depend upon a reflective grasp of the inclination, but rather follows from the fact that inclinations (whether or not they are grasped) make their possessors like the objects at which they aim.

In this fashion, habits and the inclinations to which they give rise, as likenesses of the ends to which they are ordered, are principles of our initial apprehension of the goodness of these ends as well as our later judgments that these ends are good. From this it follows that habits also affect the judgment that results in choice. For in this case, the end is the principle by which the means is judged to be



choiceworthy. But in order for it to function as a principle in this way, the end itself must be seen by the intellect as a good worthy of pursuit. Now as just mentioned, insofar as they incline us towards ends, habits clearly contribute to seeing those ends as worthy of pursuit. Consequently, by disposing us to apprehend an end in this light, a habit immediately affects the principle of the judgment of practical reason and by this means also influences the ensuing act of judgment itself. In this way, habits affect the initial intellectual apprehension of an end as good, the later judgment that the end is good, and the ultimate judgment of choice.

To be sure, the habits in the will are also a source of the will's act of intention, which as I have suggested above, is a principle of the judgment of choice. Thus, a habit in the will may very well also affect the acts of reason by means of the acts of the power to which it belongs. That is to say, such a habit may affect the will and consequently the intellect in the order of efficient causality (or exercise). Nevertheless, the effect of such a habit on reason's perception of the end as good is not reducible to this latter effect, for when disposing reason to perceive the end as worthy of pursuit, such a habit is affecting reason in the order of formal causality (or specification). This is especially evident because the very apprehension of the end as worthy of pursuit is prior to the act of intention, and therefore is not reducible to it.

But though experience confirms that our inclinations do indeed affect our judgments, Aquinas provides no further details regarding how habits might influence the judgment of reason. However, his principles suggest a way of explaining this effect. As I have already noted, Aquinas maintains as a general metaphysical principle that "everything that is received in something is received in it according to the mode of the receiver."<sup>59</sup> Thus, the intellect receives in its apprehension a good which corresponds to a habitual inclination in a different way than it receives a good to which no such inclination corresponds. Consequently, there is a metaphysical basis for our empirical observations.

<sup>59</sup> See the text in chapter 3, note 50.

This metaphysical explanation also points the way to answering the argument raised earlier that for a habit to serve as a rule and measure of human acts, it must itself be known. For if this description of the way habits influence our judgments is correct, the analogy between habits and our everyday tools of measurement might be preserved. A measuring cup, for example, can measure out a cup of flour without knowing the flour; indeed, it measures flour simply by receiving the flour into itself. The metaphysical explanation just proposed suggests that in a similar fashion, habits might serve as measures of our acts not by being known, but by disposing us to receive objects in a certain way into our minds such that we perceive them in a way that fits with how we are disposed. For instance, a just person will perceive the suggestion that he engage in an act of theft as an invitation to do evil simply because of how he is disposed when he receives the suggestion. His judgment that the act is evil need not follow from him actually reflecting on his habit of justice or the revulsion produced in his appetite by the invitation to do wrong. Simply because he possesses a contrary disposition, his intellect is able to easily see the evil of the proposed act and judge in accordance with the disposition of virtue.

A difficulty remains, however, for appetitive habits are not in the intellect itself, and so when the object of one of these habits is received into the intellect, it is not clear whether the object is received in the intellect as something inclined to that object. For example, although the just person is inclined to just actions, it is not clear that his intellect is so inclined, for justice is not in his intellect but in his will. Consequently, it is unclear whether the possession of justice directly affects how his intellect perceives just objects. Put more generally, it is unclear whether the intellect itself can be inclined to the objects of appetitive habits. But the metaphysical principle that everything is received according to the mode of the receiver only seems to apply if the intellect itself is disposed to these objects. Therefore, it is unclear whether the metaphysical principle actually helps us understand the effect of appetitive habits on the intellect's acts.

In discussing the problem of how an appetite might affect the intellect, Rolf Darge cites an impor-

tant text that suggests a way out of this difficulty. The passage is from the *De veritate*; in it, Aquinas maintains that “these two parts, namely, intellect and affect, are not to be understood as in distinct places in the soul, as sight and hearing which are the acts of organs.”<sup>60</sup> Unlike the powers of sight and hearing, which are in distinct organs, Aquinas contends that the intellect and the affective powers are not in distinct places. This is particularly clear with regard to the will, which, like the intellect, belongs directly to the soul and not to any organ. Thus, the intellect and will may be said to be the same in subject.

A similar relationship is identified between the powers of sense apprehension and the sense appetite in a passage from Aquinas’s commentary on the *De anima*. There, we find Aquinas commenting on Aristotle’s claim that “the appetitive and what is inclined to avoid are not different, neither from each other, nor from the sensitive, but their being is different.”<sup>61</sup> Elaborating on this text, Aquinas writes:

although desiring or fleeing or sensing are diverse acts, nevertheless the principle of these acts is the same in subject but differs in account (*ratione*). And this is what he [Aristotle] adds that “the appetitive and fleeing,” that is, the part of the soul which flees and [the part which] desires, are not other in subject, neither from each other nor from the sensitive part; but “their being is other,” that is, they differ in account [*ratione*]. And he says this against Plato, who placed the appetitive organ in one part of the body and the sensitive organ in another.<sup>62</sup>

Here, Aquinas finds Aristotle arguing that the sensitive powers of apprehension and the sense appetite belong to the same organ, and differ only in their account or definition (*ratio*). Neither Aquinas nor

<sup>60</sup> *De ver.*, q. 10, a. 9, ad 3 in contr. “intelligere, proprie loquendo non est intellectus sed animae per intellectum, sicut nec calefacere est caloris sed ignis per calorem. Nec istae duae partes, intellectus et affectus, sunt cogitandae in anima ut situalliter distinctae, sicut visus et auditus qui sunt actus organorum; et ideo illud quod est in affectu est etiam praesens animae intelligenti.” See Darge, *Habitus per actus cognoscuntur*, 226.

<sup>61</sup> *De anima*, 431a13–14: “οὐχ ἕτερον τὸ ὀρεκτικὸν καὶ τὸ φευκτικόν, οὐτ’ ἀλλήλων οὔτε τοῦ αἰσθητικοῦ· ἀλλὰ τὸ εἶναι ἄλλο.”

<sup>62</sup> *In de an.*, lib. 3, cap. 6: “Et quamvis appetere uel fugere uel sentire sint diuersi actus, tamen principium eorum est idem subiecto, set ratione differt; et hoc est quod subiungit quod appetituum et fugituum, id est pars anime, que fugit et desiderat, non sunt altere subiecto neque ab invicem neque a parte sensitua, set esse aliud est, id est differunt ratione. Et hoc dicit contra Platonem, qui ponebat in alia parte corporis organum appetitui, et in alia organum sensitui.” (Note this text is contained in book 3, lectio 6 in some editions.)

Aristotle provides a reason for this position in this context. But reflection upon Aquinas's general account of appetite indicates that this position is correct. Indeed, according to Aquinas, an appetitive act is simply the inclination that follows upon the apprehension of some form.<sup>63</sup> Since the cognized form is a sufficient principle of the act of appetite, it is unclear why the sensitive appetite would need another organ, besides the one in which the acts of the inner senses arise. Consequently, it is eminently reasonable to place the sensitive appetite in the same organ as the inner apprehensive senses. Accordingly, whether considering the relationship of the intellect and the will or the relationship of the inner senses and the sense appetite, one has reason to say that for each pair, the subject is the same.

This underlying unity of the cognitive and appetitive, it seems to me, is the metaphysical justification for the influence of our inclinations on our appetites. When an apprehension is received into a cognitive power, it is received in a power that is united to an appetitive power in a fundamental way, such that the inclinations of the appetite itself condition the character of the apprehension. Though Aquinas himself does not spell out his position in this much detail, this account seems to me to be the most reasonable way of explaining his position that at the same time does justice to the available texts and his metaphysical principles.

However, a final objection might be made to Aquinas's position that habits in the appetite affect the acts of practical reason. If one grants this role to affective habits, it is no longer clear why a virtue of prudence is necessary. For if one is well disposed to the end, which serves as a principle of the judgment resulting in choice, it is unclear how such judgments could go wrong or at least how an error in such judgments could be traced to practical reason. If this is so, then it seems that practical reason has no need of virtues like prudence.

In his discussions of the virtue of prudence and the related virtues of practical reason, Aquinas provides the resources to answer this objection. First, it is important to recall that for Aquinas, judgment

<sup>63</sup> ST, I, q. 80, a. 1.

and command are distinct acts. But according to Aquinas, “it is necessary wherever some good human act is found that it correspond to some human virtue.”<sup>64</sup> Therefore, even if the moral virtues disposed us perfectly towards practical judgments such that we did not require further intellectual virtues disposing us to these judgments, we would still need a virtue in practical reason to perfect its act of command. Indeed, as Aquinas points out, “sometimes that concerning which someone has judged well, is put off or done negligently or inordinately. And therefore after the virtue which judges well, there is necessary a final principal virtue which commands well.”<sup>65</sup>

But according to Aquinas, we also require virtues in practical reason to perfect our practical judgments. Aquinas calls these virtues *synesis* and *gnome*, adopting the Greek terms found in Aristotle’s *Ethics* 6, chapters 10 and 11.<sup>66</sup> Such virtues differ based on whether they dispose reason to draw upon higher or lower principles in the course of forming judgments.<sup>67</sup> In replying to an objection that the excellence of the cognitive power of judgment is from nature alone, Aquinas explains how practical judgments depend upon both moral virtues and virtues in practical reason itself:

That a cognitive power be well disposed to receiving things as they are indeed comes about in its root [*radicaliter*] from nature but in its consummation from exercise or the gift of grace. And this occurs in two ways. In one way, directly on the part of the cognitive power itself, for example, because one is not filled with distorted conceptions, but true and right ones, and this pertains to *synesis* as a special virtue. In another way, indirectly, from the good disposition of the appetitive power, from which it follows that a man judges well of the objects of appetite [*appetibiles*]. And thus the good judgment of virtue follows the habits of the moral virtues, but about ends, whereas *synesis* is rather about the means.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>64</sup> ST, II-II, q. 17, a. 1: “Oportet igitur, ubicumque invenitur aliquis actus hominis bonus, quod respondeat alicui virtuti humanae.”

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., II-II, q. 51, a. 3, ad 3: “quandoque id quod bene iudicatum est differri, vel negligenter agi aut inordinate. Et ideo post virtutem quae est bene iudicativa necessaria est finalis virtus principalis quae sit bene praeceptiva.”

<sup>66</sup> I will not discuss here whether Aristotle himself considered *synesis* and *gnome* to be virtues. But he appears to have at least considered them to be habits. See, Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1143a25.

<sup>67</sup> ST, II-II, q. 51, a. 4.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., II-II, q. 51, a. 3, ad 1: “Quod autem virtus cognoscitiva sit bene disposita ad recipiendum res secundum quod sunt, contingit quidem radicaliter ex natura, consummative autem ex exercitio vel ex munere gratiae. Et hoc dupliciter. Uno modo, directe ex parte ipsius cognoscitivae virtutis, puta quia non est imbuta pravis conceptionibus, sed veris et rectis: et hoc pertinet ad *synesim* secundum quod est specialis virtus. Alio modo, indirecte, ex bona dispositione appetitivae virtutis,

Clearly, Aquinas holds that virtue in the intellect is necessary to perfect acts of practical judgment, and so it remains to consider the explanation provided in this text.

In the passage Aquinas begins by pointing out that the cognitive power needs to be disposed well towards receiving from its active principle. Aquinas identifies the active principle as things themselves as they truly are. Thus, in order to be well disposed to practical judgment, reason must be well disposed to receiving and judging things as they are. But Aquinas suggests that there is more than one judgment which the practical intellect can make. On the one hand, there is “the judgment of virtue” which Aquinas tells us is about ends. Because it is about ends, this judgment seems to correspond to the major premise of the practical syllogism, which identifies certain kinds of acts as goods worthy of pursuit. On the other hand, there is the judgment about means. This judgment appears to correspond to the conclusion of the practical syllogism, which asserts that some means is choiceworthy (or to be avoided). Now performing such judgments surely is aided by the virtues, since for a means to good, it is necessary for it to be ordered to a due end. But being well disposed to the end is not sufficient for the judgment about the means. For one must still identify a means that is duly ordered to the end.

Aquinas thus holds that virtues such as *synesis* are necessary in practical reason to dispose it properly towards the judgment about the means. Now, I have already argued that in the judgment directly preceding choice, the active principle is the means understood as choiceworthy in light of the end. This suggests that the end is the formal component of the object of such a judgment, while the means is the material component, which is made to be an object by its relationship to the end, just as color is made into a visible object by the formal principle of light. Now just as in order to see well the power of sight must be disposed well not only to light but also to color, so practical reason must be well disposed not only to the end as such but also to the means. Without a disposition to seeing certain colors, the power of sight is color blind, and without a disposition to the means, the intellect cannot

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ex qua sequitur quod homo bene iudicet de appetibilibus. Et sic bonum virtutis iudicium consequitur habitus virtutum moralium, sed circa fines: synesis autem est magis circa ea quae sunt ad finem.”

always promptly and easily judge well regarding the means. Consequently, Aquinas has reason to hold that virtues are needed in practical reason to assist it in judging well regarding the means.

His descriptions of the virtues perfecting these judgments, *synesis* and *gnome*, fits with the above interpretation. Aquinas describes *synesis* as disposing one to judge “according to the common law” or according to “the common rules of acting.”<sup>69</sup> An example of such a rule found in Aquinas is that one should return deposits to their owners at the appointed time.<sup>70</sup> Aquinas describes this rule as a conclusion from the more general principle that one ought to act according to reason.<sup>71</sup> The rules according to which *synesis* judges therefore seem to be conclusions from the more general requirement to act in accordance with reason. By applying these rules in the right way, one is able to more quickly and easily judge the appropriate means to performing a virtuous action. For example, the rule requiring one to return a deposit helps one easily see the means to the end of justice in particular circumstances.

One must be careful, however, to distinguish *synesis* from the rules by which *synesis* produces acts of judgments. For, insofar as it is a virtue, *synesis* does not err, but Aquinas clearly indicates on more than one occasion that the common rules cannot always indicate the appropriate action to take. The failure of the injunction to return a deposit is one of Aquinas’s favorite illustrations. As Aquinas points out, when someone is attacking one’s country, one should not return a deposit to that person because this would further endanger one’s own country.<sup>72</sup> In such a case, the general rule fails. For this reason, Aquinas posits a second virtue of *gnome* which looks to natural reason itself in order to determine what to do in cases in which the common rules do not apply.<sup>73</sup> Aquinas’s does not give many details regarding

<sup>69</sup> ST, I-II, q. 57, a. 6, ad 3: “secundum communem legem.” Ibid., II-II, q. 51, a. 4: “communes regulas agendorum.”

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 94, a. 4.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.: “Apud omnes enim hoc rectum est et verum, ut secundum rationem agatur. Ex hoc autem principio sequitur quasi conclusio propria, quod deposita sint reddenda.”

<sup>72</sup> See *ibid.*, I-II, q. 94, a. 4 co., q. 97, a. 4 ad 3, II-II, q. 51, a. 4, and q. 120, a. 1. For further discussion of how such rules can fail, see John Boler, “Aquinas on Exceptions in Natural Law,” in MacDonald and Stump, *Aquinas’s Moral Theory: Essays in Honor of Norman Kretzmann*, 161–204.

<sup>73</sup> ST, I-II, q. 57, a. 6, ad 3: “Distinguuntur autem *synesis* et *gnome* secundum diversas regulas quibus iudicatur, nam *synesis* est iudicativa de agendis secundum communem legem; *gnome* autem secundum ipsam rationem naturalem, in his

how *gnome* functions, but it is clear that in disposing us to judge by natural reason itself, *gnome* must be disposing us to judge in accord with the natural hierarchy of human ends in those cases in which the common rules do not properly indicate the means that the hierarchy of human ends demands. Both virtues thus dispose us to judge the appropriate means to be chosen in order to achieve the due end. In this way, neither virtue is superfluous. Instead, both virtues supplement the dispositions to ends provided by the moral virtues with appropriate dispositions to means.

Consequently, Aquinas's position is consistent. He can maintain both that the moral virtues affect the judgments of practical reason insofar as they depend upon the end as an active principle and that further virtues are needed to perfect practical reason itself in relationship to the means. Together both virtues contribute to reason judging well about the means to a virtuous end. And so, it remains clear that habits in the appetitive powers influence the judgment of reason by affecting the perception of the end that serves as a principle of this judgment.

### 4.3 Summary

To conclude this chapter, it is worth reflecting on the principal points established regarding the effects of habits on human acts. I will do so by considering these points in relation to the three characteristics identified in the first chapter as belonging to the performance of habitual acts, namely, the uniformity, readiness, and delightfulness of such acts.

As noted in the first chapter, the uniformity of action provided by habits consists in a determination of the power of the soul to a fixed kind of act. In this chapter, I have shown more determinately that habits determine the general inclination of a power to specifically good or evil acts. The uniformity of action wrought by a habit is consequently a uniformity in the goodness or badness of a specific kind of act that falls under the more general inclination of a power of the soul.

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in quibus deficit lex communis.”



Because the determination by a habit at the same time inclines the possessor of this habit away from opposed acts, the habit also gives a power of the soul a certain readiness and ease in performing actions.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, at least in some cases, a special kind of readiness is brought about by habits which affect the acts of powers to which they do not belong. Intellectual habits, for example, insofar as they reach even the sensitive powers, give the intellect an additional readiness for thinking about reality. For since the intellect depends upon the phantasms of the inner apprehensive sense powers, by disposing the acts of these powers in a way that befits intellectual cognition, intellectual habits make ready the necessary preconditions for intellectual cognition in the inner senses, thus preparing the human being for intellectual cognition on both the sensitive and intellectual levels. Likewise, in inclining the appetites to determinate ends, affective habits not only prepare their own powers for operation; they also prepare the intellect for grasping these ends as good. But since the operations of the appetitive powers depend upon the judgment of reason, which must first approve their acts as good, by disposing reason to grasp certain appetitive acts as good, habits in the appetites further ready these powers for moving towards the end of the habit. Now it is important to note that appetitive habits, insofar as they are ordered to ends, do not completely remove the need to take counsel about how to achieve these ends. But they at least remove the need to take counsel about which ends are good<sup>75</sup> and allow an immediate rejection of any means opposed to the ends of the habits. To this extent, they ready the intellect to serve as a principle of appetitive acts.

The ease with which such acts are performed no doubt adds to the delightfulness of their performance. But Aquinas's analysis of delight provides deeper insight into how habits make our acts

<sup>74</sup> However, it is important to remember that while it inclines its power away from acts opposed to it, a habit does not determine the power to so great a degree that it eliminates the freedom to perform acts contrary to those acts to which it inclines.

<sup>75</sup> Of course, according to Aquinas, no one takes counsel about the end as such, but a badly disposed person might need to take counsel in order to recognize that certain ends to which he is not well disposed are actually good and worthy of pursuit. For example, by taking counsel about how to achieve health, an intemperate person might come to see a temperate course of action as good and worthy of pursuit.

delightful. According to Aquinas, “two things are required for delight, namely, the attainment of a fitting good and the knowledge of an attainment of this sort.”<sup>76</sup> Therefore, the delight we take in our actions results from the fact that we are performing acts that befit us and the fact that we recognize the goodness of these acts. Now habits evidently play a role with regard to both of these sources of delight in our actions. With regard to the attainment of good actions, one can distinguish two contributions of habits. First, by determining our powers to readily perform certain kinds of acts, habits assist us in attaining acts which befit us. Second, by giving us a likeness to such acts, habits can be the reason or part of the reason why an act is befitting. This is especially clear in the case of evil habits, which make acts which are not natural to us befitting to us insofar as we possess an evil disposition. Indeed, as Aquinas points out, “it happens that some [delights] are not natural simply speaking, but are connatural in a certain respect.”<sup>77</sup> Here, the term “connatural” indicates a kind of likeness in nature between the agent and the operation in which the agent delights. Aquinas goes on to explain that one source of this connaturality is custom, by which human beings can be led to find delight in even the most unnatural acts. Consequently, by giving us connatural likenesses to certain operations, habits and customs make such operations befitting to us insofar as we possess such habits or customs. And while it is particularly clear that habits can be a source of delight in evil actions, they can evidently also be a source of additional delight in good actions insofar as a good action is more like an agent who is habituated to this action than an agent who is not.

With regard to helping us recognize the goodness of the acts we perform, habits again play an important role. Indeed, as I have argued, appetitive habits, insofar as they are like the acts to which they incline us, dispose us to apprehend these acts as good and befitting. But this role is clearly not only confined to habits in the appetites, for insofar as they incline us to acts of reason that are like

<sup>76</sup> ST, I-II, q. 32, a. 1: “ad delectationem duo requiruntur: scilicet consecutio boni convenientis, et cognitio huiusmodi adeptionis.”

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., I-II, q. 31, a. 7: “contingit aliquas [delectationes] esse innaturales, simpliciter loquendo, sed connaturales secundum quid.”

them, intellectual habits also help us to recognize their corresponding acts as good. The scientist, for example, has an especially deep recognition of the value of the acts of thought proper to his or her science. Thus, both because they dispose us to the attainment of befitting acts and because they dispose us to perceive the performance of such acts as good, habits are sources of delight in the actions that proceed from them.

From these considerations, it is evident that the contributions of habits to human operations are many indeed. Such habits determine the general inclinations of powers to uniformly aim at good or evil acts. In so doing, they ready the power for action and sometimes even make ready powers on which their own power depends for operation. Moreover, by increasing the likeness of the agent to his or her acts, habits give the agent greater delight in the performance of these acts along with the satisfying knowledge that one is acting well. Evidently, then, the acquisition of good habits is of great benefit to human action.

# Conclusion

It now remains to summarize the principal conclusions of this dissertation. Although a number of important conclusions have been drawn regarding human powers and acts, I will focus upon the conclusions reached regarding habits, since an elucidation of Aquinas's thought on habits has been my chief aim. However, I will also summarize some aspects of my treatment of human powers and acts, highlighting those aspects which play the most important roles in clarifying Aquinas's views on habits.

In the first place, I have argued that for Aquinas, the necessity of habits of operation for human beings follows from the natural indeterminacy of certain human powers. In particular, the openness of rational powers to opposites constitutes a special kind of indeterminacy that requires the perfective ordering provided by habits. Without such habits, the powers of the soul would be unable to perform good acts with the consistency, readiness, and delight necessary for a happy human life. Consequently, habits are necessary if a human being is to live life well. Now such habits are not only requisite for entirely rational powers, for as I explained above certain sensitive powers of the soul may be said to participate in reason because they are commanded in a special way, namely, by receiving the apprehension of reason as a formal principle of their objects. Insofar as they share in reason, such powers have a share of reason's indeterminacy and so would seem to require the perfection of habits just as entirely rational powers do.

But in order to maintain the possibility of habits in the sensitive powers of the soul, a difficulty must be overcome: because everything is received according to the mode of the receiver and at the same time the sense powers are embodied in physical organs, it seems that any habit received into these powers could only be ordered to determinate physical ends and would thus lack the necessary flexibility

to respond to previously unexperienced situational factors. In response to this problem, I have argued that for Aquinas, habits can be received into the sensitive powers of the soul precisely insofar as they participate in reason. If habits are received into sensitive powers as participating in reason, then there is no difficulty with such habits ordering sensitive powers to rational objects, for such habits are evidently received according to the mode of the receiver. Consequently, upon a careful reading of Aquinas, this initial problem regarding how habits with rational objects can belong to sensitive powers admits of a solution.

There is, however, a somewhat different problem regarding the relationship of habits to the will. In this case, one must explain how Aquinas can maintain that the will needs some naturally acquired moral habits, but not all. This is an especially interesting problem given the fact that Aquinas initially held that the will needs no such habits, before ultimately revising his position. The key to solving this problem may be found in a distinction Aquinas develops in his later works between the good proportionate to human nature and the good proportionate to the will itself. The will only has a natural inclination to goods proportionate to the person to whom this power of will belongs. Other goods, such as the good of another or the common good, while truly good for the human being to pursue, are not determinate objects of the will's natural tendency. Consequently, the will needs moral habits to perfect it with regard to goods that are not proportionate to it, whereas no habits are needed with regard to those goods for which it already has a natural love.

Such problems concerning how habits affect human powers are not the only ones to face the student of Aquinas, however, for important questions may also be raised regarding how habits affect human acts. Among the more important of these questions is whether Aquinas is correct to hold that any given habit will incline to good or evil acts alone. This position follows from Aquinas's definition of habits as ordered to nature considered as an end, but it can be more fully supported by a consideration of the unity found in the kinds of acts that cause habits. Here, Aquinas's position that acts are specified

by their objects proves to be quite helpful. Aquinas maintains that moral acts are specified by their objects in relation to reason, such that they are fundamentally divided into two basic genera of good and evil. Likewise, cognitive acts are fundamentally divided into true and false, depending on the relationship of their objects to reality. This indicates that the more specific kinds of acts by which we form habits will fall into one or the other of these more fundamental divisions into good and bad acts. Consequently, each habit formed by these more specific kinds of acts must be either entirely good or entirely evil.

But in the philosophy of Aquinas, habits not only influence the acts of the powers to which they belong; they also immediately influence the acts of other powers. Evidently, this striking feature of Aquinas's theory demands a careful explanation. In general, I have argued that a habit can immediately affect the act of a power to which it does not belong when it affects the objects of that power. Two especially interesting examples may be observed in Aquinas's philosophy. First, Aquinas appears to hold that habits in the intellect can affect how our inner senses operate. Here, the effect of such habits can be traced to the connection between the objects stored in our inner sense powers and the intelligible species found in our intellect. Because of this connection, an order instituted by habits between the intelligible species causes a corresponding order between the objects of the sense powers, even before someone begins to consider these objects. Second, habits in the appetite can affect our practical apprehensions and judgments about the objects we experience by likening us to such objects with the result that we perceive more readily the goodness of those objects to which we have a likeness by inclination. The fundamental reason for the effect of our appetitive habits on our perception of the goodness of objects seems to be the common subject in which both the appetitive and cognitive powers are found. Since whatever is received is received according to the mode of the receiver, the way an object is perceived by a cognitive power will be conditioned by the disposition of an appetitive power insofar as that appetitive power is one in subject with the cognitive power. Therefore, it is manifest

that habits in one power can affect the objects of another and thereby can also affect the acts of the other power.

In addition to the solutions to these more particular problems, certain general conclusions about the influence of habits upon human powers and acts have also emerged. Among the most important conclusions reached regarding the effect of habits on human powers and acts was a clarification of the way in which habits bring about order in such powers and acts. A careful reading of Aquinas reveals that a habit brings about an order among various kinds of acts and among the various circumstances that form the parts of single acts so as to order these acts to the ends at which the habit aims. Likewise, the habit institutes a corresponding order among the very parts of the human power to which it belongs. Moreover, it has become clear that the ranking of one act in relationship to another by means of habit comes about insofar as one inclination in a power is subordinated to or set on par with another. Consequently, in determining the general inclination of a power to more specific kinds of acts, a habit also gives a kind of order to that power and its acts.

Evidently, the power of habits to shape our lives is great indeed. As stable dispositions to acting consistently, readily, and with pleasure, both good or evil habits have a great impact on how we live our lives. Moreover, whether ordering powers of the soul to good or ordering them to evil, habits frequently affect not only the acts of one power of the soul but also the acts of others. It is clearly necessary, therefore, to take great care to grow in good habits in order that one might succeed in living well.

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