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20.

*THOMAS AQUINAS: II*

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# THE *SUMMA THEOLOGICA*

OF SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

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*Revised by* Daniel J. Sullivan

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# TREATISE ON HABITS

## 1. IN GENERAL

### QUESTION XLIX

#### OF HABITS IN GENERAL, AS TO THEIR

##### SUBSTANCE

##### (In Four Articles)

AFTER treating of human acts and passions, we now pass on to the consideration of the principles of human acts, and first, of intrinsic principles, second, of extrinsic principles, (Q. xc). The intrinsic principle is power and habit; but as we have treated of powers in the First Part (Q. LXXVII. *sqq.*), it remains for us to consider habits. And first we shall consider them in general; second, we shall consider virtues and vices and other like habits, which are the principles of human acts (Q. Lv).

Concerning habits in general there are four points to be considered: First, the substance of habits; second, their subject (Q. L); third, the cause of their generation, increase, and corruption (Q. LI); fourth, how they are distinguished from one another (Q. LIV).

Under the first head, there are four points of inquiry: (1) Whether habit is a quality? (2) Whether it is a distinct species of quality? (3) Whether habit implies an order to an act? (4) Of the necessity of habit.

#### ARTICLE I. *Whether Habit Is a Quality?*

*We proceed thus to the First Article:* It would seem that habit is not a quality.

*Objection 1.* For Augustine says (QQ. LXXXIII, *qu. 73*):<sup>1</sup> "This word 'habit' is derived from the verb 'To have.'" But "To have" pertains not only to quality, but also to the other categories, for we speak of ourselves as having quantity and money and other like things. Therefore habit is not a quality.

*Obj. 2.* Further, habit is considered as one of the predicaments, as may be clearly seen in the *Book on the Predicaments*.<sup>2</sup> But one predicament is not contained under another. Therefore habit is not a quality.

*Obj. 3.* Further, "every habit is a disposi-

tion," as is stated in the *Book on the Predicaments*.<sup>3</sup> Now disposition is "the order of that which has parts," as stated in the *Metaphysics*.<sup>4</sup> But this belongs to the predicament Position. Therefore habit is not a quality.

*On the contrary,* The Philosopher says, in the *Book on the Predicaments*,<sup>5</sup> that "habit is a quality which it is difficult to change."

*I answer that,* This word *habitus* (habit) is derived from *habere* (to have). Now habit is taken from this word in two ways; in one way, according as man, or any other thing, is said to have something; in another way, according as a particular thing is ordered (*se habet*) in a certain way either in regard to itself, or in regard to something else.

Concerning the first, we must observe that "to have," as said in regard to anything that is had, is common to different genera. And so the Philosopher puts "to have" among the post-predicaments,<sup>6</sup> so called because they result from the different genera of things; as, for instance, opposition, priority, posterity, and the like. Now among things which are had, there seems to be this distinction, that there are some in which there is no medium between the haver and that which is had; as, for instance, there is no medium between the subject and quality or quantity. Then there are some in which there is a medium, but only a relation; as for instance a man is said to have a companion or a friend. And, further, there are some in which there is a medium, not indeed an action or a passion, but something after the manner of action or passion; thus, for instance, something adorns or covers, and something else is adorned or covered. Therefore the Philosopher says<sup>7</sup> that "a habit is said to be, as it were, an action or a passion of the haver and that which is had," as is the case in those things which we have about ourselves. And therefore these constitute a special genus of things, which is called the predicament of Habit, of which the Philosopher says<sup>8</sup> that

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* (9<sup>a</sup>10).

<sup>4</sup> Aristotle, V, 19 (1022<sup>b</sup>1).

<sup>5</sup> *Categories*, 8 (9<sup>a</sup>3). <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 15 (15<sup>b</sup>17).

<sup>7</sup> *Metaphysics*, V, 20 (1022<sup>b</sup>4).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1</sup> PL 40, 84.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Categories*, 8 (8<sup>b</sup>26).

"there is a habit between clothing and the man who is clothed."

But if "to have" be taken according as a thing is ordered in regard to itself or to something else, in that case habit is a quality, since this mode of having is in respect of some quality; and of this the Philosopher says<sup>1</sup> that "habit is a disposition whereby that which is disposed is disposed well or ill, and this, either in regard to itself or in regard to another; thus health is a habit." And in this sense we speak of habit now. Therefore we must say that habit is a quality.

*Reply Ob. 1.* This argument takes "to have" in the general sense, for in this sense it is common to many predicaments, as we have said.

*Reply Obj. 2.* This argument takes habit in the sense in which we understand it to be a medium between the haver and that which is had, and in this sense it is a predicament, as we have said.

*Reply Obj. 3.* Disposition does always, indeed, imply an order of that which has parts. But this happens in three ways, as the Philosopher goes on at once to say: namely, "either as to place, or as to power, or as to species." "In saying this," as Simplicius observes in his *Commentary on the Predicaments*,<sup>2</sup> "he includes all dispositions:—bodily dispositions, when he says 'as to place,'" and this belongs to the predicament Position, which is the order of parts in a place. "When he says 'as to power,' he includes all those dispositions which are in course of formation and not yet arrived at perfect usefulness," such as undeveloped science and virtue. "And when he says, 'as to species,' he includes perfect dispositions, which are called habits," such as perfected science and virtue.

## ARTICLE 2. *Whether Habit Is a Distinct Species of Quality?*

*We thus proceed to the Second Article:* It would seem that habit is not a distinct species of quality.

*Objection 1.* Because, as we have said (A. 1), habit, in so far as it is a quality, is a disposition whereby that which is disposed is disposed well or ill. But this happens in regard to any quality, for a thing happens to be well or ill disposed in regard also to shape, and in like manner in regard to heat and cold, and in regard to all such things. Therefore habit is not a distinct species of quality.

*Obj. 2.* Further, the Philosopher says in the *Book on the Predicaments*<sup>3</sup> that "heat and cold

are said to be dispositions or habits, just as sickness and health." But heat and cold are in the third species of quality. Therefore habit or disposition is not distinct from the other species of quality.

*Obj. 3.* Further, "difficult to change" is not a difference belonging to the predicament of quality, but rather to movement or passion. Now no genus is determined to a species by a difference of another genus, but differences should be proper to a genus, as the Philosopher says in the *Metaphysics*.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, since habit is said to be a quality difficult to change,<sup>5</sup> it does not seem to be a distinct species of quality.

*On the contrary,* The Philosopher says in the *Book on the Predicaments*<sup>6</sup> that "one species of quality is habit and disposition."

*I answer that,* The Philosopher in the *Book on the Predicaments*<sup>7</sup> considers disposition and habit as the first among the four species of quality. Now Simplicius, in his *Commentary on the Predicaments*, explains the difference of these species as follows.<sup>8</sup> He says that "some qualities are natural, and are in their subject in virtue of its nature, and are always there; but some are adventitious, being caused from without, and these can be lost. Now the latter, that is, those which are adventitious are habits and dispositions, differing in the point of being easily or difficultly lost. As to natural qualities, some regard a thing in the point of its being in a state of potency, and thus we have the second species of quality; while others regard a thing which is in act, and this either deeply rooted in it or only on its surface. If deeply rooted, we have the third species of quality; if on the surface, we have the fourth species of quality, as shape, and form which is the shape of an animated being." But this distinction of the species of quality seems unsuitable. For there are many shapes, and qualities pertaining to passion which are not natural but adventitious; and there are also many dispositions which are not adventitious but natural, as health, beauty and the like. Moreover, it does not suit the order of the species, since that which is the more natural is always first.

Therefore we must explain otherwise the distinction of dispositions and habits from other qualities. For quality, properly speaking, implies a certain mode of substance. Now mode, as Augustine says (*Gen. ad. lit.* iv, 3),<sup>9</sup> "is that which

<sup>1</sup> *Metaphysics*, v, 20 (1022<sup>b</sup>10).

<sup>2</sup> *In Cat.*, viii (CG viii, 240.30). <sup>3</sup> *Categories*, 8 (8<sup>b</sup>36).

<sup>4</sup> *VII*, 12 (1038<sup>a</sup>9).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* (8<sup>b</sup>26).

<sup>6</sup> *In Cat.*, viii (CG viii, 228.19).

<sup>7</sup> *PL* 34, 290.

<sup>8</sup> Aristotle, *Categories*, 8 (9<sup>a</sup>3).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*



a measure determines"; hence it implies a certain determination according to a certain measure. Therefore, just as that in accordance with which the potency of matter is determined to its substantial being, is called quality, which is a difference affecting substance, so that in accordance with which the potency of the subject is determined to its accidental being is called an accidental quality, which is also a kind of difference, as is clear from the Philosopher.<sup>1</sup>

Now the mode or determination of the subject according to accidental being may be taken either in relation to the very nature of the subject, or according to the action and passion resulting from its natural principles, which are matter and form; or again according to quantity. If we take the mode or determination of the subject in regard to quantity, we shall then have the fourth species of quality. And because quantity, considered in itself, is devoid of movement, and does not imply the notion of good or evil, so it does not concern the fourth species of quality whether a thing be well or ill disposed, nor quickly or slowly moving.

But the mode or determination of the subject according to action or passion is considered in the second and third species of quality. And therefore in both, we take into account whether a thing be done with ease or difficulty; whether it be transitory or lasting. But in them, we do not consider anything pertaining to the notion of good or evil, because movements and passions have not the aspect of an end, while good and evil are said in respect of an end.

On the other hand, the mode or determination of the subject in regard to the nature of the thing belongs to the first species of quality, which is habit and disposition; for the Philosopher says,<sup>2</sup> when speaking of habits of the soul and of the body, that they are "dispositions of the perfect to the best; and by perfect I mean that which is disposed in accordance with its nature." And since "the form itself and the nature of a thing is the end and the cause why a thing is made,"<sup>3</sup> therefore in the first species we consider both evil and good, and also changeableness, whether easy or difficult according, as a certain nature is the end of generation and movement. And so the Philosopher<sup>4</sup> defines habit, "a disposition whereby someone is disposed, well or ill"; and in the *Ethics*<sup>5</sup> he says that "by habits we are directed well or ill in

reference to the passions." For when the mode is suitable to the thing's nature, it has the aspect of good, and when it is unsuitable, it has the aspect of evil. And since nature is the first object of consideration in anything, for this reason habit is counted as the first species of quality.

*Reply Obj. 1.* Disposition implies a certain order, as stated above (A. 1, reply 3). Hence a man is not said to be disposed by some quality except in relation to something else. And if we add "well or ill," which belongs to the notion of habit, we must consider the quality's relation to the nature, which is the end. So in regard to shape, or heat, or cold, a man is not said to be well or ill disposed except by reason of a relation to the nature of a thing, with regard to its suitability or unsuitability. Consequently even shapes and qualities pertaining to passion, in so far as they are considered to be suitable or unsuitable to the nature of a thing, belong to habits or dispositions; for shape and colour, according to their suitability to the nature of a thing, concern beauty; while heat and cold, according to their suitability to the nature of a thing, concern health. And in this way heat and cold are put, by the Philosopher, in the first species of quality. Therefore the answer to the second objection, though some give another solution, as Simplicius says in his *Commentary on the Predicaments*.<sup>6</sup>

*Reply Obj. 3.* This difference, "difficult to change," does not distinguish habit from the other species of quality, but from disposition. Now disposition may be taken in two ways: in one way, as the genus of habit, for disposition is included in the definition of habit;<sup>7</sup> in another way, according as it is divided against habit. Again, disposition, properly so called, can be divided against habit in two ways. First, as perfect and imperfect within the same species, and thus we call it a disposition, retaining the name of the genus, when it is had imperfectly, so as to be easily lost; but we call it a habit when it is had perfectly, so as not to be lost easily. And thus a disposition becomes a habit, just as a boy becomes a man. Secondly, they may be distinguished as different species of the one subaltern genus, so that we call dispositions those qualities of the first species which by reason of their very nature are easily lost, because they have changeable causes; for example, sickness and health. But we call habits those qualities which, by reason of their very nature, are not

<sup>1</sup> *Metaphysics*, V, 14 (1020<sup>a</sup>33).

<sup>2</sup> *Physics*, VII, 3 (246<sup>a</sup>13).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 7 (198<sup>b</sup>3).

<sup>4</sup> *Metaphysics*, V, 20 (1022<sup>b</sup>10).

<sup>5</sup> II, 5 (1105<sup>b</sup>25).

<sup>6</sup> *In Cat.*, VIII (CG VIII, 233.10; 256.16).

<sup>7</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, V, 20 (1022<sup>b</sup>4).

easily changed, because they have unchangeable causes, for example, sciences and virtues. And in this sense, disposition does not become habit. The latter explanation seems more in keeping with the intention of Aristotle; for in order to confirm this distinction he invokes the common mode of speaking, according to which when a quality is by reason of its nature easily changeable, and, through some accident, becomes changeable with difficulty, then it is called a habit, while the contrary happens in regard to qualities by reason of their nature changeable with difficulty; for supposing a man to have a science imperfectly, so as to be liable to lose it easily, we say that he is disposed to that science, rather than that he has the science. From this it is clear that the word habit implies a certain lastingness: while the word disposition does not.

Nor does it matter that "to be easy and difficult to change" are specific differences (of a quality), although they belong to passion and movement, and not to the genus of quality. For these differences, though apparently accidental to quality, nevertheless designate differences which are proper and essential to quality. In the same way, in the genus of substance we often take accidental instead of substantial differences, in so far as by the former essential principles are designated.

#### ARTICLE 3. *Whether Habit Implies Order to an Act?*

*We proceed thus to the Third Article:* It would seem that habit does not imply order to an act.

*Objection 1.* For everything acts according as it is in act. But the Philosopher says<sup>1</sup> that "when one is become knowing by habit, one is still in a state of potency, but otherwise than before learning." Therefore habit does not imply the relation of a principle to an act.

*Obj. 2.* Further, that which is put in the definition of a thing, belongs to it essentially. But to be a principle of action, is put in the definition of power, as we read in the *Metaphysics*.<sup>2</sup> Therefore to be the principle of an act belongs to power essentially. Now that which is essential is first in every genus. If therefore, habit also is a principle of act, it follows that it is posterior to power. And so habit and disposition will not be the first species of quality.

*Obj. 3.* Further, health is sometimes a habit, and so are leanness and beauty. But these do not indicate relation to an act. Therefore it is not essential to habit to be a principle of act.

<sup>1</sup> *Soul*, III, 4 (429<sup>b</sup>6).

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, V, 12 (1019<sup>a</sup>15).

*On the contrary*, Augustine says (*De Bono Conjug.* xxi)<sup>3</sup> that "habit is that by which something is done when necessary." And the Commentator says (*De Anima*, iii)<sup>4</sup> that "habit is that by which we act when we will."

*I answer that*, To have relation to an act may belong to habit both according to the notion of habit, and according to the subject in which the habit is. According to the notion of habit, it belongs to every habit to have relation to an act. For it is of the very notion of habit to imply some relation to a thing's nature, in so far as it is suitable or unsuitable thereto. But a thing's nature, which is the end of generation, is further ordered to another end, which is either an operation, or the product of an operation, to which one attains by means of operation. Therefore habit implies relation not only to the very nature of a thing, but also, consequently, to operation, in so far as this is the end of nature, or conducive to the end. Hence also it is stated<sup>5</sup> in the definition of habit that it is "a disposition whereby that which is disposed, is well or ill disposed either in regard to itself," that is, to its nature, "or in regard to something else," that is, to the end.

But there are some habits, which even on the part of the subject in which they are, imply primarily and principally relation to an act. For, as we have said (A. 2), habit primarily and of itself implies a relation to the thing's nature. If therefore the nature of the thing in which the habit is consists in this very relation to an act, it follows that the habit principally implies relation to an act. Now it is clear that the nature and the notion of power is that it should be a principle of act. Therefore every habit which is in a power, as in its subject, implies principally relation to an act.

*Reply Obj. 1.* Habit is an act, in so far as it is a quality, and in this respect it can be a principle of operation. It is, however, in a state of potency in respect to operation. Therefore habit is called first act, and operation second act, as is explained in the book on the *Soul*.<sup>6</sup>

*Reply Obj. 2.* It is not of the essence of habit to be related to power, but to be related to nature. And as nature precedes action, to which power is related, therefore habit is put before power as a species of quality.

*Reply Obj. 3.* Health is said to be a habit, or a habitual disposition, in relation to nature, as

<sup>3</sup> PL 40, 390.

<sup>4</sup> Comm. 18 (VI, 2, 161B).

<sup>5</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, V, 20 (1022<sup>b</sup>10).

<sup>6</sup> Aristotle, II, 1 (412<sup>a</sup>22).