

# *The Sources of Aquinas on Human Action*<sup>1</sup>

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With Pinckaers, we are convinced that “[a] study of the sources of St. Thomas’s moral teachings can be very beneficial, for it gives us new insights into his texts and broadens and deepens our understanding of his thought.”<sup>2</sup> For this reason we have decided to dedicate the first part of our study to precisely this task.

St. Thomas knew well the thought of many of the theologians and philosophers that preceded him, making many of their ideas his own and citing them frequently in the course of his writings. In this first phase of our study we propose to examine, though not at too great a length, those authors and ideas which Aquinas used as principal sources in the development of his doctrine concerning the human act and its moral specification. Practically speaking this will mean identifying these thinkers and briefly characterizing their thought on the themes that are relevant for us, while at the same time emphasizing their influence on and relation to Aquinas’s thought. We will also try to examine in greater detail some of the more important expressions cited by Aquinas with more frequency, with particular attention to their meaning in their original context.

It is worth emphasizing from the outset that the citations Aquinas uses play a central role in his argumentation, a fact that indeed increases the importance of our present reflection.<sup>3</sup> It should also be remembered that in St. Thomas’s day “Citations are placed by the scholastics in the text and not in the notes,”<sup>4</sup> as we do today. Also, contrary to contemporary practice, in which “authorities” are named explicitly, as a general rule “They do not name contemporary theologians, with whom

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<sup>2</sup> S.-Th. PINCKAERS, *The Sources of the Ethics of St. Thomas Aquinas*, in S.J. Pope (ed.), “The Ethics of Aquinas”, Georgetown University Press, Washington 2002, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, p. 19: “If one counts the authors cited by St. Thomas, it is apparent that they are not very numerous in comparison with the bibliographies of our modern publications; however, their significance far outweighs their numbers. First, within each article, the citations are nonetheless abundant and interconnected. Above all, they are rich in content and play a considerable role in the structure of the argument.”

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 18.

they are at times engaged in very direct discussions,”<sup>5</sup> but only make general references, as e.g.: “some say that...” or other like phrases.

The idea we want to emphasize first is that St. Thomas is a theologian, and thus all of his theological and philosophical work is illuminated by his faith in Jesus of Nazareth. Like all the good theologians of his time, he has a tremendous knowledge of the sources of divine Revelation: Sacred Scripture and the apostolic Tradition, which, as we well know, together form a single deposit of faith, preserved and announced by the Church to all people of all times.

In contrast to what we see today, in St. Thomas’s time it was quite clear that *sacra doctrina* was a science that, even in its multiplicity, partook of a fundamental unity.<sup>6</sup> Indeed as a science of faith it has a single formal object, divine Revelation. This truth is not denied today, but the increasing tendency to specialization and the birth of new branches of theology at times causes us to forget that a radical and foundational connection exists between all revealed truths, i.e. the fact that all have been revealed by God.<sup>7</sup> This formality is something that must never be forgotten when considering the various branches of a single science of faith.

To the degree that theological science progresses and the universe of its reflection on divinely revealed truth becomes more abundant, it simultaneously becomes more difficult to integrate all of this knowledge into a global vision regarding God and the whole economy of creation and redemption. Such an integral and unified vision is nonetheless of highest importance if we hope to advance our theological knowledge on a solid foundation. Failure to consider the whole of revealed truth, even when studying a very specific theological question, at a minimum introduces the possibility of future incoherencies and contradictions.<sup>8</sup> Medieval theologians were relatively well protected from

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 18.

<sup>6</sup> Note that for St. Thomas theology and *sacra doctrina* are not completely synonymous. *Sacra doctrina* is a broader concept. Cf. J.-P. TORRELL, *Recherches thomasiennes*, Vrin, Paris 2000, p. 133: “on ne peut identifier la *sacra doctrina* ni à la *theologia* ni à la *sacra scriptura*, puisqu’elle les englobe l’une e l’autre” (*sacra doctrina* cannot be identified with either *theologia* or *sacra scriptura*, as it encompasses both).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 1, a. 3, c.: “sacram doctrinam unam scientiam esse. Est enim unitas potentiae et habitus consideranda secundum obiectum, non quidem materialiter, sed secundum rationem formalem obiecti, puta homo, asinus et lapis conveniunt in una formali ratione colorati, quod est obiectum visus. Quia igitur sacra Scriptura considerat aliqua secundum quod sunt divinitus revelata, secundum quod dictum est, omnia quaecumque sunt divinitus revelabilia, communicant in una ratione formali obiecti huius scientiae. Et ideo comprehenduntur sub sacra doctrina sicut sub scientia una” (sacred doctrine is one science. The unity of a faculty or habit is to be gauged by its object, not indeed, in its material aspect, but as regards the precise formality under which it is an object. For example, man, ass, stone agree in the one precise formality of being colored; and color is the formal object of sight. Therefore, because Sacred Scripture considers things precisely under the formality of being divinely revealed, whatever has been divinely revealed possesses the one precise formality of the object of this science; and therefore is included under sacred doctrine as under one science).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Catechism*, nn. 111-114. Speaking of the three criteria for a correct interpretation of Scripture, it says that one must

this danger in that their theological treatises tended to be very broad and all-encompassing,<sup>9</sup> such that the connection between the various articles of faith was more evident. It is true that in our day such a methodological choice would no longer be easy to implement, given the abundance of knowledge and the specialization of research. At a minimum, however, it is very important that each theologian have an integral and complete formation.

It is enough to consider the structure of the *Summa theologiae* to be able to reflect on the harmonious and integrated way in which St. Thomas expounds the truths of faith. The connection that exists between the various articles of faith is ordinarily expressed by the concept of *analogia fidei*. In the Angelic Doctor's work it is easy to grasp the relationship between the various revealed truths by the way the various treatises are structured, and thus to attain a global vision in which all the treatises are harmoniously integrated.

## 1. ARISTOTLE (384-322 B.C.)

Theology uses philosophy in its effort to explain and systematically deepen the data of Revelation, as we mentioned above. St. Thomas's particular predilection for Aristotelian philosophy is evident to all, even to the point that it can be said that "in philosophical matters his source was Aristotle. He studied him for many years with St. Albert, he sought out the best translations [of his works], he commented on him."<sup>10</sup>

If St. Thomas's abundant use of Aristotle's thought in his incessant search for truth is evident in general, his dependence on the Greek philosopher regarding the conception of the human act with its elements and dynamisms is even stronger.<sup>11</sup> The great influence exercised on him by St. Albert's course and two commentaries on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, written at Cologne, should obviously be noted;<sup>12</sup> the first commentary was written between 1248-1252 when St. Thomas was still his stu-

be attentive to the "coherence of the truths of faith among themselves and within the whole plan of Revelation" (n. 114).

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, the case of St. Thomas's *Summa theologiae*, or the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard.

<sup>10</sup> M.-J. NICOLAS, *Introdução à Suma Teológica*, cit., p. 32: "em matéria filosófica a sua fonte era Aristotle. Estudou-o durante longos anos, com santo Alberto, procurou as melhores traduções, comentou-o"; cf. S.-Th. PINCKAERS, *The Sources of the Ethics of St. Thomas Aquinas*, cit., p. 20: "For Thomas, the chief philosophical source is obviously Aristotle."

<sup>11</sup> For example, just in the *Summa theologiae*, I-II, qq. 1-48, St. Thomas cites 18 works of the philosopher from Stagira, namely: *Analyticum Posteriorum*, *Ars Rhetorica*, *Categoriae sive Predicamenta*, *De Anima*, *De Animalium Motione*, *De Caelo*, *De Generatione Animalium*, *De Interpretatione sive Perihermeneias*, *De partibus Animalium*, *De Poetica*, *De Re Publica o Politica*, *De Virtutibus et Vitiis*, *Ethica ad Eudemum*, *Ethica Nicomachea*, *Metaphysica*, *Meteorologicorum*, *Physica*, e *Topicorum*. Cf. *Autores e obras citadas na Suma Teológica. Seção I - Parte II - Questões 1-48*, in "São Tomás de Aquino, Suma teológica", vol. 3, Edições Loyola, São Paulo 2003<sup>2</sup>, pp. 21-22.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. J.-P. TORRELL, *Initiation à saint Thomas d'Aquin*, cit., p. 38: "On n'a jamais contesté que Thomas ait suivi les

dent,<sup>13</sup> and the second certainly between 1263-1267.<sup>14</sup> St. Albert was the first to use Robert Grosseteste's new Latin translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, made from the Greek and not from the Arab as with previous translations.<sup>15</sup> The young Dominican friar was personally charged by St. Albert himself with the diffusion of his first commentary and of putting it in writing,<sup>16</sup> giving St. Thomas an in-depth knowledge of the text; he also created an index of contents and citations, the *Tabula libri Ethicorum*,<sup>17</sup> for his personal use.<sup>18</sup>

“When St. Thomas began his studies at Paris in 1252, Aristotle was already very well known there, and both his scientific theories and his philosophical doctrine had achieved a wide consensus. From the beginning of his philosophical studies, St. Thomas both highly esteemed and widely

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cours d'Albert sur les *Noms divins*, mais on s'est étonné que, déjà théologien, il ait pu suivre des cours sur l'*Éthique* qui appartenait normalement au cursus de philosophie. Après les investigations de Gauthier, qui a relevé dans le propre commentaire de Thomas sur l'*Éthique* quelque 350 passages dans lesquels 'l'influence d'Albert est évident,' on ne peut plus douter des assertions des anciens biographes. Ces réminiscences ne renvoient pas au commentaire rédigé plus tard par Albert, alors que Thomas n'était plus son élève, mais bien à ce cours plus ancien dont Thomas témoigne d'«une connaissance approfondie (la masse de ses souvenirs en est la preuve), mais lointaine (le nombre de ses oublis le montre)»” (It has never been doubted that Thomas followed Albert's course on the *Noms divins*, but it is surprising that, already a theologian, he was able to follow the course on the *Ethics* which normally was part of the philosophy curriculum. Faced with Gauthier's research, which has shown more than 350 passages in Thomas's own commentary on the *Ethics* in which “Albert's influence is evident,” one can no longer doubt the statements of the early biographers. These references refer, not to the commentary written later by Albert, when Thomas was no longer his student, but to the earlier course of which Thomas displays a deep knowledge [as proven by the number of references], though distant [as shown by the number aspects he no longer remembers]”)

<sup>13</sup> Cf. R.-A. GAUTHIER - J.-Y. JOLIF, *L'Éthique à Nicomaque*, vol. I, Publications universitaires de Louvain - Béatrice-Nauwelaerts, Lovain - Paris 1970<sup>2</sup>, pp. 122-123: “C'est en effet à Cologne, entre 1248 et 1252, que saint Albert professa son *Cours sur l'Éthique*, recueilli avec un fidélité scrupuleuse par saint Thomas, alors son élève” (It was at Cologne from 1248-1252 that St. Albert gave his *Course on the [Aristotle's] Ethics*, received with scrupulous fidelity by St. Thomas, who was then his student).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, p. 123: “Tout cela fait du premier cours d'Albert le Grand sur l'*Éthique* le meilleur, et de beaucoup, des innombrables commentaires sur l'*Éthique* que nous a légués le moyen âge. Quelques années plus tard, sans doute entre 1263 et 1267, saint Albert en reprit la substance pour composer, mais cette fois sous forme de paraphrase, son second commentaire sur l'*Éthique*. Ces deux oeuvres de saint Albert firent de lui le rival d'Eustrate et des commentateurs grecs traduits par Robert Grosseteste” (All these aspects make of the first course of Albert the Great on the *Ethics* the best, by far, of the innumerable commentaries on the *Ethics* that have come down to us from the Middle Ages. Some years later, certainly between 1263 and 1267, St. Albert again took up the substance of the work to compose, this time in the form of a paraphrase, his second commentary on the *Ethics*. These two works of St. Albert made him a rival of Eustratius and the Greek commentators translated by Robert Grosseteste).

<sup>15</sup> The translation done by Robert Grosseteste is known as the *translatio lincolniensis*. It was thanks to the work of the bishop of Lincoln that the *NE* permeated the entire academic environment of the XIII century. Cf. *ibidem*, p. 120: “Le règne de l'*Éthique à Nicomaque* sur la morale médiévale ne s'instaure pourtant définitivement que vers le milieu du XI-II<sup>e</sup> siècle, grâce à Robert Grosseteste” (The reign of the *Nicomachean Ethics* over medieval morality was not definitively established until the middle of the XIII century, thanks to Robert Grosseteste).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, p. 130: “[saint Thomas] avait suivi le cours de saint Albert et l'avait pris par écrit” ([St. Thomas] followed St. Albert's course, and had taken it down in writing).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. J.-P. TORRELL, *Initiation à saint Thomas d'Aquin*, cit., pp. 334-337.

<sup>18</sup> According to the *Index Thomisticus* of R. Buser, St. Thomas explicitly cites the *Nicomachean Ethics* in 2167 different places in his writings. Of these citations, 1047 are in the *II pars* of the *Summa theologiae* and 616 in his *Scriptum super Sententiis*.

shared the basic principles of the metaphysics, anthropology, gnoseology, ethics and politics of Aristotle, and became one of his most competent and convinced advocates.”<sup>19</sup> It is interesting to note that in the *Commentary on the Sentences* that St. Thomas wrote while still in Paris between 1254-1256, all of the citations from Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* can be found in St. Albert’s commentary and in the *Tabula libri Ethicorum*. St. Thomas also made good use of all this knowledge<sup>20</sup> when he wrote the second part of the *Summa*, and when he reread the *Nicomachean Ethics* and wrote his own commentary, in which he departed on some points from his old master, surpassing him.<sup>21</sup> “These commentaries [on the works of Aristotle] were not courses he would have given to his students. They were in fact the equivalent of a personal reading, made with pen in hand, to force himself to better penetrate Aristotle’s text so as to prepare himself for writing the moral part of the *Summa theologiae*.”<sup>22</sup> It can be said that “The Philosopher plays a basic role in the Angelic Doctor’s ethical theory. He furnishes Thomas with the categories and analyses that serve as the foundation of his morality of virtues.”<sup>23</sup> In fact, “St. Thomas considers Aristotle an expert on human nature and borrows from him the basic structure of his morality: the ordering to happiness as our final end, the organization of the moral virtues, and the analysis of friendship that serves him in defining char-

<sup>19</sup> B. MONDIN, *Aristotele*, in “Dizionario enciclopedico del pensiero di san Tommaso d’Aquino”, cit., pp. 68-69: “Quando San Tommaso iniziò i suoi studi a Parigi, nel 1252, Aristotele vi era già molto conosciuto, e vi aveva trovato vasti consensi sia per le sue teorie scientifiche sia per le sue dottrine filosofiche. San Tommaso, sin dall’inizio dei suoi studi filosofici, apprezzò altamente e ampiamente condivise i principi fondamentali della metafisica, dell’antropologia, della gnoseologia, dell’etica e della politica di Aristotele e ne divenne uno degli avvocati più competenti e più convinti.”

<sup>20</sup> Cf. R.-A. GAUTHIER - J.-Y. JOLIF, *L’Éthique à Nicomaque*, cit., p. 130: “Il semble aussi que saint Thomas ait connu et consulté occasionnellement le second commentaire de saint Albert” (It also seems that St. Thomas knew and occasionally consulted St. Albert’s second commentary).

<sup>21</sup> It is also certain that the writing of the *II pars* was near, and perhaps simultaneous, to the writing of *De malo*. Cf. P.-M. GILS (Commissio Leonina), *Préface*, in “Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Doctoris Angelici opera omnia iussu impensaque Leonis XIII P. M. edita”, t. 23, Commissio Leonina, J. Vrin (edd.), Roma - Paris 1982, p. 5\*: “Les rapports du *De malo* avec d’autres ouvrages de saint Thomas sont assez difficiles à établir de façon parfaitement cohérent ainsi que le montrent les conclusions assez divergentes auxquelles aboutissent des auteurs sérieux. De toute façon la publication est sûrement assez proche dans le temps de celle des deux éléments de la *Secunda Pars* de la Somme qui figurent toutes deux dans la première liste de taxation et dont l’origine parisienne est généralement admise. Une rédaction quelque peu simultanée des deux ouvrages expliquerait assez bien que ce soit tantôt la question disputée, tantôt la Somme, qui semble donner le dernier état de la pensée de saint Thomas” (The relations of *De malo* with St. Thomas’s other works are very difficult to establish coherently, as is shown by the very different conclusions reached by serious authors. In any case, the publication seems to certainly have been very near the time of that of the two elements of the *Secunda Pars* of the Summa that show up both of them in the first taxation listand whose Parisian origin is generally admitted. The near-simultaneous writing of the two works would explain very well that both the disputed question and the Summa seem to offer us the last period of St. Thomas’s thought).

<sup>22</sup> J.-P. TORRELL, *Initiation à Saint Thomas d’Aquin. Sa personne e son oeuvre*, Editions Universitaires, Friburg 2002<sup>2</sup>, pp. 333-334: “ces commentaires [à les ouvres d’Aristote] n’étaient pas des cours qu’il aurait donnés à ses étudiants. C’était plutôt l’équivalent d’une lecture personnelle faite plume à la main pour s’astreindre à bien pénétrer le texte d’Aristote afin de se préparer à la rédaction de la partie morale de la *Somme de Théologie*.”

<sup>23</sup> S.-Th. PINCKAERS, *The Sources of the Ethics of St. Thomas Aquinas*, cit., p. 21.

ity.”<sup>24</sup>

The assumption by St. Albert, and later by St. Thomas, of Aristotelian philosophy as a new basic *ancilla* for theology, is a fact of great importance. This choice meant a certain rupture, which was at least uncomfortable, with the until-then traditional way of doing theology. Until Albert, western Catholic theology based itself, as is well known, fairly exclusively on an Augustinian/Platonic philosophy, and it was thus natural that the choice of Aristotle’s philosophy instead of St. Augustine’s would seem to other contemporary theologians as somewhat rash. In fact the audacity of Albert and of his disciple Thomas was based on their conviction of the superiority of Aristotle’s philosophy, which was more faithful to the data of experience – but that conviction had still to be demonstrated. For most medieval theologians, Albert and Thomas’s attempt to demonstrate the superiority of Aristotelian philosophy in various areas seemed doomed from the start. It was clearly an ambitious effort, even risky. Further complicating the situation for the two Dominicans were the theses condemned by the ecclesiastical Magisterium of the Latin Averroism present in some authors of the faculty of arts at the University of Paris, which seemed to open an insuperable chasm between the faith and the Stagirite’s thought. Against this background, the idea of using Aristotelian philosophy as a basis for doing theology did not seem to promise great success. Nevertheless, thanks to perseverance and a laborious dedication to their fundamental intuition, the two great Dominicans were in the end able to demonstrate the reasonableness of their gamble and, thanks to their work, reap abundant fruit in the field of theological speculation. Seven centuries later it is easy for us to praise Thomas’s perspicacity and greatness in his esteem for Aristotle, but at the time when new avenues for theology needed to be opened, his great choice was very far from being well accepted and consensual.

The “gamble” in Aristotelian philosophy also produced abundant fruit in the field of ethics, some of which we will highlight in what follows.

#### *a) Some important principles of Aristotelian ethics*

At the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle says that “all action and choice [...] seeks a certain good, and for this reason the good was defined, appropriately, as that to which everything tends.”<sup>25</sup> There is no choice except in view of a good to which the choice consciously tends.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 20.

<sup>25</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, liv. 1, cap. 1 (1094a, 1-2). [Passages from the *Nicomachean Ethics* are translated

Thus the good that is to be realized in action presents itself as an end to which the moral subject tends.

For Aristotle, the function of discerning the good to be realized and the evil to be avoided falls to practical reason. St. Thomas will assume this important distinction between the practical intellect and the theoretical intellect. These are not two faculties: there is a single intellect, which by extension is called practical. Whereas the theoretical intellect expresses itself in declarative propositions regarding the truth of being, the practical intellect expresses itself in imperative propositions regarding right desire, that is, desire that is oriented to the due end. Ethical reflection is not, therefore, an inquiry into the essence of things – into the nature of the person considered in itself –, but above all a reflection on the ends to which human nature is naturally inclined and how these are to be realized in concrete action.

Aristotle's reflection, departing from the experience of life, on the ends to which human nature is naturally inclined, leads him to a discussion of happiness and the moral virtues. He sees in happiness the final end of human action, that good which is wanted for itself and not in view of any other, though he also recognizes that there are other ends that are noble in themselves and to which we all feel naturally inclined, and on which also depend our self-realization and perfection. These are the ends of the moral virtues, to which Aristotle also devotes some attention in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. One should always bear in mind, however, that the most perfect good is happiness, because it alone is desired for itself. The human virtues, even if they can also be desired in themselves, are also desired in view of happiness, and not vice versa;<sup>26</sup> in other words, only happiness is desired absolutely. Happiness thus has the nature of a practical principle, since everything we do is in function of it.<sup>27</sup>

But in what does happiness consist? This is a difficult question to answer, and Aristotle addresses it gradually in the course of his treatise. Clearly, there is no unanimity regarding the content of happiness. All people seek it necessarily, but they characterize it differently. Some see happiness in pleasure, others in honors, others in the possession of material goods. For Aristotle, happiness is not a thing, but an operation of the soul, and more specifically an activity of the superior part of the soul, contemplating truth – an activity, moreover, that presupposes perfect virtue.

The moral virtues, for Aristotle, are operative habits that dispose the person to choose rightly,

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from the author's (Portuguese) translation – Tr.]

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, cap. 5 (1097a, 30-1097b, 7).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, cap. 12 (1102a, 1-4).

taking into account the ends to which he is naturally inclined. Right choice follows right deliberation on the part of practical reason, and when the ability to deliberate rightly becomes habitual in a person it is said that he possesses the virtue of prudence, a virtue vital for all moral action, since virtuous choice depends on right deliberation. But to deliberate well one must know the ends of the moral virtues, which the virtuous person knows; thus a virtuous circle is established between prudence and the moral virtues. Only virtue is prudent, and because prudent, it becomes more virtuous. Along these lines Aquinas says categorically that “it is impossible that one who is not virtuous be prudent, just as one who errs in principles cannot have knowledge.”<sup>28</sup> Without the moral virtues prudence is deprived of its principles.

Because of this circularity between prudence and the moral virtues, Aristotle acknowledges the importance for those who are not yet virtuous of external helps that lead to virtue, namely education and the laws of the *pólis*. If because our reason is imprudent we are not moved to virtue, then we need some external help to lead us to do virtuous acts, which will eventually allow us to acquire prudence. As mentioned above, St. Thomas, beyond the knowledge of Aristotle he gained thanks to the Dominicans and especially to St. Albert the Great, was also deeply conscious of the truth of the Stagirite’s statements, and of their profound agreement with the data of Revelation.

If “the human good is activity of the soul according to virtue,”<sup>29</sup> then it is necessary to inquire into the moral virtues: how many are there, how are they characterized and what are the principal dangers that threaten them. Aristotle therefore analyzes the various moral virtues, describing their content and the vices that oppose them, whether by excess or defect.

The idea of the mean relative to the subject is also a principle characteristic of moral virtue. The moral subject can be inclined to the widest variety of human goods in a disordered, imprudent way, whether by excess or by defect. It is the responsibility of right practical reason to discern the virtuous mean, that is, in what way and with what intensity it is reasonable to tend to a particular good. Vice always contains a “dose” of unreasonableness, of irrationality, because it involves a disorder with respect to the ends suitable to the human person. Furthermore, according to Aristotle, the magnanimous person, who lives according to right reason and therefore dominates and fully integrates the impetus of the passions into a virtuous life, will nonetheless not possess complete happiness if he does not have friends. It is through friendship that the person realizes his vocation to be a

<sup>28</sup> *Sententia Ethic.*, lib. 6, lect. 10, n. 18: “impossibile est esse prudentem illum qui non est virtuosus, sicut non posset esse sciens qui erraret circa principia.”

<sup>29</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, liv. 1, cap. 6 (1098a, 15-16).



social being. For this reason Aristotle says that friendship “is a perfect virtue because it is the exercise of virtue in its totality: those who possess it can exercise virtue in relation to others also, and not only in relation to themselves.”<sup>30</sup>

In summary, we can say that for Aristotle, “nature, practical reason and τέλος are the elements that structure the being and the action of human beings,”<sup>31</sup> concepts that St. Thomas – and many others with him – critically assumes and organically integrates into his theological thought.<sup>32</sup>

### b) *The human act*

Regarding the elements that comprise the human act, it must be said that the person is a moral subject thanks on the one hand to his practical reason capable of discerning the good to be done, and on the other hand to his free will, in virtue of which he is the cause of his own action. Properly human actions, therefore, are those that are deliberate and voluntary, and it is on these alone that one must reflect seriously, since on them depends human happiness. The person acts “humanly” when he acts according to “right reason,”<sup>33</sup> and not merely according to the impulses of his sensibility.

Aristotle identifies some factors that can influence and condition the voluntariness of human actions. With regard to practical reason, ignorance of a particular due end can affect prudent deliberation; with regard to the will, fear or external coercion can condition its free causality of the action. There can also at times be circumstances whose presence conditions the human act, in that the moral subject acts voluntarily in a particular choice, but only because of the presence of that circumstance. Here the principle of the action is in some way external to the subject, which led Aristotle to call these actions of mixed voluntariness. Thus for Aristotle, ignorance and coercion cause involuntary actions, and actions caused by an external principle but done voluntarily are said to be of

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, liv. 5, cap. 3 (1129b, 25-1130a, 13).

<sup>31</sup> J. COSTA, *El discernimiento del actuar humano*, cit., p. 168.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. R.-A. GAUTHIER - J.-Y. JOLIF, *L'Éthique à Nicomaque*, cit., p. 275: “Saint Thomas n’a été, et n’a voulu être, qu’un théologien. Si, au moment même où dans la *II<sup>e</sup> pars* de la *Somme de théologie* sa théologie morale, il a commenté l’*Éthique à Nicomaque*, c’était uniquement parce qu’il voyait dans la philosophie morale d’Aristote l’instrument rationnel qui lui permettrait de rendre compte de ce que la foi nous enseigne sur le sens de la vie humaine” (St. Thomas never was, nor did he ever want to be, anything but a theologian. If, at the very point in the *II<sup>e</sup> pars* of the *Summa theologiae* of his moral theology, he comments on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, this was only because he saw in Aristotle’s moral philosophy the rational instrument which allowed him to give an account of what the faith teaches us on the meaning of human life).

<sup>33</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, liv. 2, cap. 2 (1103b, 32): “ορθός λόγος.”

mixed voluntariness.<sup>34</sup>

Another element that St. Thomas will receive from Aristotle is the proper definition of virtue, which, as we have already referred to, “is a habit of choice, which consists in a mean relative to us, determined by right reason as a truly prudent person would determine it.”<sup>35</sup> The virtues are in some way desired in view of happiness, but not purely instrumentally. It can thus be said that “the virtues do not *prepare* a person to be happy, rather they *make* him happy.”<sup>36</sup>

Virtuous action is thus “charged” with intentionality, since by his action the person does not simply cause particular external effects, but above all makes himself happy, insofar as he realizes the ends to which he is naturally inclined.<sup>37</sup> Along these lines, St. Thomas says that “happiness is not in the exterior work that is accomplished, but in the action that proceeds from the virtuous habit.”<sup>38</sup> To act virtuously makes a person happy.

Clearly of highest importance are the Stagirite’s reflections regarding choice,<sup>39</sup> deliberation<sup>40</sup> and intention. St. Thomas recognized the strong fidelity to experience of Aristotle’s reflections, and was able to apply and develop them fruitfully. In his commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aquinas arrives at important conclusions regarding the concepts of choice and intention. He says that “deliberation, choice and the will, which are under our power, seem to be the principles of our actions.”<sup>41</sup> Specifically “will is spoken of regarding the end, whereas deliberation (*consilium*) and choice (*electio*) are spoken of regarding the means.”<sup>42</sup> What, then, distinguishes deliberation and choice? Choice is one of the acts of the will,<sup>43</sup> whereas “deliberation is an act of reason,”<sup>44</sup> and since “the cognitive capacity, properly speaking, precedes choice, which belongs to the appetitive capac-

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, liv. 3, cap. 1 (1109b, 30-1110a, 17).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, liv. 2, cap. 6 (1106b, 36-1107a, 2).

<sup>36</sup> J. COSTA, *El discernimiento del actuar humano*, cit., p. 173. Emphasis added.

<sup>37</sup> Commenting on the Stagirite, St. Thomas emphasizes that it is not enough to carry out materially virtuous actions to act virtuously, rather it is fundamental that they be done for virtuous ends. Cf. *Sententia Ethic.*, lib. 6, lect. 10, n. 15: “quidam operantur iusta, et tamen non dicimus esse iustos: sicut cum aliqui operantur ea quae sunt statuta legibus vel inviti, vel propter ignorantiam, aut propter aliquam aliam causam, puta propter lucrum, et non propter amorem ipsorum operum iustitiae.”

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, n. 11: “Felicitas autem non est opus exterius operatum, sed est operatio procedens ab habitu virtutis.”

<sup>39</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, liv. 3, cap. 4 (1111b, 4-1112a, 18).

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, cap. 5 (1112a, 18-1113a, 14).

<sup>41</sup> *Sententia Ethic.*, lib. 3, lect. 11, n. 7: “consilium et electio et voluntas, quae sunt in potestate nostra, videntur esse principia operationum nostrarum.”

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, n. 1: “voluntas sit de fine, consilium autem et electio de his quae sunt ad finem.”

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, lect. 6, n. 4: “electio pertinet ad voluntatem, opinio autem ad intellectum” (choice regards the will, instead opinion regards the reason).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, n. 10: “consilium est actus rationis.”

ity and is moved by the cognitive,”<sup>45</sup> it is clear not only that “choice presupposes the determination of deliberation,”<sup>46</sup> but especially “choice follows the determination of deliberation.”<sup>47</sup>

On the distinction between intention and choice Aquinas, commenting on the Stagirite, says that “choice is spoken of regarding the means, but intention is spoken of with respect the end itself”;<sup>48</sup> that is, the intention is directed to what is sought in itself, whereas choice is directed to what has a more instrumental character. In this sense St. Thomas says that “intention more refers to the end than to the means, because the means are willed by us because of the end.”<sup>49</sup> Thus the intention is not identified with choice, and “neither is choice the intention, even if it seems to be close to the intention. In fact both belong to the same power, i.e., to the rational appetite called the will, but intention designates the act of this power that tends to the good absolutely. Choice for its part designates the act of the same power toward the good with respect to what pertains to our action, by which latter we are ordered to a particular good.”<sup>50</sup> As we saw, “choice is spoken of only regarding the means,”<sup>51</sup> whereas “intention is spoken of in a proper sense with regard to the end, which as a specific fundamental principle, of itself is spoken of with regard to the will.”<sup>52</sup> It is interesting to note that “the will, because it refers to the good absolutely, can direct itself to any good, even if it be impossible,”<sup>53</sup> whereas choice necessarily refers to possible and immediately realizable alternatives. Thus “choice seems to be spoken of regarding those things that are under our power,”<sup>54</sup> and “nothing in the past can be chosen.”<sup>55</sup>

St. Thomas also assimilates from Aristotle the centrality of choice and its relation to the concept of virtue, “in fact the principal of virtue is choice,”<sup>56</sup> and understood correctly “moral virtue is

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, n. 9: “vim cognoscitivam, per se loquendo praecedit electionem quae pertinet ad vim appetitivam, quae movetur a cognoscitiva.”

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, lect. 9, n. 2: “electio praesupponit determinationem consilii.”

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, n. 3: “electio sequatur determinationem consilii.”

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, lect. 1, n. 1: “Electio autem est eorum quae sunt ad finem. Sed voluntas respicit ipsum finem.”

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, lect. 5, n. 15: “voluntas magis est finis quam eius quod est ad finem. Quia ea quae sunt ad finem volumus propter finem.”

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, n. 12: “neque etiam electio est voluntas, quamvis videatur esse propinqua voluntati. Utrumque enim pertinet ad unam potentiam; scilicet ad appetitum rationalem, qui voluntas dicitur. Sed voluntas nominat actum huius potentiae secundum quod fertur in bonum absolute. Electio autem nominat actum eiusdem potentiae relatum in bonum secundum quod pertinet ad nostram operationem, per quam in aliquod bonum ordinamur.”

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, n. 15: “electio est solum eorum quae sunt ad finem.”

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, lect. 10, n. 1: “voluntas dicitur proprie ipsorum finium, quos sicut principia quaedam primo et per se respicit potentia voluntatis.”

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, lect. 5, n. 13: “voluntas, quia respicit bonum absolute, potest esse cuiuscumque boni, licet sit impossibile.”

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, n. 16: “electio videtur esse circa ea quae sunt in potestate nostra.”

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, lib. 6, lect. 2, n. 15: “nullum praeteritum est eligibile.”

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*, lib. 2, lect. 7, n. 4: “Principale enim virtutis est electio.”

a habit of making [virtuous] choices.”<sup>57</sup> Thus, “right choice, which is necessary for virtuous action, cannot come about without prudence or without moral virtue, because the moral virtues order to the end, and prudence for its part directs the means”,<sup>58</sup> that is, a prudent reason and a well-disposed appetite are both necessary for the realization of virtuous choices.<sup>59</sup> In other words, it can be said that “Reason and appetite contribute to choice. For a choice to be good, moral virtue is required in the reason, and reason must be truthful and the appetite right, that is, what reason says – i.e., approves – must be desired by the appetite. For such a perfection of the act to in fact occur, it is necessary that none of its principles be imperfect. But the intelligence or reason, and its truth, with which right appetite agrees is practical.”<sup>60</sup>

Because “choice is essentially an act of the appetite, as it is directed by the intellect,”<sup>61</sup> it is necessary that this deliberation be true in a practical sense<sup>62</sup> – which is to say prudent – and that the rational appetite be rightly disposed.<sup>63</sup> In fact “according to the operation of the intellectual appetite

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, lib. 6, lect. 2, n. 6: “Virtus enim moralis est habitus electivus.”

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, lect. 11, n. 15: “electio recta, quae requiritur ad operationem virtutis, non est sine prudentia nec (sine) virtute morali, quia virtus moralis ordinat ad finem, prudentia autem dirigit circa ea quae sunt ad finem.”

<sup>59</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, lib. 1, lect. 1, n. 8: “duo sunt principia humanorum actuum, scilicet intellectus seu ratio, et appetitus, quae sunt principia moventia, ut dicitur in tertio de anima. In intellectu autem vel ratione consideratur speculativum et practicum. In appetitu autem rationali consideratur electio et executio. Omnia autem ista ordinantur ad aliquod bonum sicut in finem; nam verum est finis speculationis. Quantum ergo ad intellectum speculativum ponit doctrinam per quam transfunditur scientia a magistro in discipulum. Quantum vero ad intellectum practicum ponit artem, quae est recta ratio factibilium, ut habetur in VI huius; quantum vero ad actum intellectus appetitivi ponitur electio. Quantum vero ad executionem ponitur actus. Non facit autem mentionem de prudentia, quae est in ratione practica sicut et ars, quia per prudentiam proprie dirigitur electio. Dicit ergo quod singulum horum manifeste appetit quoddam bonum tamquam finem” (there are two principles of human acts, the intellect or reason and the appetite, which are the principles that move to act, as is said in the third book of the *De anima*. But in the intellect, reason can be considered as speculative or practical. The rational appetite [the will] concerns choice and execution. On the other hand, all these things are ordered to something good as its end; for instance the truth is the end of speculation. Therefore when the speculative intellect establishes a doctrine by which knowledge passes from the master to the disciple. As, in fact, the practical intellect sets art, which is the right reason applied to the doing things well, as is said in the VI book, so the act of the appetitive intellect sets choice, and execution sets action. However, doesn’t mentions prudence, which is in practical reason as is art, because by prudence, in a proper sense, choice is guided. Therefore it is said that each of these desires clearly good as its end).

<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem*, lib. 6, lect. 2, n. 6: “ad electionem concurrunt et ratio et appetitus; si electio debeat esse bona, quod requiritur ad rationem virtutis moralis, oportet quod et ratio sit vera, et appetitus sit rectus, ita scilicet quod eadem quae ratio dicit id est affirmat, appetitus prosequatur. Ad hoc enim quod sit perfectio in actu, oportet quod nullum principiorum eius sit imperfectum. Sed haec mens, scilicet ratio quae sic concordat appetitui recto, et veritas eius, est practica.”

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*, n. 14: “electio sit essentialiter actus appetitus, secundum quod dirigitur ab intellectu.”

<sup>62</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, lib. 2, lect. 7, n. 4: “oportet virtutem secundum rationem rectam operari” (its necessary that virtue is acted according to right reason).

<sup>63</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, lib. 6, lect. 10, n. 13: “Duo enim sunt necessaria in opere virtutis, (scilicet) quorum unum est ut homo habeat rectam intentionem de fine; quod quidem facit virtus moralis, in quantum inclinatur appetitum in debitum finem. Aliud autem est quod homo bene se habeat circa ea quae sunt ad finem: et hoc facit prudentia quae est bene consiliativa et iudicativa et praeceptiva eorum quae sunt ad finem” (In fact, two things are necessary in the virtuous action, this is: one that man has a proper intention of the end, because certainly moral virtue is built in the measure the appetite is inclined to the due end. The other is that man disposes himself well regarding those things that are for the end, and this is done by prudence which considers well, judges well and commands well about those things that are for the end).

that is the will, the person does not act as one who is passive, but on the contrary acts of himself as lord of his acts.”<sup>64</sup> “Not every voluntary act is susceptible of being a choice [...] but deliberated voluntary acts,”<sup>65</sup> as has already been said. For Aquinas “choice is none other than a desire that proceeds from deliberation about those things that are under our power. Choice is thus an act of the rational appetite called the will. For this reason it is said that choice is a deliberated desire.”<sup>66</sup> After the choice, the chosen action is carried out, because “the effect of choice is action.”<sup>67</sup> While it is not impossible to choose for someone else, “choice is principally spoken of regarding our own actions.”<sup>68</sup> “Choice is a counseled appetite, insofar as it is an appetite that receives what has previously been deliberated upon”<sup>69</sup> and selected by reason as being the best option, and “both deliberation and choice are spoken of regarding means.”<sup>70</sup> It is clear, therefore, that “the object of choice is the good or evil, as is spoken of with respect to the appetite, and not the true and the false, as is spoken of with respect to the intellect.”<sup>71</sup> Deliberation, which is an act of reason, can be true or false, but choice, being essentially an act of the will,<sup>72</sup> will be morally good or evil in the sense of right or disordered in relation to the virtuous ends. For example, “the incontinent person is distinguished from the prudent person according to choice, because the choice of the prudent person does not corrupt, whereas that of the incontinent person does.”<sup>73</sup> In fact the prudent person chooses virtuously according to right reason, whereas the incontinent person lets the passions of the sensibility disturb right deliberation, consequently corrupting the choice that follows.

Commenting on the Stagirite, St. Thomas also stresses that “for the complete perfection of moral virtue, not only is the choice necessary, but also the exterior action,”<sup>74</sup> that is, it is not enough

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*, lib. 2, lect. 5, n. 4: “secundum operationem appetitus intellectivi qui est voluntas, homo non agitur tamquam patiens, sed potius seipsum agit tamquam dominus sui actus.”

<sup>65</sup> *Ibidem*, lib. 3, lect. 6, n. 10: “Non tamen omne voluntarium est eligibile, ut supra dictum est, sed voluntarium praeconsiliatum.”

<sup>66</sup> *Ibidem*, lect. 9, n. 4: “electio nihil aliud sit, quam desiderium eorum quae sunt in nostra potestate, ex consilio proveniens. Est enim electio actus appetitus rationalis, qui dicitur voluntas. Ideo autem dixit electionem esse desiderium consiliabile.”

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*, lib. 6, lect. 2, n. 11: “Effectus enim electionis est actio.”

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*, lib. 3, lect. 6, n. 5: “Electio praecipue respicit actiones nostras.”

<sup>69</sup> *Ibidem*, lib. 6, lect. 2, n. 6: “Electio autem est appetitus consiliativus, in quantum scilicet appetitus accipit quod praeconsiliatum est.”

<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem*, lib. 3, lect. 9, n. 1: “tam consilium quam electio est de his quae operamur propter finem.”

<sup>71</sup> *Ibidem*, lib. 6, lect. 2, n. 14: “Obiectum enim electionis est bonum et malum, sicut et appetitus; non autem verum et falsum, quae pertinent ad intellectum.”

<sup>72</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, lib. 3, lect. 5, n. 3: “Genus autem electionis est voluntarium” (Choice is one of the acts of the will).

<sup>73</sup> *Ibidem*, lib. 7, lect. 10, n. 7: “secundum electionem incontinens differt a prudenti, quia prudentis electio non corrumpitur, incontinentis autem corrumpitur.”

<sup>74</sup> *Ibidem*, lib. 10, lect. 12, n. 9: “ad omnimodam perfectionem virtutis moralis requiritur non solum electio, sed etiam operatio exterior.”

to make virtuous decisions, one must also carry out those decisions. This does not deny that “virtuous or vicious behavior must be judged more based on the choice than on the exterior action.”<sup>75</sup> In fact “if we consider the principal acts of the virtues, which are interior, the virtue is in the choice. If on the other hand we consider exterior acts, virtue does not exist without choice, because virtuous exterior acts proceed from interior acts of choice.”<sup>76</sup>

c) *Ideas that Aquinas makes his own*

St. Thomas frequently cites the philosopher in the questions he proposes to respond to, considering him an authority. Here we will briefly present some of Aristotle’s ideas that St. Thomas makes frequent use of when treating of themes related to the human act and its morality.

First of all, Aquinas cites the philosopher when he says that “the good is that which all desire.”<sup>77</sup> Human action, and that of other beings in general, are thus characterized by the pursuit of suitable goods.

In some passages Aquinas says that good and evil are in things, but true and false are in the intellect, citing Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*.<sup>78</sup> Taken out of context this statement could be interpreted ambiguously, because it is not clear whether the good and evil are meant in an ontological or a

<sup>75</sup> *Ibidem*, lib. 3, lect. 5, n. 2: “mores virtuosi vel etiam vitiosi magis diiudicantur ex electione quam ex operationibus exterioribus.”

<sup>76</sup> *Ibidem*, lib. 2, lect. 5, n. 13: “si accipiamus principales actus virtutum qui sunt interiores, virtus est electio. Si autem exteriores, virtus non est sine electione, quia exteriores actus virtutum ab interiori electione procedunt.”

<sup>77</sup> ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, liv. 1, cap. 1 (1094a, 3). Aquinas cites this passage of Aristotle many times. See, for example: *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 37, n. 4: “Bonum est quod omnia appetunt: ut philosophus optime dictum introducit, I Ethicorum” (The good is that which all desire, as has been very well said by the philosopher in the first book of his *Ethics*); *ibidem*, lib. 3, cap. 3, n. 11: “Hinc est quod philosophi definientes bonum dixerunt: bonum est quod omnia appetunt” (This is how the philosophers defined good: ‘good is what all desire’); *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 5, a. 1, c.: “philosophus, in I Ethic. dicit quod bonum est quod omnia appetunt” (the Philosopher says [Ethic. I]: “Goodness is what all desire”); *ibidem*, I-II, q. 8, a. 1, c.: “philosophus dicit, in I Ethic. quod bonum est quod omnia appetunt” (the Philosopher says [Ethic. i, 1] that “the good is that which all desire”); *De veritate*, q. 1, a. 1, c.: “in principio Ethic. dicitur quod bonum est quod omnia appetunt” (in the beginning of the *Ethics* it is said that the good is what all desire); *De potentia*, q. 9, a. 7, ad 6: “bonum est quod omnia appetunt, ut dicitur in I Ethic.” (good is what all desire, as is said in the first book of *Ethics*); *De malo*, q. 1, a. 1, c.: “philosophum in I Ethic. optime definirunt bonum dicentes, quod bonum est quod omnia appetunt” (the Philosopher in the *Ethics* says those who said that good is what all things desire defined it best); *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 2, lect. 4, n. 2: “bonum est quod omnia appetunt, ut dicitur in primo Ethicorum” (good is that which all desire, as is said in the first book of *Ethics*).

<sup>78</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*, liv. 6, cap. 4 (1027b, 25-29); see for example: *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 30, q. 1, a. 3, ad 3: “dicit philosophus, quod bonum et malum sunt in rebus; verum et falsum in anima” (the philosopher says that the good and evil are in things, and the true and false are in the soul); *De veritate*, q. 1, a. 2, c.: “philosophus dicit VI Metaphys. quod bonum et malum sunt in rebus, verum autem et falsum sunt in mente” (the philosopher says in the fourth book of *Metaphysics* that good and evil are in things, and the true and false are in the mind); *De malo*, q. 1, a. 1, arg. 20: “philosophus dicit in VII Metaph. quod bonum et malum sunt in rebus, sed verum et falsum sunt in intellectu” (the Philosopher says in the *Metaphysics* that good and evil are in things, and true and false in the intellect).

moral sense. Examining Aristotle's text, we see that here the good and evil are referred to the perfection of being, and not to the perfection of action. What Aristotle is trying to emphasize is that the true and false exist only in reason, as opposed to the good and evil – understood as perfection of being – that exist in things; that is, a false idea does not properly have ontological consistency, and it is in this sense that Aristotle says it exists only in the mind; on the other hand, a blind dog, for example, does have its own existence, and it is in this sense that he says that evil exists in things. It would be erroneous to take this statement of the philosopher out of context and want to apply it to human action *tout court*.<sup>79</sup> Thus when Aquinas cites this passage of the *Metaphysics* and says that *bonum et malum sunt in rebus*, it is important to bear in mind that he is speaking of good and evil from an ontological, and not a moral, perspective.

After this brief parenthesis, another key idea in the context of human action is that “ends are for desirable things as principles are for intelligible things,”<sup>80</sup> that is, ends have the nature of princi-

<sup>79</sup> Cf. *Sententia Metaphysicae*, lib. 6, lect. 4, n. 11: “Verum autem et falsum, etsi sint in mente, non tamen sunt circa illam operationem mentis, qua intellectus format simplices conceptiones, et quod quid est rerum. Et hoc est quod dicit, quod verum et falsum, circa simplicia et quod quid est, nec in mente est. Unde relinquitur per locum a divisione, quod ex quo non est in rebus, nec est in mente circa simplicia et quod quid est, quod sit circa compositionem et divisionem mentis primo et principaliter; et secundo vocis, quae significat conceptionem mentis. Et ulterius concludit, quod quaecumque oportet speculari circa ens et non ens sic dictum, scilicet prout ens significat verum, et non ens falsum, posterius perscrutandum est, scilicet in fine noni et etiam in libro de anima, et in logicalibus. Tota enim logica videtur esse de ente et non ente sic dicto. Sciendum est autem, quod cum quaelibet cognitio perficiatur per hoc quod similitudo rei cognitae est in cognoscente; sicut perfectio rei cognitae consistit in hoc quod habet talem formam per quam est res talis, ita perfectio cognitionis consistit in hoc, quod habet similitudinem formae praedictae. Ex hoc autem, quod res cognita habet formam sibi debitam, dicitur esse bona; et ex hoc, quod aliquem defectum habet, dicitur esse mala. Et eodem modo ex hoc quod cognoscens habet similitudinem rei cognitae, dicitur habere veram cognitionem: ex hoc vero, quod deficit a tali similitudine, dicitur falsam cognitionem habere. Sicut ergo *bonum et malum designant perfectiones*, quae sunt in rebus: ita verum et falsum designant perfectiones cognitionum” (True and false, although they exist in the mind, they don't concern that concrete operation of the mind. And this is what he says, that true and false, about simple things and about the nature isn't in the mind. Therefore is abandoned by the place on the division, which from that isn't in things, neither in the mind concerning simple things and that which they are, because concerns in the first place and primarily the putting together and the division in mind and secondarily words that signify the concepts in mind. And further on concludes that anything that is necessary whatever on the being and on the not being thus be said, i.e. in the measure being signifies truth and non being signifies false, is to be investigated after, i.e. in the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> book and also in the book on soul and in the logics. In fact all logic seems to be of the being and the non beings as was said. But it should be known that with a certain knowledge is executed by this a resemblance of the thing knowned is in conscience, like the perfection of the thing knowned consists in having a determinate form by which is that determinate thing so does the perfection in cognition consists in this, in having a similar form. Therefore, when a thing has the form due to itself is said good, and when has a certain defect is said evil, so in the same way when the person who knows has a similarity to the thing knowned that knowledge is said to be true and when it lacks that similarity that knowledge is said to be false. Therefore just like *good and evil designate perfectiones* that are on things so true and false designate perfectiones in knowledge). Emphasis added.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, liv. 7, cap. 9 (1151a, 16-17); *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 8, a. 2, c.: “enim se habet finis in appetibilibus, sicut se habet principium in intelligibilibus, ut dicitur in VII Ethic” (For in morals the end is what principles are in speculative science [Ethic. vii, 8]); *ibidem*, q. 9, a. 3, c.: “sicut dictum est, hoc modo se habet finis in appetibilibus, sicut principium in intelligibilibus” (as stated above, the end is in things appetible, what the principle is in things intelligible); *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 166: “finis in appetibilibus est sicut principium in intelligibilibus.”

ples when we are treating of human action. Just as one proceeds deductively from the most evident principles to other, less evident truths, in the same way regarding human – that is, rational and free – desire, one proceeds from the desire for the most remote and global ends to the choice of the most particular and proximate ends. Regarding the final end, Aquinas cites the philosopher when he says that happiness is action according to perfect virtue.<sup>81</sup> Perfection in action requires the perfection of virtue, which is the condition *sine qua non* for arriving at the contemplation of truth. The moral virtues are not innate, but the aptitude for the virtues *is* natural in us,<sup>82</sup> since the human being is rational and rationally seeks those goods to which he feels naturally inclined. These natural dispositions are in fact the premise of virtue.

For both Aquinas and Aristotle, virtue is that which makes good the person who possesses it and makes his actions good,<sup>83</sup> since it gives order to all human desires. This order in the desires derives from the rectitude of practical reason, which is capable of grasping and ordering among themselves the various goods suitable to the person as a person. Along these lines they also say that the goodness of the practical intellect is to be truly in conformity with right desire.<sup>84</sup> When reason knows how to “see” which actions are truly suitable, then we can speak of practical truth.

The habitual affective disposition of each person is decisive. This disposition presupposes, at least implicitly, a specific idea of happiness. Thus, for example, for the intemperate person happiness is found in sensible pleasures, and it will be in light of this criteria that various alternatives of

<sup>81</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, liv. 1, cap. 13 (1102a, 5-6); *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 3, a. 2, s.c.: “philosophus dicit, in I Ethic. quod felicitas est operatio secundum virtutem perfectam” (the Philosopher says [Ethic. i, 13] that “happiness is an operation according to perfect virtue”); *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 49, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 2, s.c. 1: “philosophus dicit in I Ethic. quod felicitas est operatio secundum perfectam virtutem” (the philosopher says in the first book of *Ethics* that happiness is acting according to perfect virtue); *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 88, a. 1, c.: “philosophus dicit expresse, in I Ethic. quod felicitas est operatio secundum perfectam virtutem” (the Philosopher expressly says [Ethic. i, 10], that happiness is “an operation according to perfect virtue”); *De virtutibus*, q. 1, a. 1, ad 4: “philosophus in I Ethic. dicit, quod felicitas est operatio secundum virtutem perfectam” (the philosopher says in the first book of *Ethics* that happiness is acting according to perfect virtue).

<sup>82</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, liv. 2, cap. 1 (1103a, 25-26); *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 169, a. 1, arg. 1: “sicut philosophus dicit, in II Ethic. naturalis inest nobis aptitudo ad virtutes” (according to the Philosopher [Ethic. ii, 1] there is in us a natural aptitude for the virtues).

<sup>83</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, liv. 2, cap. 5 (1106a, 16); *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 19, q. 3, a. 1, c.: “dicitur 2 Ethic. quod virtus est quae bonum facit habentem, et opus ejus bonum reddit” (is said in the second book of *Ethics* that virtue is that which makes good its possessor, and that makes good its works); *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 21, a. 2, s.c.: “virtus est quae bonum facit habentem, et opus eius bonum reddit, ut dicitur in II Ethic” (virtue makes that which has it, good, and makes its action good [Ethic. ii, 6]); *De virtutibus*, q. 1, a. 12, c.: “virtus est, quae bonum facit habentem, et opus eius bonum reddit: ut patet in Lib. Ethic.” (virtue is that which makes good its possessor, and that makes good its works, as is said in the book of *Ethics*).

<sup>84</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, liv. 6, cap. 2 (1139a, 29-31); *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 19, a. 3, arg. 2: “philosophus dicit, in VI Ethic. quod bonitas intellectus practici est verum conforme appetitui recto” (the Philosopher says [Ethic. vi, 2] that the goodness of the practical intellect is “a truth that is in conformity with right desire”).



action will be considered suitable or unsuitable. To such a person, attending a big wedding feast would certainly seem opportune, whereas fasting on bread and water for three days would seem unsuitable. In this line of thinking, it can be said that a given virtuous action will seem suitable to a virtuous person and unsuitable to a vicious person, because they are differently disposed with respect to the human good. It is not surprising, then, that Aquinas cites Aristotle when he says that just as each person is, so will the end seem to him,<sup>85</sup> to stress that the person's affective disposition conditions the evaluation of the suitability or unsuitability of concrete choices. A greedy, selfish person would view the chance to participate in a work of solidarity and aid to the poor as unsuitable, whereas a generous, solidaristic person would view this same action as suitable.

With some frequency, Aquinas cites the philosopher when he says that the will is spoken of regarding the end, and choice regarding the means.<sup>86</sup> According to Aristotle moral virtue makes the ends of action upright, and prudence makes the means upright,<sup>87</sup> an idea that Aquinas also makes his own. Virtue orders human desire to suitable ends, while it falls to prudence to discern how to concretely realize the virtuous ends. Along these lines both say that prudence makes the means upright,<sup>88</sup> since it orders them in view of the virtues. Prudence thus has a decisive role in guiding human desire, and for this reason both Aristotle and St. Thomas say that prudence is right reason in things to be done.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, liv. 3, cap. 4 (1114a, 32-b, 1); *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 9, a. 2, c.: “philosophus dicit in III Ethic. qualis unusquisque est, talis finis videtur ei” (the Philosopher says [Ethic. iii, 5]: “According as a man is, such does the end seem to him”); *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 1, arg. 19: “secundum philosophum in III Ethicorum, qualis unusquisque est, talis finis videtur ei”; *De malo*, q. 6, c.: “secundum philosophum, qualis unusquisque est, talis finis videtur ei” (“ends seem to a person as a person is disposed,” as the Philosopher says); *De virtutibus*, q. 1, a. 5, arg. 2: “ut dicitur in III Ethic. qualis unusquisque est, talis finis videtur ei” (as is said in the III book of *Ethics*: as one is, in that way the end will be seen by him).

<sup>86</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, liv. 3, cap. 4 (1111b, 26-27); *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 13, a. 3, s.c.: “philosophus dicit, in III Ethic. quod voluntas est finis, electio autem eorum quae sunt ad finem” (The Philosopher says [Ethic. iii, 2] that “volition is of the end, but choice of the means”); *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 45, q. 1, a. 2, arg. 1: “secundum philosophum, voluntas est finis; electio autem eorum quae sunt ad finem, ut dicitur in 3 Ethic.” (according to the philosopher, the will concerns the end while the choice is on those things for the end as is said in the III books of the *Ethics*); *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 88, n. 4: “Secundum philosophum, in III Ethic. voluntas est finis, electio autem eorum quae ad finem sunt” (According to the philosopher in the III books of the *Ethics*: the will concerns the end while the choice is of those things for the end).

<sup>87</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, liv. 6, cap. 13 (1145a, 5-6); *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 47, a. 5, arg. 2: “philosophus dicit, in VI Ethic. quod virtus moralis recte facit operari finem, prudentia autem ea quae sunt ad finem” (the Philosopher says [Ethic. vi, 13] that “the effect of moral virtue is right action as regards the end, and that of prudence, right action as regards the means”).

<sup>88</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, liv. 6, cap. 13 (1144a, 8-11); *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 33, a. 1, ad 2: “sicut philosophus dicit, in VI Ethic. prudentia facit rectitudinem in his quae sunt ad finem” (according to the Philosopher [Ethic. vi, 12], prudence regulates whatever is directed to the end).

<sup>89</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, liv. 6, cap. 5 (1140b, 20-21); *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 47, a. 2, s.c.: “philosophus dicit, in VI Ethic. quod prudentia est recta ratio agibilium” (the Philosopher says [Ethic. vi, 5] that prudence is right reason applied to action); *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 33, q. 2, a. 2, qc. 1, arg. 3: “dicit philosophus in 6 Ethic. quod pru-

Aquinas also repeats with some frequency, citing the philosopher, that virtue makes choice upright,<sup>90</sup> which is not surprising given that choice is like a conclusion in the realm of action.<sup>91</sup> If someone is just and prudent, he will certainly make just choices, since he desires justice and knows how to bring it about *hic et nunc*. Along these lines they also say that similar habits produce similar actions.<sup>92</sup>

Finally, Aristotle asserts that where something exists because of another, there is only one reality,<sup>93</sup> that is, he applies a certain hylomorphism to human action, a concept that Aquinas will also make his own and use with some frequency. Along these lines the philosopher says that one who steals so as to commit adultery is, properly speaking, more adulterer than thief,<sup>94</sup> an example that

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dentia est recta ratio agibilium” (says the philosopher in the VI book of the *Ethics* that prudence is the right reason in the things to be done); *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 93, n. 5: “secundum philosophum, in VI Ethic. prudentia est recta ratio agibilium” (according to the philosopher in the VI book of the *Ethics*, prudence is the right reason in the things to be done); *De virtutibus*, q. 5, a. 1, ad 3: “secundum philosophum in VI Ethic. prudentia est recta ratio agibilium.” (according to the philosopher in the VI book of the *Ethics*, prudence is the right reason in the things to be done).

<sup>90</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, liv. 6, cap. 13 (1144a, 6-9); *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 13, a. 3, arg. 1: “philosophus, in VI Ethic. quod electionem rectam facit virtus” (the Philosopher says [Ethic. vi, 12] that “virtue makes us choose aright”); *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 14, q. 1, a. 1, qc. 3, arg. 3: “virtus facit rectam electionem, ut dicitur in 3 Ethic.” (virtue makes right the choice, as is said in the III book of the *Ethics*).

<sup>91</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, liv. 7, cap. 5 (1147a, 24-1147b, 1); *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 13, a. 1, arg. 2: “electio sit quasi conclusio in operabilibus, ut dicitur in VII Ethic.” (choice is a kind of conclusion in practical matters, as stated in Ethic. vii, 3); *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 27, q. 2, a. 1, c.: “enim operatio se habet in operabilibus sicut conclusio in speculativis, ut dicitur 7 Metaphysic.” (action is in the moral things like the conclusion in the theoretical things, as is said in the VII book of the *Metaphysics*); *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 4, ad 3: “electionem operis, quae est quasi conclusio in operabilibus, ut dicitur in VII Ethic.” (the choice of the action is almost like a conclusion in moral things, as is said in the VII book of the *Metaphysics*).

<sup>92</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, liv. 2, cap. 1 (1103b, 21-22); *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 18, a. 5, s.c.: “philosophus, in II Ethic. similes habitus similes actus reddunt” (according to the Philosopher [Ethic. ii, 1] “like habits produce like actions”); *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2, cap. 73, n. 22: “sicut probat Aristoteles, in II Ethicorum, ex similibus actibus fiunt similes habitus, et similes etiam actus reddunt” (as Aristotle proves in the II book of the *Ethics*, from similar acts are produced similar habits, and they also make the acts similar).

<sup>93</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Tópicos*, liv. 3, cap. 2 (117a, 18-19); *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 38, q. 1, a. 4, s.c. 1: “philosophus dicit: ubi unum propter alterum, ibi unum tantum. Sed illud quod est ad finem, desideratur propter finem. Ergo unum desiderium est finis et ejus quod est ad finem” (the philosopher says: where there is one wanted in sight of another, there is only one reality. But that which is for the end is wanted for the end. Therefore one is the desire of the end and other is the desire of that which is for the end); *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 17, a. 4, s.c.: “philosophus dicit, quod ubi est unum propter alterum, ibi est unum tantum” (the Philosopher says that “where one thing is by reason of another, there is but one”); *ibidem*, III, q. 18, a. 2, ad 3: “ubi est unum propter alterum, ibi tantum unum esse videtur, sicut superficies, quae est visibilis per colorem, est unum visibile cum colore” (“Where there is one thing on account of another, there seems to be only one”; thus a surface which is visible by color is one visible thing with the color).

<sup>94</sup> Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, liv. 5, cap. 4 (1130a, 24-27); *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 181, a. 2, c.: “id quod ordinatur ad aliud sicut ad finem, praecipue in moralibus, trahitur in speciem eius ad quod ordinatur, sicut ille qui moechatur ut furetur, magis dicitur fur quam moechus, secundum philosophum, in V Ethic.” (if one thing be directed to another as its end, it is drawn, especially in moral matters, to the species of the thing to which it is directed: for instance “he who commits adultery that he may steal, is a thief rather than an adulterer,” according to the Philosopher [Ethic. v, 2]); *ibidem*, III, q. 88, a. 4, c.: “philosophus dicit, in V Ethic. ille qui moechatur ut furetur, magis est fur quam moechus” (the Philosopher says [Ethic. v, 2] that “he who commits adultery in order to steal is a thief rather than an adulterer”); *De malo*, q. 7, a. 3, c.: “philosophus dicit in V Ethic. quod ille qui ut moechetur furatur, magis est moechus quam fur” (the Philosopher says in the *Ethics* that one who commits adultery in order to steal is an avaricious person rather than an

Aquinas will use to illustrate the material/formal relation between the *electio* and the *intentio*.<sup>95</sup>

## 2. SACRED SCRIPTURE

A first reading of the texts in which Aquinas treats of the theme of the moral specification of human acts could lead us to believe that we are faced with a purely philosophical treatment, given the scarcity of biblical citations and the abundant recourse to the authority of Aristotle and to his conceptual paradigm. This first impression, however, would be inaccurate. *De actibus humanis* is not a purely philosophical parenthesis within the *Summa theologiae*; rather, it is a theological treatise. In fact, it is only fair to admit that we find few passages in Scripture that approach theoretically the theme of the specification of the human act – though we do find an abundance of information concerning the final end of human life, the goods of the human person, the virtues and the vices, good actions and sins, as well as many passages that can cause perplexity from the moral perspective and thus call for a deeper study.<sup>96</sup> These truths that it pleased God to reveal for our salvation

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adulterer). As one can see, Aquinas uses Aristotle's example with a certain liberty, at times inverting the object of the *intentio* with that of the *electio*, without for this calling into question the idea that he wants to emphasize: the object of the *intentio* is that which is loved more, because it is loved for itself, whereas the object of the *electio* is willed instrumentally.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 18, a. 6, c.: “In actu autem voluntario invenitur duplex actus, scilicet actus interior voluntatis, et actus exterior, et uterque horum actuum habet suum obiectum. Finis autem proprie est obiectum interioris actus voluntarii, id autem circa quod est actio exterior, est obiectum eius [...]. Et ideo actus humani species *formaliter* consideratur secundum finem, *materialiter* autem secundum obiectum exterioris actus. Unde philosophus dicit, in V Ethic. quod ille qui furatur ut committat adulterium, est, per se loquendo, magis adulter quam fur” (in a voluntary action, there is a twofold action, viz. the interior action of the will, and the external action: and each of these actions has its object. The end is properly the object of the interior act of the will: while the object of the external action, is that on which the action is brought to bear [...]. Consequently the species of a human act is considered *formally* with regard to the end, but *materially* with regard to the object of the external action. Hence the Philosopher says [Ethic. v, 2] that “he who steals that he may commit adultery, is strictly speaking, more adulterer than thief”). Emphasis added. In other passages Aquinas illustrates the relation between the *intentio* (*finis*) and the *electio* (*ea quae sunt ad finem*) by the relation between light and color, which in some way complements the insufficiencies of hylomorphic analogy. See for example: *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 45, q. 1, a. 2, ad 1: “in objecto alicujus potentiae est duo considerare: scilicet illud quod est materiale, et illud quod formaliter complet rationem objecti; sicut patet in visu: quia color est visibile in potentia, et non efficitur visibile in actu nisi per actum lucis. Similiter dico, quod illud quod formaliter complet rationem voliti, est finis, ex quo est ratio boni; et hoc intelligit philosophus cum dicit, quod voluntas est finis; sed ea quae sunt ad finem, se habent materialiter ad obiectum voluntatis, ut scilicet sint volita per ordinem finis, sicut color videtur per actum lucis” (in the object of a certain power there are two things to be considered, this is the material aspect and the formal aspect which completes the meaning of the object, as is clear in sight, because color is capable of being visible, but only actually seen by light. In a similar way I say that that which formally completes the reason of wanting something is the end, from which is driven the goodness, and this was understood by the philosopher that said that the will is of the end, but those things that are for the end are like the matter in relation to the object of the will so that they are willed in ordered to the end, as color is seen by the act of light).

<sup>96</sup> See for example the request that God makes to Abraham that he offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice (cf. *Gen* 22,2). At first sight this proposal of God could seem scandalous to us. Is it? What is the moral species of the human act “to offer one's child in sacrifice to God”?

form something like the point of departure and the context based on which *fides quaerens intellectum* is developed, until it arrives at a more systematic understanding of the human act; in this *iter* St. Thomas made good use of the other sciences, including philosophy.<sup>97</sup> It is also quite clear that for Aquinas “At the highest level of authority is the Word of God, expressed in Scripture. This is what furnishes the prime substance of theology (I, q. 1) and constitutes its principal source, the highest and surest one. It is rounded out by the teaching of the great councils, which interpret it in an authentic way in the name of the church, and by the confessions of faith which summarize their teaching.”<sup>98</sup>

St. Thomas knew the Scriptures in depth, as is demonstrated by the profundity of his biblical commentaries<sup>99</sup> and by his constant citation of both the Old and New Testaments. We find citations of all of the books of Sacred Scripture in his *corpus*, with the most frequently cited texts being from the New Testament. Regarding the Old Testament, Aquinas shows a special predilection for the wisdom books, especially for *Psalms*, the book of *Wisdom* and *Proverbs*. His time spent at the Benedictine monastery of Montecassino probably contributed to his good biblical formation, as did all the formation he received during his first years with the Dominicans.

It can thus be said without hesitation that the Thomistic doctrine on the specification of human acts has as its most important and authoritative source the Word of God, and that particular philosophical doctrines, such as those of Aristotle, are used only insofar as they are useful for a deeper scientific study of that Word. Illustrative here would be the importance of the Sermon on the Mount for Aquinas’s moral proposal. “In the Beatitudes, Thomas sees Christ’s answer to the question of happiness, which no philosopher had ever truly been able to resolve, not even Aristotle.”<sup>100</sup> St. Thomas only has recourse to Aristotle insofar as he is useful for deepening and systematizing the revealed data. Further examples would be the strong biblical foundation of the Thomistic doctrine

<sup>97</sup> Cf. *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 1, a. 5, ad 2: “haec scientia [sacra doctrina] accipere potest aliquid a philosophicis disciplinis, non quod ex necessitate eis indigeat, sed ad maiorem manifestationem eorum quae in hac scientia traduntur. Non enim accipit sua principia ab aliis scientiis, sed immediate a Deo per revelationem. Et ideo non accipit ab aliis scientiis tanquam a superioribus, sed utitur eis tanquam inferioribus et ancillis” (this science can in a sense depend upon the philosophical sciences, not as though it stood in need of them, but only in order to make its teaching clearer. For it accepts its principles not from other sciences, but immediately from God, by revelation. Therefore it does not depend upon other sciences as upon the higher, but makes use of them as of the lesser, and as handmaidens).

<sup>98</sup> S.-Th. PINCKAERS, *The Sources of the Ethics of St. Thomas Aquinas*, cit., p. 19.

<sup>99</sup> St. Thomas wrote eight biblical commentaries: *Expositio in Job*, *In Psalmos Davidis lectura*, *Expositio in Cantica canticorum*, *Expositio in Jeremiam prophetam*, *Expositio in Threnos Jeremiae prophetae*, *Catena aurea supper quattor Evangelia*, *Expositio in Ev. s. Matthei*, *Expositio in Ev. s. Joannis*, *Expositio in s. Pauli apostoli epistolas*.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 24.

of *intrinsece malum*,<sup>101</sup> the doctrine of the virtues and vices,<sup>102</sup> and the doctrine on erroneous conscience.<sup>103</sup> It is clear that for St. Thomas, the Word of God contained in Sacred Scripture enjoys the highest authority, and is the definitive criteria in the light of which the truth of the various theological and philosophical doctrines is evaluated. Nothing is truer than the truths communicated to us by God himself, which is why among all the sources used by St. Thomas “the Sacred Scripture was, by far, the first”<sup>104</sup> in dignity and importance. It is therefore not surprising that in every question of the *Secunda pars* of the *Summa theologiae* we find citations of Scripture, by far the source most used by Aquinas.<sup>105</sup>

It is nevertheless important to note that in the treatise on human acts and their morality, the use of Scripture is not as extensive as in the other treatises of the *Secunda pars*. Scripture is cited 37 times<sup>106</sup> in the treatise on the final end, which St. Thomas develops in 5 questions (I-II, qq. 1-5) as one of the arguments on which his proposed solution is based. This same abundance of biblical reference is not found, however, in the 12 questions (I-II, qq. 6-17) in which he treats of human acts in their metaphysical and psychological presuppositions. There Sacred Scripture is explicitly cited only 11 times<sup>107</sup> in the context of his proposed solution. The situation improves a bit, relatively speaking, in the treatise on the morality of human acts (I-II, qq. 18-21), a theme that St. Thomas develops in a mere 4 questions, using 10 explicit citations<sup>108</sup> of Scripture in the solutions he offers to the problems raised there. This means that in qq. 1-21 of the I-II, Aquinas uses the authority of

<sup>101</sup> Cf. for example *1Cor* 6,9-10.

<sup>102</sup> There are numerous passages on this theme in the Old Testament wisdom literature.

<sup>103</sup> See for example the case of a binding erroneous conscience in *Rom* 14,14-23 and *1Cor* 8,7-13.

<sup>104</sup> M.-J. NICOLAS, *Introdução à Suma Teológica*, in “São Tomás de Aquino, Suma teológica”, vol. 1, Edições Loyola, São Paulo 2003<sup>2</sup>, p. 31: “a Sagrada Escritura era, de longe, a primeira.”

<sup>105</sup> Cf. S.-Th. PINCKAERS, *The Sources of the Ethics of St. Thomas Aquinas*, cit., p. 17: “Citations of Scripture are found in all the questions and are the most numerous. Confining myself to the *Secunda pars*, I have counted 1,839 from the Old Testament and 2,003 from the New Testament.”

<sup>106</sup> Aquinas cites: *Wis* 11,21 in q. 1, a. 4, ad 1; *Phil* 3,19 and *Mt* 6,24 in q. 1, a. 5, s.c.; *Ps* 8,8 in q. 2, a. 1, c.; *Prov* 17,16 in q. 2, a. 1, ad 2; *Eccl* 24,29 and *Jo* 4,13 in q. 2, a. 1, ad 3; *Ps* 90,15-16 and *2Cor* 10,18 in q. 2, a. 3, c.; *Mk* 8,38 in q. 2, a. 3, ad 1; *Eccl* 5,12 in q. 2, a. 4, c.; *Eccl* 15,14 in q. 2, a. 5, c.; *Ps* 143,15 in q. 2, a. 8, s.c.; *Ps* 102,5 in q. 2, a. 8, c.; *Jo* 17,3 in q. 3, a. 2, s.c.; *Mt* 22,30 in q. 3, a. 2, ad 4; *Jo* 17,3 in q. 3, a. 4, s.c.; *Jer* 9,23 in q. 3, a. 6, s.c.; *Jer* 9,24 in q. 3, a. 7, s.c.; *1Jo* 3,2 in q. 3, a. 8, s.c.; *1Cor* 9,24 in q. 4, a. 3, s.c.; *Mt* 5,8 and *Heb* 12,14 in q. 4, a. 4, s.c.; *Ap* 14,13 in q. 4, a. 5, s.c.; *2Cor* 5,6 in q. 4, a. 5, c.; *Jo* 13,17 in q. 4, a. 6, s.c.; *Ps* 72,25 in q. 4, a. 7, s.c.; *Wis* 7,11 in q. 4, a. 3, s.c.; *Ps* 93,12 in q. 5, a. 1, s.c.; *Jo* 14,2 in q. 5, a. 2, s.c.; *Jo* 14,1 in q. 5, a. 3, s.c.; *Rom* 8,24 in q. 5, a. 3, c.; *Mt* 25,46 in q. 5, a. 4, s.c.; *Ps* 16,15 and *Wis* 7,11 in q. 5, a. 4, c.; *1Cor* 2,9 in q. 5, a. 5, s.c.; *Ps* 83,12 in q. 5, a. 6, s.c.; *Jo* 13,17 in q. 5, a. 7, s.c..

<sup>107</sup> Aquinas cites: *Prov* 21,1 in q. 6, a. 4, ad 1; *Job* 21,14 in q. 6, a. 8, c.; *Jas* 1,14 in q. 9, a. 2, s.c.; *Phil* 2,13 in q. 9, a. 6, s.c.; *Gen* 4,7 in q. 10, a. 3, s.c.; *Rom* 7,15 in q. 10, a. 3, c.; *Eccl* 15,14 in q. 10, a. 4, s.c.; *Gal* 5,22 in q. 11, a. 3, obj. 2 which is answered in ad 2; *2Cor* 12,10 in q. 13, a. 3, c.; *Wis* 1,1 in q. 15, a. 1, c.; *Rom* 7,23 in q. 17, a. 7, ad 1.

<sup>108</sup> Aquinas cites: *Jo* 3,20 in q. 18, a. 1, s.c.; *Hos* 9,10 in q. 18, a. 2, s.c.; *Ps* 4,6-7 in q. 19, a. 4, c.; *Rom* 14,23 in q. 19, a. 5, s.c.; *Jo* 16,2 in q. 19, a. 6, s.c.; *Mt* 26,39 in q. 19, a. 9, s.c.; *Ps* 32,1 in q. 19, a. 10, s.c.; *1Tim* 2,4 in q. 19, a. 10, ad 2; *Is* 3,10-11 in q. 21, a. 3, s.c.; *Eccl* 12,14 in q. 21, a. 4, s.c..

Scripture 58 times in the response he offers to the problems addressed.

In what follows we will consider, as an example, those responses by Aquinas in qq. 18-21 that are based on the authority of Scripture. This will show how, even in the treatises of more philosophical density, St. Thomas has recourse with relative frequency to arguments of faith, i.e., arguments in which God's revealed authority comes into play.

In a. 1 of q. 18, citing St. John's gospel, Aquinas says that "the one who *does evil* hates the light" (3,20), to show that some actions are evil, and thus it is mistaken to claim that all human actions are good. In the next article he cites the prophet Hosea when he says: "they became abhorrent like *the things* they loved" (9,10), to show that an evil object makes evil the act that tends to it, and consequently makes evil the subject who does that act. St. Thomas here uses this passage to emphasize how an evil object of the will causes disorder or a lack of rectitude in the will that tends to that object, and that that perverse will also makes evil the subject who produces that act.

In the body of q. 19, a. 4, Aquinas cites verses 6 and 7 of Psalm 4, in which we read: "many say, who will show us the good? Lord, the *light of your face is impressed upon us*," to show that human reason, which is the immediate rule of the morality of human acts, depends entirely, as the rule of morality, on the eternal law that is the divine reason. The light of reason is an "impression" in us of the divine light. In the next article he cites the following passage from the Letter to the Romans: "everything that does not come from faith is sin" (14,23), to show how the will that goes against the judgment of conscience is necessarily evil, since one acts against what he believes in conscience to be the thing to do. In this passage of Scripture, St. Thomas assumes the expression "comes from faith" as a synonym for being in agreement with the judgment of conscience. The conclusion is then obvious: "every act that is not in accord with the judgment of conscience is sin." In the following article, however, he cites the passage of John's gospel which says: "the hour will come when those who kill you will think they are offering service to God" (16,2), to show that an erroneous judgment of conscience only causes a good will if the error in that judgment was due to inculpable ignorance. In this case with the expression "will think they are offering service to God," the Lord implies that *in fact* they will not be doing a good action, and based on this idea Aquinas claims that an erroneous conscience does not always excuse, but only in cases where there is ignorance that is inculpable because it is invincible.

In a. 9 of q. 19, Aquinas cites the passage from St. Matthew's gospel in which Jesus prays to the Father saying: "not as I will, but as you will" (26,39), to show that the goodness of the act of our

human will depends on its conformity with the divine Will. Thus for an act of our will to be good, morally speaking, one must will what God wills, as Jesus did. Along these lines, in the following article St. Thomas cites Psalm (33)32,1: “praise befits the upright,” specifying that according to the *Gloss* the “upright” are those who will what God wills, and therefore this means that praise befits those who will what God wills; that is, for an act to be praiseworthy it must be in conformity with the divine Will. In this same article, in response to the objection that says that God wills to eternally condemn those who die in mortal sin, and therefore for these to conform to the divine will they must will their own damnation,<sup>109</sup> Aquinas, citing St. Paul, says that God “wills that all people be saved” (*1Tim* 2,4), and that he therefore does not will the eternal death of the sinner in itself, but only as this damnation realizes the order of his divine justice, which latter we must all desire.<sup>110</sup>

In q. 21, a. 3, Aquinas asks the question of whether or not the human act has merit or demerit based on its goodness or malice, citing the passage of the prophet Isaiah where we read: “Happy is the just person, for all will be well with him! Indeed, he will gather the fruit of his labor. But woe to the impious, the evil person! Because he will be dealt with according to his works” (3,10-11). Thomas reads this passage to assert that human acts have merit or demerit based on their goodness or malice. In the next article Aquinas asks whether human acts are subject to merit or demerit when we consider them in relation to God. He claims that they are, because Scripture says that “God will judge every action, even what is hidden, to see if it is good or evil” (*Eccl* 12,14). Now if God judges it, it is because he will reward good works and punish evil, and therefore in some way merit exists before God.<sup>111</sup>

For its relevance for the objectives of our study, a special reference is due the passage in chapter 7 of St. Matthew’s gospel where we read, “every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree

<sup>109</sup> Cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 19, a. 10, arg. 2: “Deus vult damnare aliquem, quem praescit in mortali peccato moriturum. Si ergo homo teneretur conformare voluntatem suam divinae voluntati in volito, sequeretur quod homo teneretur velle suam damnationem” (God wills to damn the man whom He foresees about to die in mortal sin. If therefore man were bound to conform his will to the Divine will, in the point of the thing willed, it would follow that a man is bound to will his own damnation).

<sup>110</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, ad 2: “Deus non vult damnationem alicuius sub ratione damnationis, nec mortem alicuius in quantum est mors, quia ipse vult omnes homines salvos fieri, sed vult ista sub ratione iustitiae. Unde sufficit circa talia quod homo velit iustitiam Dei, et ordinem naturae servari” (God does not will the damnation of a man, considered precisely as damnation, nor a man’s death, considered precisely as death, because, “He wills all men to be saved”; but He wills such things under the aspect of justice. Wherefore in regard to such things it suffices for man to will the upholding of God’s justice and of the natural order).

<sup>111</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, q. 21, a. 4, s.c.: “dicitur Eccle. ult., cuncta quae fiunt adducet Deus in iudicium, sive bonum sit sive malum. Sed iudicium importat retributionem, respectu cuius meritum et demeritum dicitur. Ergo omnis actus hominis bonus vel malus habet rationem meriti vel demeriti apud Deum” (it is written [Eccl. 12:14]: “All things that are done, God will bring into judgment [...] whether it be good or evil.” Now judgment implies retribution, in respect of which we speak of merit and demerit. Therefore every human action, both good and evil, acquires merit or demerit in God’s sight).

bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit” (*Mt* 7,17-18). Aquinas cites and comments on this passage various times in the course of his writings, examining it in more detail in the *Catena in Mt.*, ch. 7, lect. 8, although there he is primarily concerned with collecting the sayings of the Fathers. Here our interest is in the normal use Aquinas makes of this important biblical passage.

According to St. Thomas “In the genus of sin, as in every other genus, two causes may be observed. The first is the direct and proper (*per se*) cause of sin, and is the will to sin: for it is compared to the sinful act, as a tree to its fruit, as a gloss observes on Matthew 7:18, ‘A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit’: and the greater this cause is, the more grievous will the sin be, since the greater the will to sin, the more grievously does man sin.”<sup>112</sup> Thus for the Angelic Doctor, the evil will is associated with the bad tree, and is the *per se* cause of sin, which latter is implicitly associated with bad fruit. Elsewhere he says “It is clear that it is from the evil will, just as with the bad tree, that all evil deeds are done. This is said in response to a certain objection based on the Lord’s words in *Mt* 7,18 ‘a good tree cannot bear bad fruit,’ where one sees that a good thing cannot be the cause of evil. But it must be said that the tree is the proximate cause of the fruit, although in fact the first cause in its genus is the sun or the earth, and this first cause is common to both good and bad trees and to good and bad fruit. Therefore it is the nature of the will itself, just as with the first cause, that is the principle of the goodness or evil of the will and of the goodness or evil of external acts; but the evil will, which is compared to the tree, is the proximate cause of the evil of the exterior act, which is compared to the fruits.”<sup>113</sup> Here Aquinas points out, very synthetically but not very clearly, that the natural inclination of the will to the intelligible good in all its amplitude (*voluntas ut natura*) is the first cause of the morality of our actions, because it provides the basis of our natural orientation to the final end, in the light of which human acts are distinguished as ordered or disordered. He then says that the evil will that is compared with the bad tree is the proximate cause of

<sup>112</sup> *Ibidem*, q. 73, a. 6, c.: “in genere peccati, sicut et in quolibet alio genere, potest accipi duplex causa. Una quae est propria et per se causa peccati, quae est ipsa voluntas peccandi, comparatur enim ad actum peccati sicut arbor ad fructum, ut dicitur in Glossa, super illud Matth. VII, non potest arbor bona fructus malos facere. Et huiusmodi causa quanto fuerit maior, tanto peccatum erit gravius, quanto enim voluntas fuerit maior ad peccandum, tanto homo gravius peccat.”

<sup>113</sup> *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 34, q. 1, a. 5, exp.: “Manifestum est ex voluntate mala, tamquam ex arbore mala, fieri omnia opera mala. Hoc dicit ad excludendum quamdam objectionem ex verbis domini exortam, Matth. 7, 18: non potest arbor bona malos fructus facere; ex quo videtur sequi quod res bona causa mali esse non possit. Sed dicendum, quod arbor est causa proxima fructus; causa vero prima in genere illo est vel sol vel terra; et causa prima est communis et bonis et malis arboribus, et bonis et malis fructibus; ideo ipsa natura voluntatis, sicut causa prima, est principium bonarum et malorum voluntatum, et bonorum et malorum exteriorum actuum, una et eadem; sed voluntas mala, quae comparatur arbori, est causa mali actus exterioris proxima, qui comparatur fructui.”



the evil of exterior acts, which are compared with bad fruit. Here the evil will seems to refer to the choice of the will (*electio*), and the external act seems to correspond to the act commanded by the will to the other faculties in view of the realization of the evil act. It could thus be said that a good external act cannot result from an evil *electio*, since “it is unseemly and impossible that evil be caused from the natural consequences of the good, as natural accidents are caused from their substances, because as the Lord says in *Mt 7* ‘a good tree cannot bear bad fruit,’ nor vice-versa.”<sup>114</sup> Therefore, “just as Augustine proposes in the *Enchiridion de Fide, Spe et Charitate*, by tree is meant the will, and by fruit is meant the exterior act. It is in this sense that it must be understood that the good tree cannot bear bad fruit, because an evil act does not come from a good will, just as a good act does not come from an evil will.”<sup>115</sup>

St. Thomas also offers another slightly different interpretation, saying that “no one who has charity can sin as under the impetus of charity itself, just as no one that has a particular form can act, from that form’s inclination, against that form – just as warmth, under the power of heat, cannot cool or freeze. Augustine spoke in this sense in the book *De Sermone Domini in monte*, when he expounded the sense of *Mt 7,18* ‘a good tree cannot bear bad fruit’.”<sup>116</sup> This means that an external act, as proceeding from charity, is necessarily a “good fruit”, since it proceeds from a will that is necessarily good because ordered to the final supernatural end with the love of charity.

### 3. THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH AND ECCLESIAL AUTHORS

The creeds of faith, the divine liturgy and the Fathers of the Church constitute privileged witnesses of that Tradition that comes from the apostles, and with Sacred Scripture forms a single deposit of the Word of God. This is why it is not enough for a theologian to know Sacred Scripture: he must also know well the apostolic Tradition, of which the divine liturgy and the Fathers of the

<sup>114</sup> *Super De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, lect. 17: “inconveniens et impossibile est quod malum causetur ex bono naturali effluxu, sicut accidentia naturalia causantur a suis subiectis, quia, ut dominus dicit, Matth. 7, non potest arbor bona fructus malos facere nec e converso.”

<sup>115</sup> *De malo*, q. 1, a. 3, ad 1: “sicut Augustinus solvit in Enchir. per arborem intelligitur voluntas, per fructum intelligitur opus exterius. Sic ergo intelligendum est, quod arbor bona non potest fructus malos facere, quia ex bona voluntate non procedit opus malum, sicut nec ex mala voluntate procedit opus bonum” (As Augustine explains in his *Enchiridion*, tree signifies the will, and its fruit external deeds. Therefore, we should understand that a good tree cannot bear bad fruit because bad deeds do not proceed from a good will, just as good deeds do not proceed from a bad will).

<sup>116</sup> *De virtutibus*, q. 2, a. 12, c.: “nullus habens caritatem potest peccare, quantum est ex vi ipsius caritatis, sicut neque aliquis habens aliquam formam, ex vi illius formae potest operari contra formam illam; sicut calidum ex vi calidi non potest infrigidare, vel frigidum esse; potest tamen amittere calorem et infrigidari. Et secundum hoc loquitur Augustinus in Lib. de sermone domini in monte, exponens illud quod habetur Matth. VII, 18: non potest arbor bona fructus malos facere.”

Church are two privileged witnesses. Indeed the teachings of the holy Fathers testify to a living presence of this Tradition, the riches of which are communicated to the life of the Church. For Aquinas, after Scripture, “at a second level of authority are the teachings of the church fathers, considered as qualified interpreters and commentators of Scripture.”<sup>117</sup> In fact, “for Thomas, the Fathers provide deepening insights into the truth revealed in the Bible; this latter, and the commentaries of the Fathers, were written under the inspiring influence of the same Spirit. Nevertheless, the writings of the Fathers do not possess an absolute authority; they are a source of doctrine insofar as they present what is contained in the Bible and their teaching was received by the Church.”<sup>118</sup> It is interesting to note, for example, that “the citations from the Scripture in the *Summa*, decisive for a question, are often accompanied by references to patristic works. This reveals that St. Thomas does not read Scripture in isolation but interprets it within the church with the help of authoritative representatives of the best tradition.”<sup>119</sup> One also notes that frequently “particular Fathers are cited preferentially in particular questions in which they have a special authority, or about which they made important statements.”<sup>120</sup> That is, Aquinas, like his contemporaries, attributed to each of the Fathers areas of competence in which they possess a greater authority.

St. Thomas unquestionably had a great knowledge of the Fathers and the ecclesiastical writers of the first centuries. Like all his contemporaries, Aquinas used compilations, series of texts and collections of “Sentences.” Specifically, it should be noted that “In the transmission of patristic teaching the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard play a determining role as the required manual for theological teaching.”<sup>121</sup> “Even when dealing with the Greek Fathers, we remain impressed by [Thomas’s] knowledge of the most significant doctrines [...]. We see that, during his stay at the pontifical Court, Thomas had in his possession a compendium of Greek texts (of 57 Fathers), which he had had translated into Latin, for the composition of his *Catena aurea*.”<sup>122</sup> In fact, “Thomas did not

<sup>117</sup> S.-Th. PINCKAERS, *The Sources of the Ethics of St. Thomas Aquinas*, cit., p. 19.

<sup>118</sup> L.J. ELDERS, *Santo Tomás de Aquino y los Padres de la Iglesia*, in “Doctor Communis” 48 (1995), p. 58: “según Tomás, los Padres están alineados en prolongación de la Biblia: ésta y los comentarios de los Padres han sido escritos bajo la influencia inspiradora del mismo Espíritu. No obstante los escritos de los Padres no poseen una autoridad absoluta; son una fuente de doctrina en la medida que presentan lo que está contenido en la Biblia y sus enseñanzas han sido recibidas por la Iglesia.”

<sup>119</sup> S.-Th. PINCKAERS, *The Sources of the Ethics of St. Thomas Aquinas*, cit., p. 20.

<sup>120</sup> L.J. ELDERS, *Santo Tomás de Aquino y los Padres de la Iglesia*, cit., p. 75: “determinados Padres son citados preferentemente en cuestiones particulares en las que tienen una autoridad especial o sobre las cuales hicieron importantes afirmaciones.”

<sup>121</sup> S.-Th. PINCKAERS, *The Sources of the Ethics of St. Thomas Aquinas*, cit., p. 19.

<sup>122</sup> M.-J. NICOLAS, *Introdução à Suma Teológica*, cit., p. 31: “Mesmo quando se trata dos Padres gregos, ficamos impressionados pelo seu conhecimento das doutrinas mais significativas [...]. Vimos que, em sua estada na Corte pontifícia, Tomás teve em mãos um compêndio de textos gregos (de cinquenta e sete Padres) que fez traduzir para o latim, a

know Greek well enough to read Greek texts. This notwithstanding, he uses a large number of Greek ecclesiastical writers in his Latin translation. These works are much more numerous than those known by any of his contemporaries or Latin predecessors.<sup>123</sup> It is thus clear that St. Thomas was not content to know well the Latin tradition in which he found himself, but was committed to and adept at discovering the riches of the Christian East, a fact which contributed significantly to the universality of his theology. It is clear that, in addition to his profound knowledge of Latin Patrology, “the attention St. Thomas dedicated to Greek patristic sources is of great importance”<sup>124</sup> for the whole of his theological reflection. Specifically, it can be said that “the study of the Greek Fathers influenced Thomas’s later works considerably, in particular the Trinitarian theology and Christology of the *Summa theologiae*.”<sup>125</sup>

Unlike some of our contemporaries, “St. Thomas was not so much interested in a historical study of the Fathers, but much more in the discovery, with the Fathers’ help, of a deeper understanding of the mysteries of the faith.”<sup>126</sup> Aquinas sought always to penetrate divine Revelation more deeply, and the contribution of the Fathers was especially valuable in this effort. Certainly, at times it also happens that, in this or that statement, the Fathers do not seem to be such good guides. In these cases “St. Thomas explains why certain texts in the writings of the Fathers seem doubtful. The reason is that their opinions are sometimes influenced by erroneous philosophical theories, and by certain Platonic principles.”<sup>127</sup> Thus, even if Aquinas nourished a sincere esteem for the teachings and life of the Fathers, this did not make of him a mere uncritical transmitter of their doctrine. Aquinas is unquestionably a devoted depository of the patrimony of the first Christian thinkers, but without ever extinguishing his critical sense, a natural consequence of his zeal in the search for truth. It should also be said that “in his attribution of certain works to one or another of the Fathers,

fim de compor a sua *Catena aurea*.”

<sup>123</sup> L.J. ELDERS, *Santo Tomás de Aquino y los Padres de la Iglesia*, cit., p. 62: “Tomás no sabía suficiente griego para leer textos griegos. No obstante usa una gran cantidad de autores eclesiásticos griegos en traducción latina. Estas obras son mucho mas numerosas de las conocidas por qualquiera de sus contemporáneos o predecesores latinos.”

<sup>124</sup> M.-J. NICOLAS, *Introdução à Suma Teológica*, cit., p. 27: “a atenção que São Tomás dedicou às fontes patrísticas gregas é de grande importância.”

<sup>125</sup> L.J. ELDERS, *Santo Tomás de Aquino y los Padres de la Iglesia*, cit., p. 68: “El estudio de los Padres griegos ha influido considerablemente sobre las obras posteriores de Tomás, en particular sobre la teología trinitaria y la cristología della *Suma de teologia*.”

<sup>126</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 64: “Santo Tomás no estaba tan interesado en un estudio histórico de los Padres sino más bien en el descubrimiento, mediante la ayuda de los Padres, de una comprensión más profunda de los misterios de la fe.”

<sup>127</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 59: “santo Tomás explica porqué ciertos textos en los escritos de los Padres nos parecen dudosos. La razón es que sus opiniones están a veces influenciadas por teorías filosóficas erróneas, así como por ciertos principios platónicos”; cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 14, q. 1, a. 2, c.: “Basilii enim et Augustinus et plures sanctorum sequuntur in philosophicis quae ad fidem non spectant, opiniones Platonis” (in fact, Basil and Agustin and many other saints followed in philosophical matters the opinion of Plato that doesn’t fits well with faith).

Aquinas follows the dominant convictions of his time, which in some cases were incorrect.”<sup>128</sup> In summary, it can be said that “in Thomas’s view, the Fathers are the necessary interpreters of Scripture, authentic representatives of the church’s thought,”<sup>129</sup> and thus the knowledge of their teachings is necessary for theological work. To do theology, it is not enough to know Scripture – one must also know the Fathers.

a) *St. Augustine of Hippo (354-431)*

The knowledge that St. Thomas demonstrates of the writings of both the Greek and Latin Fathers is certainly impressive, “but no patristic source can be compared to what St. Augustine was for him.”<sup>130</sup> If “the philosopher” for St. Thomas is Aristotle, “the theologian” is unquestionably St. Augustine, all of whose works Aquinas knew and used.<sup>131</sup> This fact is even more understandable if we remember that in his day “university libraries were packed with Augustine’s works. Thomas undoubtedly read him directly, though he would have used compendia of texts for citations. For St. Thomas, St. Augustine was, in matters of faith and theology, the ‘Father’ par excellence,”<sup>132</sup> and therefore it would be unfair to constantly oppose the doctrine of these two great theologians. Precisely because they are two *theologians*, and thus drink from the same fountain of divine Revelation, there is a great continuity between their theological arguments. At the same time it must be said that the philosophies used by each in their theological reflections are clearly of a very different mold. St. Thomas, as we have seen, shows a special sympathy for Aristotelian philosophy, whereas St. Augustine made use of neoplatonic philosophy; St. Thomas, however, was not anti-Platonic, nor St. Augustine anti-Aristotelian. There are many true intuitions in both Aristotle and Plato with which both theologians were in agreement, as well as other theses that neither theologian could accept.

<sup>128</sup> L.J. ELDERS, *Santo Tomás de Aquino y los Padres de la Iglesia*, cit., pp. 60-61: “En su atribución de ciertas obras a uno o otro de los Padres el Aquinate sigue la convicción dominante en su tiempo que en algunos casos era errónea.”

<sup>129</sup> S.-Th. PINCKAERS, *The Sources of the Ethics of St. Thomas Aquinas*, cit., p. 20.

<sup>130</sup> M.-J. NICOLAS, *Introdução à Suma Teológica*, cit., p. 32: “contudo, nenhuma fonte patrística pode ser comparada ao que foi para ele santo Agostinho.”

<sup>131</sup> Cf. B. MONDIN, *Agostino*, in “Dizionario enciclopédico del pensiero di san Tommaso d’Aquino”, Edizioni Studio Domenicano, Bologna 2000, p. 31: “San Tommaso conosce perfettamente Agostino, che è il suo autore preferito e più citato. La sua documentazione rivela una conoscenza e un uso di tutte le sue opere” (St. Thomas knows perfectly Augustine, who is his preferred and most cited author. His documentation reveals a knowledge and use of all of his works). According to the *Index Thomisticus*, St. Thomas (in his authentic and probably authentic writings) refers explicitly to St. Augustine 9817 times, and in 6838 different places.

<sup>132</sup> M.-J. NICOLAS, *Introdução à Suma Teológica*, cit., p. 32: “a obra de Agostinho lotava as bibliotecas universitárias. Sem dúvida, Tomás lia-a directamente, embora utilizasse compêndios de textos para as citações. Para São Tomás, santo Agostinho foi, em matéria de fé e teologia, o ‘Padre’ por excelência.”

It is not surprising, then, that “throughout the *Summa theologiae*, St. Augustine will be the Father who enjoys the greatest authority, i.e. he is the most cited, about four times as often as Gregory the Great and about five times as often as Pseudo-Dionysius.”<sup>133</sup> Specifically, from the beginning of the I-II “St. Augustine is the undisputed authority on the theme of the final end, as he is also regarding the question of in what happiness consists, and how to reach it.”<sup>134</sup> The holy bishop of Hippo is cited 536 times in the I-II, but only 12 times in qq. 18-21 that deal with the morality of human acts. In these questions Aristotle’s contribution is considerable, given that he is cited 31 times. In qq. 6-17 in which Aquinas studies in detail the psychology of the human act, the use of St. Augustine continues to be relatively modest, considering that in these 11 qq. the holy bishop of Hippo is cited 48 times.

There are some ideas of St. Augustine’s that Aquinas cites with some frequency when he treats of themes related to human action. In what follows we will highlight the most important of these.

St. Thomas, citing St. Augustine, says that evil is not in things, but in their sinful use.<sup>135</sup> Obviously here he is referring to moral evil, that is, that which proceeds from reason and will, or if we prefer, what originates in the human heart. “Therefore one does not sin except through the will,”<sup>136</sup> an important statement of the holy bishop of Hippo that Aquinas will make his own. Along the same lines he says that “voluntary sin is evil, such that if it is not voluntary, in no way is it sin.”<sup>137</sup>

<sup>133</sup> L.J. ELDERS, *Santo Tomás de Aquino y los Padres de la Iglesia*, cit., p. 79: “a lo largo de la *Suma de teología* San Agustín es el Padre que goza de mayor autoridad y es el más citado, alrededor de 4 veces más que Gregorio Magno y cerca de 5 veces más que Dionisio.”

<sup>134</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 75: “San Agustín es la autoridad incontestable en el tema del fin último, como lo es también con respecto a la cuestión en qué consiste la felicidad y cómo se alcanza.”

<sup>135</sup> Cf. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO (saint), *De doctrina christiana*, lib. 3, cap. 12 (PL 34, 73): “Nam in omnibus huiusmodi rebus, non ex earum rerum natura quibus utimur, sed ex causa utendi et modo appetendi vel probandum est vel improbandum quod facimus” (For upon all things of this kind, not out of their nature of things by which they are used, but out of the way they are used and desired or give consent or not consenting and that we are making); *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 18, a. 2, arg. 1: “In rebus autem non est malum, sed in usu peccantium, ut Augustinus dicit in libro III de Doctr. Christ.” (“evil is not in things, but in the sinner’s use of them,” as Augustine says [De Doctr. Christ. iii, 12]).

<sup>136</sup> AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO (saint), *De Duabus Animabus*, cap. 10 (PL 42, 104): “Non igitur nisi voluntate peccatur”; cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 20, a. 2, arg. 2: “Augustinus dicit, in libro *Retract.* quod non nisi voluntate peccatur” (Augustine says [Retract. i, 9] that there is no sin without the will); *ibidem*, q. 74, a. 2, arg. 1: “Dicit enim Augustinus, in libro de duabus animabus, quod non nisi voluntate peccatur” (Augustine says [De Duabus Anim. x, 10] that “no one sins except by the will”); *De veritate*, q. 25, a. 5, arg. 1: “nisi in voluntate peccatur” (nowhere other than in the will is sin); *De malo*, q. 2, a. 2, arg. 1: “Dicit enim Augustinus in Lib. *Retractationum*, quod non nisi voluntate peccatur” (Augustine says in his work *Retractions* that sin is only in the will).

<sup>137</sup> AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO (saint), *De Vera Religione*, cap. 14 (PL 34, 133): “peccatum voluntarium est malum, ut nullo modo sit peccatum, si non sit voluntarium”; cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 6, a. 8, arg. 2: “Augustinum dicentem quod omne peccatum est voluntarium” (the saying of Augustine, that “every sin is voluntary”); *ibidem*, II-II, q. 64, a. 8, c.: “omne peccatum est voluntarium, secundum Augustinum” (every sin is voluntary, according to Augustine); *De malo*, q. 3, a. 6, arg. 1: “peccatum enim adeo est voluntarium, quod si non sit voluntarium, non est peccatum, ut Augustinus di-

Speaking of acts that are not intrinsically evil, St. Augustine says that “there are certain acts about which we do not know with what intention they are done, since they can be done with a good or a bad intention; for this reason it may be rash to judge them.”<sup>138</sup> With these words he stresses the importance of the first person perspective. Commenting on the Gospel he adds: “‘the good tree does not bear bad fruit.’ In this statement the divine Master is not referring to the nature of the tree, speaking of its fruits, but of the good or evil will and its fruits, the actions which, when good, cannot proceed from an evil will, nor from a good will when they are evil. And then he adds: ‘the bad tree cannot give good fruit, nor the good tree bad fruit,’ as if to say that good works do not proceed from a bad will, nor evil works from a good [will].”<sup>139</sup>

Also of great importance for Aquinas is the definition that the bishop of Hippo gives to sin and to the eternal law. For him “sin is a certain action, word or desire against the eternal law. The eternal law is the divine reason and the will of God, which commands that the natural order be preserved, and prohibits disturbing it.”<sup>140</sup> Sin is a voluntary act against the eternal law, that is, against

cit” (sin is so voluntary that if there is nothing voluntary, there is no sin, as Augustine says); *De veritate*, q. 22, a. 6, s.c. 2: “secundum Augustinum, peccatum adeo est voluntarium, quod nisi sit voluntarium non est peccatum” (according to Augustin, sin truly speaking is willed, because nothing involuntary is sin); *Quodlibet I*, q. 9, a. 3, arg. 1: “Augustinus dicit, peccatum adeo est voluntarium, quod si non est voluntarium, non est peccatum” (Augustin says that sin truly speaking is willed, because that which is not voluntary is not a sin).

<sup>138</sup> AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO (saint), *De Sermone Domini in monte*, lib. 2, cap. 18 (PL 34, 1296): “Sunt ergo quaedam facta media, quae ignoramus quo animo fiant, quia et bono et malo fieri possunt, de quibus temerarium est iudicare”; cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 18, a. 8, s.c.: “Augustinus dicit, in libro de Serm. Dom. in Mont. quod sunt quaedam facta media, quae possunt bono vel malo animo fieri, de quibus est temerarium iudicare” (Augustine says [De Serm. Dom. in Monte ii, 18] that “there are certain deeds of a middle kind, which can be done with a good or evil mind, of which it is rash to form a judgment”); *De malo*, q. 2, a. 5, s.c. 1: “Augustinus dicit in Lib. de sermone domini in monte, quod quaedam sunt facta media quae possunt bono et malo animo fieri, de quibus temerarium est iudicare” (Augustine says in his work *On the Lord’s Sermon on the Mount* that “there are some deeds in between good and evil, deeds that can be done with good or evil intention, and it is rash to pass judgment on them”).

<sup>139</sup> AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO (saint), *Contra Iulianum haeresis Pelagianae defensorem*, lib. 1, cap. 8 (PL 44, 667): “*Arbor bona fructus malos non facit*; cum ille magister Deus, non utique naturam constituat arborem, ex qua fructus de quo loquebatur, existat; sed voluntatem seu bonam seu malam, fructus autem opera, quae nec bona voluntatis malae, nec mala possunt esse voluntatis bonae. Hoc est enim quod ait: *Arbor mala fructus bonos non facit, et arbor bona fructus malos non facit*; tamquam diceret: Nec opera bona voluntas mala, nec mala opera facit voluntas bona”; cf. *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 49, a. 1, ad 1: “sicut Augustinus dicit, contra Iulian., arborem malam appellat dominus voluntatem malam, et arborem bonam, voluntatem bonam. Ex voluntate autem bona non producitur actus moralis malus” (As Augustine says [Contra Julian. i]: “The Lord calls an evil will the evil tree, and a good will a good tree.” Now, a good will does not produce a morally bad act); *De malo*, q. 1, a. 3, ad 1: “sicut Augustinus solvit in Enchir. per arborem intelligitur voluntas, per fructum intelligitur opus exterius. Sic ergo intelligendum est, quod arbor bona non potest fructus malos facere, quia ex bona voluntate non procedit opus malum, sicut nec ex mala voluntate procedit opus bonum” (As Augustine explains in his *Enchiridion*, tree signifies the will, and its fruit external deeds. Therefore, we should understand that a good tree cannot bear bad fruit because bad deeds do not proceed from a good will, just as good deeds do not proceed from a bad will); *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 20, a. 2, arg. 1: “Per arborem autem intelligitur voluntas, et per fructum opus, secundum Glossam” (according to the gloss, the tree signifies the will, and fruit signifies works).

<sup>140</sup> AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO (saint), *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*, lib. 22, cap. 1 (PL 42, 418): “peccatum est, factum vel dictum vel concupitum aliquid contra aeternam legem. Lex vero aeterna est, ratio divina vel voluntas Dei, ordinem naturalem conservari iubens, perturbari vetans”; cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 19, a. 4, s.c.: “Augustinus dicit, XXII libro

the plan thought and willed by God.

On the relation between final ends and proximate ends, St. Augustine says that “it is certainly more important to know for what cause, in view of what end, with what intention something is done, but those things that are known to be sins must not be done for a good cause, for a good end or for a good intention,”<sup>141</sup> that is, the more remote ends are more determinative of the moral quality of the agent, but in no case does a virtuous end justify an evil action. At the same time St. Augustine recognizes that there are some cases that can cause a certain perplexity because they appear externally to be sins, but in fact they are not. He says that “among all of our actions, those that most disturb even good people are those in which sin and a good action are ‘balanced’ in such a way that if there are adequate reasons for doing them, they are not considered sin, and indeed it would be considered sin not to do them. This opinion prevailed in the common mentality above all with respect to various lies, which at times are not considered to be sins, but virtuous actions. This is the case, for example, when someone lies for the usefulness/sake of someone who from his deception will have an advantage, or when one does so to prevent someone else from doing evil, when it seems the person intends to do harm if he is not prevented by the lie. To justify lies of this kind, recourse to the help of the very numerous examples in Scripture is valid.”<sup>142</sup> Thus for the bishop of Hippo there

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contra Faustum, quod peccatum est factum, dictum vel concupitum aliquid contra aeternam legem” (Augustine says [Contra Faust. xxii, 27] that “sin is a deed, word or desire against the eternal law”); *De veritate*, q. 15, a. 4, arg. 9: “definitionem peccati ab Augustino datam, quod peccatum est dictum vel factum vel concupitum contra legem Dei” (the definition of sin given by Augustin is that sin is word or deed or a desire against the law of God); *De malo*, q. 2, a. 1, c.: “verbo Augustini dicentis, quod peccatum est dictum vel factum vel concupitum contra legem Dei” (the words of Augustine, who said that “sin is a word or deed or desire contrary to the law of God); *De virtutibus*, q. 2, a. 6, arg. 16: “peccatum est dictum vel factum vel concupitum contra legem Dei” (sin is word or deed or a desire against the law of God).

<sup>141</sup> AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO (saint), *Contra mendacium*, cap. 7 (PL 40, 528): “Interest quidem plurimum, qua causa, quo fine, qua intentione quid fiat: sed ea quae constat esse peccata, nullo bonae causae obtentu, nullo quasi bono fine, nulla velut bona intentione facienda sunt”; cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 20, a. 2, s.c.: “Augustinus dicit, in libro contra mendacium, quod quaedam sunt quae nullo quasi bono fine, aut bona voluntate, possunt bene fieri” (Augustine says [Contra Mendac. vii], that “there are some actions which neither a good end nor a good will can make good”); *De malo*, q. 10, a. 2, arg. 3: “ea autem quae sunt mala ex genere, non possunt bene fieri; ut Augustinus dicit in libro contra mendacium” (things evil by reason of their kind cannot be done in a good way, as Augustine says in his work *Against Lying*).

<sup>142</sup> AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO (saint), *Contra mendacium*, cap. 10 (PL 40, 533): “In omnibus autem actibus nostris maxime etiam bonos turbant compensativa peccata; ita ut nec peccata existimentur, si habeant tales causas propter quas fiant, et in quibus videatur peccari potius si non fiant. Et praecipue de mendaciis hoc in hominum opinione praevaluit, ut peccata non putentur illa mendacia, quinimo et recte facta esse credantur, quando quisque pro eius cui falli expedit utilitate mentitur, aut ne aliis noceat qui nociturus videtur, nisi mendaciis evitetur. Ad haec mendaciorum genera defendenda, plurima de Scripturis sanctis suffragari putantur exempla”; cf. *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 110, a. 3, ad 3: “in sacra Scriptura, sicut Augustinus dicit, inducuntur aliquorum gesta quasi exempla perfectae virtutis, de quibus non est aestimandum eos fuisse mentitos. Si qua tamen in eorum dictis appareant quae mendacia videantur, intelligendum est ea figuraliter et prophetice dicta esse” (In Holy Writ, as Augustine observes, the deeds of certain persons are related as examples of perfect virtue: and we must not believe that such persons were liars. If, however, any of their statements appear to be untruthful, we must understand such statements to have been figurative and prophetic); *Quodlibet VIII*, q. 6, a. 4, ad 2: “si-

are “lies” that seem to be sins, but which in reality are virtuous actions, and we find various examples of these in Scripture.

Another big question is that of the origin and essence of evil. Aquinas also frequently cites St. Augustine on this point, for example when the latter says: “What does it mean to say that a thing is evil, if not that it is deprived of good? Just as for the body of an animal to be sick or injured means nothing other than to be deprived of health [...], so in the soul there are some vices that are privations of natural goods, such that when someone is healed he is not transformed into another, but into what he was when he did not suffer from that illness.”<sup>143</sup> In response to the Manichees’ errors he says:

“They [the Manichees] ask us what would be the origin of evil. We respond that evil derives from the good, but not from the supreme and immutable good. Evil derives from inferior and mutable goods. By evil, however, we do not understand the nature of things, but defects of nature, but at the same time we say that these [defects] cannot derive except from a nature, and they could not subsist except in

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cut Augustinus dicit in Lib. de mendacio, et habetur in Glossa super illud Psalm. V, 7: perdes omnes qui loquuntur mendacium, dupliciter aliquis laudatur in Scriptura. Quidam propter perfectum statum virtutis; et horum facta proponuntur omnibus in exemplum; et de talibus non legitur quod mentiti sint; vel si aliqua dixerunt quae mendacia videntur, secundum intentionem quam ex instinctu spiritus sancti conceperunt, mendacia non sunt. Quidam vero laudantur propter virtutis indolem; et sic in aliquibus mendacium fuisse legitur, maxime officiosum, sicut patet de obstetricibus. Non enim commendantur quia mentitae sunt, sed propter misericordiam ex qua in mendacium inciderunt; et sic apparet in eis quaedam indoles, idest profectus virtutis, non autem perfectio” (as Augustine says in the book on lying, and is present in the glossary on psalm 5,7: you destroy all that speak falsehood, in two ways someone is praised in the Scripture. Certain for a perfect state in virtue, and their actions are presented to all as an example and of them we don’t read they have lied, or if they have said something that resembles a lie, according to their intention, moved by the Holy Spirit to which they cooperate, a lie is not. Others are praised by their virtues nature, and in some we read that there was a lie, in the most dutiful manner, as is clear in the case of the obstetrics. In fact, are not considered to have lied, but to have acted with mercy by which have incurred in lying, and in this way we see in them a certain virtues nature but not perfection).

<sup>143</sup> AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO (saint), *Enchiridion ad Laurentium*, lib. 1, cap. 11 (PL 40, 236): “Quid est autem aliud quod malum dicitur, nisi privatio boni? Nam sicut corporibus animalium nihil est aliud morbis et vulneribus affici quam sanitate privari (neque enim id agitur cum adhibetur curatio, ut mala ista quae inerant, id est morbi ac vulnera, recedant hinc et alibi sint, sed utique ut non sint; non enim ulla substantia, sed carnalis substantiae vitium est vulnus aut morbus, cum caro sit ipsa substantia, profecto aliquod bonum cui accidunt ista mala, id est privationes eius boni quod dicitur sanitas); ita et animorum quaecumque sunt vitia, naturalium sunt privationes bonorum: quae cum sanantur non aliquo transferuntur, sed ea quae ibi erant, nusquam erunt, quando in illa sanitate non erunt”; cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 18, a. 8, arg. 1: “Malum enim est privatio boni, secundum Augustinum” (Evil is the privation of good, according to Augustine); *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 16, q. 3, a. 2, qc. 1, arg. 3: “malum privatio quaedam est boni, ut Augustinus dicit Lib. 3 Confess. cap. 7, et in Enchirid.” (evil is a certain privation of good, as Augustin says in the III book of the *Confessions*, chapter VII, and in the *Enchiridion*); *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 8, n. 9: “malum privatio est boni” (evil is the privation of good); *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 15, arg.: “malum est privatio boni, ut Augustinus dicit” (evil is the privation of good, as Augustin says); *De malo*, q. 1, a. 2, s.c. 2: “malum est privatio boni, ut Augustinus dicit” (Evil is the privation of good, as Augustine says).



a nature, since evil is nothing other than a privation of the good. But the privation of what, if not of a nature? An evil will itself is nothing if not the will of a nature. The person and the angel are natures. If a will exists, it cannot be the will of no one. Wills are so important that they constitute qualities of the natures to which they belong. If one asks about a man or an angel with an evil will, it is correct to refer to him as an evil-doer, i.e., preferring to use the name of the quality of the evil will rather than that of the good nature. The nature is the substance itself that is capable of goodness or evil. It is capable of good by participation in the Good by which it was created; on the other hand it is capable of evil, not by participation in evil, but by the privation of a good. In other words, the nature acquires an evil not by mixing with an evil nature – in fact, no nature as such is evil –, but by deviating from the nature that is the supreme and immutable good, and this because it was not generated from the latter, but from nothing. If the nature were not mutable, neither could it have an evil will. The nature, in fact, could not be mutable if it derived directly from God and had not been generated from nothing. Thus God the Creator of natures is the Creator of good things, and their spontaneous departure from the good shows, not by whom they were created, but from what they were generated, and this is not anything because it is absolutely nothing. What is nothing cannot have a creator.”<sup>144</sup>

Worth emphasizing the idea that the person’s and the angel’s moral quality, derives from the

<sup>144</sup> AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO (saint), *Contra Iulianum haeresis Pelagianae defensorem*, lib. 1, cap. 8 (PL 44, 666-667): “Quaerunt itaque a nobis, unde sit malum. Respondemus: Ex bono, sed non summo et incommutabili bono. Ex bonis igitur inferioribus atque mutabilibus orta sunt mala. Quae mala licet intellegamus non esse naturas, sed vitia naturarum: tamen simul intellegimus ea, nisi ex aliquibus et in aliquibus naturis esse non posse; nec aliquid esse malum, nisi a bonitate defectum. Sed cuius defectum, nisi alicuius sine dubitatione naturae? Quia et ipsa voluntas mala, non nisi alicuius voluntas est profecto naturae. Et angelus quippe et homo naturae sunt. Non enim potest essenullius voluntas, quando est voluntas. Et tantum valent eadem voluntates, ut earum naturarum, quarum sunt, faciant qualitates. Nam si quaeratur, qualis sit angelus vel homo malae voluntatis: rectissime responderetur: Malus; magis accipiens qualitatis nomen ex voluntate mala, quam ex natura bona. Quoniam natura est ipsa substantia et bonitatis et malitiae capax: bonitatis capax est, participatione boni a quo facta est: malitiam vero capit non participatione mali, sed privatione boni, id est, non cum miscetur naturae quae aliquod malum est, quia nulla natura in quantum natura est, malum est; sed cum deficit a natura quae summum atque incommutabile est bonum; propterea quia non de illa, sed de nihilo facta est. Alioquin nec malam voluntatem habere posset, nisi mutabilis esset. Mutabilis porro natura non esset, si de Deo esset, et non ab illo de nihilo facta esset. Quapropter bonorum auctor est Deus, dum auctor est naturarum: quarum spontaneus defectus a bono, non indicat a quo factae sunt, sed unde factae sunt. Et hoc non est aliquid, quoniam penitus nihil est; et ideo non potest auctorem habere quod nihil est”; cf. *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 49, a. 1, s.c.: “dicit, contra Iulianum, non fuit omnino unde ori posset malum, nisi ex bono” (Augustine says [Contra Julian. i, 9]: “There is no possible source of evil except good”).

goodness of their will, which becomes evil by the privation of a particular good that is due to his nature, which was created good by God. The person, therefore, deviates from his good by an evil will.

*b) Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (V cent.)*

Pseudo-Dionysius, a Christian theologian of neoplatonic inspiration, is, after St. Augustine, the theologian most cited by St. Thomas.<sup>145</sup> Aquinas “read and commented on Pseudo-Dionysius avidly, and with the respect that he believed was due the ‘Areopagite’, the disciple of St. Paul,”<sup>146</sup> the latter notion seemingly confirmed by the fact that Pseudo-Dionysius titled himself the bishop of Athens and cited only Sacred Scripture in his theology. A closer study rather easily shows the dependence of the Areopagite’s thought on the first Councils, the Fathers and also on some neoplatonic philosophers, as for example Proclus, whose courses at Athens he had very probably attended. At the end of the XIX century, J. Stiglmayr and H. Koch showed by their historical studies that the works of Pseudo-Dionysius must be dated c. late V or early VI century.<sup>147</sup> Besides the precedence he gives to Platonic concepts, Pseudo-Dionysius is also an important representative of Byzantine theology, characterized by three principal elements: knowledge through wisdom, apophatism and mystical divinization. Finally, “Thomas used different translations of Pseudo-Dionysius’s works. In the *Summa contra Gentiles* Dionysius is cited in Sarrasín’s version; in the other works, John Scotus Eri-gena’s version is frequently used.”<sup>148</sup>

Regarding his influence on Aquinas’s treatise on human acts, it should be noted that the Angelic Doctor made his own the important maxim of Pseudo-Dionysius that “the good derives from a single, integral cause, whereas evil derives from many particular defects.”<sup>149</sup> Commenting on this

<sup>145</sup> According to the *Index Thomisticus*, St. Thomas (in his authentic and probably authentic writings) refers explicitly to Pseudo-Dionysius 2016 times in 1821 different places.

<sup>146</sup> M.-J. NICOLAS, *Introdução à Suma Teológica*, cit., p. 31-32: “e comentava o Pseudo-Dionísio com afeição e o respeito que acreditava dever ao ‘Areopagita’, discípulo de São Paulo.”

<sup>147</sup> Cf. J. STIGLMAYR, *Das Aufkommen der pseudo-dionysischen und ihr Eindringen in die christlichen Literatur*, Feldkirch 1895; H. KOCH, *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in seine Beziehungen zum Neuplatonismus und Mysterienwesen*, Mainz 1900.

<sup>148</sup> L.J. ELDERS, *Santo Tomás de Aquino y los Padres de la Iglesia*, cit., p. 63: “Con relación a las obras del Ps. Dionisio Tomás usó diferentes traducciones. En la *Summa contra Gentiles* Dionisio es citado en la versión de Sarrasín, en otras obras frecuentemente en la de Juan Scoto Eri-gena.”

<sup>149</sup> PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS, *De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, n. 237, in “S. Tommaso d’Aquino, Commento ai Nomi Divini di Dionigi e testo integrale di Dionigi”, vol. 1, Edizioni Studio Domenicano, Bologna 2004, p. 538: “Bonum ex una et tota est causa; malum autem ex multis et particularibus defectibus”; cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 18, a. 4, ad 3: “quilibet

passage, Aquinas says explicitly that “this is clear in both natural things and moral. In fact health and beauty are caused by the fact that the body is well-proportioned in all of its parts, but for it to be ugly or sick, it is enough that it lack due proportion in a particular part [...]. Likewise, for the [human] act it is required that it be well-disposed according to all the due circumstances; taking away any one of them, the act becomes vicious.”<sup>150</sup>

Pseudo-Dionysius’s reflections on nature also left a profound mark on St. Thomas. For the Areopagite, evil has no ontological consistency of its own, but presents itself as the privation of a due good: “pure” evil does not exist, “nor in fact does evil exist except as subsistent in the good.”<sup>151</sup> Along these lines, he also says regarding moral evil that “an accidental mode of being – of extrinsic origin and not having its own principle – must be attributed to evil, such that when it is produced it seems to be a good, in that it is done in view of a good, without however in reality being a good, given that it is done in view of a good without however being so in reality, in that we consider good that which is not. It shows that what is desired is one thing, and what is attained is another.”<sup>152</sup> That

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singularis defectus causat malum, bonum autem causatur ex integra causa, ut Dionysius dicit, IV cap. de Div. Nom.” (“evil results from any single defect, but good from the complete cause,” as Dionysius says [Div. Nom. iv]); *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 36, q. 1, a. 5, ad 2: “bonum contingit ex una et perfecta causa: sed malum ex particularibus defectibus, ut Dionysius dicit” (the good derives from one and perfect cause while the evil from a particular defect, as says Dionysius); *De malo*, q. 8, a. 1, arg. 12: “bonum contingit ex una et tota causa, malum autem ex singularibus defectibus, ut Dionysius dicit IV cap. de Div. Nomin.” (good results from a unified and integral cause, and evil from individual defects, as Dionysius says in his work *The Divine Names*); *De virtutibus*, q. 3, a. 1, c.: “malum, quia contingit ex singularibus defectibus, ut Dionysius dicit in IV cap. de divinis Nomin.” (the evil, that derives from a particular defect, as is said by Dionysius in the chapter IV of the *De divinis nominibus*).

<sup>150</sup> *Super De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, lect. 22: “hoc apparet tam in naturalibus, quam in moralibus. Sanitas enim et pulchritudo causantur per hoc quod corpus, quantum ad omnes partes, est bene proportionatum, sed ad hoc quod sit turpitudine vel aegritudo, sufficit quod desit debita proportio in quacumque parte. Et ideo multipliciter contingit esse aegrum et turpe, sed uno modo esse sanum et pulchrum. Similiter, ad actum requiritur quod sit commensuratus secundum omnes debitas circumstantias, quarum quaecumque tollatur, efficitur actus vitiosus.”

<sup>151</sup> PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS, *De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, n. 248, cit., p. 558: “neque enim est malum conspicuum subsistens bono”; cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 29, a. 3, s.c.: “quia malum non agit nisi virtute boni, ut Dionysius dicit, cap. IV de Div. Nom.” (“evil does nothing except in virtue of good,” as Dionysius says [Div. Nom. iv]); *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 34, q. 1, a. 2, ad 4: “dicit Dionysius, quod malum nihil agit nisi virtute boni” (Dionysius says that the evil doesn’t act unless in virtue of the good); *De veritate*, q. 1, a. 10, arg. 5: “malum non substantificatur nisi in bono, ut Dionysius et Augustinus dicunt” (the evil doesn’t have existence unless in the good, as is said by Dionysius and Augustin); *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 6, c.: “Dionysii qui dicit, quod malum non agit nisi virtute boni” (Dionysius, who says that the evil doesn’t act unless in the virtue of good); *De virtutibus*, q. 2, a. 12, arg. 12: “malum non agit nisi virtute boni, ut dicit Dionysius, IV cap. de Divin. Nomin.” (the evil doesn’t act unless in the virtue of good, as is said by Dionysius in the chapter IV of the *De divinis nominibus*).

<sup>152</sup> PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS, *De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, n. 244, cit., p. 540: “Malo, esse ponendum est secundum accidens et propter aliud et non ex principio proprio. Quare quod fit, rectum quidem esse apparere, quoniam boni gratia fit; revera autem non rectum esse, idcirco quod non bonum, bonum opinamur. Demonstratum est aliud esse desideratum et aliud factum”; cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 18, a. 1, arg. 3: “malum non potest esse causa nisi per accidens, ut patet per Dionysium, IV cap. de Div. Nom.” (evil cannot be a cause, save accidentally, as Dionysius declares [Div. Nom. iv]); *ibidem*, q. 78, a. 1, arg. 2: “Dionysius dicit, IV cap. de Div. Nom. quod nullus intendens ad malum operatur” (Dionysius says [Div. Nom. iv] that “no one works intending evil”).

is, moral evil presents itself as an apparent good, since it possesses a certain attractiveness which derives from the presence of the good, but some due good is lacking that makes it deficient, and “therefore, evil is privation and defect, weakness, lack of measure, sin, lack of intention, of beauty, life, intelligence, reason, perfection, foundation, cause, definition, production, action, activity, order, and the like; it is undefined, darkness, without substance.”<sup>153</sup>

On the other hand “the cause of goods is one. If the good is opposed to evil, the causes of evil are many,”<sup>154</sup> in that the possible privations of due goods are many. The cause of due perfections in all beings, whether ontologically or with regard to their action, must always be attributed to God as the Absolute Perfection in which the various beings participate to different degrees. And since everything that has being has it in virtue of its participation in the source of good, Pseudo-Dionysius also recognizes that “the principle and the end of all evils is the good; in fact, because of the good all [good] things exist, as well as those that are not. In reality, we also do these latter things desiring the good, because no one does what he does in view of evil. Therefore evil does not have its own substance, but a privation of substance, because it originates not for itself but because of a good.”<sup>155</sup> Commenting on this statement, St. Thomas gives a suggestive example when he says that “one who commits adultery is not attracted to it by the disorder in virtue of which adultery is evil, but by the pleasure that is a good.”<sup>156</sup> Along these same lines Aquinas also cites Pseudo-Dionysius when he says that “evil does not fight against the good except in virtue of the good; of itself, in fact, it is impotent and deficient,”<sup>157</sup> that is, it is the pleasure of adultery – the sensible good that it offers, and

<sup>153</sup> PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS, *De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, n. 245, cit., p. 540: “Igitur, privatio est malum et defectus et infirmitas et incommensuratio et peccatum et sine intentione et sine pulchritudine et sine vita et sine mente et sine ratione et imperfectum et non collocatum et sine causa et indefinitum et sine germine et vacuum et non operans et inordinatum et dissimile et infinitum et obscurum et sine substantia”; cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 34, q. 1, a. 3, arg. 5: “Dionysius dicit, quod malum non habet causam” (Dionysius says that evil doesn’t have a cause).

<sup>154</sup> PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS, *De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, n. 242, cit., p. 540: “Bonorum causa est una. Si bono malum est contrarium mali causae sunt multae”; cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 39, q. 2, a. 2, ad 4: “malum contingit multifariam secundum Dionysium, et bonum uno modo” (the evil can happen in multiple ways and the good in one way, according to Dionysius).

<sup>155</sup> PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS, *De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, n. 243, cit., p. 540: “Omnium et malorum principium et finis erit bonum: etenim boni gratia sunt omnia, quaecumque contraria. Etenim ista facimus, bonum desiderantes; nullus enim ad malum respiciens facit quae facit; propter quod neque subsistentiam habet malum, sed privationem substantiae, boni gratia et non sui ipsius factum”; cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 19, a. 1, arg. 1: “malum est praeter voluntatem, ut Dionysius dicit, IV cap. de Div. Nom.” (“evil is outside the scope of the will,” as Dionysius says [Div. Nom. iv]); *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 46, q. 1, a. 2, arg. 2: “malum est praeter voluntatem, ut dicit Dionysius” (the evil is over the will, as is said by Dionysius).

<sup>156</sup> *Super De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, lect. 22: “ille qui committit adulterium non allicitur ex inordinatione propter quam adulterium est malum, sed ex delectatione quae est aliquod bonum.”

<sup>157</sup> *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 8, n. 11: “malum non pugnat contra bonum nisi virtute boni, secundum se vero est impotens et infirmum”; cf. PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS, *De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, n. 200, cit., p. 458: “haec est boni virtutis excellens magnitudo quod et privata et sui ipsius privationem firmat secundum totalem ipsius participationem. Et, si oportet

not its intrinsic evil – that “fights against” the good of living chastely. In fact, “no one tends to evil in their action,”<sup>158</sup> but “all things, whatever they do, they do for the love of good”<sup>159</sup> and not of evil, since nothing can be desired as evil. It is in this precise sense, and no other, that Aquinas also frequently says, citing Pseudo-Dionysius,<sup>160</sup> that “evil falls outside of the intention.”<sup>161</sup> “But if someone who does evil tends to the good, as is said here, it seems that he does not sin, because sin depends principally on the intention. But it must be said that if someone is unaware, inculpably, that a certain evil is connected to a good as such, rarely and in very few cases is that intention to the good said to be evil. But when the connected evil is known, as attached to the good which one intends, in some way the intention is also directed to that evil, even if not in a primary way, i.e., it directs itself to that evil because of a particular good to which is attached a privation of a due end. Indeed, by the fact that he does not renounce that good because of the evil attached to it, it follows that he wants

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tet confidenter dicere vera, et adversaria ipsi, ipsius virtute et sunt et adversaria possunt” (this is the excellent force of the good virtue that strengthens the individuals and its own privation according to a total participation of itself. And, if is necessary to say the truth, and to its opponents, the virtue itself and are and opponents can); *ibidem*, n. 246, cit., p. 540: “Sicut totaliter potest aliquid malum ad bonum mixtione: quod enim omnino boni expers neque est aliquid neque potest” (As it is absolutely possible that some evil to be mixed with good, because in reality evil does not expel all good neither can). See also for example: *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 29, a. 3, s.c.: “malum non agit nisi virtute boni, ut Dionysius dicit, cap. IV de Div. Nom.” (“evil does nothing except in virtue of good,” as Dionysius says [Div. Nom. iv]); *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 20, q. 2, a. 3, arg. 2: “quia malum non agit nisi virtute boni, ut dicit Dionysius” (because evil doesn’t act unless in virtue of good, as the Dionysius says); *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 6, c.: “Dionysii qui dicit, quod malum non agit nisi virtute boni” (Dionysius who says that evil doesn’t act unless in virtue of good); *De virtutibus*, q. 2, a. 12, arg. 12: “malum non agit nisi virtute boni, ut dicit Dionysius, IV cap. de Divin. Nomin.” (evil doesn’t act unless in virtue of good, as said Dionysius in the chapter IV of the *De divinis nominibus*).

<sup>158</sup> *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 42, q. 2, a. 1, ad 7: “nullus intendens ad malum operatur”; *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 78, a. 1, arg. 2: “Dionysius dicit, IV cap. de Div. Nom., quod nullus intendens ad malum operatur” (Dionysius says [Div. Nom. iv] that “no one works intending evil”); *De malo*, q. 3, a. 12, arg. 1: “secundum quod Dionysius dicit IV cap. de Divin. Nomin., nullus intendens ad malum operatur” (as Dionysius says in his work *On the Divine Names*, no one does something with an intention to do evil); cf. PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS, *De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, lect. 14, n. 189, cit., p. 438: “nihil enim ad mali naturam respiciens facit quae facit” (in fact nobody does what he does intending the evil nature).

<sup>159</sup> *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 28, a. 6, s.c.: “propter amorem boni omnia agunt quaecumque agunt”; cf. PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS, *De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, lect. 14, n. 189, cit., p. 438: “si existentia pulchrum et bonum desiderant et omnia quaecumque faciunt, propter hoc quod videtur bonum faciunt et omnium existentium intentio principium habet et finem, bonum” (if the things that exist desire beauty and goodness and in all things they do, therefore it is clear that the good acting and the intention of all things that exist have as its principle and end the good).

<sup>160</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, lect. 22, n. 244, cit., p. 540: “malum est praeter viam et praeter intentionem” (evil is out of track and beyond intention).

<sup>161</sup> *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 47, q. 1, a. 3, arg. 4: “malum est praeter intentionem”; *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 74, a. 1, arg. 1: “Dicit enim Dionysius, in IV cap. de Div. Nom. quod malum est praeter voluntatem et intentionem” (For Dionysius says [Div. Nom. iv] that “evil is outside the will and the intention”); *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 3, cap. 4, n. 6: “Dionysius dicit, IV cap. de Div. Nom. quod malum est praeter intentionem” (Dionysius said in the chapter IV of the *De divinis nominibus* that evil is beyond intention); *De veritate*, q. 18, a. 6, c.: “malum est praeter intentionem, ut dicit Dionysius, IV cap. de divinis Nomin.” (evil is beyond intention as Dionysius said in the chapter IV of the *De divinis nominibus*); *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 6, c.: “Dionysii qui dicit, quod malum non agit nisi virtute boni, et quod malum est praeter intentionem” (Dionysius said that evil doesn’t act unless in virtue of the good and that evil is beyond intention); *De malo*, q. 2, a. 1, c.: “malum est praeter intentionem, et voluntatem, ut Dionysius dicit IV capite de Divin. Nomin.” (evil [is] outside one’s intention and one’s power to will, as Dionysius says in his work *On the Divine Names*).

that evil more than the privation of the good it is attached to, and also that he wants the greater good of which he is deprived because of that evil, less than the lesser good to which that evil is attached.”<sup>162</sup> Returning to the example of adultery,<sup>163</sup> it can be said that even if someone who commits adultery does it for the sensible good it produces and therefore the moral disorder it produces is outside of his intention – since, in the sense used here, he does not desire the privation of chastity and justice *per se* – he nevertheless sins because he is aware that that act has an intrinsic disorder inevitably attached to it; specifically, it opposes the virtues of chastity and justice, and that disorder vis-à-vis human goods indisposes the person with respect to true happiness, because as St. Augustine would say it produces a disorder in the *ordo amoris*.

We can say, then, that Aquinas receives this doctrine that sees in evil a privation of a due good, and that he consequently also adheres to the Areopagite’s statement that “not all things are completely evil in themselves. For the devil evil consists in being outside of the intellect conformed to the good; for the soul in being outside of reason; for the body being outside of nature.”<sup>163</sup> Aquinas says quite frequently, explicitly citing this passage, that the good of the person is to act according to reason,<sup>164</sup> and that evil is to go against the order of reason. For the human being, in fact, to act ratio-

<sup>162</sup> *Super De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, lect. 22: “Sed si ille qui facit malum intendit ad bonum, ut hic dicit, videtur quod non peccet, quia peccatum praecipue ex intentione dependet. Sed dicendum est quod si aliud malum coniunctum bono esset ignoratum, utpote adiunctum ei, raro et in paucioribus intentio quae fertur in bonum esset mala. Sed quando malum adiunctum non latet, utpote semper adiunctum huic bono in quod intentio fertur, aliquo etiam modo fertur in malum, licet non principaliter. Ex quo enim non recusat illud bonum propter malum adiunctum, sequitur quod magis velit illud malum quam carere bono et quod minus velit maius bonum, quo privatur per illud malum, quam minus bonum cui adiungitur malum.”

<sup>163</sup> PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS, *De divinis nominibus*, cap. 4, n. 247, cit., p. 540: “Non omnia omnibus et eadem secundum idem mala. Daemoni est malum praeter boniformem intellectum esse; animae praeter rationem; corporis praeter naturam”; cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 18, a. 5, c.: “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” (in human actions, good and evil are predicated in reference to the reason; because as Dionysius says [Div. Nom. iv], “the good of man is to be in accordance with reason,” and evil is “to be against reason”); *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 23, q. 2, a. 4, qc. 1, arg. 3: “malum hominis est contra rationem esse, ut dicit Dionysius” (evil in man is to act against reason, as says Dionysius); *De malo*, q. 14, a. 1, c.: “sicut Dionysius dicit IV cap. de Divin. Nomin. malum animae est praeter rationem esse” (The evil of the soul consists of being contrary to reason, as Dionysius says in his work *On the Divine Names*).

<sup>164</sup> Cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 18, a. 5, c.: “Dionysius dicit, IV cap. de Div. Nom. bonum hominis est secundum rationem esse, malum autem quod est praeter rationem” (Dionysius says [Div. Nom. iv], “the good of man is to be in accordance with reason,” and evil is “to be against reason”); *De malo*, q. 4, a. 2, ad 6: “Dionysius dicit in IV cap. de Divin. Nomin. malum hominis est praeter rationem esse” (as Dionysius says in his work *On the Divine Names*, it is evil for human beings to be beyond the bounds of reason); *Super De Trinitate*, pars 2, q. 3, a. 1, arg. 5: “dicit Dionysius, malum hominis est praeter rationem esse” (Dionysius said that evil in human behaviour is to act unreasonably); *Super Sent.*, lib. 3, d. 29, q. 1, a. 1, s.c. 1: “Dionysius dicit, malum hominis est contra bonum rationis esse” (Dionysius said that evil in human behaviour is to act against the good of reason); *De veritate*, q. 15, a. 3, arg. 4: “malum enim hominis est contra rationem esse, ut dicit Dionysius, IV cap. de divinis Nomin.” (in fact evil in human behaviour is to act against reason, as said Dionysius in the IV chapter of the *De divinis nominibus*).

nally is a condition of realizing his humanity. It is thanks to reason that the person is capable of discerning the goods that suit him as a person, and thus what are the due ends for reaching human perfection in action. We can only reach those goods suitable to human nature through the use of practical reason, and it is in this sense that Aquinas emphasizes insistently, citing Pseudo-Dionysius, that the good of the person is to act according to reason. Whenever the human person allows his behavior to be guided by other criteria, as, e.g., the sensible passions, to the detriment of reason, he will necessarily depart from his true good, since only reason is capable of showing us the goods that are truly suitable for reaching the final end. The very capacity of the human person to give meaning to his action presupposes that this same action is an action oriented by reason. In this perspective moral evil always necessarily implies a certain “irrationality,” because in it one prefers an apparent good to a good that is true, suitable and due. It is hardly rational to voluntarily deprive oneself of what is truly good for the person as a person, and it is precisely this intuition of Pseudo-Dionysius that sees in evil a privation of a due good, that St. Thomas will deepen and expound magisterially.<sup>165</sup>

*c) St. John Chrysostom (c. 347-407) and Nemesius of Emesa (IV cent.)*

St. John Chrysostom is cited 3282 times by Aquinas in his writings, especially in his biblical commentaries and above all in the *Catena aurea*.<sup>166</sup> St. Thomas sees in him a great authority on the subject of the interpretation of Sacred Scripture. On the theme of the human act, the only relevant citation of Chrysostom that we encounter in Aquinas’s *corpus* is that of “It is the will that is rewarded for doing good, or punished for doing evil,”<sup>167</sup> that is, moral responsibility derives from the voluntariness of our actions.

Regarding the *De natura hominis* of Nemesius, bishop of Emesa, Aquinas cites it with some frequency, though he thought, with his contemporaries, that this work was of St. Gregory of Nyssa. He frequently cites Nemesius together with St. John Damascene, and makes abundant use of him in qq. 6-17 of the I-II, explicitly citing him 20 times in just 11 questions.

<sup>165</sup> It is impressive to note the number of times that St. Thomas cites ch. 4 of the *De divinis nominibus* in the course of his writings. According to the *Index Thomisticus* this would be 181 times, of which about half (93) are in the *II pars* of the *Summa theologiae*.

<sup>166</sup> Aquinas cites Chrysostom 2889 times in the *Catena aurea*, which represents 88% of his citations of this Father.

<sup>167</sup> *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 20, a. 4, arg. 1: “voluntas est quae aut remuneratur pro bono, aut condemnatur pro malo”; *De malo*, q. 2, a. 2, arg. 4: “Chrysostomus dicit super Matth. quod voluntas est quae aut remuneratur pro bono aut condemnatur pro malo” (Chrysostom says in his *Unfinished Work on Matthew*: “The will is either rewarded for good or condemned for evil”); cf. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM (saint), *Homilia* 19 (PG 57, 274): “Quamobrem non simpliciter rem, sed voluntatem vel punit vel coronat” (why just not only the things, but the will punishes or rewards).

Aquinas cites Nemesius when he claims that “children and irrational animals participate in the voluntary,”<sup>168</sup> though at the same time he acknowledges that “children and irrational animals act willingly but not from choice.”<sup>169</sup> As we will have occasion to show below, St. Thomas uses a broad concept of voluntariness, applied to beings endowed with sensible knowledge and concupiscible and irascible appetite. In this sense “voluntary” does not mean that an act proceeds from the will, but only that it proceeds from an internal principle stimulated by sensible knowledge, as happens with children and animals.

Aquinas also cites Nemesius’s famous work to assert that when one acts out of fear, the voluntary and the involuntary are mixed.<sup>170</sup> St. Thomas also has recourse to the bishop of Emesa when he defines action under violence, saying that an action that originates in an external principle must be considered coerced.<sup>171</sup> On the practical knowledge relevant for action, Aquinas will cite Nemesius to say that ignorance of circumstances causes an involuntary act.<sup>172</sup> Regarding the most important circumstances, St. Thomas says that “the most important circumstances are ‘why it is done’ and

<sup>168</sup> *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 6, a. 2, s.c.: “pueri et bruta animalia communicant voluntario”; cf. NEMESIUS, *De natura hominis*, cap. 32 (PG 40, 730 a): “si illa invite fiunt, neque bestia ulla sponte quid facit, neque parvuli: nunc non ita se habet. Videmus enim illa sponte ad alimenta accedere, et neque per vim (per se enim moventur), neque per inscientiam, quoniam alimentum non ignorat” (if those things are done reluctantly, any animal does it spontaneously, neither children, then they don’t possess it. In reality, we see them to search for food spontaneously, and not constrained by force, they are moved by themselves, not by ignorance, because they don’t ignore the food).

<sup>169</sup> *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 13, a. 2, s.c.: “pueri et irrationalia voluntarie quidem faciunt, non tamen eligentia”; cf. NEMESIUS, *De natura hominis*, cap. 33 (PG 40, 731 a): “Nam pueri et bestiae sponte quidem faciunt, non tamen eligentes” (children and animals act certainly act spontaneously, and not by choice).

<sup>170</sup> Cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 6, a. 6, c.: “dicit Gregorius Nyssenus in libro suo de homine, huiusmodi quae per metum aguntur, mixta sunt ex voluntario et involuntario” (Gregory of Nyssa in his book on Man, such things are done through fear “are of a mixed character,” being partly voluntary and partly involuntary); NEMESIUS, *De natura hominis*, cap. 30 (PG 40, 722 a): “aut metum majorum malorum elegerit quis minus malum, aut spe majoris boni sumpserit minus bonum, quod aliter consequi, quod vult, non possit, non invitus agit aut patitur” (or that had chosen fear as a minor evil, or in the hope of achieving a greater good obtained a lesser good, which otherwise someone would achieve what he wants, he can not, he didn’t act reluctantly or suffering).

<sup>171</sup> Cf. NEMESIUS, *De natura hominis*, cap. 30 (PG 40, 719 b): “Quod invite fit, partim per vim, partim per ignorantiam; atque eorum quidem, quae per vim fiunt, principium efficiendi extra est. Alia enim quaedam causa violentiae est, non nos” (when is done against will, in some cases by force, in others by ignorance, and in some of these, those that are made by force, the principle of motion is exterior. In reality, other is the cause of action, the violence of somebody, and not us); *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 6, a. 6, ad 1: “ut Gregorius Nyssenus dicit, ad excludendum ea quae per metum aguntur, in definitione violenti non solum dicitur quod violentum est cuius principium est extra, sed additur, nihil conferente vim passo” (as Gregory of Nyssa says, in order to exclude things done through fear, a violent action is defined as not only one, “the principal whereof is from without,” but with the addition, “in which he that suffers violence concurs not at all”).

<sup>172</sup> Cf. NEMESIUS, *De natura hominis*, cap. 31 (PG 40, 723 b): “agimus quaedam per inscientiam, quae facta molestiam afferant: haec vocarunt invite facta, quae perpetrata dolor consequitur” (we act on a certain ignorance, because those actions cause us suffering. These are called actions against the will which are carried through with pain); *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 7, a. 2, s.c.: “ignorantia circumstantiarum causat involuntarium, ut Damascenus et Gregorius Nyssenus dicunt” (ignorance of circumstances causes an act to be involuntary, according to Damascene and Gregory of Nyssa).



‘what is done’.<sup>173</sup>

Speaking of choice, Aquinas bases himself on Nemesius to assert that this is not only a desire or only a judgment, but something composed of both: just as an animal is composed of body and soul, so choice is composed of an appetite and a judgment.<sup>174</sup> If “will is spoken of regarding the end, choice is spoken of regarding the means.”<sup>175</sup> Deliberation is not carried out about the end, but about the means.<sup>176</sup> “All deliberation is a search for a solution; but not every search for a solution is deliberative,”<sup>177</sup> says Aquinas, citing Nemesius. Deliberation concerns those things that are under our power to do;<sup>178</sup> also, those things that are done in a discipline or an art do not fall under deliberation.<sup>179</sup>

<sup>173</sup> *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 7, a. 4, s.c.: “principalissimae circumstantiae sunt cuius gratia agitur, et quid est quod agitur”; cf. NEMESIUS, *De natura hominis*, cap. 31 (PG 40, 727 a-b): “Sunt autem potissima in his, cuius gratia, et quod agitur, id est causa et factum” (but are the principal in this, for what reason and what is done, i.e. the cause of action and the thing made).

<sup>174</sup> Cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 13, a. 1, c.: “Gregorius Nyssenus dicit quod electio neque est appetitus secundum seipsam, neque consilium solum, sed ex his aliquid compositum. Sicut enim dicimus animal ex anima et corpore compositum esse, neque vero corpus esse secundum seipsum, neque animam solam, sed utrumque; ita et electionem” (Gregory of Nyssa says that choice “is neither desire only, nor counsel only, but a combination of the two. For just as we say that an animal is composed of soul and body, and that it is neither a mere body, nor a mere soul, but both; so is it with choice”); NEMESIUS, *De natura hominis*, cap. 33 (PG 40, 734 b-c): “Est igitur mistum quid ex consilio et iudicio et appetito, et neque appetitus per se (*neque iudicium*), aequè consilium tantum, sed quiddam ex his compositum. Ut enim dicimus animal ex corpore et anima constare, neque tamen animal corpus esse, neque animam solum, sed quod ex utroque, sic etiam electionem. Esse ergo consilium quoddam et consultationem cum approbatione” (Therefore its a mixed reality from counsel, judgement and appetite, and neither is appetite by himself, neither judgement, neither counsel but something emerging from this union. In fact, we say that the animal has body and soul, he his neither only body, neither only soul, but something resulting from both, and in the same way is choice. Its is therefore a certain counsel and inquiry with approval).

<sup>175</sup> NEMESIUS, *De natura hominis*, cap. 33 (PG 40, 734 a): “Voluntas enim finis ipsius est; electio eorum quae sunt ad finem pertinent.”

<sup>176</sup> Cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 14, a. 2, s.c.: “Gregorius Nyssenus dicit, quod non de fine, sed de his quae sunt ad finem, est consilium” (Gregory of Nyssa says that “counsel is not of the end, but of the means”); NEMESIUS, *De natura hominis*, cap. 34 (PG 40, 739 a): “Ostensum porro est, neque de fine, sed de his, quae ad finem referuntur, consultationem esse” (It is now clear that deliberation is not of the end but of these things that conduct to the end).

<sup>177</sup> *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 14, a. 1, s.c.: “omne quidem consilium quaestio est; non autem omnis quaestio consilium”; cf. NEMESIUS, *De natura hominis*, cap. 34 (PG 40, 735 b): “omnis enim consultatio quaestio quaedam est; non omnis autem quaestio, consultatio” (every deliberation is some kind of inquiry, but non all inquiry is a deliberation).

<sup>178</sup> Cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 14, a. 3, s.c.: “Gregorius Nyssenus dicit, consilium de his quae sunt in nobis, et per nos fieri possunt” (Gregory of Nyssa says: “We take counsel of things that are within our competency and that we are able to do”); NEMESIUS, *De natura hominis*, cap. 34 (PG 40, 738 a): “Consultamus de iis quae in nobis sunt posita et per nos fieri possunt” (we deliberate on those things that are in our power and can be done by us).

<sup>179</sup> Cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 14, a. 4, s.c.: “Gregorius Nyssenus dicit, quod de his quae secundum disciplinam vel artem sunt operibus, non est consilium” (Gregory of Nyssa says that “counsel has no place in things that are done according to science or art”); NEMESIUS, *De natura hominis*, cap. 34 (PG 40, 738 c): “Quamobrem dictum est, de iis nos consultare quae in nobis sita sunt. Nam non de omnibus hominibus, neque de qualibet re consultatio instituitur, sed de iis tantum quae in nostra sunt potestate (*ac per nos geruntur*). Non enim deliberamus, quomodo hostes, aut remotae a nobis gentes, recte rempublicam administrant; etsi hoc apud illos in consultationem veniat. At neque de omnibus quae per nos geruntur et in nobis sita sunt, consultamus; sed adjici oportet: de iis quorum exitus incertus est. Nam si res plana sit, de eaque constat, non consultamus. Neque enim de operibus aut actionibus, quae scientia aut arte instituta sunt, deliberatio est” (This is why it was said that deliberation regards those things that are in our power. In fact, deliberation is not of all

d) *St. John Damascene (c. 675-749)*

Through his work *De fide orthodoxa*, the great compiler of the patristic thought of the Christian Orient was one of the main sources of inspiration of the scholastic period. St. Thomas was no exception in this, demonstrating an in-depth knowledge of the Damascene's thought and using it with his customary profundity.<sup>180</sup> Specifically in the I-II "in qq. 6-17 on human actions in general Damascene is solicited to define the voluntary act ('the voluntary is an act consisting in a rational operation,' I-II, q. 6, a. 1, s.c.), as well as to explain what are the circumstances of the human act."<sup>181</sup>

Aquinas cites Damascene with some frequency on some important aspects of anthropology, for example to associate *liberum arbitrium* with the human will,<sup>182</sup> to emphasize that this same will is a rational appetite<sup>183</sup> and that by it, together with reason, the fact of being created in the image of God is manifested in the person.<sup>184</sup> He also follows Damascene when he says that conscience is

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men, neither of anything that is subject of inquiry, but only on those things that are under our power and are by us produce. We do not deliberate on how the enemies or the remote peoples administer their public affairs, although this is for them theme for deliberation. Neither of all things that are by us generated we deliberate, but it is necessary to add, of those whose end is uncertain. In fact, if something is obvious and knowned, we don't deliberate. Neither deliberation is on those works or actions that respect science or art).

<sup>180</sup> Cf. M.-J. NICOLAS, *Introdução à Suma Teológica*, cit., p. 31. According to the *Index Thomisticus*, St. Thomas cites the *De fidei orthodoxae* St. John Damascene in 911 different places, especially in his *Scriptum super Sententiis* and in the *Summa theologiae*.

<sup>181</sup> L.J. ELDERS, *Santo Tomás de Aquino y los Padres de la Iglesia*, cit., p. 75: "en las cuestiones 6 hasta 17 sobre las acciones humanas en general el Damascene es solicitado para definir qué es un acto voluntario ("actus qui est operatio rationalis", I-II, q. 6, a. 1, s.c.) así como para explicar qué son las circunstancias del acto humano"; cf. JOHN DAMASCENE (saint), *De fide orthodoxa*, lib. 2, cap. 24 (PG 94, 954 a): "omnino scire oportet, actionem esse operationem cum ratione editam. Actiones porro laus sequitur aut vituperium" (all need to know that action is and operation made with reason. To action follows praise either reproach).

<sup>182</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, lib. 3, cap. 14 (PG 94, 1038 c): "Et rursus, si ad beatæ et superessentialis divinitatis imaginem conditus est homo, profecto cum natura divina libera sit, et virtute volendi suapte natura polleat, homo quoque qui ejus imago est, iisdem a natura præditus erit. Etenim Patres liberum arbitrium voluntatem esse delineirunt" (And in return, if man is made to the image of the happy and high divinity, proceeds from a divine nature that has freedom, and the power of her will is strong, likewise man which is its image has the same nature. And indeed the Fathers defined freedom to be the will).

<sup>183</sup> Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 45, q. 1, a. 1, arg. 4: "secundum Damascenum, voluntas est in ratione" (according to Damascene, will is in reason); JOHN DAMASCENE (saint), *De fide orthodoxa*, lib. 2, cap. 22 (PG 94, 943 b): "Voluntas est rationalis et vitalis appetitus, ex iis duntaxat quæ naturalia sunt, pendens" (The will is a rational and vital appetite, depending on these, which are natural, in this measure).

<sup>184</sup> Cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, prol.: "sicut Damascenus dicit, homo factus ad imaginem Dei dicitur, secundum quod per imaginem significatur intellectualem et arbitrio liberum et per se potestativum" (Since, as Damascene states, man is said to be made to God's image, in so far as the image implies an intelligent being endowed with free-will and self-movement); JOHN DAMASCENE (saint), *De fide orthodoxa*, lib. 2, cap. 12 (PG 94, 919 b): "hominem ex visibili et invisibili natura suis Deum manibus ad imaginem et similitudinem suam condit: sic nempe, ut effictio de terra corpore, animam ratione et intelligentia præditam insufflatione sua ei tribuerit: id quod divinam imaginem appellamus. Quod enim dicitur, *ad imaginem*, hoc vis intelligendi, arbitriique libertas significatur: quod autem *ad similitudinem*, virtutis, quantum fieri potest, expressa similitudo notatur" (God through His hands made man, of a visible and invisible nature, to His image and resemblance, thus truly his body was fashioned from earth, and gave his soul reason and intellect through insufflation, and that is what we call the divine image. Therefore truly it is said, *to His image*, to signify this power of in-

properly the law of our intellect,<sup>185</sup> and when he asserts that the heavenly bodies are not the cause of our acts.<sup>186</sup>

The distinction between the appetitive and cognitive powers of the soul<sup>187</sup> and the assertion that violence and ignorance cause involuntariness<sup>188</sup> are also frequent references that Aquinas makes to the great Oriental Father, stating firmly, however, that “choice is certainly always under our power,”<sup>189</sup> and that it is thanks to choice that we can orient our cognitive powers and our action.<sup>190</sup>

Another important idea that Aquinas receives from Damascene is that the will must desire what is telligence and freedom. On the other hand, *to His resemblance*, refers explicitly to virtue, in the measure of possible realization).

<sup>185</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, lib. 4, cap. 22 (PG 94, 1199 a): “Dei itaque lex mentem nostram inscendens, eam ad se trahit, conscientiam nostram extimulando, quae et ipsa mentis nostrae lex dicitur” (so the divine law entering our mind, attracted it to herself extimulating our conscience, that is called the law of our mind); *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 79, a. 13, c.: “nomen conscientiae attribuitur primo habitui naturali, scilicet synderesi, sicut Hieronymus, in Glossa Ezech. I, synderesim conscientiam nominat; et Basilius naturale iudicium; et Damascenus dicit quod est lex intellectus nostri” (the name conscience is given to the first natural habit – namely, “synderesis”: thus Jerome calls “synderesis” conscience [Gloss. Ezechiel 1:6]; Basil calls it the “natural power of judgment,” and Damascene says that it is the “law of our intellect”); *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 24, q. 2, a. 4, arg. 5: “Damascenus dicit, quod conscientia est lex intellectus nostri” (Damascene says that the conscience is the law of our intellect); *De veritate*, q. 17, a. 4, s.c. 4: “Damascenum, conscientia est lex intellectus nostri” (Damascene [says that] the conscience is the law of our intellect).

<sup>186</sup> Cf. JOHN DAMASCENE (saint), *De fide orthodoxa*, lib. 2, cap. 7 (PG 94, 894 a-b): “cum liberi arbitrii a Conditoro praediti simus, hinc efficitur ut actiones nostrae juris nostri sint. Alioqui, si ex siderum motu cuncta facimus, sequitur ut ea quae facimus necessitate faciamus. Id porro quod necessitate fit, neque virtus, neque vitium est” (As we were made with freedom by the Creator, this causes that our actions are under our power. Otherwise, if we act on the influence of the motion of the stars, it follows that what we do we do it necessarily. And that what is done by necessity it is not virtue neither vice); *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 9, a. 5, s.c.: “Damascenus dicit, in II libro, quod corpora caelestia non sunt causae nostrorum actuum” (Damascene says [De Fide Orth. ii, 7] that “the heavenly bodies are not the causes of our acts”).

<sup>187</sup> Cf. JOHN DAMASCENE (saint), *De fide orthodoxa*, lib. 2, cap. 22 (PG 94, 942 c): “Illud porro notandum duplices esse animae nostrae vires, alias in cognitione positae, sunt mens, cogitatio, opinio, imaginatio, sensus. Vitales seu appetentes, voluntas et electio” (further on it is clear that the power in our soul is double. Some are cognitive, like mind, thinking, opinion, imagination and senses. Others are appetitive, like will and choice).

<sup>188</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, cap. 24 (PG 94, 954 b): “Porro non voluntarium, vel per vim fit, vel per ignorantiam” (Hereafter unwillled, is either produce by violence or by ignorance); *ibidem* (PG 94, 954 c): “Non voluntarium igitur duplex cum sit, alterum propter vim, alterum propter ignorantiam, utriusque voluntarium opponitur” (The unwillled actions can have two causes, some are caused by violence, others are caused by ignorance. Both of these causes oppose freedom); *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 6, a. 5, s.c.: “philosophus et Damascenus dicunt, quod aliquid est involuntarium per violentiam” (the Philosopher and Damascene say that “things done under compulsion are involuntary”); *ibidem*, a. 8, s.c.: “Damascenus et philosophus dicunt, quod involuntarium quoddam est per ignorantiam” (Damascene and the Philosopher say that “what is done through ignorance is involuntary”); *De malo*, q. 3, a. 6, arg. 1: “Ignorantia enim causat involuntarium, ut Damascenus dicit” (Ignorance causes involuntary things, as Damascene says).

<sup>189</sup> JOHN DAMASCENE (saint), *De fide orthodoxa*, lib. 2, cap. 26 (PG 94, 959 b): “electionem quidem semper in nostra potestate esse.”

<sup>190</sup> Cf. *ibidem*: “In nobis igitur haec sita sunt, quae alterutro modo possunt evenire, velut, moveri, et non moveri; incitari, et non incitari; appetere quae necessaria sunt, et non appetere; mentiri, et non mentiri; tribuere, et non tribuere; gaudere dum convenit, et similiter non gaudere, et ubi non convenit, caeteraque ejusmodi, in quibus virtutis et vitii munera versantur. Horum enim penes nos libera est potestas” (Therefore these things are situated in us, that can happen in either way, like to move oneself or not to move oneself, to arouse oneself or not to arouse oneself, to desire necessary things or not to desire, to lie or not to lie, to grant or not to grant, to rejoice with a gathering and similar not to rejoice, and non gathering, and other similar, on which virtues and vices are about. In fact those are under our free power); *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 17, a. 6, s.c.: “dicit enim Damascenus quod libero arbitrio homo exquirat, et scrutatur, et iudicat, et disponit” (Damascene says that “by his free-will man inquires, considers, judges, approves”).

suitable to nature,<sup>191</sup> and thus, citing Damascene, he says that “sin is a wandering away from what is according to nature.”<sup>192</sup>

Aquinas also takes inspiration from the Father of Damascus regarding the discursivity of human action. In a passage that for its richness deserves to be included in its entirety, St. John Damascene says that:

“The will or the act of willing is spoken of regarding the end, and not [regarding] the means. And the end is certainly that to which the act of the will tends, as for example “to reign,” or “to be in good health.” On the other hand, the means are the object of consideration, i.e., the way in which one attains health or royal dignity. This seeking or consideration follows on the act of the will: if these things are within our reach to be realized, counsel or deliberation occurs. Counsel is in fact desire that asks about things to be done, which are under our operative capability. One deliberates over which option should or should not be done, and what is considered most suitable is called “judgment.” After this the person moves him-

<sup>191</sup> Cf. JOHN DAMASCENE (saint), *De fide orthodoxa*, lib. 2, cap. 22 (PG 94, 943 b): “*Θέλεις, innata vis volendi*. – Sciendum itaque est, insitam a natura vim eam esse, qua id quod naturae consentaneum est, appetat, et omnia quae naturae essentialiter insunt, tueatur et conservet: quae quidem voluntas dicitur” (natural power of willing. And therefore it should be known that this power comes from nature, which tends to that which is according to it, and all things that are essential to nature are defended and conserved by it, and is called precisely will); *Summa theologiae*, III, q. 18, a. 3, c.: “alterius rationis est actus voluntatis secundum quod fertur in aliquid secundum se volitum, ut sanitas, quod a Damasceno vocatur thelesis, idest simplex voluntas, et a magistris vocatur voluntas ut natura, et alterius rationis est actus voluntatis secundum quod fertur in aliquid quod est volitum solum ex ordine ad alterum, sicut est sumptio medicinae, quem quidem voluntatis actum Damascenus vocat bulesim, idest consiliativam voluntatem, a magistris autem vocatur voluntas ut ratio. Haec autem diversitas actus non diversificat potentiam, quia uterque actus attenditur ad unam rationem communem obiecti, quod est bonum” (the act of the will, inasmuch as it is drawn to anything desired of itself, as health, which act is called by Damascene *thelesis* – i.e. simple will, and by the masters “will as nature,” is different from the act of the will as it is drawn to anything that is desired only in order to something else, as to take medicine; and this act of the will Damascene calls *boulesis* – i.e. counseling will, and the masters, “will as reason.” But this diversity of acts does not diversify the power, since both acts regard the one common ratio of the object, which is goodness).

<sup>192</sup> *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 34, a. 3, arg. 3: “peccatum est recessus ab eo quod est secundum naturam”; cf. JOHN DAMASCENE (saint), *De fide orthodoxa*, lib. 2, cap. 4 (PG 94, 875 a): “quem Creatoris beneficio consecutus erat, non ferens, libera voluntate, ex eo quod naturae consentaneum est, in id quod est contram naturam, immutatus est, atque adversus opificem suum Deum rebellionis ergo se extulit, ac primus a bono discedens, malus evasit. Neque enim quidquam aliud malum est, nisi boni privatio” (he was able to get a benefit of the Creator, freely didn’t got it, from that which was according to his nature changed into that which is against nature, and raised himself in rebellion against the work of his God, initially good finished evil. In fact, evil isn’t other thing than the privation of good); *ibidem*, cap. 30 (PG 94, 975 a): “in stato naturae consentaneo manentes, in virtute sumus: ab eo autem statu, hoc est virtute deflectentes, in id quod naturae repugnat vitiumque labimur” (remaining in the state according to nature, we are in virtue, moving way from that state, this is the deviation from virtue into that what is repugnant to nature and falling into vice); *ibidem*, lib. 4, cap. 20 (PG 94, 1195 b-c): “malum nihil aliud esse quam privationem boni, atque ab eo quo naturae consentaneum est, in id quod naturae repugnat” (evil is nothing other than the privation of good, of that which is consentaneous to nature into that which is repugnant to nature).

self to it, embracing it by the judgment of counsel, and then it is called *gnèmh* or “sentence.” If, on the other hand, the decision regarding what was judged suitable is not carried out, i.e., what was considered opportune is not done, this means that it was little embraced, and therefore it is not called “sentence.” To true desire follows choice, which is obviously nothing other than the preference for one of two things proposed. Then the action is commanded, and this is called “impulse.” Then the attained end is enjoyed, and this is called “use.” Finally, after use, the appetite rests.”<sup>193</sup>

The influence of this psychology of human action of St. John Damascene on St. Thomas is considerable, a fact that will become increasingly clear in the course of our study. There is undeniably a strong affinity between Damascene’s proposal and Aquinas’s regarding the way of conceiving the dynamic of the human act: in just qq. 6-21 of the I-II, the great oriental Father is cited an impressive 28 times.

#### 4. THE ECCLESIASTICAL MAGISTERIUM

Intimately linked to Scripture and Tradition is the ecclesiastical Magisterium, which has been granted the charismatic *munus* of the authentic interpretation of the word of God. St. Thomas also knows the Magisterium quite well: specifically, it is quite clear that “his knowledge of the great councils, and also of the more recent ones, is determinative for the elaboration of his thought. It is easy to recognize, for example, that he spoke more carefully of the relation between grace and freedom once he became aware of the Council of Orange.”<sup>194</sup> Along these lines it is interesting to note

<sup>193</sup> *Ibidem*, lib. 2, cap. 22 (PG 94, 946 a): “Voluntas, seu volendi actus finem specat, non ea quae sunt ad finem. Ac finis quidem est, id quod actus voluntatis subjectum est, v. gr. regnare, bona valetudine esse: ad finem autem, id de quo consultatur, puta modus consequendae sanitatis, vel regiae dignitatis. Voluntatis actum sequitur inquisitio et consideratio. Deinde si de rebus quae in potestate nostra sunt, agitur, consilium existit, seu deliberatio. Est autem consilium appetitus inquirens de rebus agendis, quarum potestas penes nos est. Deliberat enim quispiam, num rem aliquam aggredi debeat, necne: tum id quod idoneum magis sit iudicat, et *judicium* dicitur. Postea erga illud afficitur, et amplectitur quod consilium censuit; et tunc *gnèmh*, id est, *sententia* vocatur. Nam si ita iudicet, ut tamen erga illud quod iudicatum est, non afficiatur; hoc est, illud quod iudicatum est, non afficiatur; hoc est, illud minime amplectatur, sententia non dicitur. Jam vero affectionem sequitur electio, quippe quae nihil est aliud nisi e duabus rebus quae proponuntur, alterius prae altera susceptio. Dein ad actionem progreditur, et hoc dicitur *impulsus*. Tum subinde adepto fine utitur, et tunc *usus* appellatur. Post *usum* denique appetitus quiescit.”

<sup>194</sup> M.-J. NICOLAS, *Introdução à Suma Teológica*, cit., p. 31: “seu conhecimento dos grandes concílios, e também dos mais recentes, é determinante na elaboração do seu pensamento. É fácil constatar, por exemplo, que falou com mais precaução das relações da graça e da liberdade a partir do momento em que tomou conhecimento do Concílio de Orange.”

that St. Thomas is the first theologian to cite textually the Acts of the first five ecumenical councils, of which he seems to have discovered a Latin translation in the early sixties [of the XIII century] in Italy.”<sup>195</sup> The doctrine of the Church proposed solemnly by the Magisterium manifests with certainty the faith transmitted by the apostles. “For Thomas, not even the consensus of many of the Fathers creates an absolute certainty. The doctrine of the Church alone is the absolute criteria for evaluating the truth of what they wrote.”<sup>196</sup>

Regarding interventions of the Magisterium on questions related to the human act, reference should be made to the Synod of Sens (June 2, 1140), in which some of Peter Abelard’s theses, contested vehemently by St. Bernard, were condemned; they were later openly condemned by the ecclesiastical Magisterium. These were the theses condemned at the synod:

“5. That the *liberum arbitrium* by itself is sufficient for any good.”<sup>197</sup>

“13. That a person becomes neither better nor worse by his works.”<sup>198</sup>

“19. That neither the action, nor the will, nor concupiscence, nor the pleasure that attracts, is sin, and we need not will that they be extinguished.”<sup>199</sup>

It seems that St. Thomas did not have direct contact with Abelard’s writings, but considered the questions related to his debates with St. Bernard through the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard and also through this Magisterial intervention.<sup>200</sup>

## 5. PETER ABELARD (1079-1142)

The figure of Peter Abelard interests us indirectly, since St. Thomas does not cite him textually. Some statements of the famous philosopher-theologian of Pallet did not leave his contemporaries unmoved – particularly St. Bernard of Clairvaux – and he in some way influenced some of the later themes of discussion related to the morality of human acts. His turbulent life was marked by heated disputes, certainly abetted by his lively temperament and great rhetorical ability.

<sup>195</sup> L.J. ELDERS, *Santo Tomás de Aquino y los Padres de la Iglesia*, cit., pp. 62-63: “Tomás es el primer teólogo que cita textualmente las Actas de los cinco primeros concilios ecuménicos de las que parece haber descubierto una traducción latina al principio de los años sessenta en Italia.”

<sup>196</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 60: “Según Tomás ni siquiera el consenso entre numerosos Padres crea una certeza absoluta. Solamente la doctrina de la Iglesia es el criterio absoluto para evaluar la verdad de lo que escriben.”

<sup>197</sup> DH 725: “5. Quod liberum arbitrium per se sufficiat ad aliquod bonum.”

<sup>198</sup> DH 733: “13. Quod propter opera nec melior nec peior efficiatur homo.”

<sup>199</sup> DH 739: “19. Quod neque opus neque voluntas neque concupiscentia neque delectatio, quae movet eam, peccatum sit, nec debemus eam velle exstingui.”

<sup>200</sup> Cf. *Autores e obras citadas na Suma Teológica*, in “São Tomás de Aquino, Suma teológica”, vol. 1, Edições Loyola, São Paulo 2003<sup>2</sup>, p. 121.

Regarding the human act, Abelard reacted intensely against the prevailing way of treating the theme, which centered excessively on the external act: in today's terminology we might classify it as "captive" to a third-person perspective. Abelard thus had some merit in stressing the importance of the acting subject's intentions, and indirectly (and perhaps inadvertently) of showing the insufficiency of some aspects of the dominant approach to the morality of human acts of his time.

In his efforts, however, to overcome the limits of the analyses of his day, his thought had the serious limitation of seeing in the external act only a merely transitive *operatum* with no moral relevance, and of making the morality of actions depend on the *sola intentione agentis*. His position tends to ignore the morality of the *electio*, a fact which led him to not admit the existence of *intrinsece malum*, that is, of concrete choices that are always immoral,<sup>201</sup> independently of any subsequent intention of the agent.

In his *Ethica*, Abelard poses the question of the merit of our actions as follows: "what do we merit, you ask, before God because of what we do by willing or not willing? I respond, certainly nothing: since He himself, in remunerating us, considers more the disposition of the action, and neither the good nor the evil will adds anything to the action's merit."<sup>202</sup> His response already gives us a glimpse of some characteristics of his conception of the morality of human actions. In another passage, he says along the same lines that morality depends exclusively on the moral subject's interior disposition, "thus it is not a sin to desire a woman, but to consent in that desire; nor is the will of living with her [a sin], but it is the consent to that will which is condemnable."<sup>203</sup> It should be noted that for Peter Abelard the concepts of will and consent are not exactly identifiable with ours. For him, the concept of will seems to be identified with desire as an unavoidable natural tendency,<sup>204</sup> whereas the concept of consent seems to be identified with intention.<sup>205</sup>

<sup>201</sup> Cf. G. DE VECCHI, *L'etica o Scito te ipsum di Pietro Abelardo. Analisi critica di un progetto di teologia morale*, Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome 2005, p. 134: "penso che sia possibile affermare che l'unico *intrinsece malum* nel pensiero etico abelardiano sia il disprezzo di Dio" (I think that it is possible to say that the only *intrinsece malum* in Peter Abelard's ethical thought is to despise God).

<sup>202</sup> P. ABELARD, *Ethica*, cap. 3 (PL 178, 638 c-d): "aut quid, inquires, apud Deum meremur ex eo quod volentes aut inviti agimus? Nihil certe respondeo: cum ipse animum potius quam actionem in remuneratione penset, nec quidquam ad meritum actio addat sive de bona, sive de mala voluntate prodeat."

<sup>203</sup> *Ibidem* (PL 178, 693 a): "Non itaque concupiscere mulierem, sed concupiscentiae consentire peccatum est; nec voluntas concubitus, sed voluntatis consensus damnabilis est."

<sup>204</sup> Cf. M.J. CANO, *La teología moral fundamental de Peter Abelardo*, Servicio de publicaciones de la Universidad de Navarra, Pamplona 1996. p. 45: "En el *Ethica* va a identificar la voluntad con el deseo o tendencia natural que surge espontáneamente y que no es posible evitar" (In the *Ethica* he will identify the will with the desire or natural tendency that arises spontaneously and is not possible to avoid).

<sup>205</sup> Cf. J. COSTA, *El discernimiento del actuar humano*, cit., p. 104: "Este autor pone todo el peso del mérito o del pecado en el *consentimiento* que posteriormente identificará con la *intención*" (This author puts all the weight of the merit or the sin on the *consent*, that he will later identify with the *intention*).

Seeing things in this way, Abelard considers that merit or praise “are not in the things one does, but in fact God considers with what disposition they are done; [and therefore] merit and praise do not consist in the actions, but in the intention of the agent.”<sup>206</sup> Moreover, “we see, in fact, that actions that are suitable to be done or not [done], are found equally among good persons and bad, and only the intention separates them.”<sup>207</sup> Abelard therefore sees no problem in saying that “it is not a sin to desire another’s wife or [to desire to] have intercourse with her, but to consent to this desire or action.”<sup>208</sup> Everything depends on the agent’s intention, and thus concrete acts are considered to be morally indifferent. The theologian from Pallet insists on the same point when he says “certainly the actions that, as we said previously, are equally common among the bad and the elect, and which are all in themselves indifferent, are not called good or evil except by the intention of the agent.”<sup>209</sup> Certainly the term intention can be conceived in a broad sense, such as to also include the will’s movement toward the object in the *electio*, but it seems sufficiently clear that this is not Abelard’s meaning, since he never tires of insisting that actions are all in themselves morally indifferent, or more precisely indifferent with respect to their merit.

This was essentially the issue that scandalized St. Bernard, and which led the Fathers of the synod of Sens to reaffirm revealed doctrine when they condemned the Abelardian thesis that “a person becomes neither better nor worse by his actions.”<sup>210</sup> Unfortunately, it seems that after the condemnation Peter Abelard substantially maintained his theses,<sup>211</sup> as can be seen when he says “the work of our actions, as they are in themselves indifferent, are said to be good or bad based on the

<sup>206</sup> P. ABELARD, *Ethica*, cap. 3 (PL 178, 644 a): “Non enim quae fiunt, sed quo animo fiant pensat Deus; nec in opere, sed in intentione meritum operantis, vel laus consistit.”

<sup>207</sup> *Ibidem* (PL 178, 643 d): “Constat quippe opera quae fieri convenit aut minime aequae a bonis sicut a malis hominibus geri, quos intentio sola separat.”

<sup>208</sup> *Ibidem* (PL 178, 642 d): “Non est itaque peccatum uxorem alterius concupiscere vel cum ea concumbere, sed magis huic concupiscentiae vel actioni consentire.”

<sup>209</sup> *Ibidem*, cap. 7 (PL 178, 650 b): “Opera quippe, quae, ut praediximus, aequae reprobis ut electis communia sunt, omniaque in se indifferentia, nec nisi pro intentione agentis bona vel mala dicenda sunt, non videlicet quia bonum vel malum sit ea fieri, sed quia bene vel male fiunt, hoc est, ea intentione qua convenit fieri, aut minime.”

<sup>210</sup> DH 733: “13. Quod propter opera nec melior nec peior efficiatur homo.”

<sup>211</sup> Cf. O. LOTTIN, *Psychologie et morale aux XII<sup>e</sup> et XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, tome IV, III partie, Abbaye du Mont César - J. Duculot éditeur, Louvain - Gembloux 1954, pp. 313-314: “Dans son *Dialogus* écrit vers 1142, peu après le concile de Sens, Pierre Abélard ne modifie qu’apparemment sa position. Il concède – ce qui n’était mis en doute par personne – qu’il y a certaines choses d’ordre moral qui sont bonnes en soi, substantiellement et nécessairement, telles les vertus, d’autres sont mauvais, tels les vices; mais il maintient que les actes sont de soi indifférents et ne deviennent moralement bons que par l’intention” (In his *Dialogus* written c. 1142, shortly before the council of Sens, Peter Abelard only apparently modified his position. He conceded – that which had never been questioned by anyone – that certain things in the moral order are good in themselves, substantively and necessarily, such as the virtues, and others evil, such as the vices; but he maintained that acts are in themselves indifferent and only become morally good due to the intention).



intention from which they proceed.”<sup>212</sup> This position of Abelard would make the question of the morality of concrete acts a theme of reflection for the theologians that followed him, and clearly contributed to a significant deepening of our understanding of morality *ex obiecto*.

## 6. PETER LOMBARD (c. 1100-1160)

Peter Lombard, Abelard’s student, would disagree with his polemical master on the question of the morality of external acts, and as we shall see dedicated some reflections in his *Sentences* to clarification of the question of *intrinsece malum*.

The famous bishop of Paris knew little of the Oriental Fathers, but he did know and cite abundantly the principal Latin Fathers. “In his *Liber Sententiarum*, Peter Lombard cites Augustine roughly 1,000 times, Ambrose and Hilary 90 and 85 times respectively, Gregory 55 and Jerome 50 times, but there are only 27 references to John Damascene and 17 to Chrysostom.”<sup>213</sup>

Because of the broad circulation of his *Sentences*, Peter Lombard profoundly marked the “agenda” of questions that were the object of reflection and debate in European universities for many decades. The questions he raised were widely discussed, and his terminology widely diffused. St. Thomas, like his contemporaries, was a “child of his times,” and it is thus not surprising that he sought to respond to the questions that were “on the table.” Regarding the human act, it is important to note that “against the indifferentism of Abelard, the Master of the *Sentences* stresses that certain acts are in the moral order by their very nature.”<sup>214</sup> He thus developed the reflection on the morality of actions rooted in Scripture and in the Fathers, tending to distinguish and characterize the sources of morality.

### a) *Liber Sententiarum*

Basing himself primarily on St. Augustine, Peter Lombard speaks of evil as a privation of the good. “Evil is actually the corruption or privation of the good. Where there is no good, there can be

<sup>212</sup> P. ABELARD, *Dialogus inter philosophum, Iudeorum et Christianum*, cap. 3 (PL 178, 1652 b): “operum nostrorum actiones, cum in se sint indifferentes, ex intentione tamen, ex qua procedunt, bonae dicuntur aut malae.”

<sup>213</sup> L.J. ELDERS, *Santo Tomás de Aquino y los Padres de la Iglesia*, cit., p. 56: “En su *Liber Sententiarum* Peter Lombardo cita Agustín unas 1000 veces, a Ambrosio y a Hilario 90 y 85 veces respectivamente, a Gregorio 55 y a Jerónimo 50 veces, pero solamente hay 27 referencias a Juan Damasceno y 17 a Crisóstomo.”

<sup>214</sup> O. LOTTIN, *Psychologie et morale aux XII<sup>e</sup> et XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, tome II, I<sup>e</sup> partie, Abbaye du Mont César - J. Duculot éditeur, Louvain - Gembloux 1948, p. 464: “contre l’indifférentisme moral d’Abelard, le Maître des Sentences souligne que certains actes sont dans l’ordre moral par leur nature même.”

no privation or corruption of the good. Sin therefore cannot exist except in a good thing. Just as bodies are corrupted with illness and injuries, which are privations of that good which we call health, so also all the vices of the soul are privations of natural goods,<sup>215</sup> and thus absolute evil does not exist; what does exist is a nature deprived of a particular good, and it is that privation that is call “evil.” In this sense Lombard claims that “all nature, even if it be vicious, as being nature is good, as being vicious is evil,”<sup>216</sup> i.e., moral evil is always such under a particular aspect of privation, and not absolutely.

Regarding sin, the Master of the Sentences says that “it can be said with certainty, and must be taught, that sin is an evil interior and exterior act, that is, it is an evil thought, word and action. However, sin consists principally in the will, from which, like a bad tree, proceed evil actions like bad fruit.”<sup>217</sup> With this statement he seems to want to distance himself from those like Abelard who, stressing the centrality of the will, end by claiming that there is no sin in the exterior act. At the same time he recognizes that the will has a unique role in the morality of human action. “In fact to

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<sup>215</sup> P. LOMBARD, *Sententiarum libri IV*, lib. 2, dist. 34, in “S. Tommaso d’Aquino, Commento alle Sentenze di Pietro Lombardo”, vol. 4, Edizioni Studio Domenicano, Bologna 2001, p. 630: “Malum enim est corruptio vel privatio boni. Ubi autem bonum non est, non potest esse privatio vel corruptio boni. Peccatum igitur non potest esse nisi in re bona. Sicut enim morbis ac vulneribus corrumpuntur corpora, quae, ut ait Augustinus in Enchiridion, sunt privationes eius boni quod dicitur sanitas, ita et animorum quaecumque sunt vitia, naturalium sunt privationes bonorum”; Cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 35, q. 1, a. 1, ad 3: “nocere dicitur dupliciter; scilicet effective, et formaliter. Formaliter autem nocere dicitur ipsum nocementum, sive ipsa ademptio boni vel privatio, sicut albedo facit album: et sic omne quod nocet, poena est in his quae nata sunt poenam subire. Si autem sumatur effective, sic dicitur nocere id quod causat privationem alicujus perfectionis in re; et hoc modo culpa nocet, quia per actum deordinatum aufertur aliqua perfectio, scilicet gratia; et tamen ipsa privatio gratiae poena est; et hoc est quod Magister dicit, quod culpa est corruptio boni active: quia scilicet malum culpae consistit in defectu actus, secundum quod deficit a debito fine et debitis circumstantiis: et iste actus deficiens agit vel efficit in anima privationem gratiae; et ipsa privatio gratiae passive accepta, poena est” (harm is said in a double way, in a effective way and in a formal way. In the formal way harm is said of the nuisance itself, in the removal of good or in its privation, like whiteness makes white, and in this way anything that harms, punishment is in these that are born that suffer the punishment. On the other hand if it is taken in the effective sense, it is said harm of that which causes a certain privation of perfection in things, and in this way sin harms, because by a disordered act is taken out a certain perfection, that is grace. And the privation of grace itself is a punishment, and this is what the Master says, that sin is the active corruption of good, because the evil of sin consists in the defect of the act as it deprived of the due end and the due circumstances, and this defective act acts and produces the privation of grace in soul, and the privation of grace itself, passively accepted, is the punishment).

<sup>216</sup> P. LOMBARD, *Sententiarum libri IV*, lib. 2, dist. 34, cit., p. 630: “Omnis itaque natura etiam si vitiosa sit, in quantum natura est, bona est; in quanto vitiosa est, mala est”; cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 4, d. 49, q. 3, a. 4, qc. 1, c.: “omnis actio quantum ad hoc quod habet de natura actionis est bona; sed quantum ad hoc quod adiungitur de defectu, aliqua actio est mala” (every action considered in its nature of action is good, but when is added some defect then some actions are evil).

<sup>217</sup> P. LOMBARD, *Sententiarum libri IV*, lib. 2, dist. 35, cit., p. 670: “Sane dici, et libere tradi debet, peccatum esse actum malum interiorem et exteriorem, scilicet malam cogitationem, locutionem et operationem. Praecipue tamen in voluntate consistit peccatum, ex qua tamquam ex arbore mala procedunt opera mala tamquam fructus mali”; cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 74, a. 1, c.: “peccatum quidam actus est, sicut supra dictum est. Actuum autem quidam transeunt in exteriorem materiam” (Sin is an act, as stated above. Now some acts pass into external matter).

will evil things is an evil, whereas to understand or to remember evil things is not an evil.”<sup>218</sup> It is by the rectitude of the will that a person becomes good, and “the will is evaluated based on its end, whether it is good or evil, sin or grace.”<sup>219</sup> The will that tends to a good end will be good, and the will that tends to an evil end will be evil.

Regarding the articulation of the final end vis-à-vis more proximate ends (i.e., not simply the *finis proximus* that specifies the *electio*, but ends intermediate to the *finis ultimis*), Peter Lombard asserts that “among the faithful there are many upright wills, each having their own distinct ends, and at the same time they have a single, identical end, because all are ordered to one, that is the end of ends.”<sup>220</sup> Thus he admits the existence of a plurality of different virtuous proximate (and intermediate) ends among the faithful, but that all of these different paths are ordered by charity to God, the final end. “Therefore all things must be done for God, in such a way that to Him we order everything that we do and all of the ends”<sup>221</sup> we desire. This is the Christian’s vocation: to order all human activity by love for God. “The will by which I desire to possess life certainly seems to be different from that by which I desire to help a poor person, but the latter is ordered to the former,”<sup>222</sup> and therefore even if they can be distinguished, in practice they are united.

At one point he makes an interesting terminological clarification regarding the use of the terms “will,” “end” and “intention.” He says that “between the will and the end there is a clear and

<sup>218</sup> P. LOMBARD, *Sententiarum libri IV*, lib. 2, dist. 39, cit., p. 830: “Velle enim mala, malum est; sed intelligere vel memorare mala malum non est”; cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 39, q. 1, a. 2, c.: “velle enim mala, malum est; sed intelligere mala, non est malum: cuius ratio sumi potest ex objecto utriusque. Objectum enim voluntatis est bonum; sed objectum intellectus est verum” (to want bad things is evil, but to understand bad things is not evil because the object can be considered in two ways. The object of will is the good, but the object of the intellect is the truth).

<sup>219</sup> P. LOMBARD, *Sententiarum libri IV*, lib. 2, dist. 38, cit., p. 798: “voluntas ex suo fine pensetur, utrum sit recta an parva, peccatum an gratia”; cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 34, a. 4, c.: “voluntas sit bona vel mala, praecipue ex fine cognoscitur” (it is chiefly from the end that we discern whether the will is good or evil).

<sup>220</sup> P. LOMBARD, *Sententiarum libri IV*, lib. 2, dist. 38, cit., p. 794: “plures in fidelibus esse voluntates rectas, proprios ac diversos fines habentes; et tamen unum eundemque: quia omnes referuntur ad unum, qui est finis finium”; cf. *De malo*, q. 6, ad 9: “multis viis ad beatitudinem perveniri potest” (there are many ways to achieve happiness).

<sup>221</sup> P. LOMBARD, *Sententiarum libri IV*, lib. 2, dist. 38, cit., p. 796: “Propter Deum ergo omnia facienda sunt, ut omnia quae facimus, omniumque fines ad eum referamus”; cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 100, a. 10, arg. 2: “omnia fiant propter Deum” (Do all to the glory of God).

<sup>222</sup> P. LOMBARD, *Sententiarum libri IV*, lib. 2, dist. 38, cit., p. 798: “alia quidem videtur esse voluntas qua volo habere vitam, et alia qua pauperi subvenire volo; sed ista ad illum refertur”; cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, exp.: “Intentio ad illud respicit propter quod volumus. Intentio enim includit actum rationis; et ideo respicit ad id ad quod aliquid ordinatum est; sed voluntas nominat actum voluntatis absolute, cuius non est ordinare vel conferre; et ideo voluntas respicit id in quod immediate fertur. Et alia quidem videtur voluntas esse qua volo habere vitam, et alia qua pauperi subvenire volo” (Intention concerns something that is willed by us. Intention includes, in fact, an act of reason and therefore concerns to that which something else is ordered, but ‘want’ designates the act of will in an absolute way, which has not the task of ordering or bring together, and therefore ‘want’ concerns that in which the will is immediately taken. And one thing, that seems certainly to be a ‘want’, is to desire to have life, and other is to help the poor); *Super Sent.*, lib. 1, d. 45, q. 1, a. 2, arg. 4: “ea quae sunt ad finem, non quaeruntur nisi propter finem” (those things that are for the end are not searched unless in view of the end).

certain distinction, because the will is that by which we will a certain thing, and the end of the will is in fact that which we will, and by which the will realizes itself, or it is that in view of which we will that thing. The intention is actually at times taken to be the will, at other times the end of the will.”<sup>223</sup> Thus, the will is the human faculty that allows us to “will,” the “end” is the various objects desired by the will and the “intention” has a more flexible use, referring either to the will or to the end.

Another important problem is that of the morality of human acts. For Peter Lombard “absolutely and truly good are those acts that have a good cause and intention, that is, that are accompanied by a good will and tend to a good end. Conversely, acts that have a perverse cause and intention must be called absolutely evil.”<sup>224</sup> Noteworthy is the association between the good cause of the act and its being accompanied by a good intention. Along these lines he says that “actions are good or evil based on the affect and the end, and this seems to agree with what the Lord says in the Gospel (*Mt 7,18*): ‘A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.’ And by tree he does not mean the nature of the human mind, but the will, which, if evil, does evil actions and not good ones, and if truly good does good actions and not evil.”<sup>225</sup> Thus it is clear that evil ac-

<sup>223</sup> P. LOMBARD, *Sententiarum libri IV*, lib. 2, dist. 38, cit., p. 796: “inter voluntas et finem certo atque evidenti modo distingui; quia voluntas est qua volumus aliquid; finis vero voluntatis est vel illud quod volumus, per quod impletur ipsa voluntas, vel potius aliud propter quod illud volumus. Intentio vero [interdum pro voluntate.] interdum pro finis voluntatis accipitur”; cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 8, a. 2, c.: “voluntas quandoque dicitur ipsa potentia qua volumus; quandoque autem ipse voluntatis actus” (The word “voluntas” sometimes designates the power of the will, sometimes its act); *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5, exp.: “Finis vero voluntatis est vel illud quod volumus... vel potius illud propter quod illud volumus. Quia omne bonum rationem finis habet; bonum autem objectum est voluntatis; ideo quodlibet volitum quod est objectum voluntatis, finis potest dici; sed magis proprie dicitur finis illud in quod ultimo voluntas tendit, quia hoc est ab ea primo volitum” (In fact, the end of the will is that what we wish or more precisely that in sight of what we want something. Because, all good has reason of end, and good is the object of will. Therefore, anything willed as an object of will can be said ‘end’, but it is said more adequately of the end for which the will tends ultimately, because this is the first to be desired).

<sup>224</sup> P. LOMBARD, *Sententiarum libri IV*, lib. 2, dist. 40, cit., p. 874: “Nam simpliciter ac vere boni sunt illi actus qui bonam habent causam et intentionem; idest, qui bonam voluntatem comitantur, et ad bonum finem tendunt. Mali vero simpliciter dici debent, qui perversam habent causam et intentionem”; cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 20, a. 2, c.: “voluntas sit mala sive ex intentione finis, sive ex actu voluto, consequens est actum exteriorem esse malum” (if the will be evil either by reason of its intention of the end, or by reason of the act willed, it follows that the external action is evil).

<sup>225</sup> P. LOMBARD, *Sententiarum libri IV*, lib. 2, dist. 40, cit., p. 874: “ex affectu et fine opera esse bona vel mala; quibus consonant quod Dominus in Evangelio [Veritas] ait (*Mt 7,18*): “Non potest arbor bona fructus malos facere, neque arbor mala fructus bonos facere.” Nomine arboris non humanae mentis natura, sed voluntas intelligitur; quae si mala fuerit, non bona, sed mala facit opera; si vero bona fuerit, bona, non mala facit opera”; cf. *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 34, q. 1, a. 5, exp.: “Manifestum est ex voluntate mala, tamquam ex arbore mala, fieri omnia opera mala. Hoc dicit ad excludendum quamdam objectionem ex verbis domini exortam, *Matth. 7, 18*: non potest arbor bona malos fructus facere; ex quo videtur sequi quod res bona causa mali esse non possit. Sed dicendum, quod arbor est causa proxima fructus; causa vero prima in genere illo est vel sol vel terra; et causa prima est communis et bonis et malis arboribus, et bonis et malis fructibus; ideo ipsa natura voluntatis, sicut causa prima, est principium bonarum et malarum voluntatum, et bonorum et malorum exteriorum actuum, una et eadem; sed voluntas mala, quae comparatur arbori, est causa mali actus exterioris proxima, qui comparatur fructui” (It is evident that from an evil will, like an evil tree, are produced all bad actions. This is

tions proceed from an evil will, whereas good actions proceed from a good will. Lombard seems to admit an exception to his general rule, however, when he says that “a will or an action is not always judged to be evil based on the end, as with those things that are *per se* sins. In fact if someone did such actions for some good cause, the end seems to be good, and the will does not become evil because of the end, nor does the action become evil because of the will, but because of the action the will becomes depraved,”<sup>226</sup> and “thus all the actions of the person are judged good or evil according to the intention and the cause, except those that are evil in themselves, that is, those that cannot be done without the prevarication (i.e., disorder)”<sup>227</sup> of the will. This means that, for Lombard, there are some actions that are in themselves evil and can never be done with a good will, since by tending to them the will itself is necessarily corrupted; in other cases where this does not occur, however, the intention that moves the agent to the action is of highest importance.

#### 7. ST. BONAVENTURE (c. 1217-1274)

It is at times easy to exaggerate an opposition between St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure. Certainly they differ on a wide variety of points, but it would also be unfair to not point out the much that they have in common.

On the question of natural law, for example, “a thesis of St. Bonaventure’s followed by St. Thomas: contrary to the entire scholastic tradition, Bonaventure had asserted that, in the strictest

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said excluding a certain objection that came out from the words of the Lord, Mt 7:18 ‘a good tree cannot produce bad fruits’ from which follows clearly that good things cannot be the cause of bad. But referring to the tree as the proximate cause of the fruits. In fact, the first cause in that gender is the sun or the earth, and the first cause is common either to the good and to the bad trees and to the good and bad fruits. Therefore, the nature of the will itself, as first cause, is the principle of the good and bad wills and good and bad exterior acts one and the same, but the bad will that is compared to the tree is the proximate cause of the evil in the exterior act that is compared with the fruits).

<sup>226</sup> P. LOMBARD, *Sententiarum libri IV*, lib. 2, dist. 40, cit., p. 878: “non semper ex fine iudicatur voluntas sive actio mala, sicut in illis quae per se peccata sunt. Illa enim cum quis gesserit pro aliqua bona causa, bonum videtur habere finem; nec ex fine voluntas est mala, nec ex voluntate actio fit mala, sed ex actione voluntas fit parva”; cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 20, a. 3, c.: “quando actus exterior est bonus vel malus solum ex ordine ad finem, tunc est omnino eadem bonitas vel malitia actus voluntatis, qui per se respicit finem, et actus exterioris, qui respicit finem mediante actu voluntatis. Quando autem actus exterior habet bonitatem vel malitiam secundum se, scilicet secundum materiam vel circumstantias, tunc bonitas exterioris actus est una, et bonitas voluntatis quae est ex fine, est alia” (when the external action derives goodness or malice from its relation to the end only, then there is but one and the same goodness of the act of the will which of itself regards the end, and of the external action, which regards the end through the medium of the act of the will. But when the external action has goodness or malice of itself, i.e. in regard to its matter and circumstances, then the goodness of the external action is distinct from the goodness of the will in regarding the end).

<sup>227</sup> P. LOMBARD, *Sententiarum libri IV*, lib. 2, dist. 40, cit., p. 878: “Omnia igitur hominis opera secundum intentionem et causam iudicatur bona vel mala, exceptis his quae per se mala sunt, idest quae sine praevaricatione fieri nequeunt”; cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 20, a. 4, ad 2: “bonitas actus exterioris quam habet ex materia et circumstantiis, est alia a bonitate voluntatis quae est ex fine” (the goodness which the external action takes from its matter and circumstances, is distinct from that which it derives from the end).

sense, the natural law is that which is common to people and to animals, *quod natura docuit omnia animalia*; here he recognizes the Roman jurist Ulpian's definition. It is remarkable that, on this point, Thomas Aquinas abandons his teacher Albert and takes Bonaventure's conception as his own, even in his last works.<sup>228</sup>

For Bonaventure, "the will is good when it is ordered to a good end."<sup>229</sup> In this passage "end" must be understood in a broad sense, that is, inclusive not only of the *finis operantis* (taken in my study as the end of the *intentio*) but also of the *finis operis* (as end of the *electio*, i.e., the *finis proximus*), since "the goodness of the intention regards not only the goodness of the end, but also the right order of the means with respect to the end itself."<sup>230</sup> Aquinas would agree completely with these statements, as he himself makes analogous ones, as we will see later.

For the Seraphic Doctor, for the will to be upright it is necessary that the end to which it tends be good,<sup>231</sup> and that the means by which it tends to that end are not evil *ex genere* or *secundum se*, as in the case of lying.<sup>232</sup> St. Bonaventure also claims, with the great majority of his contemporaries, that there are concrete choices that are intrinsically disordered, which of themselves make the moral act evil.

<sup>228</sup> O. LOTTIN, *Psychologie et morale aux XII<sup>e</sup> et XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, tome III, II partie, cit., p. 593: "une thèse prope à saint Bonaventure reprise par saint Thomas: contrairement à toute la tradition scolaire, Bonaventura avait soutenu que, dans son sens le plus strict, le droit naturel est celui qui est commun à l'homme et à l'animal, *quod natura docuit omnia animalia*; on reconnaît la définition du jurisconsulte romain Ulpian. Il est remarquable que, sur ce point, Thomas d'Aquin abandonne son maître Albert et reprend pour son compte, jusque dans ses derniers ouvrages, la conception de Bonaventure."

<sup>229</sup> BONAVENTURE (saint), *Super Sent.*, in "Opera omnia, voll. 1-12, Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, Quaracchi 1882-1902", lib. 2, d. 38, a. 1, q. 1, c.: "voluntas esse bona ex *ordinatione* ad bonum finem"; *Super Sent.*, lib. 2, d. 38, q. 1, prol.: "rectitudo voluntatis est ex intentione finis" (the rectitude in the will derives from the end intended).

<sup>230</sup> BONAVENTURE (saint), *Super Sent.*, cit., lib. 2, d. 40, a. 1, q. 1, c.: "bonitas intentionis non tantum respicit bonitatem *finis*, sed etiam rectum ordinem *eius quod est ad finem* ad ipsum finem"; cf. *Summa theologiae*, I-II, q. 20, a. 2, c.: "Si igitur voluntas sit bona et ex obiecto proprio, et ex fine, consequens est actum exteriorem esse bonum. Sed non sufficit ad hoc quod actus exterior sit bonus, bonitas voluntatis quae est ex intentione finis, sed si voluntas sit mala sive ex intentione finis, sive ex actu voluto, consequens est actum exteriorem esse malum" (If therefore the will be good, both from its proper object and from its end, it follows that the external action is good. But if the will be good from its intention of the end, this is not enough to make the external action good: and if the will be evil either by reason of its intention of the end, or by reason of the act willed, it follows that the external action is evil).

<sup>231</sup> Cf. O. LOTTIN, *Psychologie et morale aux XII<sup>e</sup> et XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, tome IV, III partie, cit., p. 455: "Pour qu'une volonté soit orientée convenablement vers la fin – car, note le saint docteur, c'est bien là le problème – il faut d'abord que la fin soit bonne, bonne en elle-même sans doute, mais aussi en tant de fin" (For the will to be suitably oriented to the end – because, as the holy doctor notes, the problem lies here – it is first necessary that the end be good, unquestionably good in itself, but also as an end).

<sup>232</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, p. 546: "Sous d'autres formules saint Bonaventure en revient à son tour à la thèse du Lombard: la volonté est bonne si la fin est bonne et si le moyen ne soit pas mauvais en soi" (Regarding other formulas, St. Bonaventure relies in turn on Lombard's thesis: the will is good if the end is good and if the means are not evil in themselves).

## 8. OTHER AUTHORS

As has already been shown, “Certain masters, such as Philip the Chancellor with his teaching on the virtues, Albert the Great in his teaching at Cologne and Paris, and Franciscan colleagues such as Alexander of Hales and Bonaventure, provide St. Thomas with much information and many ideas”<sup>233</sup> regarding the conception of the human act and its moral specification. It is probable, for example, that Aquinas’s conception of legitimate defense was inspired by Alexander of Hales and Alan of Lille.<sup>234</sup> For Alexander of Hales legitimate defense includes “no desire for vengeance, but only the intention of preserving one’s own life,”<sup>235</sup> while Alan of Lille stresses that there is no intention to kill the aggressor in legitimate defense.<sup>236</sup>

From Odon Rigaud, Aquinas will make his own the concept of *liberum arbitrium*. Rigaud “held that the *liberum arbitrium* is not a *habitus* or a *potentia habitualis*, but a faculty, to know the will as impregnated by reason; the proper act of the *liberum arbitrium* is the choice, itself also an act of the will entirely penetrated by reason. Some elements that St. Thomas will soon recover, so as to separate himself both from his teacher Albert and from Bonaventure.”<sup>237</sup>

<sup>233</sup> S.-Th. PINCKAERS, *The Sources of the Ethics of St. Thomas Aquinas*, cit., p. 19.

<sup>234</sup> Cf. T.A. CAVANAUGH, *Double-Effect Reasoning*, cit., p. 5.

<sup>235</sup> ALEXANDRE DE HALES, *Summa theologica*, t. 4, typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, Quaracchi 1948, p. 533: “nulla libido vindictae, sed sola intentio conservationis propriae salutis”; cf. *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 64, a. 7, c.: “Actus igitur huiusmodi ex hoc quod intenditur conservatio propriae vitae, non habet rationem illiciti” (Therefore this act, since one’s intention is to save one’s own life, is not unlawful).

<sup>236</sup> Cf. ALAIN DE LILLE, *De fide catholica*, cap. 22 (PL 210, 398 a): “Concedimus etiam, quod “vim vi repellere licet cum moderamine inculpatae tutelae”, nec licet repellendo injurias, hominem occidere ex deliberatione, si tamen intuitu se defendendi, occiderit alium, non intendendo eum occidere, non peccabit mortaliter” (We agree also that ‘repelling violence by force in a moderate and unblamed defense’ is not licit when one repelling offenses kills deliberately a man, but only when defending oneself, one kills other man non intending killing him and doesn’t sins mortally); cf. *Summa theologiae*, II-II, q. 64, a. 7, c.: “Morales autem actus recipiunt speciem secundum id quod intenditur, non autem ab eo quod est praeter intentionem, cum sit per accidens, ut ex supradictis patet. Ex actu igitur alicuius seipsum defendentis duplex effectus sequi potest, unus quidem conservatio propriae vitae; alius autem occisio invadentis [...]; illicitum est quod homo intendat occidere hominem ut seipsum defendat” (Moral acts take their species according to what is intended, and not according to what is beside the intention, since this is accidental as explained above. Accordingly the act of self-defense may have two effects, one is the saving of one’s life, the other is the slaying of the aggressor [...]; it is not lawful for a man to intend killing a man in self-defense).

<sup>237</sup> O. LOTTIN, *Psychologie et morale aux XII<sup>e</sup> et XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, tome III, II partie, cit., p. 594: “[Odon Rigaud] soutient que le libre arbitre n’est ni un *habitus* ni une *potentia habitualis*, mais une faculté, à savoir la volonté en tant qu’imprégnée de raison; l’acte propre du libre arbitre est la choix, acte de volonté tout pénétré, lui aussi, de raison. Autant d’éléments que saint Thomas va bientôt reprendre pour se séparer à la fois de son maître Albert e de saint Bonaventure.”