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The Structure of Human Action.
Reflections on *Summa Theologiae*, IaIIae, qq. 8-17

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ABSTRACT

Using the example of buying a plane tickect with a credit card, it is emphasized that there is a plurality of will acts. The constituents of voluntary acts depend on will as rational appetite, a desire consequent on a knowledge: the human act is a knowing wanting. The constituent will acts bears an end or aim and the means of achieving that end. Free willing requires a capacity which is in potency in two ways: to act or not to act; to do this as opposed to that. When it intends the end, there is an object before the mind and will, then enjoyment appears, as an anticipation of the delight of having it in reality. Among the means to the end, three acts of will bearing on means can be distinguished: choice, consent and use, with the company of counsel, intelectual activity which presides over willing the means to the end.

The will acts bearing on the end presuppose the presentation of the object by mind; the inquiry into ways and means by mind presupposes the intention of the end by will. The acts of will bearing on end and means are elicited voluntary acts, acts of the will itself; other acts are voluntary insofar as they are commanded by will. Bodily organs are instruments of the powers of the soul, and the organs come under the sway of reason to the degree the powers do. And there is a moral moment: in virtue of what are human acts good or bad?

In this article I set out to present the analysis of human action St. Thomas provides in the *Summa theologiae* with an eye to making as clear as I can what I take his teaching to be. I do not take into account other interpretations. After an anecdotal beginning, meant to provide a dramatic setting, I go on to the text of Thomas.

If we see Fifi LaRue fish a Visa Card from her purse at the Pan Am counter and ask ourselves what she is doing we could of course simply repeat that she is fishing a Visa Card from her purse at the Pan Am counter. We might also say that she is paying for a ticket to Rome or, more vaguely and comprehensively, Fifi is on her way to Rome.

Now, impulsive though Fifi be, we would expect that she has given some thought to buying the ticket and to taking the trip before fishing that Visa Card from her purse with a flourish that draws admiring stares from several quarters, including of course our own. She did not suddenly spring into existence at the counter, pull out a credit card and ask for a ticket to Rome. What she is doing implements a notion she has nurtured for some time, however short; it doesn't really matter whether she has been considering the trip for months or minutes. Made weary by the routine of her day, she went shopping, her eye was caught by some fetching travel posters and she found herself thinking of somewhere altogether elsehwere. Almost anywhere else would do, such was her ennui, but a picture of the Spanish Steps bathed in sunlight, nearly buried in flowers and flower children, arrested her. She sat looking at it, a little smile teasing her sensuous lips. Thoughts of Paris and Madrid fade away. It is Rome she craves. She tells herself she is going and that is that. And so it is that we come upon her at the Pan Am counter in Kennedy fishing a Visa Card from her purse and buying a ticket.

She might have paid cash. She might have written a check. She might have gotten out a Frequent Flyer certificate. In any case, she would be offering something valuable for the ticket, but it is unlikely that we would say that they are different acts. That is, the way she buys the ticket may differ, but the differences have no moral significance. But is any one of these ways of paying a different act from the act of buying a ticket to Rome? It is true, since there are indeed many ways of paying, that none of them is an essential part of buying a ticket. But they are disjunctively necessary. That is, *some* method of payment must form part of the act of buying the ticket.

But she can use the credit card or cash or a check or a certificate, perhaps a gift certificate, to buy a vial of scent to put behind her pretty ears. That is a different act than buying a ticket to Rome. But any purchase must involve as an element a mode of payment, whether pure or mixed (that is, one might pay part in cash, part by check, etc.).

We can, however, isolate pulling a piece of plastic from her purse from making any purchase at all, and so too with removing bills from her wallet, a certificate from her purse or writing numbers on a check form. Taken just as such, these might appeal to us as the atoms at which analysis of actions ultimately arrives. And what we would have in mind is that while the act of purchasing may not be separable from some mode of payment, what we are calling modes of payment could well occur without being modes of payment. Fifi's removal of the credit card may be part of a general emptying of her purse in search of her car keys. Or it might form part of any number of intentional acts. Or maybe it is an aborted act. Fifi pulls out her credit card and, as she lays it on the counter, has second thoughts about this impulsive flight to Rome. She hesitates. Whether or not she goes on to buy a ticket, we seem confronted by a distinct human action which, presumably, must be either morally good or bad.

Perhaps. Or perhaps we are getting impatient and wonder why we cannot just stick with «going to Rome» as the action Fifi is engaged in and let it go at that. What is the point of breaking up that fairly simple action into component parts? The point of our impatience is that there must be a point to making finer grained analyses, and so there must. Otherwise Fifi's taking out her credit card can conceivably be broken up into brain events, the movements of the muscles and bones of her arm, the clutching of the card between thumb and fingers, the drawing of it forth. All these things are going on, all are parts in some sense of what Fifi is doing, but we don't want to hear about them if the question is: What is Fifi doing? when the point of that question – Fifi may put it to herself – is to wonder about the morality of the deed.

Something may be either a part of a larger action or an action in its own right. The latter becomes clear when the larger action is interrupted and we are left with just the part which now becomes the only whole we have, the only action performed which can be morally appraised.

Fifi at the counter can be taken to be doing something which includes her wanting to be elsewhere as she glances at travel posters, then concentrates on Rome, determines to go there, decides to go by plane, picks a day and goes to the counter and buys the ticket. Normally this will be subsumed into «Fifi is going to Rome.» Saying that she is buying her ticket may do service for this larger claim, but were she or someone else to go into all the steps and details that make up that morally one action we would become restive and wonder why this boring particularity is being visited on us. The only answer can be: *Because sometimes those parts become whole actions subject to moral appraisal on their own*. A single moral act is potentially a plurality of moral acts. Those potential parts become actualised when one arrests oneself or is interrupted or for one reason or another does not carry through the original intention. That seems to be the main reason Thomas holds that there is a plurality of will acts.

CONSTITUENTS OF VOLUNTARY ACTS

«You Can't Want What You Don't Know.» – The human act is one that proceeds from deliberate will; it is a knowing wanting. That in us which seeks or desires is specified as this desire or that by its object. I want to go home. I want a girl just like the girl who married dear old dad. Give me land, lots of land, under starry skies above. And so on. For Thomas, as for Aristotle, the nature of a thing is the built-in basis for its activity because it is an appetite for what is good for the agent whose nature it is. This thought is retained in «Water seeks its own level» and remarks of that kind. The nature of a physical object is the source of appetite and desire and the more complicated the thing the more numerous its appetities. (And thus the need to distinguish between nature and appetite, the latter being a faculty or power of the former.)

The transition from non-living to living things is sometimes described as the transition from the merely natural to the besouled or living. Of course, living things have

natures but «mere nature» is best represented by a thing that has one only drive, is ordered to a single end. Thus Aristotle's elements were determined to move to a given place in the scheme of things. Earth downward, fire upward. This is their nature. By contrast with the inorganic, the simplest living thing has a nature which is the seat of many appetites. Determined activity gives way to spontaneity. [*In II de anima*, lect. 7, n. 311-2].

That something should be ordered to a given good or goods is a mark of intelligence. A plan unfolds. It is what we want to know when we study nature. Why does something act as it does? But the knowledge that a plan presupposes need not be had by the things enacting the plan. Animal life is thus a quite new level, where desires are triggered by perception as well as by mere nature. The senses grasp things as pleasing or unpleasing and the animal seeks or shuns them accordingly. The movement toward what is perceived as good is what Thomas means by sense appetite. Specifically animal desires are consequent on perception, on sense cognition.

These reminders enable us to see what is meant by will. Will is rational appetite, a desire consequent on a knowledge which, unlike perception, surmounts particularity by grasping things *as things of a given kind*. A sense like hearing or sight perceives things only of a given range or kind. Hearing picks up sounds, sight colors. Mind is not restricted to a kind of thing; it can in principle know any and every kind of thing. Its range is not confined to this kind of being, or that, but bears on being as such. That is, it can know anything.

Mind is an appetite for truth; that is its nature. We don't decide to think; we simply are the animal that thinks. Of course we can put our minds to scrambling our minds with drugs, just as we can commit suicide. But each of us is an instance of that very special animal who knows things as the kinds of things they are, can be aware of his awareness of other things, encompasses in his mind the whole universe. Those who seek to depreciate man's uniqueness tell us he is a mere speck in one galaxy among who knows how many galaxies, that even as a species he has been here for a space of time which, cosmically considered, does not even register, and as for individual men, well... But this big put down self-destructs when we notice that one of those specks is speaking to others and all are assumed to be able to encompass in their grasp the whole cosmos. Some speck. In wiser days that speck was recognized as a microcosm, the whole writ small.

The mind transcends the moment, the particular, and can range over all that is. Will is the appetite that follows on that kind of cognition, on mind. It is the desire consequent on the intellect's universal grasp of what is good. When mind in its practical gear thinks of the good for man its content specifies the will's desire. You can't want what you don't know.

The human act is a knowing wanting. Thomas in reflecting on such situations as those with which we began this chapter, saw the need to distinguish a number of acts of will, that is, acts of intellectual appetite.

WILLING THE END

On the assumption that human acts are thus made up of parts that have a moral unity due to the intention that binds them together, Thomas will speak of the constituent will acts as bearing either on an end or aim, on the one hand, or on the means of achieving that end, on the other.

[l] Fifi's eye is caught by travel posters and the thought of taking a vacation interests her.

[2] Fifi daydreams over a picture of the Trevi Fountain, a popular ballad echoes in her head. How pleasant it would be...

[3] Fifi sees Rome as her destination, as somewher she means to take means of getting to. Fifi intends to go to Rome.

Because Fifi may never go on from [1] to [2] let alone to anything else, Thomas distinguishes this simple stirring of the will by thought and image from other acts of will. She might do [1] and [2] and then shake away the thoughts. [3] will absorb into itself [1] and [2]. If what interests Fifi in the thought of a vacation is moral mishaviour on foreign soil [1] may fortify Fifi in her proclivity to adventure but she shakes the thought away and does not go on to [2]. If she does go on and takes pleasure in the thought of amoral antics in the Azores, she is doing something bad for her character. If she intends to go and fling roses, roses riotously with the throng, her fault is more profound.

I am getting ahead of myself by suggesting these moral appraisals if only to underscore that, unless there is some such moral payoff on identifying particular acts we would likely lose interest in distinguishing such possible acts. [1], [2] and [3] exemplify what Thomas calls will (*voluntas*), enjoyment (*frui*) and intention (*intentio*), respectively.

Will is not used here to name the capacity or faculty but an activity of that faculty: by will Thomas here means a particular want following on an intellectual grasp. Like the will to power. The object of will as a power is the understood good and acts of will bear on things which are seen as good. These goods are sought as ends, as what finalizes and gives an object to the will act.

Ratio autem boni, quod est obiectum potentiae voluntatis, invenitur non solum in fine, sed etiam in his quae sunt ad finem. Si autem loquamur de voluntate secundum quod nominat proprie actum, sic, proprie loquendo, est finis tantum. Omnis enim actus denominatus a potentia, nominat	The note of the good, which is the object of the faculty of will, is found not only in the end but also in the things which are for the sake of the end. However, if we speak of 'will' as naming its proper act then, properly speaking, it is of end alone. For every act bearing the name of

simplicem actum illius potentiae, sicut *intelligere* nominat simplicem actum intellectus. Simplex autem actus potentiae est in id quod est secundum se obiectum potentiae. Id autem quod est propter se bonum et volitum est finis. Unde voluntas proprie est ipsius finis.(*Iallae*. 8.2)

its power names that power's simple act, as understanding names the simple act of the understanding. The simple act of a power bears on what is as such the object of the power. But it is end which is in itself good and willed. Hence will is properly of end itself.

The reference to *intellectus*, the simple act of intellect which bears on primary intelligibilities, things which are starting points and all but impossible not to know, is a significant analogy, and not only because will is the intellectual appetite. Just as mind first bears on things which are knowable in themselves, directly, immediately (what the tradition in which Thomas moves calls *per se notae*), so the end is first in the order of desirable things: the end is the beginning. Thomas refers to *Nicomachean Ethics,* VII, 8 (1151a16) which could be rendered as, «In actions that for the sake of which is the starting point just as axioms are in mathematics.» That thought will be echoed when Thomas discusses the natural moral law.

«In my end is my beginning,» as Eliot wrote in one of the *Four Quartets*. What is first in thought, what gets us going, is the last thing to be realized.

...in executione operis, ea quae sunt ad finem se habet ut media, et finis ut terminus. Unde sicut motus naturalis interdum sistit in medio, et non pertingit ad terminum; ita quandoque operatur aliquis id quod est ad finem, et tamen non consequitur finem. Sed in volendo est e converso: nam voluntas per finem devenit ad volendum ea quae sunt ad finem; sicut et intellectus devenit in conclusiones per principia, quae *media* dicuntur. Unde intellectus aliquando intelligit medium, et ex eo non procedit ad conclusionem. Et similiter voluntas aliquando vult finem, et tamen non procedit ad volendum id quod est ad finem. (*Iallae*.8.3. ad 3m).

In the execution of the deed the things which relate to the end are means and the end the term. And just as a natural motion sometimes stops midway and does not reach its term, so sometimes a person does what is for the end yet does not achieve the end. In willing it is the other way round, for will because of the end comes to want what is for the sake of the end, as intellect arrives at conclusions through principles called 'middles.' So the intellect sometimes understand the middle and does not go on from it to the conclusion. Similarly the will sometimes wills the end, yet does not go on to will what leads to the end.

Here we see the spatial origins in locomotion of the terminology of rational dis-

course (syllogism) generally and then particularly of practical reasoning. *Medium* or middle as used of the midpoint of a passage from A to B, is employed in speaking of reasoning as that which links the predicate and subject of the conclusion. The middle term is that of which the predicate is said and which is said of the subject, in the premisses, thus providing the conceptual link for the predicate and subject in the conclusion. Those *per se notae* principles alluded to above are immediate in the precise sense of being knowable in themselves (*per se*) without need of a mediating middle term: we see right off (*statim*) the truth of the conjunction of predicate and subject.

Talk of end and means is derived from the same spatial image. The end is the term of the action; what must be done if that term is to be reached is called the means, as a midpoint that must be passed through in order to arrive at the term or end.

FREE WILLING

A power or capacity of the soul is, as the name suggests, in potency, potential, not yet actually engaged in the act of which it is the capacity. It is in potency in two ways: to act or not to act; to do this as opposed to that. Thomas illustrates this with sight. Sometimes we are not actually seeing, sometimes we are. When we aren't we can and when we do we have actualized the potency but sometimes we see red, sometimes we see black. Sight needs a cause first that it should see and then that it should see this rather than that. That is, it needs a cause of its use or exercise and it needs something to specify or determine its act. It is the will that uses or exercises the other powers, those that come under the dominion of man. If will thus ranges over the other powers as moving or efficient cause, it nonetheless depends upon intellect as its formal cause.

Bonum autem in communi, quod habet rationem finis, est obiectum voluntatis. Et ideo ex hac parte voluntas movet alias potentias animae ad suos actus: utimur enim aliis potentiis cum volumus. Nam fines et perfectiones omnium aliarum potentiarum comprehenduntur sub obiecto voluntatis, sicut quaedam particularia bona: semper autem ars vel potentia ad quam pertinet finis universalis, movet ad agendum artem vel potentiam ad quam pertinet finis particularis sub illo universali comprehensus; sicut dux exercitus, qui intendit bonum commune, scilicet

It is the good generally, that has the note of end, which is the object of will. Because of this will moves the other powers of soul to act: for we use the other powers when we wish. The end and perfections of all the others powers are included in the object of will as particular goods. The art or power which looks to the universal end always moves to action the art or power which bears on a particular end included under the universal. The general of the army who intends the common good, namely the order of the whole army, by his command moves one of his

ordinem totius exercitus, movet suo imperio aliquem ex tribunis, qui intendit ordinem unius acie. Sed obiectum movet determinando actum, ad modum principii formalis, a quo in rebus naturalibus actio specificatur, sicut calefactio a calore. Primum autem principium formale est ens et verum universale, quod est obiectum intellectus. Et ideo isto modo motionis intellectus movet voluntatem, sicut praestans ei obiectum suum.
(*IaIIae*. 9.1)

tribunes who commands one of the platoons. But the object moves by determining the act in the manner of a formal principle, as natural activities are specified: heating by heat. The first formal principle is being and universal truth, the object of intellect. The intellect moves the will in this way, then, presenting to it its object.

Will moves the intellect to perform but intellect specifies the object of will. The good is the object of appetite or will and thus is the object of intellect not as good, but as true. Truth as the end of intellect is a particular good falling under the general good the will wants and thus truth is the object of will not as truth but as a good. So too Thomas distinguishes between intellect as a nature and intellect as intellect. As a nature, it is determined to the truth, it is an appetite for the truth. There are some truths it is determined to know; it cannot fail to know them. As intellect it has a more variable object; it can fall into falsity. It needs to perform lengthy discursive acts to arrive at a given truth. Will as a nature is ordered and determined to the good as such. Determined. Will as will is *ad opposita*, free. The will is not free to want the good; nor is this simply a question of the formal *ratio ultimi finis*. Notice how Thomas articulates the good.

Hoc autem est bonum in communi, in quod voluntas naturaliter tendit, sicut quaedam potentia in suum obiectum: et etiam ipse finis ultimus, qui hoc modo se habet ad appetibilibus, sicut prima principia demonstrationum in intellegibilibus: et universaliter omnia illa quae conveniunt volenti secundum suam naturam. Non enim per voluntatem appetimus solum ea quae pertinent ad potentiam voluntatis; sed etiam ea quae pertinent ad singulas potentias, et ad totum hominem. Unde naturaliter homo vult non solum obiectum voluntatis, sed etiam alia

This is the common good to which will naturally tends as any power does to its object, and the ultimate end itself which relates to desirable things as the first principles of demonstation do to intelligibles; and universally whatever befits the willer according to his own nature. For through will we seek not only what pertains to the power of will, but also the things pertaining to each power, and to the whole man. Hence a man naturally wills not only the object of will, but also the others things befitting other powers: like

quae conveniunt aliis potentiis: ut cognitionem veri, quae convenit intellectui; et esse et vivere et alia huiusmodi, quae respiciunt consistentiam naturalem; quae omnia comprehenduntur sub obiecto voluntatis, sicut quaedam particularia bona. (*IaIIae*. 10. 1).

knowledge of the truth, which belongs to intellect; and being and life and other like things which are part of his natural wholeness: all of these are included in the object of will as particular goods.

Among the things the will cannot not will are the objects of the various natural inclinations which enter into man's make up. This passage is a remarkable foreshadowing of the later treatment of natural law precepts. But what about the freedom the will? If the will's act is specificed by what reason presents to it, what room for maneuver does it have?

There is no doubt that will is not free with respect to goodness itself, to the ultimate end. It is not in our power to will anything other than the good, that is, what is perfective of us. This may seem tautological. I cannot yearn for something other than the point of yearning at all. Whatever particular thing I want will exhibit that note of what-fulfills, what is good. And as the passage just quoted makes clear, this overall objective can be filled in with the constituents of our complete good. We will not only our good vaguely taken but also everything we recognize as necessary to our good. Once more, Thomas invokes the running analogy between will and reason – how could he not? – and once more we have a passage that anticipates *IaIIae*, q. 94, a. 2. [It is important that the Treatise on Law be seen as a part of the part of the Summa in which it is found.]

Finis ultimus ex necessitate movet voluntatem, quia est bonum perfectum. Et similiter illa quae ordinantur ad hunc finem, sine quibus finis haberi non potest, sicut esse et vivere et huiusmodi. Alia vero, sine quibus finis haberi potest, non ex necessitate vult qui vult finem: sicut conclusiones sine quibus principia possunt esse vera, non ex necessitate credit qui credit principia. (*IaIIae*. 10. 2, ad 3m).

The ultimate end necessarily moves the will, because it is the perfect good. Similarly what is so ordered to the end that without it the end cannot be had, like being, life, and the like. Other things, however, without which the end can be attained, are not necessarily wanted by one who wants the end; much as conclusions on whose truth the principles do not depend are not necessarily accepted by one who accepts the principles.

The reason some things do not necessarily move the will is that they are neither the end nor necessary constituents or conditions of the end. Our happiness does not depend

on them. The objects of desire that occur to us are all good one way or the other. A bowl of Raisin Bran looks good, not because of the list of chemicals on the side of the box, but because of remembered pleasant taste. A walk in the rain looks good to Gene Kelly. The Grand Tetons make climbers' feet itch when they think of them. On and on and on. But of just about anything men pursue they can say, «I could live without it.» Good as it is, it is not good through and through. That is, all goods have pros and cons. That is the root of our freedom. Our will is not necessarily moved by anything short of goodness itself and the innumerable carriers of the note of goodness have their limitations. Hence the complexity of the human act. There is no automatic, in the sense of necessary, response to the possible objects of pursuit that come constantly to mind. Fifi at the Pan Am counter is visited by thoughts of what a trip to Rome will do to her bank account, her job, her diet, her morals.

Freedom is a vast subject. We will not dwell on the discussion, of ancient vintage, as to whether the will can be so buffeted by passion as to lose the name of action. We will not ask whether God necessarily moves the will, save to note that the question must first be distinguished into «moves as efficient cause» and «moves as object or formal cause.» As efficient cause God moves the will he created in a mode appropriate to the will. To see God will be to see the fulfillment of our total being. Preferring anything to God, in vision, is a conceptual impossibility. In this life, alas, even when we know God is goodness itself, He is a good among many, and other goods are all too often preferred to him.

ENJOYMENT AND INTENTION

The mind inexhaustibly provides to will possible objects of pursuit. To think of anything that can be done or made by us is to think of a good, something that is a possible object of will. Clearly, we screen out the vast majority of these; very few engage the will. Those that do, those whose attractiveness, pull, fittingness, pleasantness is dwelt on a bit stir up in us a kind of pleasure. It is not that we are committing ourselves to A as opposed to B. We may be stirred by both. Fifi may be «half in love with easeful death» but also moved by the thought of visiting in Rome the house where Keats died. This enjoyment is of something that promises to fulfill us. It is end like and it is pleasant. It holds the promise of putting our desire to rest. As an object before the mind and will we already in a sense possess it and the enjoyment (*fruitio*) is an anticipation of the delight of having it in reality. It is the latter that is enjoyment in the full sense.

We may even go on to intend the end so considered and as considered enjoyed. To intend is to tend toward the thing, to see it as an object of pursuit, as something getting to which may entail doing many as yet unthought of things. Intention is that which binds together into one moral act a plurality of acts that could occur without reference to one another.

Et ideo ea quae sunt plura secundum rem, possunt accipi ut unus terminus intentionis, prout sunt unum secundum rationem: vel quia aliqua duo concurrunt ad integrandum aliquid unum, sicut ad sanitatem concurrunt calor et frigus commensurata; vel quia aliqua dou sub uno communi continentur, quod potest esse intentum. Puta acquisitio vini et vestis continetur sub lucro, sicut sub quoddam communi: unde nihil prohibet quin ille qui intendit lucrum, simul hae duo intendit. (*IaIIae*.12. 3, ad 2m).

Thus it is that many really different things can be the objects of a single intention insofar as they are made one by reason; either because several things concur to make up another, as proportionate heat and cold enter into health; or because two things are contained under something common that can be intended. Buying some wine and some clothes come under money as under something common, so one whose intention is money is not precluded from intending these two things as well.

The term 'intention' may strike us as being linked to thinking rather than willing and both medieval and modern uses of the term strengthen that. But if we think of «tending toward,» its etymology, we will see that the epistemological and logical uses borrow from the sense Thomas has in mind here, not the reverse. Of course, will is intellectual appetite and is dependent on consciousness of an object as a term of pursuit. To intend something is to want something which will become the reason for wanting others things which are means to it. To tend toward the thing as a term of a process that may involve as yet unconsidered means, that is intention. Here is Thomas's summary statement of these three will acts bearing on end.

Intentio est actus voluntatis respectu finis. Sed voluntas respicit finem tripliciter. [a] Uno modo, absolute: et sic dicitur *voluntas*, prout absolute volumus vel sanitatem vel si quid aliud est huiusmodi. [b] Alio modo consideratur finis secundum quod in eo quiescitur: et hoc modo *fruitio* respicit finem. [c] Tertio modo consideratur finis secundum quod est terminus alicuius quod in ipsum ordinatur: et sic *intentio* respicit finem. (*IaIIae*. 12, 1, ad 4m)

Intention is the act of will bearing on the end. But will looks to the end in three ways. [a] First, absolutely: *will* in this sense occurs when we absolutely want health or any such thing. [b] Second, end is taken as that in which rest can be had, and it is thus that *enjoyment* looks to the end. [c] Third, the end is taken as the term of what is ordered to it, and it is thus that *intention* relates to end.

MEANS TO THE END

Having distinguished three acts of will bearing on the end, Thomas turns to the way we will what is for the sake of the intended end. We have already seen that many things and acts can be part of one intention: we intend both the end and that which is for the sake of the end. Thomas distinguishes three acts of will bearing on means: choice, consent and use. In the course of analysing these, he will discuss counsel as well, the rational reflection which precedes and guides choice. The rational discourse undertaken at the service of intention and to guide choice is what Aristotle called the practical syllogism.

Syllogism may suggest deteached and formal reasoning to us and to that degree the term is unhelpful in this context. Until we can rid ourselves of the notion that syllogism can only mean what it means in the *Prior Analytics* we may be surprised to hear the discourse or thinking that is involved before and during action, where action means some activity other than thinking, spooken of as syllogism. In any case, we want to make room for the *discourse* of mind in its practical use.

This is another massively important distinction, that between the theoretical and the practical uses of our mind. These differ because they have different ends in view. In the theoretical use of our mind we seek the perfection of thinking as such, truth. In the practical use of our mind we seek beyond truth the perfection of activities other than thinking, activities like choosing, buying and selling, sawing, seeing, seesawing, etc., etc.

We have seen several passages in which Thomas draws a parallel between mind and will. Just as the mind has starting points in per se notae propositions, so the will has its starting point in the ultimate end. Truths other than self evident ones will claim our assent to the degree that they are linked to the principles. Goods other than the end will move the will necessarily if they are such that the end cannot be had without them. Not all truths follow necessarily from premisses. Not all goods, indeed very few of them, have a necessary relation to the ultimate end.

The principles of practical rason will be judgments which bear on goods. Judgments as to what is good for us bear on the end or things without which the end cannot be had; *they are principles of practical reason*. It is these Thomas will call the precepts of natural law.

The young woman who has the intention of going to Rome has, as we suggested, many possibile ways of getting there. Fifi is unlikely to swim, being presently in Baltimore, though if she were in Ostia she might like Aeneas go up the Tiber one way or another. If Fifi in Baltimore consults a travel agent, she will be presented with at least those ways of getting to Rome which promise a percentage to the agent. The fact that there is a plurality indicates that there is no one way of getting to Rome. If there were, Fifi's troubles would be over.

The practical order is a sea of possibilities and contingencies through which we must navigate. There is no single sea lane just as there is no one port toward which all are sailing. Not that we want to suggest that every practical decision is of the lifeboat variety. That is, twelve people and Tallulah Bankhead have survived the torpedoing of their ship

and toss on the frothy waves of the North Atlantic. Food runs out, then water. They look hungrily at one another. Being invited to the captain's table has become fraught with ambiguity. The moral questions arises: Who shall become a meal for the others?

Life, thank God, is seldom like that. But pondering what course to take is commonplace. We are prompted to such inquiry because we intend an end. The will acts bearing on the end presuppose the presentation of the object by mind; the inquiry into ways and means by mind presupposes the intention of the end by will. «Ex hoc quod homo vult finem, movetur ad consiliandum de his quae sunt ad finem: because he wills the end, a man is moved to take counsel concerning things which are ordered to the end.» (*Iallae*.. 14. 1. ad 1m).

Counsel is an inquiry, a questioning. What to do? But in the precise sense: What to do if such-and-such is to be brought about? If such an inquiry arrived at the conclusion that you can't get there from here, that would render the intention of the end idle. *Voluntas* would become *velleitas*, as Thomas says. But that is a result that might emerge. If the conditions for getting to Rome cannot be met by me, it is an impossible objective for me and it doesn't matter that thousands of others go there every day. Only the practically possible can be chosen, and counsel is aimed at choice.

Electio consequitur sententiam vel iudicium, quod est sicut conclusio syllogismi operativi. Unde illud cadit sub electione, quod se habet ut conclusio in syllogismo operabilium. Finis autem in operabilibus se habet ut principium, et non ut conclusio, ut Philosophus dicit in II Physic. Unde finis, inquantum est huiusmodi, non cadit sub electione. (*IaIIae*. 13. 3)

Choice follows on the opinion or judgment that is the conclusion of an operative syllogism. Hence that falls to choice which is like the conclusion in operative syllogisms. The end in doable things functions as a principle, not a conclusion, as Aristotle observes. Hence the end as such does not fall to choice.

The intellect's grasp of the end is presupposed by will; so the mind's quest for means of achieving the intended end is presupposed by choice. But Thomas distinguishes another act of will bearing on means that may precede choice, namely, consent. Consent is the directing of the movement of appetite on something within the power of the one doing the directing.

Sed appetitus eorum quae sunt ad finem, praesupponit determinationem consilii. Et ideo applicatio appetitivi motus ad determinationem consilii proprie est consensus. (*Iallae*. 15.3).

But the desire of those things which are for the end presupposes counsel's determination. Therefore the directing of the appetitive motion to what counsel has determined is consent properly so called.

Imperare autem est quidem essentialiter actus rationis: imperans enim ordinat eum cui imperat ad aliquid agendum intimando vel denuntiando; sic autem ordinare per modum cuiusdam intimationis est rationis. Sed ratio potest aliquid intimare vel denuntiare dupliciter. [a] Uno modo, absolute: quae quidem intimatio exprimitur per verbum indicativi modi; sicut si aliquis alicui dicat, 'Hoc est tibi faciendum'. [b] Aliquando autem ratio intimat aliquid alicui, movendo ipsum ad hoc: et talis intimatio exprimitur per verbum imperativi modi; puta cum alicui dicitur: 'Fac hoc'. (*IaIIae*. 17.1).

To command however is indeed essentially an act of reason; the one commanded orders the one he commands to do something by intimating or denouncing; to order in this way, by way of intimation, is an act of reason. Reason can intimate or denounce in two ways, [a] first, absolutely. This sort of intimation is expressed by a verb in the indicative mood, as if one were to say to someone, 'This ought to be done by you'. [b] Sometimes however reason intimates something to someone, moving him to it. Such intimation is expressed by a verb in the imperative mood, as for example when to someone is said, 'Do this'.

Mind or intellect is said to move only insofar as it has received movement from will. *Imperare est actus rationis, praesupposito tamen actu voluntatis*: command is an act of reason which presupposes an act of will. (*IaIIae*. 17.1) Use follows on command, putting into service whatever is necessary to execute the action.

It may seem that command and the act commanded are simply two different acts; and this will seem even more to be the case when there is an interval between the command and the execution. Nonetheless, they make up a moral whole. «Unde patet quod imperium et actus imperatus sunt unus actus humanus, sicut quoddam totum est unum, sed est secundum partes multa: whence it is clear that command and the commanded act are one human act, much as a whole is one though it has many parts.» (*IaIIae*.17.4).

We see in this passage how it is that the many acts Thomas distinguishes can be parts of what is morally one action. The intention of the end prompts the search for means which lead on to choice, command and execution. Thomas would then see these parts as embedded in the whole action, potentially many and, at least on occasion, actualized when the action is not taken to term and the only human act to be appraised morally is a truncated one. The analysis of one moral act into a plurality of parts does not suggest that what we should be inclined to call a single human act has to be recognized as really or actually a plurality of human acts. Rather a single human act contains many parts which are only potentially many acts; some of them actually come to be separate wholes when something goes wrong.

Command has its natural application to the external acts which execute the choice, but like 'use', 'command' has other applications as well. An act of will can be com-

manded, at least one bearing on means. It makes no sense to speak of commanding the will to seek the good as such. «Primus autem voluntatis actus non est ex ratione ordinatione, sed ex instinctu naturae: the first act of will is not due to the ordering of reason but to the instinct of nature.» (*IaIIae*. 17.5. ad 3m) To command other acts of will presupposes previous will acts which lend their moving power to the command. This is not circular; only the recognition that the moral life is a continuing thing.

Can the act of reason be commanded? This question suggests the way in which the life of the mind, study, research, enter into the moral life.

Sed attendendum est quod actus rationis potest considerari dupliciter. [a] Uno modo, quantum ad exercitium actus. Et sic actus rationis semper imperari potest: sicut cum indicitur alicui quod attendat, et ratione utatur. [b] Alio modo, quantum ad obiectum, respectu cuius duo actus rationis attenduntur. (i) Primo quidem ut veritatem circa aliquid apprehendat. Et hoc non est in potestate nostra: hoc autem contingit per virtutem alicuius luminis, vel naturalis vel supernaturalis. Et ideo quantum ad hoc, actus rationis non est in potestate nostra, nec imperari potest. (ii) Alius autem actus rationis est dum his quae apprehendit assentit. Si igitur fuerint talia apprehensa, quibus naturaliter intellectus assentiat, sicut prima principia, assensus talium vel dissensus non est in potestate nostra, sed in ordine naturae: et ideo, proprie loquendo, nec imperio subiacet. Sunt autem quaedam apprehensa quae non adeo convincunt intellectum, quin possit assentire vel dissentire, vel saltem sensum vel dissensum suspendere, propter aliquam causam: et in talibus assensus ipse vel dissensus in potestate nostra est, et sub imperio cadit. (*IaIIae*.17.6)

But it should be noticed that the act of reason can be understood in two ways. [a] With respect to the exercise of the act, and thus the act of reason can always be commanded as when one is told he should listen and use his reason. [b] With respect to its object, and here two acts of reason are found, (i) first, that whereby the truth about something is grasped, and this is not in our power, but comes about in virtue of either a natural or supernatural light. In this respect, then, the act of reason is not in our power and cannot be commanded. (ii) Another act of reason is that whereby we assent to what has been apprehended. Now if the things apprehended are like first principles to which intellect naturally assents neither assent nor dissent is in our power, but in the order of nature. Therefore, properly speaking, they are not subject to command. Some of the things apprehended do not convince intellect and assent or dissent are possible, or at least the suspension of assent or dissent for some cause. In things of this kind assent or dissent is in our power and falls under command.

Imagination can be commanded and thus be put to use in a moral act, but what of bodily activities? This question is of keen interest, since we began by distinguishing human acts from acts of a man and saying only human acts are moral and all moral acts are human acts. This may seem to have as its consequence that the moral life is inside somewhere, a matter of mind and will. But some acts of body can be rational and moral by participation, insofar as they come under command. A sign that digesting and growing escape the range of command and thus the reach of the moral is that we are neither praised nor blamed for digesting well or for growing three inches or losing our hair, and so on, although some doctors may treat indigestion and baldness as moral faults. Thomas entertains an objection that we do indeed praise and blame in this area. After all, are not gluttony and lust morally deficient acts in the area of the bodily?

Thomas would not simply set aside digestion and growth taken as such but see such activities as pertaining obliquiely to the moral order, by way of medicine. If something is wrong with our digestion, we can take remedies for it, a couple of Alka Seltzers say, and restore normal functioning. So to use medicine may well be praiseworthy and not to use it subject us to blame. The art of medicine and pharmacology aid nature to do its own stuff, so to say. Thus, while it doesn't make sense to imagine ourselves issuing commands to our digestive tract or telling ourselves to grow a few inches, even these may come under the sway of reason and thus be derivatively morally good or bad. But the objection suggests another tack to Thomas.

Virtus et vitium, laus et vituperium, non debentur ipsis actibus nutritivae vel generativae potentiae, qui sunt digestio et formatio corporis humani; sed actibus sensitivis partis ordinatis ad actus generativae vel nutritivae; puta in concupiscendo delectationem cibi et venerorum, et utendo secundum quod oportet, vel non secundum quod oportet. (*IaIIae*. 17.8.3m).	Virtue and vice, praise and blame, do not belong to the acts themselves of the nutritive and generative powers, digestion and the formation of the human body, but to the acts of the sensitive part which are ordered to the acts of the generative or nutritive; for example in desiring the pleasure of food and sex and using them as they should be or as they should not be.

And so Thomas comes to the use of our bodily members, arms and legs and so forth, in ways which are voluntary and this moral or immoral. Bodily organs are instruments of the powers of the soul, organ means instrument, and the organs come under the sway of reason to the degree the powers do. When Thomas says that neither the heart nor the reproductive organs are subject to the command of reason, he does not of course mean to suggest that genital activity escapes the range of the moral. What he means is that our heart beat and certain responses of a sexual kind take place whether we want them to or not. The desire thereby elicited, itself morally neutral, enters the range of the moral insofar as it becomes an object of cognition, sense or intellectual. Hunger and

thirst and sexual desire are natural. But the desires and pursuits consequent upon them involve awareness and consciousness and thus come into the moral order. It is no fault of Fifi's that after a day or two of not eating she feels hunger, but whether or not she orders a hamburger with French Fries is up to her.

SUMMARY

Thomas is now poised to ask a question of specifically moral moment: in virtue of what are human acts good or bad? To have sailed right into that without these preliminary reflections on human action would have turned up difficulties requiring a backtracking to the analysis of action as such. Questions 7 through 17 of the *IaIIae* of the *Summa theologiae* provide a good example of the way Thomas blends a variety of traditions into a new whole. The influence of Aristotle is obvious in his discussion of the natural aspects of man's ultimate end or happiness. In the analysis of the various acts of will, those bearing on end, those bearing on means, Thomas casts his net wide for materials from Augustine, John Damascene and Nemesius (or, as he thought, Gregory of Nyssus) as well as Aristotle. The result is a new whole, a new philosophical whole, by and large, since there is no intrinsic dependence in this analysis of action on revealed truth. When he discusses the way our sexual organs seem to have a life of their own, he attributes this to Original Sin and the removal of the supernatural gift; that is why sexual activities are so difficult to govern. He then turns to Aristotle's *De motu animalium* for an account of this, noting that the heart and the reproductive organs almost act like separate living things within the animal.

Thomas's use of such disparate sources has led some to accuse him of eclecticism, the pasting together of incompatible pieces taken from a plurality of places. There is no doubt that, to certain types of scholar, the ability to see unity in diversity is an affront, but Thomas is exhibiting here the same confidence Aristotle had that men speaking of the same issue are likely to say complementary as well as contradictory things and that we should be more alive to the former than to the latter. If one were to point to the base line of the discussion, despite its inclusion of things unmentioned by him, it is Aristotle who holds pride of place.

Since the basic scheme throughout these questions is the interaction of mind and will, those who deny that Aristotle recognised the will, must be startled by that claim.

An intellectual grasp of the good in general – implicit in the grasp of anything as good – provides the will with its object, an object it cannot not want. This natural and necessary act of will is called will, and keeping the name of the faculty for the activity is meant to underscore its basicness. The good that is the object of this basic act of will is the end. The intellectual activity which presides over willing the means to the end is that Thomas refers to as counsel. Counsel is an inquiry, a search for the way to achieve the end, and is itself a complex activity, discourse. When its work is done, the will chooses. The mind's preceptive, commanding act is the prelude to putting to use other powers and our bodily organs to execute the plan arrived at through the process of counsel. What is first in the

order the intention is last in the order of execution and of course vice versa. The end is first present to mind and having set off the search for ways of and means of attaining it we reach the point where the mental prelude gives way to execution. Counsel arrives at an action that can be done here and now and sets in train a series which eventually will realize the end. The doing or executing of that plan is what we first of all have in mind when we speak of action. That is, what Thomas calls the external or commanded act may seem to be the human or moral act *tout court*. But insofar as it is a human act, it presupposes the internal origins Thomas has been at pains to analyse.

The three major conjunctions of mind and will just mentioned – intellectual grasp of good/ will; counsel/choice; command/use – involve the other will acts Thomas discussed, but it is well to keep in mind this basic triad.

Let us end by addressing an uneasiness you will have felt. Talk of what mind is doing and what will is doing suggests an inner drama as if there were rival moral agents within us. When we say the mind or will does something, we mean of course that a given human being engages in mental activity, a given human being wants something, and so forth. After all, the analysis is aimed at the appraisal of the actions of such agents as Socrates and Abelard and Cervantes. We should not, however, allow this uneasiness –it may even become impatience– to lead us to sweep away all talk of different powers and faculties. Rather, we might take the occasion of our unease to reflect on how it was that distinct powers of the soul came into currency.

Seeing differs from hearing. It is from such indisputable truths that it all begins. I both see and hear, and thus I can be said to have the capacity to see and the capacity to hear. Two capacities? Yes, if the activities are distinct, as they are. The capacity to hear does not get actualized as seeing. The general rule, then, is that insofar as distinct activities of an agent are recognized, we recognize correspondingly distinct powers or faculties or capacities. This is an inference. The analysis goes on to argue that, because of the distinction of the operations and derivatively the powers, there must be a distinction between them and the soul that is their seat.

It is not our present task to undertake that analysis. But it seemed wise at least to refer to it, lest you think Thomas thinks of all the faculties of the soul, particularly mind and will, as Aristotle did of heart and the pudenda, that is, as little animals acting almost autonomously within.

On the face of it, St. Thomas's analysis of the complete human act into parts which are themselves only potentially human acts in their own right seems internally consistent and illuminating of the deeds of human persons.

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