A Dark Universal:
A Thomistic Account of Evil

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Philosophy)

Macquarie University
Department of Philosophy

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Submitted: Aug. 31, 2020

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract of Thesis	v
Statement of Originality	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
Translations and Common Abbreviations	ix
Introduction	1
1.) Motivation for the Project	1
2.) Secular and Religious Conceptions of Evil	4
3.) Summary of Chapters	7
Chapter 1: Love	16
1.) The Nature of Love	16
2.) Love and Action	23
3.) Friendship	26
4.) Friendship and Self-Love	27
5.) Friendship, Concord, and Closeness	34
6.) Conclusion	39
Chapter 2: Charity and the Virtues	41
1.) The Nature of Virtue	42
2.) Virtue, Eudaimonia, and Beatitude	44
3.) Intellectual Virtue	47
4.) Moral Virtues	48
5.) Prudence	50
6.) Prudence and Charity	54

7.) Justice 57
8.) Faith 59
9.) Hope and Fortitude 63
10.) Concluding Remarks about the Centrality of Charity 66

Chapter 3: Vice 68

1.) Pride 70
2.) Envy 82
3.) Wrath (Anger) 85
4.) Acedia (Sloth) 94
5.) Avarice 96
6.) Temperance 99
7.) Gluttony 101
8.) Lust 102
9.) Conclusion 105

Chapter 4: The Metaphysics of Evil 107

1.) New and Old Natural Law 107
2.) Convertibility of the Transcendentals 113
3.) The Natures of Things 116
4.) The Fulfillment of Appetites 123
5.) Evil as Privation 129
6.) Conclusion 137

Chapter 5: The Nature of Action and Cooperation with Evil 139

1.) The Guise of the Good 140
2.) The Nature of Human Action 161
3.) Cooperating with Evil 165
4.) Conclusion 175

Chapter 6: The Distinctiveness of Evil as a Moral Category 176

1.) The Distinctiveness of Evil as a Moral Category 178
2.) Friendship, Relational Rupture, and Communities 185
3.) Capital Punishment and Brutishness 194
4.) Malice 202
5.) Conclusion 209

Chapter 7: Evil Intuitions 211

1.) Regarding Evil Actions 211
2.) Regarding Evil Persons 233
3.) Conclusion 243

Concluding Thoughts: Assessing a Theory of Evil 244

1.) A Summary of the Project 244
2.) Theoretical Virtues 245

References 250

Abstract of Thesis

A Dark Universal: A Thomistic Account of Evil

Robert Michael Snell

Since the Second World War there has been a revival of interest in the nature of moral evil among professional philosophers. Some have argued that evil is not a profitable moral category, lacking explanatory power, and ought to be abandoned. Other philosophers argue that the concept of evil has a legitimate place in moral philosophy and cannot be abandoned without cost. They argue that there seems to be something conveyed by describing an act as 'evil' in modern contexts which is not captured by calling an act very, very wrong. One thinker who has been largely absent from these discussions is Thomas Aquinas. Part of the reason for this is that Aquinas' account of evil (by which he means badness in a general sense) as a privation of goodness is often assumed to deflate the concept of evil in question. In this thesis, I ask what a Thomistic understanding of moral evil in the relevant sense could look like, and I argue that Aquinas' philosophical writings provide a plausible framework within which the concept can be understood.

Specifically, I argue that evil acts in the relevant sense can be understood as those acts by which humans set themselves against the goods which necessarily bind human societies together, and hence decisively alienate the evildoer from any flourishing society. I draw from Aquinas' writings on the nature of moral vice, on capital punishment, and on the 'stain on the soul' left by serious wrongdoing to understand the ways in which people can become evil and the effects that evil actions have on their perpetrators' moral character. Although I in no way shy away from Aquinas' theological writings, the essence of the account as it emerges could be accepted by a secular audience as readily as a religious one.

In order to develop this account, it is necessary to explore various aspects of Aquinas' thought. Firstly, I examine Aquinas' understanding of love. Love is central to Aquinas' moral psychology. The entirety of his approach to ethical thought could be summarised as learning how to love well. This includes a discussion of the nature of friendship, and how it is that shared goods unite people as friends. This leads into a discussion of the

nature of virtue. Aquinas takes charity, understood as a participation in divine love, as being the form of all virtue. Following this is a discussion of the nature of moral vices, understood as characteristic ways we fail to love well and dispose ourselves to continue in such failures. Then comes a discussion of the metaphysics of evil, understood as a privation of a good that ought to be present but is not. From this comes a discussion and defence of the Guise of the Good principle, which holds that every human action is done for the sake of a real or perceived good. I argue that the principle is entailed by Aquinas' metaphysics and that it makes sense of apparent counterexamples of people seeking evil for evil's sake. This leads into a discussion of the nature of evil actions, understood within the context of Aquinas' overall analysis of human action. Included is an examination of cooperation with evil, and to what extent unwilling participants can become evildoers themselves. I then bring together these different areas of thought into the cohesive theory outlined above, and argue that it well explains common intuitions philosophers have regarding evil.

Statement of Originality

This work has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Name: Robert Michael Snell Signature: Date: 30 August, 2020

Acknowledgements

Of the numerous people to thank the first must be my tireless supervisor, Dr. Paul Formosa, for guiding the project with attentiveness, diligence, gentleness, and supererogatory patience. Thanks is also due to my family, for putting up with me over the past few months in particular. I also wish to thank my numerous friends, including the Fraternas for their ongoing support, Katherine Kwa for sharing her own PhD experiences, which have been helpful, and Matthew Su, for first introducing me to Aquinas and for the numerous lengthy conversations about different aspects of Aquinas' thought, without which this project would not have been possible. I would like to thank the Thomism Discussion Group for innumerable fruitful discussions about Aquinas' thought. Finally, I would like to thank Robert Krishna, O.P. for volunteering to proof-read the entire thesis despite having numerous other calls on his attention.

Translations and Common Abbreviations

When referring to the works of Aquinas I have, where available, used the Aquinas Institute translations. That is, the revised translation of the *Summa Theologiae* (typically abbreviated ST) by Laurence Shapcote, O.P (2012); the revised translation of the *Summa Contra Gentiles* (typically abbreviated SCG), also by Laurence Shapcote, O.P. (2018); The revised translation of the *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* by Jeremy Holmes and Beth Mortensen (2013); the revised translation of the *Compendium of Theology* by Cyril Vollert (2018); the revised translation of *On the Principles of Nature* (sometimes referred to in the text as *De Principiis*) by Roman A. Kocourek (2018). Five important works of Aquinas are used which are not translated and revised by the Aquinas Institute. The translation of the *Disputed Questions on Virtue* is that of Jeffrey Hause and Claudia Eisen Murphy (2010); the translation of *Disputed Questions on Evil* (often referred to in the text as *De Malo* and abbreviated to DM) is that of Richard Regan, edited by Brian Davies (2003); the translation of the *Commentary on the Nichomachean Ethics* is that of C.I. Litzinger, O.P. (1964); the translation of the *Commentary on the Metaphysics* is that of John P. Rowan (1961); the translation of the *Commentary on Aristotle's Politics* is that of Richard Regan (2007). The translations from Aristotle used are those from the Revised Oxford Translation, edited by Jonathan Barnes (1984). That of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is by W.D. Ross, revised by J.O. Urmson; that of the *Politics* is by B. Jowett; and that of the *Metaphysics* is by W.D. Ross, all of which are in the Revised Oxford Translation.

Introduction

Motivation for the Project

Over the last few decades there has been increased philosophical interest in the nature of evil.[1] Philosophers have always considered different aspects of evil in depth, but this renewal of interest had to do with a question largely unexamined, as to whether there is a kind of moral evil categorically distinct from other kinds of wrongdoing. Typical of this other category are the kinds of moral depravity exhibited by sadistic serial killers, perpetrators of genocide, and the Nazis. As Todd Calder writes, 'It seems that we cannot capture the moral significance of these actions and their perpetrators by calling them 'wrong' or 'bad' or even 'very very wrong' or 'very very bad.' We need the concept of evil.'[2] It is important to note that there are different concepts of evil. It is possible to describe cyclones as evil due to their potentially catastrophic effects on humans. It is also possible to describe everyday moral wrongs as evil. The concept of evil being discussed here is a narrower concept. If upon hearing reports of someone kidnapping small children to rape and torture them one's interlocutor responded, 'That's morally wrong. He shouldn't have done that', then we would likely be incredulous at their response, and could easily reply 'It's not just wrong. It's evil!' This is the sense of evil under discussion here. We would easily call the actions in question evil, but we would also intuitively describe the perpetrator as evil. As Marcus Singer writes, in this sense of the word, '"evil"… is the worst possible term of opprobrium imaginable.'[3]

Accounts of evil will typically either start with an analysis of what it means for an action to be evil in this sense, and then define an evil person by reference to evil actions,[4] or start with an analysis or what it means to be an evil person and then define an evil action by reference to evil persons.[5] Evil people can be understood as the kind of people

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[1] Arendt, 2006; Calder, 2007; Card, 2010; Cole, 2006; de Wijze, 2018; Formosa, 2008; Garrard, 2002; Haybron, 2002a; Kekes, 2005; Morton, 2004; Neiman, 2003; Nys & de Wijze (eds.), 2019; Russell, 2014; Singer, 2004; Steiner, 2002; Thomas, 2003.
[2] Calder, 2013a, paragraph 1.
[3] Singer, 2004, p. 185.
[4] See, for instance, Barry, 2013, pp. 87-90; Kekes, 2005; Thomas, 1993; Russell, 2014.
[5] See, for instance, Haybron, 2002a; Singer, 2004, p. 190.

who tend to perform evil actions, and evil actions can be understood as the kinds of actions characteristic of evil people.

There are a number of significant ideas raised and debated among contemporary evil theorists, of which I will mention just four here. Firstly, there is a debate over whether the difference between mere wrongfulness and evil is qualitative or quantitative in nature. Many theorists argue that evil is qualitatively distinct from wrongdoing, though virtually all accept that if an act is evil then it is also wrong.[6] Some theorists argue that the difference is quantitative in nature, such that evil acts are simply acts at the extreme end of wrongfulness.[7] The issue is complicated by the fact that there are multiple senses of qualitative difference in which the evil-wrong distinction could be interpreted.[8]

Secondly, there is an idea that evil people are consistently evil.[9] This is not necessarily to say that the person is frequently performing evil acts, but that whatever it is that makes someone evil makes them consistently evil. Hitler did not cease being evil when he fell asleep or turned his mind to innocent pastimes.

Thirdly and relatedly is an idea that there is a certain stability about evil characters which makes it incredibly difficult for an evil person to cease being evil.[10] This is separate if closely related to the previous idea since it is possible to accept that evil people are consistently evil and also that an evil character is not fixed. Someone could have the ability to repent and turn from their evil ways but nonetheless not do it, and consistently perform evil acts.

Fourthly, several writers believe that an evil character is the mirror image of a moral saint, a person who is morally virtuous to an extraordinary degree across all aspects of their lives. For instance, Daniel Haybron argues that this is a reason to accept his own

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[6] E.g. Steiner, 2002; Garrard, 2002; Calder, 2013b. Calder is the rare exception who holds that an act can be evil without being wrong.
[7] See Russell, 2007, 2014.
[8] Calder distinguishes between four different senses (Calder in Nys & de Wijze (eds.), 2019, pp. 218-233.)
[9] Haybron, 2002a, 2002b; Barry, 2013.
[10] See Russell, 2014, p. 169; Barry, 2013, pp. 82-7.

account of evil, on which evil people have no morally redeeming features that actually impact their behaviour.[11] By contrast, Luke Russell rejects this idea on the basis that an evil person may well have something redeeming about their character, which can even make them more dangerous than they would be otherwise.[12]

A figure conspicuously absent from these contemporary discussions of evil is Thomas Aquinas. It is known in this literature that Aquinas followed Augustine by defending an account on which evil is interpreted as a privation of goodness. Nonetheless, as Calder notes, 'The theories offered are secular and incompatible with the historically dominant privation theory developed by Saint Augustine.'[13] Calder considers 'whether the privation theory ought to be revived along with philosophical interest in the nature of evil, or whether it should be put to rest.'[14] Calder concludes that it should not be revived, but it is significant that the question was whether there were any reason to revive it. There was no question that it would need reviving if it were to survive. Beyond this, there is little detailed engagement with the work of Aquinas in the contemporary philosophical literature on evil.

The current account closest to an Augustinian-Thomistic privation account is Haybron's, but though he regards evil as bound up with the absence of any real good, he is quick to point out that 'This is not an Augustinian view, since evil need not be a *mere* privation.'[15] Russell, in his book on evil, only mentions Augustine in order to use events in his life as examples, and only mentions Aquinas to consider the question of whether one can justly enjoy the pain in someone else's deserved suffering.[16] There is not any consideration that their works could be used profitably when discerning the nature of evil in the narrow sense. Similarly, the chapter on Aquinas in the recent *Routledge Handbook of the Philosophy of Evil* only discusses his thought as it pertains to the problem of evil for religious belief.[17]

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[11] Haybron, 2002a. See also Barry, 2013.
[12] Russell, 2010, p. 241-2.
[13] Calder, 2007, p. 371.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Haybron, 2002a, p. 270. Emphasis added.
[16] Russell, 2014. For Augustine, see p. 38, 86, 100; for Aquinas, see p. 179.
[17] Grant in Nys and de Wijze, 2019, pp. 42-54.

Thomistic philosophers have not attempted to bring Aquinas to the debate over evil in the narrow sense. Indeed, it is difficult to even find references among Thomists to the question. An exception is David Oderberg who, in his recent book on the metaphysics of good and evil, notes the existence of the contemporary, narrow sense of evil simply to stat that he will not be discussing it. He does, however, continue to write:

> [G]iven that we already have a rich vocabulary of negative terms by which we routinely sort and evaluate bad things and actions, I am doubtful of the *theoretical* point of having as well [the contemporary sense of evil], albeit for purely expressive or other psychological reasons it may have some use.[18]

One likely reason for this lack of attention is that Aquinas does not make such a distinction in his own writings. He does have a highly developed and nuanced system of moral wrongdoing, but there does not seem to be anything that quite corresponds to the contemporary evil-wrong distinction. This raises the question of whether a Thomistic account of evil in the narrow sense is possible. In this thesis, I argue that in fact Aquinas' philosophy does have the conceptual resources necessary for one to develop a theory of evil in the narrow sense, and I propose such an account. I do not attempt to show that this account is superior to all other theories of evil, but I do argue that it is plausible. The account is 'Thomistic' in the sense that it is situated within the writings and thought of Aquinas, even if not in the sense that he himself proposed it. One objection to developing a Thomistic theory of evil is that the contemporary, narrow sense of evil is an essentially secular concept, and hence likely to be incompatible with Aquinas' understanding of morality, which is inextricably bound up with his theology. This objection needs to be considered in relative depth before we proceed any further.

Secular and Religious Conceptions of Evil

The recent discussions of evil in the narrow sense are explicitly secular in nature. There is a 'concern that religious accounts of evil inevitably import more problems than they

[18] Oderberg, 2020, p. x.

solve,' as Stephen de Wijze writes.[19] The resistance to religious input is so strong that some writers think it best to eschew evil as a concept altogether due to its perceived supernatural connotations. As de Wijze describes this position, 'a notion of "evil" is at best an outdated and unhelpful term that brings with it unacceptable baggage from the past. To use this term inevitably evokes a discredited and dangerous religious metaphysics.'[20] The concern is not just about religious ideas of evil but extends to the supernatural more broadly. Claudia Card discusses at length the need to demythologise the concept of evil from ideas such as those of witches if evil is to be maintained as a contemporary concept.[21] All of this is not to say that religious people are intended to be excluded from engaging philosophy of evil. Russell states explicitly what is usually implicit when he writes 'my account of evil is not intended to be unsuitable for people who do believe in the existence of a supernatural God or other supernatural agents.'[22]

Aquinas is unquestionably a deeply religious thinker whose philosophy is itself deeply religious. He believes that the form of all virtue is charity, which he understands as friendship with God.[23] As such, even if an account of evil could be built from Aquinas' thought, one could easily doubt that it would be of much interest to philosophers who do not share his theological commitments. The account that I will propose here does not of itself require any reference to God or to relationship with God. I believe that an atheist could accept it in an analogous way to how a theist could accept Russell's account. In that sense it is a secular account of evil.

That being said, when discussing the conceptual background to the account from Aquinas it is necessary to discuss Aquinas' understanding of God and of human relationship with God. The account fits within Aquinas' broader worldview, which is unabashedly religious, and as such when discussing the background of Aquinas' thought

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[19] De Wijze, in Nys and de Wijze (eds.) 2019, p. 205.
[20] Ibid. See also Cole, 2006.
[21] Card, 2010, pp. 10-16. Though it is worth noting that the Council of Paderborn in 785 AD condemned the belief in witches and resolved that anyone who killed someone on the pretence of them being a witch should be executed for murder, Marina Montesano, 2018, p. 93.
[22] Russell, 2014, p. 10.
[23] This will be discussed in depth in chapter 2.

it is necessary to mention some of his theological beliefs, though the account of evil itself could be abstracted from this context since it does not itself include any theological claims or presuppositions. One natural area of concern for the success of this project lies in Aquinas' understanding of the demonic. Philip Cole, in his secular attempt to engage with the concept of evil, notes that while working on his book 'I found myself spending more and more time examining the figure of Satan… once I began writing, I found that I could not get away from him… In a sense, this is a political philosophy of Satan.'[24] If an avowed atheist like Cole could not help but include the devil in his account of evil, one could understandably expect the demonic to be central to a Thomistic account of evil.

In fact, demons have very little space in Aquinas' moral philosophy. He does certainly believe in the existence of demons, and believes that they can influence people morally, but they are located at the periphery of his ethical system. His account of what makes an immoral action requires no reference to demons. Though his account of virtue makes reference to God, his account of vice does not require the demonic. That being said, it is useful to briefly look at two points in Aquinas' thought about demons, to make explicit that demons are not essential to his understanding of morality as well as to understand what he believes about the evilness of demons.

In the *Disputed Questions on Evil*, Aquinas gives a lengthy treatment of the causes of moral wrongdoing as well as of moral vice. He also includes a section on demons at the end of the book. It is significant that he did not think it necessary to cover his thought on demons before dealing with the nature of moral vice. The only place before his treatment on vice that has to with the effects of demons is about the causes of moral wrongdoing. He asks the question whether the devil can tempt people into sin and then whether all sin is a result of demonic temptation. His answer is no, since the demons are not the only cause of sin:

> [Others] are due to the freedom of human beings to choose and to the corruption of the flesh. This is so because, as Origen says, even if the devil were not to exist, human beings would have appetites for food and sex and such like, regarding

[24] Cole, 2006, pp. 2-3.

> which many disorders arise unless reason restrains such appetites… And restraining and ordering such appetites are subject to the power of free choice. Therefore, not all sins need to come about at the instigation of the devil.[25]

After noting this point, Aquinas is content to not have any article on demons for the duration of the thirty-one articles during which he discusses moral vice. As will be apparent by their total absence in chapter 3, demons have practically no place in Aquinas' understanding of human vice.

The second point has to do with a question Aquinas asks in his section on demons, namely of whether demons are evil by nature or by their will. He makes a distinction between two different ways that something could be evil by nature, and then argues that in neither sense demons are evil by nature.[26] As we will see later on, Aquinas believes that there is a metaphysical link between the being of a thing and goodness.[27] It is impossible, for Aquinas, for anything to be purely evil. Even the demons have natural good in them. As such, Aquinas even goes so far as to argue that is proper to love the demons out of charity.[28] Whereas Cole thinks that the concept of evil has to do with 'demonizing the enemy,'[29] it could be said that Aquinas is reluctant even to demonize the demons.

Summary of Chapters

Since I will be constructing a theory of evil from the conceptual resources in Aquinas' writings, before I can give the account it is necessary to provide the resources. The majority of the thesis involves explaining different aspects of Aquinas' moral thought which lay the groundwork for the account of evil. The first two chapters are about the nature of love and virtue, respectively.

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[25] *De Malo*, Q. III, Art. 5.
[26] *De Malo*, Q. XVI, Art. 2.
[27] This will be discussed in depth in chapter 4.
[28] ST II-II, Q. 25, Art. 11. Aquinas distinguishes between willing the good of something out of charity and seeking friendship with it from charity, and holds that the former 9though not the latter) is proper regarding demons.
[29] Cole, 2006, subtitle.

Chapter 1: Love

Love is central to Aquinas' moral philosophy. Love is the principle undergirding motivation and action. Aquinas thinks that anything done by anyone is done out of love for something. He understands love to involve two interconnected desires: willing the good of the beloved and seeking relation-appropriate union with the beloved. In the first chapter I lay out Aquinas' thought about love and argue that it constitutes a better account of love than other competing theories. There are two different aspects of love which a plausible account needs to be able to account for. Firstly, love must be responsive to the goodness of the beloved. It is natural for a lover to point out positive features of the beloved in order to explain her love. Secondly, love ought to persevere despite changes in the beloved's positive characteristics. We would describe a person as more loving if she is willing to stand by a loved one throughout a cancer battle than if she left since the beloved had lost all desirable characteristics. Aquinas' account can explain both of these aspects of love. The good we will to the other and the union we seek with the beloved is dependent on the nature of the beloved. At the same time, the nature of the union to be sought is also dependent on the relation between lover and beloved, such that it can be proper to continue willing the good of the beloved even after the original goods that appealed to us have changed.

Finally, I examine Aquinas' understanding of friendship. Aquinas thinks that friendships are defined by reference to the goods that unite people together, and that the ultimate form of friendship is loving someone as another self. The discussion of the goods that unite people together prepares for a later discussion of how communities are themselves grounded in the goods that unite the community members together. This is central to the account of evil I later present. In addition, the nature of friendship as loving someone as another self provides the means by which Aquinas' ethical system can be eudaemonist in nature without being self-centred. The account of love friendship presented here leads naturally into a discussion of the virtue of charity in the following chapter.

Chapter 2: Charity and the Virtues

Aquinas' understanding of moral vice can best be understood from the standpoint of his understanding of virtue. In this chapter I focus chiefly on charity, the virtue of love for both God and neighbour, which is central to Aquinas' understanding of the virtues. Charity is interpreted as both love for and friendship with God, and is taken to be the form of the virtues. I also briefly go through Aquinas' understanding of intellectual and theological virtues, and finally the moral virtues. Aquinas takes there to be four cardinal virtues which act as the hinges of the moral life: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. Prudence is the most important, providing the rule of the other virtues. Prudence is understood as applied wisdom, which is knowledge of the highest goods. It is prudence that determines how the virtues are to be lived in concrete circumstances. Justice has to do with giving to each their due and helps to govern human relationships. Fortitude is the virtue of not giving up seeking a good either too early or too late due to obstacles. Temperance has to do with the proper use and place of pleasure in life. That being said, my discussion of temperance is contained in chapter 3 for practical reasons. This chapter provides a summary of Aquinas' understanding of a flourishing moral character. Since Aquinas takes evil to be a privation of goodness, it is necessary to know the good of virtue before dealing with the privations found in moral vice.

Chapter 3: Vice

The third chapter is on the nature of moral vice. Aquinas structures his understanding of vice around several specific capital vices. The capital vices are likened both to the head of a body, which governs the rest of the body, and to the head of a river, from which the rest of the river flows. Analogously, the capital vices are vices that typically act as the motivations for other kinds of wrongs. Aquinas takes the central moral vice to be pride, taken as an excessive desire for one's own excellence. It functions as the form of the other vices in an analogous way to how charity functions as form of the virtues. In addition to pride there is vainglory, envy, wrath, acedia, avarice, gluttony, and lust. I discuss each vice systematically, noting how they function for Aquinas as well as how they can function as motivations for evil action. Vainglory has to do with excessively seeking honour. Envy has to do with having sorrow at another's good. Wrath has to do with having unjustified anger. Acedia (or sloth) has to do with a kind of willed sorrow at being as such. Avarice has to do with the excessive and unreasonable seeking for possessions. Gluttony has to do with the unreasonable seeking of food, and lust has to do

with the unreasonable seeking of sex. This chapter provides a summary of Aquinas' understanding of a dysfunctional moral character. Since evil characters are plausibly a subset of morally vicious characters more generally, an understanding of moral vice is helpful for a holistic understanding of evil character. After dealing with a particular kind of moral privation, namely the privation of moral character found in the vices, the discussion turns in the following chapter to a discussion of the nature of privation more generally.

Chapter 4: The Metaphysics of Evil

In the fourth chapter I survey Aquinas' understanding of metaphysics, inasmuch as it is necessary to understand his understanding of evil as a privation of goodness. In order to do this, I consider a debate between two groups of Thomists about how best to interpret Aquinas' ethics. The Old Natural Law theorists argue that first one must gain a detailed knowledge of the metaphysics of human nature and from this derive a system of what goods are proper to humans. The New Natural Law theorists argue that we must first look at what goods humans ultimately seek and fundamentally care about, and from these basic goods construct an ethical system, with far less focus on metaphysics. I do not adjudicate between these camps, and hold that my account should be plausible either to someone who accepts Thomistic metaphysics or rejects it. As such, the overall purpose of this chapter is not to defend Thomistic metaphysics so much as to exposit it, so that it will be clearer to Old Natural Law theorists how my account is consonant with such a metaphysical framework.

Central to this metaphysical framework is an idea known as the convertibility of the transcendentals, which basically holds that there are a number of concepts such as truth and goodness which are in fact the being of a thing considered in different ways. Most important for my purposes is the consequent understanding of the relationship between the goodness of things and their being. Aquinas takes things to have goodness in and of itself insofar as they instantiate the kind of thing that they are. A carefully drawn triangle is a better triangle than a badly drawn one with crooked sides, because it is more triangular. This is the context for Aquinas' understanding of evil (in a very broad sense) being a privation of goodness. It is a privation of the due order of a thing by which the thing is what it is. From here, I respond to two objections against the privation

theory of evil raised by Todd Calder, namely that it cannot make sense of certain paradigmatic cases of evil such as pain, and that one could construct a theory of goodness as a privation of evil that would be just as plausible as the traditional privation account.[30] With this metaphysical background in place it is possible to turn to Aquinas' understanding of the nature of action in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: The Nature of Action and Cooperation with Evil

In the fifth chapter I examine the Thomistic understanding of the nature of human action. Firstly, building on the metaphysics established in the previous chapter, I examine the Guise of the Good thesis, according to which every action is done for the sake of some real or perceived good. I argue that the principle applies in different ways for different kinds of things and actions. I contend that in a fundamental sense the principle can be taken as a metaphysical truism, as well as being accurate when applied to moral psychology. I respond to criticisms of the principle such as those of J. David Velleman, who argues that it is possible to do evil for evil's sake.[31] After this I briefly survey Aquinas' understanding of the moral analysis of human actions. Aquinas takes the morality of human actions to be a function of what the action is about (the object), the end it is directed towards by the will, and the circumstances contextualising the act. The relationship between the object of the act and the end of the act is significant when later discussing the nature of evil actions in particular. In later chapters I argue that the distinction between the object and the end is helpful when answering the question of whether only evil persons can perform evil actions.

In the context of this understanding of human actions I examine the nature of cooperation with evil. Cooperation with evil is an important topic to deal with given that many people who participate in evil activities are not themselves the primary actor and may even disapprove of the actions being performed. Although only to a limited extent grounded in Aquinas' writings, there is an established tradition of interpreting cooperation with evil (taken in the sense of moral wrongdoing generally) through a distinction between formal and material cooperation. In this system formal cooperation

[30] Calder, 2007.
[31] Velleman, 1992.

essentially involves the co-operator being united with the evil will of the primary malefactor, and material cooperation is interpreted as being where the co-operator participates in some way in the wrongful act but is does not share the evil will of the primary malefactor. I agree with some recent authors that, though of some value, this system needs to be interpreted within the context of Aquinas' broader understanding of moral action as presented previously, which provides other useful tools for evaluating cooperation with evil.

Chapter 6: The Distinctiveness of Evil as a Moral Category

In this chapter I bring the different ideas from previous chapters together to explicitly formulate the essence of a theory of evil in the narrow sense. I argue that political society, interpreted as the society which contains all other communities, is directed toward the end of its people living well, and includes a series of goods which are necessary to this end. It is this system of goods which bind society together, analogously to how shared goods bind friendships together as discussed in chapter 1. These goods are not arbitrary but are established by the nature of humans, as broadly described in both the chapter on virtue and the chapter on metaphysics. Since people in society are bound together by virtue of these shared goods a person can be alienated from society by opposing these goods. I propose that evil in the narrow sense can be interpreted as a radical opposition to the basic goods, established within human nature, that humans need in order to live well, which bind society together. This opposition can be found in either the exterior object or the end of an action, which grounds my understanding of evil actions. The radical opposition to these goods can also be found in people's characters, which grounds my understanding of evil character. I argue that, in a meaningful sense, evil persons are always alienated from flourishing societies as a result of their evildoing. Evil actions alienate an evildoer from society, though I propose this as an implication of my view, and not as its essence.

I also, in this chapter, examine Aquinas' treatment of capital punishment. While not taking a side in the question of whether capital punishment is prudent today, I argue that different aspects of Aquinas' treatment of capital punishment can have implications for a philosophy of evil. Most notable is Aquinas' treatment of how human dignity functions in the case of people who are going to be executed. I argue that Aquinas'

remarks can best be interpreted in the light of his understanding of moral brutishness, wherein a person might do horrific actions without being morally responsible for them. Finally, I look at Aquinas' treatment of malice, which is the most severe kind of moral disorder found in the human will, and relates to how a person can in the morally worst way be opposed to the goods which bind society together.

In summary, I propose that evil acts in the narrow sense are acts directed gravely against the foundational goods which bind society together by being prerequisites for living well. The gravity of an act for this purpose is determined by to what extent the act tends to destroy the victim's prospects of living well. I also propose that an evil person is a person who is maliciously, gravely, and dispositionally directed against the common goods of society, with gravity determined by how radically opposed the person's will is to others living well. With the essence of the account laid out, it is then possible to examine how it functions as a theory of evil in the following chapter, in conversation with other philosophers of evil.

Chapter 7: Evil Intuitions

In the seventh and final chapter I go through a list compiled by Luke Russell of fifteen intuitions that a theory of evil should have something to say about, and briefly explain what my account has to say about each one, and how it relates to thoughts about these intuitions from various philosophers of evil. The first eight intuitions have to do with evil action, and the next seven with evil persons. I will simply list the fifteen intuitions here. Those to do with evil action are as follows:

> (1) Saying that an action is evil is a means of expressing very strong moral condemnation of that action.
> (2) Evil actions are morally wrong.
> (3) The person who performs an evil action is blameworthy and properly held responsible for that action.
> (4) Evil actions are extreme and never merely trivial.
> (5) Evil actions are incomprehensible.
> (6) Evil actions can be banal.
> (7) There is a psychological hallmark of evil action.

(8) Evil actions are qualitatively distinct from ordinary wrongs.[32]

The seven intuitions to with evil persons are as follows:

(9) There are some actual evil persons.
(10) Evil persons are rare.
(11) Evil persons deserve our strongest moral condemnation.
(12) In some cases the fact that S is an evil person helps to explain why S performed an evil action.
(13) Not every evildoer is an evil person.
(14) It is possible to become an evil person by performing evil actions.
(15) It is possible, though very difficult, for an evil person to become a good person.[33]

I show that my Thomistic account of evil has plausible responses to each of these intuitions, indicating that it provides a comprehensive account of evil action and personhood worth further exploration.

Concluding Remarks: Theoretical Virtues

To conclude the project, I assess whether my account has five different theoretical virtues proposed by Paul Formosa as a test for prospective theories of evil. I argue that my account does in fact have them and is, as a result, a plausible theory of evil. The five theoretical virtues to be considered are summarised as follows : '1) meshing well with important theories of moral wrongdoing; 2) being based on a plausible moral psychology; 3) explaining the basis of our judgments about evil; 4) being able to alter, revise and expand our judgments about evil; and 5) being pitched at the right level of generality.'[34]

I argue that the Thomistic account of evil that I formulate meshes especially well with an important of moral wrongdoing and also is based on a plausible moral psychology due

[32] Russell, 2014, p. 34.
[33] Ibid. p. 135.
[34] Formosa, 2013, p. 235.

to being based on Aquinas' own moral philosophy, which contains a theory of moral wrongdoing and a moral psychology both eminently defendable independently from any considerations about the philosophy of evil. The metaphysics undergirding the account, I argue, renders it able to both explain and appropriately expand our intuitions about evil, as seen in the case of folk intuitions about the inhumanity of evil persons. Aquinas' metaphysics both allows us to understand the intuition that evil people in a sense fall short of the full meaning of humanity, but also modifies it by providing a mechanism whereby this does not simply rob evil people of human dignity, thereby itself justifying brutality. Finally, I argue that my account is pitched at the right level of generality. It is not too general as to be unhelpful, due to the account's grounding in the basic goods of human society. It is also not unduly specific, as a result of not containing a detailed system of exactly what all of the goods are and by what mechanisms they relate to one another. As a result, I conclude that my account is a plausible theory of evil.

Chapter 1: Love

Introduction

Aquinas claims that all actions are done from love of some kind. This could be highly counter-intuitive. How could evil actions be motivated by love? Surely atrocities such as genocide cannot be instances of love. In order to begin developing a Thomistic account of evil, we need to start with Aquinas's account of love. I then examine Aquinas' account of friendship, which is important in order to understand how we love one another practically. Aquinas holds that central to friendship is loving a person as another self and that, among other factors, friendships are formed by harmony between the wills of the friends. This discussion of friendship paves the way for the discussion of the virtues in the following chapter, and also prepares for a discussion of how societies are bound together by shared goods, which will be important throughout the later chapters where the account of evil is fleshed out.

The Nature of Love

The contemporary literature on the nature of love splits into two broad theories on what love is. On the first theory, love is a reaction to admired qualities in the beloved.[35] On the second theory the relationship between love and the value of the beloved is reversed. One does not love someone simply based on their qualities, but decides to love them and on the basis of that decision values the beloved.[36] The first is a response to value, whereas the second is a conferral of value. Eleonore Stump[37] names these two families of theories the responsiveness account and the volitional account, respectively.

The responsiveness account has the advantage of being grounded in the valued qualities of the beloved. It might seem as though a theory of love ought to ground itself in the beloved, otherwise it is exceptionally difficult to give a satisfactory explanation of why you love one person as opposed to someone else.[38] If love were not responsive to qualities of the beloved then common sentiments like 'I love him because he is kind'

[35] For instance, Velleman, 1999; Keller, 2000.
[36] For instance, Frankfurt, 2004; Kolodny, 2003.
[37] Stump, 2010, pp. 86-7.
[38] Keller, 2000.

would be unintelligible. As Aristotle writes in the *Rhetoric*, 'It is pleasant to be loved, for this… makes a man see himself as the possessor of goodness, a thing that every being that has a feeling for it desires to possess: to be loved means to be valued for one's own personal qualities.'[39] On the other hand, the volitional account has the advantage of making at least partial sense of the persistence of love. If a loved one loses some of their appealing qualities, the loving thing to do would be to keep loving them. Similarly, if love were simply based on qualities then it would become an unbearably mercenary affair. Should a more attractive woman come along it would not be loving for a husband to abandon his wife. His love should not be simply contingent on the lack of more appealing people to love. To take a non-romantic example, an adopted child ought not simply be loved by her parents due to her talents and other excellences, but because she is their daughter.[40] This persistence is hard to make sense of if one understands love simply as a response to appealing qualities. At the same time, volitional accounts also have to account for the persistence of love, since acts of the will are subject to change. It would obviously be a failure of love for an adoptive parent to change their mind and choose to no longer regard their adoptive children as their children.

It thus seems as though, ideally, an account of love should have both an aspect grounded in the beloved and an aspect grounded in the lover, in order to avoid the problems of either the responsive or volitional accounts. One possibility for such an account is provided by an idea found in Kierkegaard, that though the beloved has valuable qualities, it is not on the basis of these that they are loved. Likening love with his account of faith, he writes:

> It is possible to talk half humorously about reasons: So, at long last you want to have a few reasons. I am happy to oblige. Do you want to have 3 or 5 or 7? How many do you want? But I can say nothing higher than this: *I* believe. This is the positive saturation point, just as when a lover says: She is the one I love, and he says nothing about loving her more than others love their beloveds, and nothing about reasons.[41]

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[39] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1371 a18.
[40] Kolodny, 2003.
[41] Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers,* 3608.

As Alexander Pruss understands him, Kierkegaard holds that the lover loves the beloved on the basis of their unrepeatable personal identity, as opposed to their qualities.[42] There is a significant reason to be skeptical of this view, however. The problem is that it does not appear plausible that we can radically abstract someone's personal identity from their qualities. Our identities are deeply shaped and formed by our qualities and their histories such that by abstracting these out, significant aspects of someone's identity would be missed. To give an example, the philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff lost his adult son in a mountain climbing accident. In an interview he commented, 'Who am I? I'm one whose son, Eric, was killed in a mountain climbing accident. That's part of who I am.'[43] Both Wolterstorff's love for his son and the event of his son's death are bound up with his identity so inextricably that they cannot plausibly be abstracted from his identity. As a result, love for Wolterstorff must take serious account of his qualities and associated personal history. In this way, the qualities of a person contextualize and provide important meaning to what it means to love that person as they are, *pace* Kierkegaard.

A more promising account in between the volitional and responsive accounts is provided by Aquinas. I will first elucidate this account, and come back when discussing friendship to defend it by showing how it addresses the concerns about both responsive and volitional accounts of love. At the outset, there is an important distinction that must be observed within Aquinas' writing on love, namely the distinction between the love of concupiscence and the love of friendship. He writes:

> As the Philosopher says (Rhet. ii, 4), "to love is to wish good to someone." Hence the movement of love has a twofold tendency: towards the good which a man wishes to someone (to himself or to another) and towards that to which he wishes some good. Accordingly, man has love of concupiscence towards the good that he wishes to another, and love of friendship towards him to whom he wishes the good.

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[42] Pruss, 2013, pp. 36-9.

[43] *Lament for a Son: Nicholas Wolterstorff on Grief and Suffering*, October 8, 2018, URL: <https://cct.biola.edu/lament-for-a-son-nicholas-wolterstorff-grief-suffering/>

> Now the members of this division are related as primary and secondary: since that which is loved with the love of friendship is loved simply and for itself; whereas that which is loved with the love of concupiscence, is loved, not simply and for itself, but for something else. For just as that which has existence, is a being simply, while that which exists in another is a relative being; so, because good is convertible with being, the good, which itself has goodness, is good simply; but that which is another's good, is a relative good. Consequently the love with which a thing is loved, that it may have some good, is love simply; while the love, with which a thing is loved, that it may be another's good, is relative love.[44]

Hence, it is meaningful to say, 'I love this bottle of wine' without demeaning the concept of love as applied to persons, since we only love the wine (by concupiscence) in relation to our love for ourselves or for another who will be enjoying it (the love of friendship). The primary love present here is the willing of the good of the beloved, for whom we will specific goods. This willing of the beloved's good is not, however, sufficient for the fullness of love. Aquinas also believes that love is essentially directed towards union with the beloved. He writes:

> Dionysius says (Div. Nom. iv) that every love is a "unitive love."/ I answer that, the union of lover and beloved is twofold. The first is real union; for instance, when the beloved is present with the lover. The second is union of affection: and this union must be considered in relation to the preceding apprehension; since movement of the appetite follows apprehension. Now love being twofold, viz. love of concupiscence and love of friendship; each of these arises from a kind of apprehension of the oneness of the thing loved with the lover. For when we love a thing, by desiring it, we apprehend it as belonging to our wellbeing. In like manner when a man loves another with the love of friendship, he wills good to him, just as he wills good to himself: wherefore he apprehends him as his other self, in so far, to wit, as he wills good to him as to himself. Hence a friend is called a man's "other self" (Ethic. ix, 4), and Augustine says (Confess. iv, 6), "Well did one say to his friend: Thou half of my soul."

[44] ST I-II, Q. 26, Art. 4.

> The first of these unions is caused "effectively" by love; because love moves man to desire and seek the presence of the beloved, as of something suitable and belonging to him. The second union is caused "formally" by love; because love itself is this union or bond. In this sense Augustine says (De Trin. viii, 10) that "love is a vital principle uniting, or seeking to unite two together, the lover, to wit, and the beloved." For in describing it as "uniting" he refers to the union of affection, without which there is no love: and in saying that "it seeks to unite," he refers to real union.[45]

The emphasis placed here by Aquinas upon love as treating a person as another self will be developed in more depth in the section on friendship at the end of this chapter. For the moment, the important thing to note is that Aquinas views the tendency towards union with the beloved as essential to love, in addition to willing the good of the beloved. Eleonore Stump takes these two principles to be constitutive of Aquinas' theory.[46]

Alexander Pruss, though not attempting to exegete Aquinas, produces a similar and closely related account of love.[47] He distinguishes between three different aspects of love. Two are those already mentioned, which he refers to as goodwill (or benevolence) and union. However, Pruss also adds another aspect which is prior to the other two, namely appreciation. Without first perceiving and appreciating the good of the other one cannot will it or seek to be united to it. As such, although Aquinas does not explicitly label appreciation as an aspect of love in the same way as goodwill and union, it seems to be assumed in his view and I will take it as a part of his theory.

Pruss, paying homage to Aquinas, describes the interplay of these aspects with admirable clarity:

> As we can learn from St. Thomas Aquinas, by willing a good to the beloved for the beloved's sake, one is already united with the beloved in will, since the beloved

[45] ST I-II, Q. 28, Art. 1.
[46] Stump, 2006.
[47] Pruss, 2013.

> also wills what is good for him or herself. Likewise, in willing a good to someone, one is appreciating the beloved as the sort of being to whom it is appropriate to will goods. Thus, willing a good to the beloved implies at least some appreciation and union. Similarly, sufficient appreciation of a person will make it clear to us that it is no less appropriate to bestow goods on this person than on ourselves… Moreover, appreciation of a person naturally leads to one's aiming at union, while in union the other person's good becomes to some extent one's own.[48]

Wherever one aspect of love is absent, we can see how it is incomplete. If desire for the other's good is absent and we merely appreciate his good and desire union with that good then the love (if it is still proper to use the word) is selfish and possessive. If the desire for union is absent, leaving us with appreciation and benevolence, then what is left is not necessarily wrong, but certainly is not the fullness of love. We see this if we compare Paula giving money to a charity, knowing that the money she gives will help someone though not caring about who the specific person is, with Jerome being personally present to someone going through a hard time while supporting them. Both are good things to do, but the union present in the latter case makes it more likely for the latter recipient to feel loved than the former. Finally, consider where we do not recognize the good of the other but seek their good and desire union with them. Since we would not be willing their good for the sake of their goodness (since we do not appreciate their goodness) our reasons for so doing would have to be independent, and would thus be instrumental in nature, only desiring their good and union with them for some other purpose of our own. For instance, someone who is friendly towards an acquaintance solely because he has romantic designs on the acquaintance's friend and wants to be accepted by the acquaintance in order to get closer to his romantic interest. He might be willing the acquaintance's good, and desiring to become friends with her, but not because he actually likes her as a person.

This approach to love effectively tackles the distinctive problems for the volitional and responsive accounts. It is grounded in the nature of the lover since it is the lover who has the appetite for goodness which inclines her towards the beloved. It also is

[48] Pruss, 2013, p. 23

grounded in the beloved's good, since that is what the appetite is directed towards. The lover sees the good of the beloved and therefore desires appropriate union with the person and for the beloved's good to be fulfilled. This makes sense of the persistence of love too, since the good of the beloved becomes a good for the lover.[49] This argument will be greatly expanded upon in the section on friendship and self-love. Unfortunately, Aquinas' account of love does not appear to be well known among philosophers of love more broadly, and most Thomistic treatments of love do not interact with the volitional and responsive accounts.[50]

It is important to note that Aquinas' conception of love is linked to his conception of human rationality. Following Aristotle, Aquinas takes humans to be rational animals. Rationality does not have to do with merely being clever. Rather, rationality has to do with being directed towards knowing the truth for its own sake.[51] This knowledge of truth is then used to direct the will towards what the intellect perceives to be good. The will is, in Aquinas' understanding, the rational appetite. The rational appetite is the appetite for goodness.[52] Hence to say that humans are rational animals is to say that they have an appetite for goodness. Of course, all animals have appetites for specific things that are good for them, such as food and reproduction, but humans have an appetite for goodness as such.[53] This appetite functions properly insofar as it is guided

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[49] Since loving the beloved is a way the lover is fulfilling his nature as a rational animal, the good of the beloved, which he wills in loving her, becomes part of his own good. For a fuller account of Aquinas' theory of love see Stump, 2010, pp. 83-308.

[50] Michael Sherwin's *By Knowledge & By Love* (2005) does not attempt any interaction with contemporary philosophy of love. Neither does Anthony Flood's (2014) book *The Root of Friendship: Self-Love & Self-Governance in Aquinas*, which broke ground by bringing attention to the centrality of self-love in the Thomistic account of friendship. The most influential Thomist to interact with these other accounts is Eleonore Stump (in her 2010 book, *Wandering in Darkness*). Stump's development of the Thomistic account of love has certainly been criticised, for example by Jordan Wessling (2019). Stump makes a distinction between different degrees of closeness not explicitly in Aquinas, which are then criticised by Wessling as not being compatible with what she says about union. These criticisms do not apply to the account I am presenting since I am not relying upon this distinction, and am grounding my own response to the volitional and responsive accounts in writings by Aquinas brought to attention by Flood (2014), which Stump does not make use of.

[51] ST I, Q. 91, Art. 3.

[52] ST I-II, Q. 8, Art, 1.

[53] ST I-II, Q. 1, Art. 2. 'Appetite' in the scholastic context has been defined as 'a form and especially a power that has an inclination toward an object suitable for itself or away from

by the intellect. We use our intellect to figure out what the good is, and then our will (the rational appetite) inclines us toward that good for the sake of its perceived goodness. For Aquinas, the will is considered free insofar as it is guided by the intellect.[54] This might seem a strange description of the will for contemporary readers. As Eleonore Stump writes, 'contemporary philosophers tend to operate with a conception of the will as the mind's steering wheel, neutral in its own right but able to direct other parts of the person.'[55] By contrast, the will for Aquinas is not neutral but is directed toward whatever is presented to it as good. That being said, the will can also influence the operation of the intellect, as illustrated by Stump in the following example.

> … while you are reading a magazine, you come across an advertisement asking for money for children, with an emotionally powerful picture of a starving child. Your intellect recognizes that if you look at the ad for very long, you are likely to succumb to its emotional force. Intellect sees the goodness of contributing to the charity, but it also recognizes that if you give money to this charity, you won't have it for the new computer you have been coveting. Your desire for the new computer is strong and influences intellect to rank saving money for the computer as best for you now. In consequence of the finding on intellect's part, and with this influence from the passions, will directs intellect to stop thinking about the charity, and (after a further interaction of intellect and will) you turn the page of your magazine.[56]

Love and Action

For Aquinas, love is not simply one disposition amongst others that we can act on. Rather, he states, 'Every agent acts for an end, as stated above.[57] Now the end is the good

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an unsuitable object' (Wuellner, 2012, p. 8). It refers to the dispositions organisms have towards what they need to flourish as an instance of their species.

[54] ST I, Q. 83, Art. 1.

[55] Stump, 1997, p. 577.

[56] Stump, 1997, pp. 578-9.

[57] ST I-II, Q. 1, Art. 2.

desired and loved by each one. Wherefore it is evident that every agent, whatever it be, does every action from love of some kind.'[58]

This seems incredibly counterintuitive. Some things we obviously do out of love, like helping a friend who is sick or buying our spouse flowers[59] (although even in these cases we can be motivated by other things besides love), but surely there are things we do which do not come from love. For instance, scratching one's face if it is itchy, or hating someone unjustly. We would certainly not ordinarily describe an incident of domestic violence, or of genocide, as being loving. Aquinas does not weaken his principle in order to escape such objections, but explicitly states 'hatred also is a result of love', and 'desire, sadness and pleasure, and consequently all the other passions of the soul, result from love. Wherefore every act proceeds from any passion, proceeds also from love as from a first cause.'[60] This idea will be developed in far greater depth in chapter 5, but it is necessary to say a few words about it here.

This apparent problem seems at first glance to be exacerbated, rather than diffused, by viewing it in the context of Aquinas' theory of love, as already discussed. If I hate someone I am not willing their good, but willing them something bad instead. If we are to understand Aquinas' take on moral evil, then we must first go even further into his account of love. Aquinas does not think that every act is motivated for love for everyone and everything, but just that it is motivated by some love or another. Hence just because hating is obviously not loving for the one being hated, it does not follow that the hatred is not caused by any love whatsoever.[61]

Aquinas views hatred as being fundamentally about responding to threats of some kind. Even non-rational animals can respond to being injured or threatened with aggression.

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[58] ST I-II, Q. 28, Art. 6.

[59] Such actions are done 'out of love' not in the sense that the fact of one's love is necessarily itself a motivation for acting, but in the sense that the motivational process is a loving one. It is fitting for someone to be thinking about the wellbeing of their sick friend when buying flowers, and not necessarily about their love for the sick friend.

[60] Ibid.

[61] This will be discussed in far greater depth in the treatment of the Guise of the Good in chapter 5.

The ultimate purpose for this tendency is the good of the animal, or the animal's young. Aquinas refers to it as 'natural hatred' and the protective basis for it as 'natural love.'[62] The same overall process occurs not just in the appetites and behaviours we share with other animals, but in the distinctively intellectual life and behaviours that humans exhibit. This is taken to be the basis for hatred more broadly. We hate things, that is, will their bad, in response to seeing them as a threat to ourselves or others whom we love. In this way, hatred itself can be viewed as the result of love, even if not necessarily love for the one being hated.[63] We will something's bad in order to prevent it from being an obstacle to a good we are willing. Someone may have hatred for a friend's family for hurting the friend, and associating them with the hurt they perceive to be an impediment to the friend's good.

Ultimately, Aquinas thinks that we are called to love every single rational being, and irrational beings too (though in a different way).[64] Of course, it is all well and good to say that we ought to be loving to everyone and everything, but this seems practically impossible. We cannot love everyone perfectly or equally. I cannot spend the same time both working as an accountant to raise money to feed starving children and also spend the day minding my neighbours' children while they are out of town. This raises a very large question, namely, how best are we to love? This question is, effectively, the key question of ethics for Aquinas. Of our obligation to love God and neighbour, he writes, 'Those two principles are the first general principles of the natural law, and are self-evident to human reason, either through nature or through faith. Wherefore all the precepts of the Decalogue are referred to these, as conclusions to general principles.'[65] In the same question Aquinas argues that the Decalogue is an accurate summary of all natural moral precepts, implying that the entirety of ethics ultimately flows from the obligations to love both God and neighbour.

[62] ST I-II, Q. 29, Art. 1.
[63] ST I-II, Q. 29, Art. 2.
[64] This will be fleshed out in the following chapter. ST II-II, Q. 25.
[65] ST I-II, Q. 100, Art. 3.

Friendship

Properly, love seeks relationship appropriate union with the beloved, and friendship is the most significant form of relationship for Aquinas. Hence it is worth examining his understanding of friendship, since a desire cannot be properly understood independently from what it is a desire for. Aquinas' understanding of friendship sets the stage for his understanding of society, which will be addressed when discussing the account of evil later on. Aquinas views friendship as an integral part of the good life. He comments, 'Moral philosophy considers all things that are required for human living; and among these friendship is especially necessary, to such an extent that no one in his right mind would choose to live in the possession of great external goods without friends'.[66] In part, the reason for this is instrumental. Friends help one another when going through hardship, help them retain their external goods when they have them, and 'the help of friends may restrain [the young] from sin'.[67] However the value of friends is not merely in their usefulness. Aquinas writes elsewhere, 'the happy man needs friends… that he may do good to them; that he may delight in seeing them do good; and again that he may be helped by them in his good work'.[68]

Although the value of friendships in our personal lives is fairly uncontroversial, not everyone thinks that it has the same moral value as Aquinas would ascribe to it. For instance, Cocking and Kennett argue that the acts flowing from friendships are not necessarily morally good ones. For instance, although we are influenced by and so may emulate our friends' behaviour, they think that 'I am just as likely to be directed by your interest in gambling at the casino as by your interest in ballet'.[69] However, as we shall see, on Aquinas' view friendships *qua* friendships are directed toward the good of the friend such that a friendship would be an imperfect one insofar as it directed its members to morally problematic behaviour.

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[66] *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, 1964, bk. 8, lct. 1.
[67] *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, 1964, bk. 8, lct. 1. One way this could work is if we have virtuous friends that we admire then we might be spurred onto live a virtuous life so as to emulate them and not disappoint them.
[68] ST I-II, Q. 4, Art. 8.
[69] Cocking & Kennett, 2000, p. 286.

Friendship and Self-Love

An essential aspect of friendship for Aquinas is self-love. It would make sense in an account of friendship to have a discussion of friendship with oneself, and the self-love involved in it. Aquinas, however, treats self-love as an essential aspect of friendship as such. He writes:

> We must hold that, properly speaking, a man is not a friend to himself, but something more than a friend, since friendship implies union, for Dionysius says (*Div Nom*. iv) that "love is a unitive force," whereas a man is one with himself which is more than being united to another. Hence, just as unity is the principle of union, so the love with which a man loves himself is the form and root of friendship. For if we have friendship with others it is because we do unto them as we do unto ourselves, hence we read in *Ethic*. ix. 4, 8, that "the origin of friendly relations with others lies in our relations to ourselves."[70]

In the last sentence of this passage Aquinas gives two different ways that self-love interacts with our friendships with others, corresponding to his statement that self-love is 'the form and root of friendship.' Firstly, 'if we have friendship with others it is because we do unto them as we do unto ourselves', which speaks to how self-love is the form of friendship. We love friends in the same way we love ourselves. Secondly, 'the origin of friendly relations with others lies in our relations to ourselves', which speaks to it being the root of friendship. The relational context of our friendships with others is in how we relate to ourselves. As Anthony Flood argues, 'for Aquinas, self-love constitutes the interior, heart, or primal self-experience of the person. The interior life and self-experience of each person constituted by self-love and actualised in self-friendship, in turn creates the terms for friendship between persons.'[71]

In order to unpack this, we must examine what self-love is and how it relates to friendship with oneself. The first principle of love, willing the good of the beloved, seems to be ubiquitous among humans. In fact, for Aquinas, it is present in some way in all

[70] ST II-II, Q. 25. Art. 4.
[71] Flood, 2014, p. 17.

living things by the fact that they are all ordered towards their self-preservation.[72] Regarding humans he writes 'it is common to all for each one to love what he thinks himself to be.'[73] The words 'what *he thinks* himself to be' are particularly significant. Although we are unlikely to be mistaken about many obvious things about ourselves, like that we are composed of bodies requiring nutritional sustenance, we may well be mistaken about ourselves in other ways, and so fail to will what is in fact our own good. For instance, take someone who identifies himself too strongly with his basketball skills and who then neglects things that are in fact more conducive to his overall flourishing, such as if he neglects to maintain his relationships with friends and family in order to focus on training for local tournaments. Self-knowledge is thus essential to being able to will one's own good well.

The second principle of love, willing union with the beloved, applies unusually to self-love since one just is oneself. As Flood writes:

> The love of friendship seeks the greatest union possible given the constraints of the separation between lover and beloved. The union occurs most intimately within the inner lives or interiors of each person. Since there is no separation between lover and beloved, self-love truly reaches to the deepest interior or heart of the person.[74]

However, although we are united to ourselves by being a single substance, there are other kinds of unity which we can lack with ourselves. Friends, for instance, are united to one another by both principles of love. By willing one another's good and by desiring union with the other. Since the goods of both of them are willed by both of them they are united in will, but this is not the sum total of the union friends desire. Friends are also united to each other through knowing one another. Aquinas writes:

> This effect of mutual indwelling may be understood as referring both to the apprehensive and to the appetitive power. Because, as to the apprehensive

[72] This receives far more detailed treatment in the chapter on the Guise of the Good.
[73] ST II-II, Q. 25, Art. 7.
[74] Flood, 2014, p. 17.

> power, the beloved is said to be in the lover, inasmuch as the beloved abides in the apprehension of the lover … while the lover is said to be in the beloved, according to apprehension, inasmuch as the lover is not satisfied with a superficial apprehension of the beloved, but strives to gain an intimate knowledge of everything pertaining to the beloved, so as to penetrate into his very soul.[75]

This kind of union, of knowing the beloved, is obviously also damaged by a lack of self-knowledge. If we are unaware of what things we care about, or are unaware of how we feel about or have been impacted by significant events in our lives, then we will lack the kind of intimacy with ourselves that we seek in close friendships.

As noted in a passage quoted above, Aquinas does not count one's relation to oneself as a friendship strictly put, 'but something more than a friend, since friendship implies union… whereas a man is one with himself which is more than being united to another.'[76] Nonetheless this distinction is largely a semantic one, so once we have noted that relations with ourselves are different from other friendships since we are substantially united to ourselves but not to other friends, we can freely speak of self-friendships.

Aquinas agrees with Aristotle that, in a sense, 'a friend is another self'.[77] As such, we love friends as though they are ourselves. This is the sense in which self-love is the very form of friendship. In his *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, Aquinas explains this at length:

> For since love in a certain way unites lover to beloved, the lover therefore stands to the beloved as if to himself or to that which concerns his perfection. But to himself and that which belongs to him, he stands in the following ways. First, he wishes whatever concerns his perfection to be present to him; and therefore love includes *longing* for the beloved, by which the beloved's presence is desired.

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[75] ST I-II, Q. 28, Art. 2.
[76] ST II-II, Q. 25, Art. 4.
[77] Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics, Bk. 9, 4.

> Second, in his affections a man turns other things back to himself and seeks for himself whatever goods are expedient for him; and so far as this is done for the beloved, love includes the *benevolence* by which someone desires good things for the beloved. Third, the things a man desires for himself he actually acquires for himself by acting; and insofar as this activity is exercised toward another, love includes *beneficence*. Fourth, to the accomplishment of whatever seems good in his sight, he gives his full consent; and insofar as this attitude comes to be toward a friend, love includes *concord* by which someone consents to things as they seem [good] to his friend.[78]

These four ways in which someone loves another as they do themselves could be taken as a partial definition of friendship. A friend is someone we love as another self, which we can characteristically see in these four ways. These four attributes fit intuitively with Aquinas' theory of love. Longing for a friend's presence is a way of desiring union with him. Benevolence (and the beneficence that flows from it) involves willing the others good, and friends are united together through concord, which Aquinas elsewhere explains as 'will[ing] and reject[ing] the same things'.[79] Of course there are other ways in addition that we may love people, and these other ways may also be present in friendships, but these four seem collectively to constitute, for Aquinas, the sufficient conditions for friendship.

An interesting contrast to Aquinas' view on the relation between self-love and friendship is the position of Elijah Millgram.[80] Millgram takes seriously Aristotle's belief about friends being other selves, and interprets it to be true by virtue of the way friends shape one another. Due to the way friends emulate and influence one another we can be spoken of as 'procreators' of our friends, and thus to share the same nature and being of the friend.[81] The metaphysical mechanics of a friend being another self are quite different from that of Aquinas as I have presented it. For Aquinas, a friend becomes another self for

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[78] *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum Petri Lombardi, On Love and Charity*, III, D. 27, Q. 2, Art. 1., quoted in Flood, 2014, p. 14.
[79] Quoted in Daniel Schwartz, 2007, 1.3 Acts of Friendship, para. 1.
[80] Millgram, 1987.
[81] Millgram, 1987, p. 367.

someone by virtue of being united with them by willing the friend's good, which the friend also wills. In addition, a friend is another self in the sense that we will their good as if it were our own. As Aquinas puts it, 'a person feels for a friend what he feels for himself. Consequently, it seems that friendship consists in any of these characteristics that people experience toward themselves; and that those are real friends who have these characteristics.'[82]

However, it might be thought that this is too stringent for a definition of friendship. After all, friends often do not have the same values, beliefs, or goals, which may seem to be required by concord. It is also the case that many people who might be called friends of each other do not in fact will the other's good but may secretly hate them. Aquinas could agree with these phenomena without altering his position, though. Regarding friends who secretly hate each other, it is plausible that in fact they are not friends, but merely pretend to be. This is seen in the absurdity of them being open with their hatred and still calling one another friends. Also, it is true that friends might disagree on any number of important issues and have varied goals, but there still must be something that unites them in order to justify calling them friends.[83] Ardent conservatives and liberals can be friends and have lengthy political discussions with one another, but only because they both value politics and so have a reason to talk about it. If one of them were apathetic about politics and everything else that the other cared about, they would have nothing in common and could not sustain friendship, not caring about anything the other has to say. They are united in willing the political good, even if they disagree about what that good looks like.[84] As Aquinas says in several places, 'concord is a union of wills, not of opinions'.[85]

It may also be queried whether we actually do love all of our friends as other selves. This might be true for close friends, but it seems counterintuitive to say it of all friends. Of

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[82] Commentary on the Nichomachean Ethics, Bk 9, Lect. 4, chapter 4, para. 1811.
[83] Similarly, White (2001), takes solidarity around shared values to be a central aspect of friendship.
[84] Although if their political views affect their actions in serious ways then the beliefs might impede their relationship, such as if they were passionate soldiers on opposite sides of a civil war. The factors at play here would be analogous to those regarding discord among friends as a result of moral wrongdoing, discussed below.
[85] See, for instance, II Sent. D. 11, Q. 2, Art. 5; III Sent. D. 27, Q. 2, Art. 1.

course, we could make a distinction between friends and acquaintances, and say that many people we call friends are actually just acquaintances we are being polite to. But there are certainly people we would describe as friends who we may relate to in the four characteristic ways above who we may not think we love with self-love. We can long for the pleasant company of someone, will her good and act for her benefit, and be united by goods that we both care about and not think that we love her as if she were another self. In response, it is worth saying that whether we love someone as if they were another self is not necessarily a binary matter. Plausibly I could love someone more or less like another self. This makes sense given the nature of friendships. Whether or not someone is a friend or whether they are a close friend is not necessarily easy to determine. Neither is determining at what precise point a friendship began, for most friendships. If loving someone as another self is taken to be the form of friendship then plausibly relationships would be more or less perfectly a friendship insofar as we love the person with self-love.

It is interesting to note that since having this kind of love for someone could be unreciprocated, friendship can be asymmetrical.[86] Jerome can be a good friend of Paula's even if Paula is not a good friend of Jerome. Though of course this asymmetry does pose certain limits on how good a friend of Paula's Jerome can be, since the union sought by loving someone as oneself requires mutual closeness.

Self-love can also help to explain why we become friends with one person as opposed to another. As already discussed, we seek to be united with the good of another when we perceive and appreciate the goodness of the person. However, self-love explains why we seek to be united with the goods we perceive. As Anthony Flood explains, 'some goods apprehended by the intellect do not produce the complacency or "pleasant affective affinity," and thereby there is no desire for such a good; rather, only objects judged by the intellect to be appropriate for us prompts love that seeks to be united to the good.'[87] Regarding relationships, he continues, 'the intellect judges *another person* to be fitting in

[86] This is perfectly compatible with the idea that friendship requires mutual love. I am saying that the strength and quality of love within a friendship can be asymmetrical, not that Paula could be friends with Jerome while Jerome is not friends with her.
[87] Flood, 2014, p. 6.

regard to the love of friendship.'[88] Since we love ourselves, when we perceive goods we judge whether union with them would be good for us, specifically, and if so then will that union as a way of willing our own good. Hence, we may respond differently to different people, even if they have similar qualities, based on whether we judge union with them to be beneficial to us given the context. For example, Jerome may perceive many good qualities in Paula, such as wit, compassion, and being aesthetically beautiful, and pursue a romantic relationship with her as a result, judging such a union to be good for himself. If they do develop a romantic relationship then Jerome may (and ought) not to respond in the same way to the same qualities in Paula's friend Jane, since a romantic union with Jane would not be good for Jerome given his relationship with Paula.

Furthermore, since he now loves Paula as another self, he has even more reason not to will romantic union with Jane since it would conflict with Paula's good, which he loves as his own. This explains why it is the case that although we may initially love a friend out of qualities they have that appeal to us, we can persist in loving them even if the qualities are lost or do not appeal to us anymore for some reason. Once we love someone as a friend, union with them is no longer sought merely for our own sake but also for theirs as though it were our own. Hence this approach to love incorporates the focus on the beloved which is a desideratum of the responsiveness account on love, but in a way that provides a plausible reason for the persistence of love.

One concern with this approach could be that it does not adequately take into account the value of the history of a friendship. As Brink phrases the worry, 'unless our account of love and friendship attaches intrinsic significance to the historical relationship between friends, it seems unable to justify concern for the friend *qua* friend'.[89] This idea could be incorporated into the Thomistic understanding of friendship without much trouble, though Aquinas does not address it specifically. Since our relationship with ourselves heavily involves our past experience of ourselves, it is fitting that the history of our other friendships would be significant in the same way.

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[88] Ibid.
[89] Brink, 1999, p. 270.

Friendship, Concord, and Closeness

Aquinas writes that 'the lover is not satisfied with a superficial apprehension of the beloved, but strives to gain an intimate knowledge of everything pertaining to the beloved, so as to penetrate into his very soul.'[90] I will now treat the union friends have in being relationally close to each other, and how this closeness relates to Aquinas' understanding of friendship. This is important for understanding Aquinas' understanding of virtue in the next chapter. One objection to eudaemonist theories of ethics like Aquinas' is that they get the emphasis of morality wrong by being focused on the good of oneself when acting virtuously. The depth of union which love is directed toward provides a response to this concern, as the good of the beloved is itself incorporated into the lover's good such that acting for the sake of the other becomes included within Aquinas' eudaemonism.

The first question to consider in order to understand the importance of concord between wills is how willing the same good unites friends. The question being asked is not why this concord should be considered an important part of friendship, but how willing the same good helps unite friends to allow for relational closeness (though the former question will be treated in passing).

I do not take relational closeness as itself constitutive of friendship. We have friends (in the common usage of the term) whom we are not close to and would not confide in. Nonetheless it is true that mutual closeness and friendship are closely related. Our best friends are people we are close to, and we are that close to few others. We might trust and confide in a counsellor, but since it is not mutual we would probably not consider the counsellor to have relational closeness with us. We can be mutually close to family members and spouses, though for Aquinas these relationships also fit under the genus of friendship.[91]

From the quote from Aquinas above, we might think that relational closeness is the same as knowing intimate things about someone. However, this is clearly not the case, otherwise a stalker would be considered relationally close to his victim. Mutual

[90] ST I-II, Q. 28, Art. 2.
[91] For instance, ST supp. Q. 42, Art. 2.

knowledge of intimate things is also insufficient. Two political opponents who hire detectives in order to politically smear the other would not be close to one another. Rather, it seems as though the knowledge must be attained through voluntary sharing. However, as Cocking and Kennett note, 'it is not the sharing of private information nor even of very personal information, as such, that contributes to the bonds of trust and intimacy between companion friends. At best it is a sharing of what friends care about'.[92] The point being made is that mere discretionary sharing cannot be taken as a comprehensive understanding of closeness. In Eleonore Stump's account, closeness requires mutual self-revelation, but also openness to the other's self-revelation, and some kind of need for the other.[93] Stump explains the thought behind the final criterion as follows: 'If Jerome had no need for Paula, he would not care whether or not he had Paula in his life; it would be a matter of indifference to him one way or another. In that case, it would be counter-intuitive to suppose that Paula is close to him.'[94] This needing could also be understood as the longing for the beloved which is one of Aquinas' criteria for friendship.

Implicit behind this account of closeness is benevolence, and its associated beneficence. The reason why we are willing to reveal ourselves to another person is typically that the other person wills our good. We know that they care about us and so can trust them with intimate knowledge of ourselves, since they would not misuse it, and because the knowledge we give them might be able to help them will our good more effectively. It is difficult to help someone if we do not understand what is going on. Conversely, we might also reveal ourselves to someone because we care about them and think that us sharing might help them, like when a friend reveals his own very personal experience of grief to a friend who is grieving. Of course, even then we would only reveal information sensitive to us if we trusted the other person not to use it against us, which requires at least some level of benevolence on their part too.

For both of these motivations it is necessary that the confidant is trusted to have benevolence to the confider, and in the second case that the confider also has

[92] Cocking & Kennett, 1998, p. 518.
[93] Stump, 2010, p. 123.
[94] Stump, 2010, 122.

benevolence for the confidant. Since the confider would will his own good in either case, both confidant and confider are united in willing the good of the confider. Hence for either motivation the act of confiding presupposes that both confider and confidant have a concord of wills, and that this concord requires benevolence.

This helps explain the relation between friendship and closeness. Although they are not identical, closeness seems to presuppose friendship, indeed a friendship where the good of the other (the benevolence criterion) is one of the goods that unites the friends together in will. Of course, not all friendships like this will in fact be close, but they seem to be a necessary condition for closeness. It is easy to see how this relates to Aquinas' treatment of love. Since love involves benevolence and a desire for union with the other, it would seem as though friends must of necessity love one another.

However, one could plausibly object that although friends must have mutual benevolence, and be united in willing a common good, it is not obvious that they must *seek* such a union. Two friends could be united by being on the same work team and thus by having a common goal, and even have benevolence for the other, without actually wanting their relationship to continue. For Aquinas, such relationships could perhaps sometimes count as friendships, but only in an attenuated sense. This might seem counter-intuitive, after all numerous contemporary models of friendships exclude such relationships.[95] However, such models are often only trying to account for close friendships, and including these weaker relationships makes sense of the broad way we use the word 'friend' to include both acquaintances we have a sustained relationship with as well as close friends. For Aquinas, if two co-workers did not love each other as themselves with the longing for closeness that is entailed then they would not really be friends, but just acquaintances. However, it could also be possible that they did in fact will the others good as if it were their own and desire union with them, but would not seek such union due to other factors.[96] In this case they could be rightly categorised as friends by Aquinas, even if they did not actively seek closer union with one another.

[95] E.g. Thomas, 2013; Cocking & Kennett, 1998.
[96] For instance, if they lacked the time or emotional resources to develop and sustain a fuller relationship.

This yields an interesting result in the case of close friendships with people involved in egregious moral wrongdoing. According to Richard White, 'I may be aware that my friend has some real moral failings, and so I adjust my expectations accordingly, but I still consider her my friend. Not because I deliberately ignore certain aspects of her character, but because friendship is not always about morality and virtue'.[97] On Aquinas' view this would be only partly correct. It is true that people with serious moral failings can obviously have friendships, considered broadly. Take two old school friends, Bob and Rita, who play poker together. They might both care about one another, but if Rita is dealing drugs to children and Bob knows about it then benevolence would require him to correct his friend. After all, he wills her good and it is not conducive to her good to be guilty of dealing drugs to children. If she repents then their friendship can continue fairly easily, but if she does not then it would be exceedingly difficult for them to remain close friends. If a constitutive part of the relationship is a shared commitment to Rita's good (which it must be if they are to be close) then Bob would care a lot more about trying to change her ways than about playing poker and other shared goods. Hence on the issue of Rita's good the two friends' wills would be opposed (even if they both broadly wanted her good). This opposition would impede closeness. Rita would not tell Bob about her drug dealing operations, lest he try to impede her (as benevolence would require him to do), and Bob would find it difficult to trust Rita's judgment when it comes to loving him. Of course, it is possible for them to remain close friends up to a point. They can value each other and confide about some of the things they care about. But the wrongdoing would heavily impede their relationship, since they would not be thoroughly united together in seeking Rita's good, or Bob's good through a potential lack of trust. In addition, Rita's belief that her activities are good for her demonstrate a deep lack of self-knowledge. Insofar as she lacks self-knowledge she cannot share herself as she really is with Bob, which imposes further limits on how close to her Bob can be.

This is interesting, because both Rita and Bob care about Rita's good and only disagree about what her good requires.[98] But this discord is sufficient to impede their

[97] White, 1999, p. 80.

[98] This assumes that Rita does not understand that it is not in her interest to deal drugs to children, but if she does understand it then by dealing drugs she is failing to will her own good, and thus fails to be united to Bob who does will her good. So whether her defect is in the intellect or will, either way it will impede her closeness to Bob.

relationship. This might seem to contradict Aquinas' previously quoted dictum that 'concord is a union of wills, not of opinions'[99] While discussing this dictum Daniel Schwartz addresses a similar case of discord between friends, where one accepts the teaching of the Church and the other does not. He argues that the difference between them is not just because they have different specific theological beliefs, but that they differ far more fundamentally about how to come to theological truth (one holding to Church authority and the other not). He gives two explanations of the resulting discord that could also apply to our case. Firstly, that in addition to the same general end that the friends both seek (theological truth) there is a proximate end that they are not united in (adherence to theological authority), and that discord is produced at the proximate level.[100] Secondly and more interestingly though, the rejection of this proximate end carries with it rejection of the Church as a whole, of which his friend is a member. He thus rejects his friend in some way by rejecting the community that is central to him.[101] This also applies to Bob and Rita. In rejecting the proximate end to Rita's goodness of her not selling drugs to children, she not only is opposed to Bob on this particular matter but on a myriad of other values he will have regarding what the good of a human person consists in, the value and proper treatment of children, respect for the law, and so on, as well as those community and family structures through which Bob formed his belief that selling drugs to children is wrong.

One objection to the view of friendship I have sketched here is that it does not adequately account for the receptiveness of friends to one another's interests. As Cocking & Kennett write, 'it is a common feature of close friendships that within them, each person is receptive to developing interests or activities, which they do not already pursue, primarily because they are the interests and activities of the other'.[102] Paula asks Jerome to go to an art gallery and Jerome goes, because he is close friends with Paula, even though he has hitherto been uninterested in art. It is not because he does not want to hurt her by his rejection that he agrees, but he goes happily just because it is

[99] II Sent. D. 11, Q. 2, Art. 5.
[100] Schwartz, 2007, 2.3 Why Conflicting Beliefs Alone Do Not Create Discord: A Look at Heresy.
[101] Schwartz, 2007, 2.3 Why Conflicting Beliefs Alone Do Not Create Discord: A Look at Heresy.
[102] Cocking & Kennett, 1998, 503-4.

something Paula likes, and he is interested in it as a result. This kind of case can be accommodated into Aquinas' model in two different but non-exclusive ways. Firstly, if he both likes and respects Paula then Jerome might well trust that if Paula is interested in an activity then there is likely a good there worth exploring and pursuing, and therefore he agrees to go in case he is missing out on something by neglecting art. Secondly, the union of close friends is very precious to us. Since humans are inherently directed towards love it is unsurprising that we value close friendships so much, and are eager to make them closer, where feasible. As such, the union of close friends can itself be a good that the friends care about and act towards. Since Paula is interested in art and wills artistic goods, Jerome may also want to will those artistic goods in order to be united with Paula more fully.

This applies interestingly when it comes to our relationship with God, which is central for Aquinas. In the same way as we can seek some good (such as ballet) because we see that a friend values it and we trust them, it makes sense to seek the good of everything that exists, since God loves all that is and can presumably be trusted to know what is worth caring about.[103] Similarly, we could be motivated to seek the good of all sorts of things, including people we are not otherwise inclined to care about and animals, because we know that God loves them and so can draw relationally closer to God through loving the same things. This relationship is an essential aspect of Aquinas' view of charity, which frames his schema of the moral virtues, and is further discussed in the following chapter.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have surveyed Aquinas' theory of love. I have explained the key role of love as a motivator for moral action, and how Aquinas' views on love can help mediate between the Old and New Natural Law traditions, understanding ethics either in terms of what perfects human nature from a speculative standpoint, and what appeals to our wills from a practical standpoint. This prepares for a discussion of the Guise of the Good thesis in chapter 5, which argues more in depth that all actions, including evil ones, are done out of love for some good. I then surveyed Aquinas' view of friendship as grounded

[103] Aquinas argues that God loves all things at ST I, Q. 20, Art. 2.

in loving someone as another self. Aquinas' view of friendship paves the way for discussion of the virtues in the following chapter, which are situated by the virtue of charity, which Aquinas understands within the context of friendship with God and, derivatively, neighbour. This understanding of the goods which unite friendships and of relational rupture prepares for the account of evil being discussed in chapters 6 and 7, which relies on an analogous understanding of society being united by goods, with evil acts alienating evildoers from society due to their opposition to these goods.

Chapter 2: Charity and the Virtues

Introduction

We have seen in the previous chapter that for Aquinas the moral life is about love. We are perfected as human beings insofar as we love well. Love both seeks the good of the beloved and seeks appropriate union with them. The ideal relational union sought by this love is that of friendship, where we love another person as another self. However, it is not obvious how this is to be lived practically. We cannot be good friends with everyone, and we are extremely limited in our ability to will everyone's good. Even if we devote our lives to helping others and giving to efficient charities, we will only be able to help a small fraction of people. In addition, due to our ignorance of those people helped, it is not obvious that we would even be willing their specific goods, but rather may be willing more abstract goods such as the elimination of poverty. Even amongst just our close friends and family members it can be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to love them all well simultaneously.

In this chapter, I discuss charity, friendship with God, as what unifies all our other loves, for Aquinas. I focus mainly on charity's relation to prudence, which unites the other cardinal virtues of justice, fortitude, and temperance, and charity's relation to the theological virtues of faith and hope. I forestall my discussion of temperance until the following chapter, which focuses mainly on the moral vices. My aim in this chapter is more to present Aquinas' view than to rigorously defend it.[104] As has been alluded to in the introduction, Aquinas understands evil to be privative in nature. In order to understand what it is to be vicious or to act immorally we must first understand what vice is a privation of, namely of virtue.[105] Hence before treating moral wrongdoing in general or evil in particular it is necessary to spell out proper action in terms of love and the sort of virtues that a loving moral agent will have. In this way the account of moral evil, as it will be developed in subsequent chapters, will presuppose various aspects of

[104] For a fuller treatment, see Budziszewski's 2017 *Commentary on Thomas Aquinas's Virtue Ethics*.
[105] Objections to the privation account are addressed in chapter 4.

Aquinas' understanding of the virtues, but the core of it should still be intelligible to someone who rejects, for instance, Aquinas' understanding of faith.[106]

As has been said, charity is defined as friendship with God.[107] Counterintuitively Aquinas also considers it to be a virtue, namely the virtue associated with love. Indeed, charity is the chief virtue for Aquinas.[108] Not only that, but it is the form of all the virtues.[109] That is to say, the other moral virtues count as virtues only insofar as they in some way participate in charity. An otherwise courageous act would not count as perfectly courageous if it were not motivated by and contextualised by charity. In this way Aquinas holds to a unity of the virtues thesis. It is not quite that none of the virtues can exist without one another, but that all of the other virtues require charity. Several questions are raised by these few points. For instance, how can charity be both a friendship and a virtue? Is it really plausible that an explicitly theological motivation is required for authentic virtue? And would contextualising all virtuous action within the context of friendship with God instrumentalise the people we do good things for, by treating them merely as means to the end of loving God? If I were kind to a friend's family simply out of love for the friend then I would plausibly not be loving the family members for who they are in and of themselves, but only *as family members of* my friend. In order to answer these questions, it is first necessary to examine what virtue means for Aquinas.

The Nature of Virtue

Aquinas affirms Augustine's definition of virtue, that 'Virtue is a good quality of the mind, by which one lives rightly, which no one uses badly, which God works in us without us.'[110] Significantly, Aquinas comments, 'This formulation captures the definition of virtue, and if we leave out the last clause, it applies to every human

[106] As discussed in the introduction.
[107] ST II-II, Q. 23, Art. 1.
[108] *Disputed Questions on Virtue*, On Charity, Article 2.
[109] *Disputed Questions on Virtue*, On Charity, Article 3.
[110] *Disputed Questions on Virtue*, On the Virtues in General, Art. 2. The original definition seems to be a quote from a later summary of Augustine's writing on virtue, found in the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard (2.27.1), which Aquinas wrote a commentary on.

virtue.'[111]

As is seen in the given definition, virtues are properties of the mind, but are inherently directed towards right action. The goodness of a virtue is threefold in the definition. Virtue is a good quality of the mind, which is to say it is perfective of the intellective part of the human person, including both intellect and will. It is directed towards right living, which is to say it is perfective of action. Finally, it cannot be used badly, which is to say that the will functions properly when guided by the virtues.

Aquinas has a fairly broad understanding of virtue, including 'moral, intellectual, and theological virtues.'[112] These categories are meant to together allow the human person to live a life directed towards the good in love. All the faculties of a person are by nature directed toward the good of that person. This is true of involuntary faculties, such as our stomachs' propensity to digest food, which either function properly or malfunction without our direct control. It is also true of voluntary faculties, governing such things as how we think and act. Since the proper functioning of the latter depends upon us choosing to use these faculties well, our flourishing requires us to have the disposition to use voluntary faculties well. These dispositions are the virtues.[113] These dispositions must be habitual in nature for multiple reasons according to Aquinas. Firstly, 'for steadfastness in our operation. After all, what depends on the operation [of the faculty] alone changes easily if it has not been stabilised by a habitual inclination.'[114] A second and related reason is that 'unless a habit in some way inclines the rational power to one course, then whenever we have to perform an operation, we must first make an inquiry about what to do', which is inefficient and cumbersome in real life situations.[115] That being said, as J. Budziszewski notes, the 'Latin term [*habitus*] is much broader than its English cognate, "habit," which we tend to use for things we do without thinking about them. By contrast, a *habitus* can be any kind of dispositional quality whatsoever.'[116]

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[112] Ibid.
[113] *Disputed Questions on Virtue*, On the Virtues in General, 1.
[114] *Disputed Questions on Virtue*, On the Virtues in General, 1.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Budziszewski, *Commentary on Thomas Aquinas's Virtue* Ethics, 2017, p. 12.

Virtue, Eudaimonia, and Beatitude

Aquinas' theory of virtue could be described as eudaemonist in nature. The virtues gain their worth because they allow for humans to live a good life, achieving eudaimonia, a deep flourishing of the human person associated with worthwhile happiness. It is difficult to give a precise definition of eudaimonia, though it is sufficient for present purposes to say that it is the deepest and fullest kind of goodness available to a rational creature, involving the fulfilment of that creature's rational nature. Eudaemonist theories of virtue could be separated based on the strength of the relationship between virtue and eudaimonia. For the stoics, for instance, moral virtue is sufficient for eudaimonia.[117] For Aristotle, by contrast, virtue is necessary but insufficient.[118] Human well-being is dependent on all sorts of contingent goods such that contingent circumstances like poverty can significantly obstruct the fulfilment of our natures. Even our rational natures seem to be impeded by such circumstances. Without a reasonable degree of wealth, for instance, it is quite difficult to devote the necessary resources to the study of philosophy or the natural sciences.

Aquinas could be taken as situated in between these two views. As Brian Davies explains:

> The English word "happiness" can be used to translate at least two different Latin terms: *felicitas* and *beatitudo*. Aquinas makes copious use of both of these words, and there are times when he writes as though they are equivalent or synonymous. Primarily, however, he speaks of *felicitas* when he means happiness enjoyed by people before death (earthly happiness, so we might say): the delights that food can provide, the pleasure of looking at a beautiful painting, the enjoyment of good health, freedom from pain and worry, and so on… Yet such is not the case when it comes to his notion of *beatitudo* (which is the kind of happiness in which he seems to be most interested). This, for him, is complete

[117] Annas, 1993.

[118] *Nichomachean Ethics* 1100a10. Aristotle comments that even a virtuous and happy man like Homer's Priam could not be called blessed. Priam, despite his virtue, witnessed his country being despoiled by the Greek campaign and his dead son being dragged around the city behind a chariot.

> fulfillment to which nothing can be added by way of improvement or variation. Nor can it ever be lost. And that is because he takes it to be the ultimate good for people: union with God after death. For Aquinas, therefore, *felicitas*, good though it may often be, is happiness in an imperfect or restricted sense while *beatitudo* is not.[119]

Beatitude (*beatitudo*) is Aquinas' equivalent of eudaimonia, and though being analogous to the classical concept of eudaimonia, it is relevantly different.[120] Beatitude, the final end of the human person, is ultimately found in union with God. As we shall see later on in this chapter, Aquinas takes all the other goods in human life to be properly contextualised by union with God. This union chiefly occurs through both the intellect and the will. The nature of beatitude is conditioned by our rational natures, for Aquinas. In the *Compendium of Theology* he writes that:

> So great is the desire for knowledge within us that, once we apprehend an effect, we wish to know its cause. Moreover, after we have gained some knowledge of the circumstances investing a thing, our desire is not satisfied until we penetrate to its essence. Therefore our natural desire for knowledge cannot come to rest within us until we know the first cause, and that not in any way, but in its very essence. This first cause is God. Consequently the ultimate end of an intellectual creature is the vision of God in His essence… Once this end is reached, natural desire must find its full fruition. The divine essence thus united to the intellect of the one who sees God, is the adequate principle for knowing everything, and is the source of all good, so that nothing can remain to be desired.[121]

Although the essence of beatitude is held to be present in the intellect, Aquinas does think that there is of necessity a loving movement of the will by virtue of which a person delights in the apprehension of God. Joseph Stenberg convincingly argues Aquinas believes the movement of love for God and the resultant delight are themselves a part of

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[119] Davies, 2012, p. 655-6 (ebook ed.)
[120] For a detailed treatment of the relationship between the two concepts, see Stephen Theron's *Thomas Aquinas on Virtue and Human Flourishing* (2018).
[121] Compendium, 104, 106.

the essence of beatitude, but are secondary to the intellectual vision. He explains the relation between the intellect and the delight of the will in beatitude as follows:

> First, [Aquinas] conveys that the vision is ultimately responsible for making perfect happiness what it is. Second, he conveys that the vision in no way depends upon delight, but the delight radically depends on the vision. Third, he conveys a necessary relationship between the vision and delight, such that, if one has the vision, then one necessarily has the delight as well. Finally and in my view most importantly, Aquinas successfully conveys that the vision is far more important than the delight in perfect happiness.[122]

This approach to happiness might seem rather cold and cerebral. It could appear to obscure the fact that, though we have rationality, we are still animals with other aspects of our nature and flourishing too. Aquinas holds that this perfect beatitude, which cannot be fully enjoyed in this present life for theological reasons, would also overflow in bodily joy.[123]

The happiness available in this life, however, is understood to be an imperfect participation in and likeness to beatitude.[124] The deepest union with God available in this life is found through the theological virtue of charity, the virtue of love for God (and derivatively for everyone else). Aquinas writes of charity, 'By receiving this gratuitous gift, therefore, man is made pleasing to God and is brought so far that by the love of charity he becomes one spirit with God: he is in God and God is in him.'[125] Since this union is the highest end and deepest joy, for Aquinas, the fullness of happiness and human well-being in this life is to be found within the virtues themselves, since charity is the very form of the virtues. Therefore, it does not make sense to speak of the fullness of human well-being to be even conceptually or rarely separated from the virtues, for Aquinas.

However, Aquinas does think that, though the greatest joy in this life is found in the

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[122] Stenberg, 2016, pp. 88-9.
[123] ST Supp. Q. 75, Art. 1, ad. 4.
[124] ST I-II, Q. 3, Art. 6.
[125] *Compendium of Theology*, I. 214.

virtues, it can be hampered by 'the changeableness of fortune, the weakness of the human body, the imperfection and instability of knowledge and virtue, all of which are hindrances to the perfection of happiness.'[126]

Intellectual Virtue

The intellectual virtues are, predictably, about perfecting the intellect. In order to love well we need to be adept at learning how things are. Otherwise we will not be able to identify what the good of something is, and how to act in such a way as to promote that good. In order to love one's child well a parent must know what a human child is like, and how to go about using that knowledge in a way that will be beneficial. If the parent lacked either kind of knowledge then the child would likely be malnourished. The virtues of the speculative intellect, to allow us to figure out what the natures (and hence goods) of things are, are understanding, science, and wisdom.[127] The virtues of the practical intellect, to figure out how to use speculative knowledge, are art and prudence.[128] Since they are tangential to my purposes, I will just list what these virtues are for. It must be noted, alongside J. Budziszewski, though, that 'each of the terms "science," "wisdom," "prudence," "art," and "understanding" presents difficulties because its contemporary English meaning is so different from the meanings of the Latin term translated.'[129] Regarding the virtues of the speculative intellect, understanding has to do with intuitive insight not requiring demonstration, science has to do with discovering the immediate causes of things, and wisdom has to do with discovering the ultimate causes of things, or to put it another way, the highest goods. Regarding the practical intellect, prudence is about, based on knowledge of the highest goods, figuring out how to act, and art is about figuring out how to make things (where 'make' is used in an extremely broad sense).[130]

Interestingly, the intellectual virtues do not perfectly fulfil Aquinas' definition of virtue. The intellectual virtues, though they are essential for right living, can be used for bad

[126] ST Supp. Q. 75, Art. 1.
[127] ST I-II, Q. 57, Art. 2.
[128] ST I-II, Q. 57, Art. 3-4.
[129] Budziszewski 2017, *Commentary on Thomas Aquinas's Virtue Ethics*, p. 24.
[130] For a nice overview of the intellectual virtues in Aquinas, see Gregory Reichberg's essay 'The Intellectual Virtues', in Pope, 2002, pp. 131-150.

ends, or at least not put to proper use. As Gregory Reichberg comments, '[f]ully possessed of the medical art, an eminent surgeon may nevertheless refuse to operate on a sick individual who clearly stands to benefit from this intervention.'[131] For this reason, Aquinas holds that the intellectual virtues are only virtues in 'a relative sense', whereas virtue considered absolutely resides in a perfection of the will.[132] I will now turn to the moral virtues, particularly prudence, and to the theological virtues, in greater depth to complete the account of virtue.

Moral Virtues

The moral virtues differ from the intellectual virtues in that they are explicitly directed toward the agent choosing to act well. At the centre of Aquinas' account of morals are the four cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude (or courage), and temperance. Aquinas comments that they are called cardinal in reference to the noun for a hinge, *cardo*, and the cardinal virtues can be considered the hinges of the door to a life fitting for human beings.[133] The list of these four virtues can be found in ancient Greek thought and also makes its way into Jewish thought. Plato, in the *Symposium*, has Agathon organise his speech praising Love as 'king of the gods' around Love's possession of the four virtues.[134] The Wisdom of Solomon (8:7 RSV) tells us 'if anyone loves righteousness, her labors are virtues; for she teaches self-control and prudence, justice and courage; nothing in life is more profitable for men than these.'

In his understanding of moral and intellectual virtue, Aquinas is drawing heavily from Aristotle. It is fairly common for Aquinas to be interpreted as basically copying Aristotle's ethics, while adding the theological virtues in order to ceremoniously baptise it. For instance, the highly influential twentieth century commentator on religion, Richard Niebuhr, commented:

> In man to man relationships, the life of a good man will be characterized by the practice of the four classical virtues: temperance, courage (or fortitude), justice,

[131] Reichberg in Pope, 2002, p. 141.
[132] ST I-II, Q. 56, Art. 3.
[133] *Disputed Questions on Virtue*, On the Cardinal Virtues, art. 1.
[134] *Symposium*, 195-198

> and above all wisdom or prudence, that refined ability to judge correctly what is right to know and do. This much can be developed by natural and reasonable man, quite apart from revelation and faith. In all this Thomas does little more than reproduce Aristotle. God endows man, through Christian revelation and the church with its sacraments, with the added gift of the three theological virtues, faith, hope and love, which direct man to God Himself, and which therefore crown the four natural virtues. These seven cardinal virtues are the internal habits of the good life.[135]

The eminent Thomistic philosopher Ralph McInerney takes a similar position when describing Aquinas' ethics as set forth in the Summa Theologiae:

> The dominant voice in these questions is that of Aristotle... It is fair to say that these discussions would have been unthinkable apart from the influence of Aristotle, particularly, though by no means exclusively, of his *Nicomachean Ethics.*[136]

McInerney also writes, in the *Ethica Thomistica*, 'Thomas, as a Christian, could not wholly share Aristotle's notion of the good life, but the Aristotelian conception provides him with the natural base on which to erect his account of the graced and supernatural life to which we are called.'[137] The idea is that Aquinas' natural philosophy is basically that of Aristotle, with the differences between the thinkers emerging when it comes to the supernatural.

This phenomenon was well described by Jean Porter, who decries the 'tendency among Aquinas scholars… to read Aquinas as if he not only baptised Aristotle, but is himself little more than Aristotle baptised.'[138] Eleonore Stump effectively summarised such interpretations as follows. 'On the Aristotelian ethics that many scholars suppose Aquinas accepts, a moral virtue is a habit which is acquired through practice and which disposes the will to act in accordance with reason in varying circumstances.'[139]

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[135] Beach & Niebuhr, 1973, p. 206.
[136] McInerney, 1993, pp. 25-6.
[137] McInerney, 1997, p. 31.
[138] Porter, 2005, 167-191, as quoted in Stump, 2012, p. 31.
[139] Stump, 2012, p. 30.

Obviously, this interpretive tendency is not totally wrong headed. Aquinas did draw heavily from Aristotle's ethical framework. But the theological virtues, especially charity (friendship with God), are far more important than mere add-ons to a pre-existing model. Rather, they are ultimately the centre of Aquinas' ethics. Their presence reorients the four Aristotelian virtues and situates them within the broader framework of charity. To make this point explicit, I will briefly go through the four cardinal virtues and show how charity fundamentally reorients them.[140]

Prudence

For Aquinas, prudence is the chief moral virtue. It is the only virtue to be classed as both an intellectual and moral virtue. What prudence does is apply wisdom, knowledge of the highest goods, to lower goods in order to direct action.[141] This is essential because we are rarely in situations where we have difficulty choosing the only good available to us. Typically, we have numerous goods we could choose to pursue, and need to adjudicate between them.

To give an example, if someone is extremely tired one night and a friend asks for advice on a personal issue, he must choose which good to seek in that moment. It is not as simple as just choosing which of the obvious goods, rest or helping the friend, is greater. He needs to look more deeply into the goods of rest and of helping the friend in order to discern what he ought to do. He might figure that he can do without a bit of sleep and so help his friend. However, if his fatigue is such that he would be unlikely to give his friend good advice then it might be best to postpone the conversation. Similarly, if he needs to be well rested because the next morning important goods will depend on his cognitive function (perhaps he is a surgeon with a complicated and high-risk surgery early in the morning), it might also be best to postpone the conversation. In order to discern such things, he must take the goods he is choosing between (rest and advising his friend) and examine why they are good in this context. This is what is meant by ordering actions by knowledge of higher goods, which is the point of prudence.

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[140] A good discussion of how charity reorients the cardinal virtues can be found in Sherwin, 2005, pp. 170-201.

[141] For an excellent treatment of prudence, and the relationship between knowledge and love more generally in Aquinas, see Michael Sherwin's *By Knowledge & By Love* (2005).

Prudence has an incredibly central place amongst the moral virtues. The eminent twentieth century Thomist Josef Pieper writes, 'prudence is cause, root, mother, measure, precept, guide, and prototype of all ethical virtues; it acts in all of them, perfecting them to their true nature; all participate in it, and by virtue of this participation they are virtues.'[142] There is much that could be said to unpack such a quote, but I will just say something about how prudence is described as the guide of the other moral virtues, and how it can be said that the other virtues gain their nature as virtues through it. Each of the other virtues has its own specific end, the good towards which it oriented. For instance, temperance is directed toward the right use of objects of sense appetites. That is, using well our desires for things on account of the physical pleasure they bring (the most obvious examples being enjoyment in food or sex). Fortitude is about seeking a good and not giving up when difficulties arise. Justice is directed toward the right relations between human beings, by rendering to each his due. Prudence perfects these virtues by ensuring that our actions are actually directed toward the goods that make them valuable. It is possible for someone to value a simulacrum of a virtue when in fact they are valuing something else. Take for instance someone who values fortitude because they think that by resisting obstacles they are demonstrating how strong and resolute they are. Such a person may be acting in accordance with fortitude, but the actions would not be acts of fortitude since they lack the right end. They are not persevering out of love for the good but out of pride. Prudence directs us toward the proper goods of each virtue.[143]

Furthermore, prudence is what allows us to adjudicate between worthy goods associated with the other cardinal virtues themselves in practical situations. Knowing why fortitude is important, and that it gets its goodness from the goodness of what is being pursued, lets us know when to not pursue a worthy good because it will conflict with another significant good. For instance, if someone has been unjustly issued a parking fine then it is just for her to seek to rectify the situation and have the fine reversed. But if the process of getting the fine cancelled is so arduous that it poses a threat to her important relationships then it might well be prudent to give up on the

[142] 1966, p. 8

[143] For a helpful analysis of the conceptual background to Aquinas' account, see Jean Porter's (1996) essay, 'Contested Categories: Reason, Nature, and the Natural Order in Medieval Accounts of the Natural Law,' *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 24, p. 207-232.

attempt to rectify the fine. To continue the attempt despite such consequences would not be an instance of virtuous fortitude but of vicious rashness. As Michael Sherwin writes, 'in order for prudence to determine a proper means to the end, the [other] moral virtues must supply prudence with a proper end; yet, in order for the moral virtues to have a proper end as their object, prudence must determine this proximate end from other candidates.'[144]

In this way, Aquinas follows Aristotle in holding that the moral virtues exist in a golden mean between other vices.[145] What determines if a specific action is an instance of fortitude depends on the deliberations of prudential reason. This yields a unity of the virtues thesis. The moral virtues are only virtues insofar as they are informed by prudence.[146] That prudence, applied wisdom, is the key moral virtue flows from Aquinas' understanding of human nature. Aquinas comments, 'since having reason is what makes a human being human, it must be that a human being's good is to be as reason demands.'[147]

This is especially obvious within personal relationships. If a loved one, say a child, had misbehaved such that some sort of correction was needed, it is not enough to be just so that you know what kind of correction is appropriate. You must also be able to gauge the situation to see if this is the appropriate time or way to give correction. If the child had just learned of the death of a loved one and so was distraught, it might be prudent not to correct them immediately, so as not to add extra emotional burdens to them.

However, it could be difficult to figure out precisely what it is that prudence is tracking. What is it that unifies prudent decisions under the one name? For Aquinas, prudence is ultimately about love. As Finnis writes:

> Practical reasonableness involves not only (i) an intelligent and rationally integrated understanding of practical reason's principles and of the implications

[144] Sherwin, 2005, p. 112.
[145] 'Moral and intellectual virtues do lie in a mean, but in different ways. However, theological virtues do not lie in a mean, except, perhaps, coincidentally'. *Disputed Questions on Virtue*, On the Virtues in General, art. 13.
[146] *Disputed Questions on Virtue,* On the Cardinal Virtues, art. 2.
[147] *Disputed Questions on Virtue*, On the Virtues in General, art. 13.

> that, under the auspices of the master principle of love of neighbor as self, they have in the form of moral standards, but also (ii) the personal self-governance needed to put those conscientious judgments into effect by choices and corresponding action. So *prudentia* has many phases or, as Aquinas says, parts, and enters into every other virtue. It is far removed from "prudence" in the sense of "rational self-interest", for by *prudentia* one is actively aware that self-interest is self-stunting or indeed self-destructive unless one transcends it by one's dispositions and acts of justice and friendship or love.[148]

The reason why it might not be prudent to correct the child while they are in mourning is because you love them and think that the emotional burden of correction would outweigh the good of the correction as regards what is best for the child. Prudence, through applying knowledge of the higher goods, asks the question: how can I best love in this circumstance? After all, the good is the proper object of love. When we love we will the beloved's good. Through looking for the highest goods, the function of wisdom, we learn how to appropriately order our loves. As Michael Sherwin writes:

> Since love is the principle of the will's motion, to assert that prudence depends on a rightly ordered will implies that prudence depends on rightly ordered love. As we would expect, this is exactly what Aquinas affirms. While he denies that prudence is essentially love, he nonetheless affirms that prudence depends on rightly ordered love, because "love moves to the act of prudence." It is for this reason… that Aquinas can follow Augustine in affirming that the virtues depend on our rightly ordered love. Aquinas can join Augustine in describing prudence as "love discerning well," because love "moves reason to discern."[149]

It should be clear that prudence as "love discerning well" involves more than simply finding the golden mean for the other virtues. As James F. Keenan summarises, 'prudence has a privileged place among the cardinal virtues: it recognises the ends to which a person is naturally inclined, it establishes the agenda by which one can pursue those ends, it directs the agent's own performance of the pursued activity, and, finally, it

[148] Finnis, 2021, 4.4.1.
[149] Sherwin, 2005, p. 110.

measures the rightness of the action taken. Prudence, in short, guides the agent to living a self-directed life that seeks integration.'[150]

Prudence and Charity

Aquinas holds that the moral virtues are fundamentally transformed when informed by charity, the love of God. Indeed, the relation between prudence and the other virtues is analogous to the relation between charity and all the other virtues it informs. Aquinas writes, '[c]harity is the form, mover, and root of the virtues'.[151] Since charity is love for God, this at first glance seems surprising. It is not obvious how the form of temperance is to be found in love for God. The key to understanding this notion is Aquinas' conception of God as unqualified being and goodness. God, for Aquinas, is not just one being amongst others, not even the preeminent being. Rather, God is pure actuality. Aquinas writes:

> God is existence itself, of itself subsistent. Consequently, He must contain within Himself the whole perfection of being… Now all created perfections are included in the perfection of being; for things are perfect, precisely so far as they have being after some fashion. It follows therefore that the perfection of no one thing is wanting to God.[152]

This basic understanding of God, often called classical theism, is by no means ubiquitous among contemporary philosophers of religion.[153] Many theistic philosophers prefer what is sometimes called theistic personalism.[154] Brian Davies summarises one brand of theistic personalism as follows:

> God is an invisible center of consciousness, a mind with many and varied thoughts, something having beliefs, and something to be strongly compared to us insofar as we subscribe to the distinction between mind and body defended by

[150] Keenan, 'The Virtue of Prudence (IIa IIae, qq. 47-56)', in Pope (ed.) 2002, p. 259.
[151] *Disputed Questions on Virtue*, On Charity, Art. 3.
[152] ST I Q. 4, Art. 2
[153] For an excellent treatment of the nature of classical theism and its relation to other conceptions of God, see Feser's 'The Nature of God and of His Relationship to the World' in his 2017 book, *Five Proofs of the Existence of God*, pp. 169-248.
[154] For a classic defence of a theistic personalist conception of God, See Swinburne's 1977 book, *The Coherence of Theism.*

Descartes as he develops his account of what he takes himself to be.[155]

Theistic personalist views of God do not understand God as subsistent being (and hence goodness) itself, which is necessary for Aquinas' understanding of charity. When we love something, we perceive its goodness then, since we are directed towards goodness by virtue of our rationality, we will the fullness of that good and desire union with it. Understood as unqualified goodness, God is the ultimate object of the will and, consequently, the ultimate object of love. Indeed, the goodness and being of all other things is taken by Aquinas to be a participation in the goodness and being of God.[156] Hence, for Aquinas, to love anything at all for its own goodness is in some qualified sense to love God. Similarly, in loving God one of necessity also loves everything and everyone that exists to at least some extent, if love for God is to be genuine. This is on account of two things. Firstly, because insofar as something exists it participates in the goodness and nature of God. Secondly, because in the context of friendship one loves what the friend loves, as a result of loving the friend as another self, as discussed in the previous chapter. Since God loves everything[157] it is fitting that someone who loves God will love everything else for God's sake, insofar as God is loved out of friendship, as Brian Davies discusses.[158] Aquinas takes the love of charity to most properly apply to other rational creatures, but allows that it also applies to irrational beings, though in a different way.[159] In fact, this love is one of the chief ways humans are united to God for Aquinas. He writes, '[t]he Divine Essence Itself is charity' and 'the charity whereby formally we love our neighbour is a participation of Divine charity.'[160] Indeed, the love for neighbour participates in the divine love, for Aquinas, whereby 'man is made pleasing to God and is brought so far that by the love of charity he becomes one spirit with God: he is in God and God is in him.'[161]

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[155] Davies, 2014, p. 351.
[156] ST I Q. 4, Art. 2
[157] ST I, Q. 20, Art. 2. '… a thing has existence, or any kind of good, only inasmuch as it is willed by God. To every existing thing, then, God wills some good. Hence, since to love anything is nothing else than to will good to that thing, it is manifest that God loves everything that exists.'
[158] Davies, 2014, pp. 240-2.
[159] ST II-II, Q. 25, Art. 3.
[160] ST II-II, Q. 23, Art. 2, Ad. 1.
[161] Compendium of Theology, I, 214.

Coming back to the previous distinction between perfect and imperfect happiness, charity is clearly directed towards perfect happiness. Since imperfect happiness is taken to be a participation in perfect happiness, charity is not of mere theological significance but is taken to frame the entirety of one's moral life as the form of the virtues, as previously discussed.

We could summarise the ways we can love as follows. Firstly, we can love people or objects for our own sake, because they will in some way contribute to our good (as discussed in the previous chapter, this is the love of concupiscence). Secondly, we can love people for their own sake, as if they are another self (the love of friendship). When we love ourselves or others, we are willing the good of the beloved. This is implicitly loving goodness itself, since goodness is what we are choosing for the beloved, who we care about.[162] Since God is unqualified goodness this is a kind of indirect love for God, but it is only loving God for the sake of the beloved. To be clear, this is not to say that whenever we love someone, we are loving God with the love of friendship, that is, that we are willing a good to God for God's own sake. Hence, in addition to this there is charity, where we can love God *qua* God, and not just God for the sake of other people we love. Charity, though directly applying to love of God, also gives us new ways of loving everyone else as well. Since the good of each specific person is a participation in the goodness of God, and is also loved by God, we can through charity love everyone that exists *qua* participation in the goodness of God, whom we love, and *qua* someone beloved by God. Since we ourselves exist, this gives us a new way of loving ourselves, too.

This helps us to understand how charity helps to situate the other virtues, for Aquinas. Prudence takes knowledge of what the highest goods are, that lower goods participate in, and applies it to action. But knowledge of God, understood as the unqualified good, is the good in which all other goods are incorporated. Hence prudence, and the other moral virtues by extension, are perfected by knowledge and love of God. As Josef Pieper puts it, 'prudence is the mold of the moral virtues; but charity molds even prudence itself.'[163] Or, to put it another way, for Aquinas, all of the other virtues properly operate

[162] This is an application of the distinction between the love of friendship and love of concupiscence in ST I-II, Q. 26, Art. 4.
[163] Pieper, 1966, p. 37.

within the context of friendship with God.

Justice

As Pieper notes, 'whenever "justice" is analysed, so vast a multitude of meanings come to mind that it is quite impossible to master them.'[164] Nonetheless, it is worth making a few points. Aquinas defines the virtue of justice as 'a habit whereby a man renders to each one his due by a constant and perpetual will'.[165] It is a broad virtue, ranging from the respect due one's parents, the giving of aid to the disadvantaged, and even rendering worship to God. There is also the contentious issue over the place of rights in Thomism. As Lloyd Weinreb notes, 'the philosophy of natural law has on the whole not been much concerned with the matter of rights.'[166] Yet two of the most influential Thomists of recent times, Jacques Maritain and John Finnis,[167] have developed nuanced systems for understanding rights. Here I will just comment on Aquinas' view of property rights and the obligations we have to the economically disadvantaged, because this provides a clear example of Aquinas' approach to justice.[168]

Peter Singer, in his influential essay *Famine, Affluence, and Morality*, argues that our obligations to the poor are far more radical than most Westerners suppose, requiring what would seem to be a severe degree of self-sacrificial giving. To contend that his views would not 'have seemed so extreme at other times and in other places', he offers a supportive quote from Aquinas, 'a writer not normally thought of as a way-out radical'.[169] The implications of Aquinas' theory of justice may indeed qualify as radical by the standards of the contemporary west.

Aquinas has a nuanced view of property rights. As Eleonore Stump explains, 'it is human agreement, added to natural justice and supplementing it, which allows certain people to claim certain things as their own. Consequently, it is appropriate for human beings to *hold* certain things as their property, and to *acquire* and *dispose* of certain things as their

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[164] Pieper, 1966, p. 43.
[165] ST II-II Q. 58, Art. 1.
[166] Weinreb, 1992, in Robert P. George, *Natural Law Theory: Contemporary Essays*, p. 278.
[167] Maritain, 1943, *The Rights of Man and Natural Law;* Finnis, 2011, *Natural Law & Natural Rights.*
[168] For a full length treatment see Jean Porter's 2016 book, *Justice as a Virtue: a Thomistic Perspective.*
[169] Singer, 1972, p. 238.

own.'[170] But at the same time, 'when it comes to the *use* of property, a person ought to hold his possessions not as his own but as (in principle) common, that is, ready to use them for the common good.'[171] Aquinas thinks there are practical considerations in favour of possessing property.[172] For instance, humans will be more likely to work orderly and thus productively if each has a particular area of responsibility, such as a specific patch of land. Amongst other things, observing positive rights over land and other possessions reduces conflicts that arise over resources when there is no way of ordering who has priority of use over a certain resource. However, these reasons are not always operative. For instance, 'in cases of need all things are common property, so that there would seem to be no sin in taking another's property, for need has made it common.'[173] Following this statement, Aquinas writes the passage quoted by Singer:

> Things which are of human right cannot derogate from natural right or Divine right. Now according to the natural order established by Divine Providence, inferior things are ordained for the purpose of succoring man's needs by their means. Wherefore the division and appropriation of things which are based on human law, do not preclude the fact that man's needs have to be remedied by means of these very things. *Hence whatever certain people have in superabundance is due, by natural law, to the purpose of succoring the poor*. For this reason Ambrose [Loc. cit., Article 2, Objection 3] says, and his words are embodied in the Decretals (Dist. xlvii, can. Sicut ii): "It is the hungry man's bread that you withhold, the naked man's cloak that you store away, the money that you bury in the earth is the price of the poor man's ransom and freedom."[174]

This indeed has radical implications. Of course, prudence is still required to discern how best to give to the disadvantaged in helpful ways, especially since modern westerners have numerous other calls by justice as well as serving the poor. There are children to raise, parents to look after, and many other demands of justice. However, it would be utterly foolish for a Thomist to utilise any of these calls as excuses to avoid giving of our

[170] Stump, 2003, p. 324.
[171] Ibid.
[172] ST II-II Q. 66, Art. 2.
[173] ST II-II, Q. 66, Art. 7.
[174] ST II-II, Q. 66, Art. 7. Emphasis added.

resources to those who need them (as humans are wont to do). As discussed, charity transforms the meaning of justice as a virtue. Issues of justice are not merely compartmentalised to one's relationship with the person he should be aiding, but are contextualised by his relationship with God and, derivatively, everyone else. Hence to willingly and knowingly choose to refrain from giving one's due to those in need out of avarice (for instance) is to implicitly reject goodness as such, which degrades one's relationships with God and with everyone else, who ought to be loved for their intrinsic goodness. Aquinas writes:

> For if we call avarice the love and desire of temporal goods in such a way that we make them our end, avarice will always be a mortal sin [a wrongdoing which destroys charity in the human heart]. For turning toward a created good as our end causes turning away from the immutable good, which ought to be our ultimate end, since there cannot be several ultimate ends.[175]

Faith

It might seem unusual to consider faith a virtue based on what has been said of Aquinas' views so far. This could be for two reasons. Firstly, faith may not seem to be a good thing to be had for a person. For instance, if faith is taken to be against reason, then it plausibly is not the sort of thing that befits a rational animal. Secondly, faith does not appear to have to do with virtue as such, even if it is good. Faith, as commonly understood, has to do with believing things and what we believe is not under the control of our wills. Since virtue has to do with our wills functioning properly, if faith is some sort of excellence it would plausibly be an excellence of the intellect and not of the will. Unsurprisingly, these concerns can be cleared up by clarifying what Aquinas means by faith.

Faith, for Aquinas, is not simply the intellectual assent to a set of religious propositions, though this is an important aspect of it. The theological virtue of faith is best understood by its relation to charity. We are called to love God and neighbour, but 'the will does not move toward anything except in so far as it is apprehended by the intellect.'[176] Or, as

[175] De Malo, Q. 13, Art. 3.
[176] ST II-II, Q. 4, Art. 7.

Dominic Doyle summarised the relation between the three theological virtues:

> The theological virtues follow this order [faith, hope, love] because some apprehension must precede appetitive movement (since you cannot want something until you have some notion of what it is you want), and appetite in turn precedes union (since you cannot unite with something unless you first move towards it). The theological virtues culminate in charity since it unites the believer to God in friendship.[177]

So before we can love anything we must first have some knowledge of what it is that we are to love. This is fairly commonsensical even in everyday affairs. If we meet someone and become friends with them, how well we can love them will depend upon how much of them we know. If we only know fairly general things, such as where they grew up and what their occupation is, then we will not know how to will their good well, since we will not really know what their good is. If, however, they share more of themselves and their personal struggles with us then we will be able to help them, or at least want to help them, achieve their good in a deeper way. Aquinas takes mutual knowledge itself to give people a kind of union, a mutual indwelling, with one another.[178] Faith has to do with trusting someone when they share about themselves with us, and it thus addresses the limits our ignorance places on our ability to love. Of course, to an extent these limits can be overcome through our natural reasoning. We can do research about someone and watch how they go about their lives in order to find out more about them. But in order to love someone more deeply we require knowledge of them which only they or those close to them can share with us.[179] The intellectual assent on the basis of this trust is what faith is.

This helps reveal why faith does not have to contradict natural reason. It is perfectly reasonable to believe someone when they reveal things about themselves. But it does require us to trust that they are not lying to us. This trust is why faith involves the will and not just the intellect. Trusting what someone says will not typically approach the epistemic certainty of logical demonstration, though it is nonetheless reasonable.

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[177] Doyle, 2011, p. 21.
[178] ST I-II, Q. 28, Art. 2.
[179] For a fuller treatment of faith and the testimony of others, see Stump, 2014.

Aquinas holds that in such cases the will can direct the intellect to accept what is presented to it. This might seem counterintuitive, since we do not ordinarily think that we can form beliefs by willing ourselves to assent to them. We cannot, for instance, not believe in a tree that we can presently clearly see with our own eyes.[180] Or, to use a rhetorical question from William P. Alston, 'Can you, at this moment, start to believe that the United States is still a colony of Great Britain, just by deciding to do so?'[181] However, in cases where we do not have a firm belief it does in fact seem possible to affect our beliefs volitionally. For instance, an investor who has heavily invested in a single project that initially looked promising but is failing to deliver. The investor may keep putting in more and more money, insistent that the project will finally become successful, even though all the evidence goes against it. He is unwilling to face the evidence as it stands because he has set his will on the project's success. Analogous occurrences can happen in relationships, where a lover becomes convinced that their beloved can and will be able to change their ways, despite failing to change numerous times already. The investor's and lover's wills have become committed, and belief follows their wills.

These are destructive scenarios, but there are positive instances of the same phenomenon. Lovers must be able to make themselves vulnerable to one another and share themselves even if it is risky in order to grow closer to one another. In sharing, they are committing themselves to believing that the beloved will not betray their trust. Hence faith is required by both people when one shares with the other. For the one sharing, that their vulnerability will be respected, and for the one being shared with, that what is being shared is true.[182] Additionally, as Eleonore Stump points out, 'if trust is always involuntary, then it makes no sense for a testifier to ask his audience for trust… Unless at least some trust is voluntary, then trust is not the kind of thing a person can ever *give* (or be invited to give).'[183]

Given these considerations it does seem plausible to consider faith in everyday matters a fitting area for virtue, between a vice of being too sceptical and untrusting on the one

[180] At least not unless we have some special reason to doubt our experience of sight.
[181] Alston, 1989, p. 122.
[182] There are numerous obstacles to faith and vulnerability, which are helpfully discussed by Stump, 2010, pp. 128-50.
[183] Stump, 2014, p. 207.

side and a vice of being unreasonably credulous on the other.[184] Certainly Aquinas thinks that there are both obligations to be trustworthy and also to prudently trust others in daily life. Regarding the first, he writes:

> Since man is a social animal, one man naturally owes another that without which human society cannot be preserved. Men would not be able to live with one another unless they were able to trust one another, as when manifesting the truth to one another. And therefore the virtue of genuineness in some manner answers to the notion of debt.[185]

Regarding the obligation to be appropriately trusting, he writes:

> That without which human society cannot be preserved is above all necessary for man, and to humanity as a whole, since man is a political animal (as is said in 8 Ethic). But without trust (*fide*) human society cannot be preserved, because it is necessary that one man believe another as to promises and testimony and other things of this sort which are necessary for men to remain together. Therefore, trust (*fides*) is in the highest degree necessary to humankind.[186]

For Aquinas, this applies pre-eminently to the case of God. We can figure some things out about God through natural reason, such as God's existence, being timeless, being the ground of everything that exists, being all powerful and all knowing, and the like.[187] In addition to these things, however, Aquinas also holds that God has shared personally with humans through revelation and through the authority of the Church. Aquinas does believe that accepting these requires trust, though also that natural reason can provide grounds for thinking revelation and the teaching of the Church reliable and authentic.[188] However, faith of sorts is required in many human relationships, but ought not always be regarded as a general duty. After all, in many cases it is not optimal to trust people

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[184] For an excellent development of this idea, see Marie I. George, 2006, 'Aquinas on the Nature of Trust', *The Thomist*, Vol. 70, No. 1, pp. 103-123.
[185] ST II-II, Q. 109, Art. 3, ad. 1.
[186] In Boeth. De Trin., Q. 3, Art. 1, 3rd sed contra.
[187] For Aquinas himself on these, see ST I, Q. 2-26; for a classic secondary work see Garrigou-Lagrange, 2016.
[188] SCG 1, 4-8.

unqualifiedly. With God, however, Aquinas thinks that faith is always positive, in the sense that God would never betray loved ones and thus can always be trusted (though he acknowledges that the certainty of God's revelation is made difficult to perceive given the limits of natural reason).[189]

This helps approach answers for the two initial concerns with faith as a virtue. Faith properly does not go against reason, even if it goes beyond what can be demonstrated with it, and it is a virtue because it refers to the will's act of choosing to trust, and not simply on the intellect's judgment, though the intellectual judgment is relevant.[190]

Hope and Fortitude

There is a potential problem here. If we do not believe that the good of the other and the union we seek with them is possible then we will not be able to place our trust in either ourselves or them to achieve it. To give a moral example, every time the unfaithful husband breaks his promises and cheats on his spouse they will both have less reason to trust him next time, and so trusting in him to remain faithful will be harder. To give a non-moral example, a doctor seeking a treatment for a desperate patient might find herself unable to keep searching if overtaken by the apparent fruitlessness of her efforts. What is lacking in both cases is hope that the good being sought is possible.
Aquinas distinguishes between hope as a passion, fortitude as a moral virtue, and hope as a theological virtue. The passion of hope is just the felt desire for some difficult-to-achieve good, and is by itself value-neutral.[191] It is good when applied well, but the passion of hope can also be the result of 'heat and high spirits, on account of wine', or the result of inexperience.[192] More important is the distinction between fortitude and hope as a theological virtue.

Fortitude is the disposition to not give up the fight for some good even if it proves immensely difficult and unlikely to achieve. It is the virtue which moderates the irascible

[189] ST II-II, Q. 4, Art. 8.
[190] Obviously a great deal more could be said. In depth Thomistic accounts of epistemology could help here. See Lonergan, 1957, and Maritain, 1937 for classic treatments. An excellent contemporary account which explores these questions in a Thomistic fashion is Eleonore Stump's magisterial *Wandering in Darkness* (2010).
[191] ST I-II, Q. 40.
[192] ST I-II Q. 40, Art. 6.

appetite, which concerns the passions of hope, fear, and daring.[193] The irascible appetite concerns things that have both an element that is desirability and of aversion. A soldier both seeks victory, which is desirable, but also has an aversion to losing his life. In Aquinas' understanding, daring is strictly speaking that which opposes the fear, however a person will only dare to risk the danger being feared (death) if he has hope of achieving the relevant good (victory). Hence, fortitude is strictly about navigating both fear and daring, while daring presupposes hope. Aquinas writes:

> I answer that, as we have often stated, all these passions belong to the appetitive power. Now every movement of the appetitive power is reducible to one either of pursuit or of avoidance. Again, pursuit or avoidance is of something either by reason of itself or by reason of something else. By reason of itself, good is the object of pursuit, and evil, the object of avoidance: but by reason of something else, evil can be the object of pursuit, through some good attaching to it; and good can be the object of avoidance, through some evil attaching to it. Now that which is by reason of something else, follows that which is by reason of itself. Consequently pursuit of evil follows pursuit of good; and avoidance of good follows avoidance of evil. Now these four things belong to four passions, since pursuit of good belongs to hope, avoidance of evil to fear, the pursuit of the fearful evil belongs to daring, and the avoidance of good to despair. It follows, therefore, that daring results from hope; since it is in the hope of overcoming the threatening object of fear, that one attacks it boldly. But despair results from fear: since the reason why a man despairs is because he fears the difficulty attaching to the good he should hope for.[194]

However, since we sometimes should give up and accept defeat, persistence is not an absolute rule. We need to be prudent to figure out when we can be most loving by persisting and when we can be most loving by diverting our efforts elsewhere. Our doctor above ought not spend all of her time looking into extremely unlikely treatments for one patient while she has many other patients who need her attention. Since fortitude has to do with the appropriate persistence in seeking the good, it is predicated

[193] ST II-II, Q. 123.
[194] ST I-II, Q. 45, Art. 2.

upon prudence and justice to ensure we are persisting in something worthwhile, and persisting in it appropriately given the circumstances. As Josef Pieper comments, 'Every child knows that in the list of cardinal virtues fortitude comes third. This enumeration is not accidental… Prudence and justice precede fortitude. And that means, categorically: without prudence, without justice, there is no fortitude'.[195]

The theological virtue of hope has a closely analogous function, but when applied to the good of union with God. Hope naturally follows faith, for Aquinas. '[E]ven when we have faith, there still remains in the soul an impulse towards something else, namely, the perfect vision of the truth asented to in faith… [S]tirrings of hope arise in the soul of the believer that by God's help he may gain possession of the goods he naturally desires, once he learns of them through faith.'[196] As opposed to ordinary fortitude, hope in God is never held to be a bad thing. Since God is perfectly loving towards each person one ought not be wary of God betraying one's trust. However, for Aquinas, the virtue of hope does have two contrary vices: despair and presumption. One ought not give up hope altogether and despair of union with God, since God's love for the person provides a ground for continued hope.[197] One also ought not decide that they will achieve beatitude no matter what and so abandon the quest for growing in love.[198]

The theological virtues of faith and hope also change the way we can love more generally. Since they are both directed towards union with God in charity, and charity directs us not only to loving God but to loving others as participants in the divine nature who are beloved by God, faith and hope also indirectly impact our love for others in notable ways. For instance, since all our other relationships are incorporated into the context of friendship with God, hope leads to increases in fortitude when interacting with others. If I set my hope on being united to God in love, and this requires that I love others too, then I am less likely to give up on myself when I find myself unloving towards an acquaintance or friend, since the good of loving them becomes more significant.

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[195] Pieper, 1966, p. 123.
[196] *Compendium of Theology*, II, 1.
[197] ST II-II, Q. 20.
[198] ST II-II, Q. 21.

Concluding Remarks about the Centrality of Charity

Aquinas' central placement of the theological virtues in his moral philosophy might make us baulk somewhat, since it could be taken to imply that one needs to be religious in order to live virtuously, and it is obvious that many religious people live less virtuously than many non-religious people. It is important to note here that what is included in knowledge and love of God is not merely theological knowledge or external religious observance. Aquinas does, to be sure, think that religious acts of worship have their place in the moral life, but interestingly he categorises them under justice instead of faith or charity. Whereas the theological virtues gain their centrality by connecting a person to God, the unqualified good, directly, Aquinas does not think the same is true of acts of worship classed under religion. He writes that the 'acts whereby God is worshipped do not reach out to God himself, as when we believe God we reach out to Him by believing; for which reason it was stated… that God is the object of faith, not only because we believe in a God, but because we believe God.'[199] Religion is not a theological virtue, in Aquinas' thought. It is entirely possible for someone to engage in external religious practices while having no charity whatsoever.

We should not read Aquinas' privileging of charity as a put down for non-religious people, but rather as an implication of his ultimate understanding of human flourishing. Aquinas holds that beatitude includes the contemplation of God as the truth containing all other truths, which completely satisfies the intellect, and the enjoyment of God as the good containing all other goods, satisfying the will. Genuine charity (alongside faith and hope) are privileged by Aquinas because he takes them to participate (in an albeit very incomplete way) in this ultimate flourishing of the human person.

Of course, since Aquinas does think that unqualified goodness is ultimately to be conceived of in theological terms (as a God who is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, etc.) the perfection of a relationship with goodness as such in this way would include orthodox theological beliefs too, but that is contingent upon the truth of such beliefs. As such, people who disagree with Aquinas' theology could still usefully adapt his overall moral theory as presented here, including the relationship between charity and the virtues, by phrasing it in terms of a person's relating properly to goodness as such,

[199] ST II-II, Q. 81, Art. 4.

though this would not quite be Aquinas' own account.

Another objection could be that charity instrumentalises the love of everyone but God for the sake of loving God. After all, we would think it more perfect love to love someone for their own sake than to love them for the sake of a mutual friend. However, if one has Aquinas' conception of God then this objection is not quite as convincing. Aquinas writes 'being is innermost in each thing and most fundamentally inherent in all things since it is formal in respect of everything found in a thing… Hence it must be that God is in all things, and innermostly'.[200] For Aquinas, the very being and goodness of a thing cannot be separated from the thing's relation to God. Hence, to love something as a qualified participation in God is in fact to love it as that which it most fundamentally is.

Having now examined the relation between Aquinas' understanding of the various moral and theological virtues, we have the requisite background of his understanding of the moral good for a person. This picture of moral flourishing is important since we can now understand what the evildoer is falling short of. With this in place we are now in a position to turn to the vices and examine the various ways in which the human moral character can be distorted.

[200] ST I Q. 8, Art. 1.

Chapter 3: Vice

Introduction

Having seen what the moral life looks like when flourishing, for Aquinas, it is now possible to examine his understanding of moral vice. The capital vices are a classical way of ordering discussions of moral vice which Aquinas makes use of when discussing moral vice. It is not intended to be comprehensive, but the vices are broad enough and representative enough of moral vices that they have long been used in pastoral settings and for moral self-examination.[201] The vices in the canonical list are pride, vainglory, envy, wrath, acedia (also called sloth), avarice, gluttony and lust. Pride is taken to be the most serious, with gluttony and lust the least. The list given has eight vices present, which is counterintuitive since the system is often referred to as the seven deadly sins. Due to the close relationship between pride and vainglory the latter is often omitted from the list, causing Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung to call vainglory 'the forgotten vice.'[202] It took time for the canonical list to develop, and although it is tempting to read them in connection with the seven key virtues of the last chapter, the lists developed independently of one another, with the list of vices being more fluid. Evagrius Ponticus (346-99 AD), an important figure in early Christian monasticism, provides a list of eight demonic thoughts that torment monks living in the desert, 'gluttony, then impurity [sexual lust], avarice, sadness, anger, acedia, vainglory, and last of all pride.'[203] The list develops until Pope Gregory the Great's (540-604 AD) work *Morals on the Book of Job*, where he gives the list that became canonical for later writers including Aquinas. Gregory is significant also for the emphasis he placed on pride, which Aquinas would later follow. He writes:

> For the tempting vices, which fight against us in invisible contest on behalf of pride which reigns over them, some of them go first, like captains; others follow,

[201] A standard classical work to this effect would be Gregory the Great's *The Book of Pastoral Rule* (Gregory, 2007). Some psychologists argue that the classical list can be applied to good effect today, as well. (E.g. Scott Sullender, 2015.)
[202] See DeYoung, 2014.
[203] Evagrius, *Praktikos* 6, quoted in DeYoung, 2009, chapter 1.

> after the manner of an army … For when pride, the queen of sins, has fully possessed a conquered heart, she surrenders it immediately to seven principal sins, as if to some of her generals, to lay it waste … For pride is the root of all evil … but seven principal vices, as its first progeny, no doubt spring from this poisonous root: namely vain glory, envy, anger, melancholy, avarice, gluttony, and lust.[204]

Some contemporary writers are a little bewildered by the list for its apparent modesty. For instance, to Robert Solomon it seems as though 'the "deadly sins" barely jiggle the scales of justice'.[205] We can understand this objection. Why would sloth be a deadly sin but murder or torture not? There are two reasons for this. Firstly, the purpose of the list is misunderstood. The vices are not considered deadly due simply to their intrinsic gravity. Rather, they have been singled out because they are vices thought to lead to other vices and to grave immorality. This is why they have been called capital vices.[206] According to Aquinas, 'a capital vice is one that has a very desirable end, so that through desire for that end, a man proceeds to commit many sins, all of which are said to arise from that vice as from a principal vice.'[207] Secondly, many of the vices have been popularly misunderstood. For instance, sloth is commonly thought of as akin to laziness, but is meant in the list as a kind of voluntary existential sorrow. I will go through each one briefly, explaining what it is and how it relates to charity. I will also observe how some of these vices have in fact led to gravely evil acts. Since evil acts are plausibly a subset of wrong acts,[208] and evil persons are plausibly a subset of the morally vicious, a proper understanding of evil character must rely on some account of moral vice. Hence, before constructing a Thomistic account of evil it is necessary to survey the Thomistic understanding of vice which will contextualise it. As Eleonore Stump writes, 'Dante Alighieri… is a superb Thomist and, in his *Divine Comedy,* he puts flesh on Aquinas's sophisticated philosophical and theological views by means of an allegory with

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[204] *Moralia on Job* 31.45.87-88. As quoted in DeYoung, 2009, chapter 1.
[205] Solomon, 1999, p. 2.
[206] From *caput*, head, which signifies both the head of a river, which starts small but ends up big, and how the head leads or directs the rest of the body.
[207] ST II-II, Q. 153, Art. 4.
[208] Todd Calder's objections notwithstanding, Calder 2013b. I do not mean by this that evil action and character are *nothing but* subsets of wrong actions and vicious character, but simply that evil actions and characters are in fact wrong and vicious.

novelistic elements.'[209] As such, I will often use examples from Dante's *Comedy* when illustrating Aquinas' understanding of different vices.

Before going through the particular vices it is important to note very briefly what Aquinas takes a vice to be, which he explains in Q. 71 of *Summa Theologiae, Prima Secundae.* Roughly, moral vice is understood as a habitual disposition against choosing the goods that reason calls for. Since right reason calls us to love others as well as we can in concrete circumstances, moral vice ultimately involves a failure in proper love. It is also useful to note in passing that, as Brian Davies explains, habits 'are good or evil because the acts they tend toward are good or evil. One can be blamed more for acting badly than one can be blamed for having an unengaged *habitus* to act badly.'[210] Aquinas writes:

> Vice is contrary to virtue. Now the virtue of a thing consists in its being well disposed in a manner befitting its nature… Hence the vice of any thing consists in its being disposed in a manner not befitting its nature… But it must be observed that the nature of a thing is chiefly the form from which that thing derives its species. Now man derives his species from his rational soul: and consequently whatever is contrary to the order of reason is, properly speaking, contrary to the nature of man, as man… [therefore] vice is contrary to man's nature, insofar as it is contrary to reason.[211]

Pride

Pride's position as a vice of special severity has long been a controversial one. Michael Eric Dyson, whilst acknowledging that pride can be a vice, also holds that 'Proper pride is a boon, a stroke of moral genius against those who would withhold its virtue in the false belief that they might increase their own.'[212] He even gives examples of what seem to him to be instances of virtuous pride, such as black pride, or national pride, which are regularly celebrated. Earlier in the ethical tradition, Aristotle draws a distinction between the vain man, who thinks of himself as greater than he in fact is, and the proud

[209] Stump in Chignell (ed.) 2019, p. 252.
[210] Davies, 2014, p. 203.
[211] ST I-II, Q. 71, Art. 6.
[212] Dyson, 2006, p. 26.

man, who thinks that he is great and actually is great. He writes 'pride, then, seems to be a sort of crown of the virtues; for it makes them greater, and it is not found without them'.[213] Indeed, for someone not to view himself with the greatness that he has could be an injustice to himself. Pride is thus a virtue for Aristotle, a mean in between the vices of vanity and undue humility. The vain man is one who 'thinks himself worthy of great things, being unworthy of them', and 'The man who thinks himself worthy of less than he really is worthy of is unduly humble.'[214] For Aquinas, however, pride is indeed a moral vice. In fact, it is the root of all moral vice.[215] This might seem strange at first, since even if we include arrogance as falling under pride and dislike it, we would not intuitively link it with most of the other vices.

Unsurprisingly, Aquinas does not mean quite the same thing by pride (*superbia*) as we often mean by it. Unlike Aristotle, he does not take it to be a belief (whether true or false) about one's greatness. Rather, pride as Aquinas uses the term is an excessive self-love. The proud man 'wishes to overstep beyond what he is… Now right reason requires that every man's will should tend to that which is proportionate to him. Therefore it is evident that pride denotes something opposed to right reason.'[216] It is of course right that we should seek our own good, since we are called to love not only others but ourselves. However, recall that for Aquinas love is not totally blind. In order to properly will someone's good we must first know what that good is. If I do not know what it is then all sorts of perversions of love could follow. I ought not love my cat in the same way I love my sister. How it is appropriate to love them depends in part on their nature. It also depends upon my nature and my relation to them. Hence the way I am to love my sister is not the same as the way I am to love strangers on the train. This also applies to self-love.[217] If I love myself as if I were more excellent in some respect than I in fact am, then I may well do harm to both myself and others. To give an everyday example, I may be uncomfortable standing on a bus and so take the last seat while someone else who clearly needs it more is left standing. I know that they need it more, yet I take my good

[213] Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1124a1.
[214] *Nichomachean Ethics*, Bk IV, 3.
[215] De Malo, Q. 8, Art. 2.
[216] ST II-II, Q. 162, Art. 1.
[217] For an in depth treatment of self-love in Aquinas' thought, see Mary Ekman, 2015.

as more important than theirs. This would be a case of pride.

Even with these clarifications, though, it still seems far-fetched to give pride special significance as a vice. Yet Aquinas is unyielding, 'pride is said to be the most grievous of sins because that which gives sin its gravity is essential to pride. Hence pride is the cause of gravity in other sins.'[218] This seems surprising. Surely if love is the form of all virtue then the core of moral vice would pertain to a lack of or perversion of love. For Aquinas, this is in a sense what pride is.

Recall that, for Aquinas, there two main principles which constitute human rationality. There is the intellect, which figures out what is true and good, and the rational appetite, or the will, which chooses what we take to be good. Aquinas writes 'every human virtue must perfect one of these principles. If it perfects the speculative or practical intellect to yield a good human act, it will be an intellectual virtue. But if it perfects the appetitive part, it will be a moral virtue.'[219] Given that having a moral vice entails lacking some moral virtue**,** a corollary of this is that an instance of a moral vice must be a failing of the will, and not just of the intellect.

Given this, Aquinas observes that there are essentially two aspects of a moral wrongdoing.[220] Firstly, a turning away from the good we ought to be following, and secondly, a turning towards some other good we are seeking instead. Aquinas takes pride to be present in the first aspect. In the *De Malo* he writes:

> If we should understand pride as it belongs to every sin by pride's effect, then pride is simply turning away from the immutable good, and covetousness turning toward a transitory good. And one sin is constituted by these two turnings as the formal and material elements, since every sin is a turning away from the immutable good and a turning toward a transitory good.[221]

Here pride specifically involves privileging our own will above reason.[222] The will is supposed to be ultimately guided by the intellect. Before we choose a certain course of

[218] ST II-II, Q. 162, Art. 7.
[219] ST II-II, Q. 58, Art. 3.
[220] ST II-II, Q. 162, Art. 6.
[221] De Malo, Q. 8, Art. 2, Ad. 12.
[222] De Malo, Q. 8, Art. 2.

action that might seem attractive to us we must first examine with our intellects whether the action is in fact something we can licitly do. I might feel like eating a steak due to hunger, but before deciding to do so I ought to (briefly) reason about whether there are other factors which have a bearing on my act. Perhaps the steak is set apart for a set purpose, or perhaps I do not have time to be eating at the moment. There would be something wrong if I were to freely neglect even such a cursory intellectual check and move straight from my desire for the steak to its consumption. At this stage it would be natural to wonder how as mild a failure as recklessly eating a steak could be interpreted as an instance of pride. For Aquinas, our reason is a means by which we are subordinated to truth.[223] Furthermore, insofar as our actions follow from the proper functioning of the intellect, our actions are ordered according to the truth as we understand it. He writes:

> Therefore, we should consider that every sin is based on a natural appetite… But it belongs to reason to direct appetites, and especially insofar as the law of God informs reason. Therefore, an appetite will be morally right and virtuous if the appetite is borne to a naturally desired good by the rule of reason, and there will be sin whether an appetite exceeds the rule of reason or falls short of it.[224]

Culpably ignoring the rule of reason when acting usurps the natural order according to which our actions are meant to be governed. This is not to say that this usurpation is intentional. Aquinas makes a distinction between analysing an act according to its intent and according to its effect. He gives the example of a person who kills their father, thinking him to be an enemy. The person 'indeed commits the sin of patricide as to the sin's effect but not as to the person's intent.'[225] He applies the same analysis to pride.[226] All instances of moral wrongdoing are effectively instances of pride since they all involve usurping the truth by which we ought to be governed, even if not all of them are

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[223] Indeed, our understanding truth is at some level a submission to God, for Aquinas, since 'whatever truth is known by anyone is due to a participation in that light which shines in the darkness; for every truth, no matter by whom it is spoken, comes from the Holy Spirit.' *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, Ch. 1, Lec. 3.
[224] De Malo, Q. 8, Art. 2.
[225] Ibid.
[226] It should be noted that Aquinas does not state that the patricide case is itself an instance of pride, but merely gives it as an example of the effect-intent distinction.

instances of pride by intention. Hence there is a general sense of pride which is common to all wrongdoing, for Aquinas, as distinct from a special and distinct vice of pride where one is motivated explicitly by an excessive desire for excellence. Through neglecting the rule of honest reason when we act we run the risk of sacrificing higher goods for lower ones, even if we are not trying to sacrifice such goods. Aquinas explains how pride can be both the general root of vice as well as a specific capital vice in the De Malo, when asking how many capital vices there are. One of the objections he considers is that the canonical list is too long, with only pride and covetousness being capital vices. He responds as follows:

> Therefore, we indeed do not call covetousness and pride, understood in a general way, capital sins, since they are not particular vices. Rather, we call covetousness and pride in general certain roots and sources of vices, just as if we were to say that the desire for happiness is the root of all virtues. But we can say that even covetousness and pride as particular sins, by reason of their ends, have a general causal influence on all sins. For example, the end of avarice is related to the ends of all other sins as a source, since human beings can with riches acquire everything that other vices desire… And the particular end of pride, namely, the excellence of honor or glory, is the end of all such ends, as it were, since human beings can obtain honor or glory by great riches and by indulging certain desires. And although one of these ends in the course of executing the ends is the first, and another the last, so to speak, we still ought not on that account to designate only these two sins capital, since the will's intention is not chiefly ordained only to those two ends.[227]

In the body of the same article he goes through the list of capital vices while discussing what good they are aimed towards. Pride is listed among the others as follows:

> Therefore, pride or vainglory aims to attain a good of the soul, which is a good conceived in the mind, namely, the excellence of honor and glory. And gluttony aims to attain a good of the body relating to preservation of the individual, which consists of food. And sexual lust pertains to a good of the body relating to

[227] De Malo, Q. VIII, Art. 1, Ad. 1.

> preservation of the species as regards sexual intercourse. And avarice pertains to a good consisting in external things…[228]

So, for Aquinas, in a general sense pride and covetousness lie behind all sins, but in the more specific sense of the two vices they are still capital vices, alongside the rest of the traditional list. The difference between the senses of pride is well understood by way of the distinction between effect and intent discussed above. All wrongdoing manifests pride in the general sense insofar as it presupposes that one has in effect overly privileged one's own will and excellence. The more specific capital vice of pride has to do with when this is not just what one has willed in effect, but by intent. It is useful to note that, as in the quoted passage above, Aquinas both uses the words pride and vainglory to refer to the capital vice of pride.

Ultimately charity means being willing to sacrifice even our own specific good for the sake of higher goods, and therefore not desiring our own good excessively.[229] This yields something like the paradox of hedonism. As long as we are just seeking our own good we will not actually achieve our ultimate good. In his essay *First and Second Things,* C. S. Lewis[230] notes that we should not be too surprised by the paradox, since the same basic idea applies across numerous areas of life. He summarises the general principle as that 'every preference of a small good to a great, or a partial good to a total good, involves the loss of the small or partial good for which the sacrifice was made.'[231] He gives several examples of the principle at play, such as that 'the man who makes alcohol his chief good loses not only his job but his palate and all power of enjoying the earlier (and only

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[228] Ibid. Body of article. His discussion of the goods of the other vices including acedia (spiritual apathy) are significantly longer and so have been omitted.

[229] In the *Disputed Questions on Virtue* (On Charity, Art. 7) Aquinas follows Augustine in having a fourfold order regarding what is loved out of charity: firstly, God; secondly, one's soul; thirdly, one's neighbour; and fourthly, one's body. Or, as Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung phrased the same basic point, 'Pride is the vice of putting yourself at the center of things, in God's place, choosing your own way to happiness and believing that any goodness or happiness you have is due to your own power and merit. All the capital vices manifest pride in this way.' (DeYoung, 2014, p. 37).

[230] Although Lewis is best known as a children's author, it is worth noting that at the time of writing he lectured philosophy (amongst other things) at Magdalen College, Oxford.

[231] Lewis, 2000, p. 247.

pleasurable) levels of intoxication.'[232] He expands on the idea in another work:

> Even in social life, you will never make a good impression on other people until you stop thinking about what kind of impression you are making. Even in literature and art, no man who bothers about originality will ever be original: whereas if you simply try to tell the truth (without caring twopence how often it has been told before) you will, nine times out of ten, become original without ever having noticed it. The principle runs through all life from top to bottom.[233]

To put it another way, what Aquinas is saying is that when we commit moral wrongdoing we are refusing to submit to our reason about what would be good to do in favour of what we already want to do. But there is a question here. Pride is the inordinate desire for one's excellence, and is also understood to be refusal to submit to truth (as accessed through our reason). How do these two relate to one another? For Aquinas, the highest excellence of the human person comes from our ability to identify goods higher than ourselves and seek them for the sake of their goodness, reaching all the way up to seeking unqualified goodness as such. To inordinately desire our own good, then, is to treat our own good as more desirable than some good that is above us.[234] Since our reason reveals that this is irrational, acting out of an excessive desire for our own good also requires the refusal to submit to reason. Ironically, through this refusal to submit to reason we fail to achieve the proper excellence of human beings.[235]

At this point, a question which may naturally arise is whether or not we are responsible for moral wrongdoing which results from errors in reasoning. On the one hand, we would not want to say that every error about moral matters results in guilt, since ethics

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[232] Ibid. It is worth noting that the alcohol example is likely something he observed in his own home, which was deeply affected by the alcoholism of his brother.
[233] Lewis, 1996, p. 191.
[234] We can see this at work in Aquinas' treatment of why the devil sinned, which is in my view the clearest picture of the mechanics of moral action in Aquinas' thought. In this case, Aquinas holds that the devil sinned by refusing to allow his good be achieved by submitting to divine grace (the higher good), instead trying to achieve his ultimate end through his own excellence. *De Malo*, Q. 16, Art. 3.
[235] For a more in depth treatment of the relation between pride and moral wrongdoing in Aquinas, see Lawrence Dewan, 1995.

is hard. On the other hand, it would seem to be letting serious wrongdoers off too easily if they were excused by having magnanimous motives which were poorly executed.

In order to answer this question properly we must first discuss the general principles that will need to be applied. Firstly, it is important to note that Aquinas thinks that different moral truths are known to us with varying degrees of clarity. He writes:

> As stated above, there belong to the natural law, first, certain most general precepts, that are known to all; and secondly, certain secondary and more detailed precepts, which are, as it were, conclusions following closely from first principles. As to those general principles, the natural law, in the abstract, can nowise be blotted out from men's hearts. But it is blotted out in the case of a particular action, in so far as reason is hindered from applying the general principle to a particular point of practice, on account of concupiscence or some other passion, as stated above. But as to the other, i.e. the secondary precepts, the natural law can be blotted out from the human heart, either by evil persuasions, just as in speculative matters errors occur in respect of necessary conclusions; or by vicious customs and corrupt habits, as among some men, theft, and even unnatural vices, as the Apostle states, were not esteemed sinful.[236]

Truths like the wrongness of murder are sufficiently obvious that they would presumably 'follow closely from first principles', at least as much as his example of theft does. Hence Aquinas evidently holds that even some obviously wrong acts might not be universally known to all people in all circumstances. In this question of the Summa, however, he does not address one's culpability for acting on one's erring reason. The relevant place in Aquinas' writings where he addresses this concern in the Summa Theologiae is not in his treatment of vice in the secunda secundae, but earlier in the prima secundae when he asks both whether the will is evil when it is at variance with erring reason (Q. 19, Art. 5) and whether the will is good when it abides by erring reason (Q. 19, Art. 6). It is important to note that he is discussing the issue at the level of general

[236] ST I-II, Q. 94, Art. 6.

principles and so is not writing specifically about gravely immoral acts such as terrorism. In response to the first of these questions, he writes:

> For in matters of indifference, the will that is at variance with erring reason or conscience, is evil in some way on account of the object, on which the goodness or malice of the will depends; not indeed on account of the object according as it is in its own nature; but according as it is accidentally apprehended by reason as something evil to do or to avoid. And since the object of the will is that which is proposed by the reason, as stated above, from the very fact that a thing is proposed by the reason as being evil, the will by tending thereto becomes evil. And this is the case not only in indifferent matters, but also in those that are good or evil in themselves. For not only indifferent matters can received the character of goodness or malice accidentally; but also that which is good, can receive the character of evil, or that which is evil, can receive the character of goodness, on account of the reason apprehending it as such… If, therefore, the erring reason propose it as an evil, the will tends to it as to something evil. Consequently the will is evil, because it wills evil, not indeed that which is evil in itself, but that which is evil accidentally, through being apprehended as such by the reason… Consequently if it be proposed by the reason as something evil, the will tends to it as to something evil: not as if it were evil in itself, but because it is evil accidentally, through the apprehension of the reason. Hence the Philosopher says (Ethic. vii, 9) that "properly speaking the incontinent man is one who does not follow right reason; but accidentally, he is also one who does not follow false reason." We must therefore conclude that, absolutely speaking, every will at variance with reason, whether right or erring, is always evil.[237]

His argument is that the point of the will is not to decide whether an act is good or bad. That is the job of the intellect. The will is simply meant to seek that which the intellect presents to it as good. Independently of reason the will cannot tell what would be good to seek. Hence if someone genuinely thought something to be good to do but refrained

[237] ST I-II, Q. 19, Art. 5.

from doing it they would be guilty of acting against their conscience, even if it turned out that their conscience was mistaken. Of course, depending on the consequences of the decision we might be very glad, on balance, that they acted as they did. The idea is that if the person acted against their erring reason and happened to act well, it would be merely by luck that they acted well, since apart from their reason they have no reliable way of judging whether an act is good or bad to do.

After this, Aquinas turns to whether the will is good when it abides by erring reason. After the previous article, one could easily expect him to answer that it is good, since the error is in the intellect and not the will. However, he answers:

> Whereas the previous question is the same as inquiring "whether an erring conscience binds"; so this question is the same as inquiring "whether an erring conscience excuses." Now this question depends on what has been said above about ignorance. For it was said (I-II:6:8) that ignorance sometimes causes an act to be involuntary, and sometimes not. And since moral good and evil consist in action in so far as it is voluntary, as was stated above; it is evident that when ignorance causes an act to be involuntary, it takes away the character of moral good and evil; but not, when it does not cause the act to be involuntary. Again, it has been stated above (I-II:6:8) that when ignorance is in any way willed, either directly or indirectly, it does not cause the act to be involuntary. And I call that ignorance "directly" voluntary, to which the act of the will tends: and that, "indirectly" voluntary, which is due to negligence, by reason of a man not wishing to know what he ought to know, as stated above (I-II:6:8).
>
> If then reason or conscience err with an error that is voluntary, either directly, or through negligence, so that one errs about what one ought to know; then such an error of reason or conscience does not excuse the will, that abides by that erring reason or conscience, from being evil. But if the error arise from ignorance of some circumstance, and without any negligence, so that it cause the act to be involuntary, then that error of reason or conscience excuses the will, that abides by that erring reason, from being evil. For instance, if erring reason tell a man that he should go to another man's wife, the will that abides by that erring reason

> is evil; since this error arises from ignorance of the Divine Law, which he is bound to know. But if a man's reason, errs in mistaking another for his wife, and if he wish to give her her right when she asks for it, his will is excused from being evil: because this error arises from ignorance of a circumstance, which ignorance excuses, and causes the act to be involuntary.

Here, finally, we have the principle Aquinas uses to discern the extent of guilt when someone acts wrongly as a result of erring reason. The fundamental principle is whether or not the act can be deemed voluntary, which depends on whether or not the ignorance itself is innocent. To the extent that we are bound to know basic moral truths (either because they are very clear or because, for Aquinas, they have been divinely revealed) we are responsible for not knowing them, and therefore for the actions which follows our ignorance. The clearer a moral truth is, the less likely it is that a person could be morally excused from not knowing it. Ignorance is far more likely to excuse one from guilt (due to involuntariness) if it is an ignorance of a circumstance of the act in question, since ignorance of these do not require ignorance of basic moral truths. At this point a natural objection would be that this answer puts a person with culpable ignorance in an impossible situation, since they could not obey their reasoning or deny it without guilt. Aquinas acknowledges the objection and responds to it as follows:

> Just as in syllogistic arguments, granted one absurdity, others must needs follow; so in moral matters, given one absurdity, others must follow too. Thus suppose a man to seek vainglory, he will sin, whether he does his duty for vainglory or whether he omit to do it. Nor is he in a dilemma about the matter: because he can put aside his evil intention. In like manner, suppose a man's reason or conscience to err through inexcusable ignorance, then evil must needs result in the will. Nor is this man in a dilemma: because he can lay aside his error, since his ignorance is vincible and voluntary.[238]

The response observes that since the apparent dilemma only occurs when an ignorance is voluntary, the person could escape from the dilemma by repenting of their negligence

[238] Ibid. ad. 1.

and committing themselves to putting their minds in right order insofar as they are able. In this situation they would only be guilty of the initial ignorance.[239]

So, with this understanding of pride in mind, how are we to make sense of putatively positive forms of pride? In his book on pride, Michael Eric Dyson gives several possibilities to consider, of which I will here respond to just one, pride in one's accomplishments which spur one on to meaningful and positive action.[240] Dyson gives a narrative of myriad instances throughout his own life where pride has proved a significant motivator. For instance, 'I won my first blue ribbon in the fifth grade for reciting from memory Paul Laurence Dunbar's vernacular verse. That was perhaps my proudest moment as a youth, especially because my fifth-grade teacher, Mrs. James, delighted so warmly in my victory.'[241] And later on, recounting writing a book about Martin Luther King Jr., a personal hero, he writes 'I took no small pride (I hope it was "proper pride") when reviewers and readers found merit in my approach to King's protean spiritual and political journey.'[242] The first instance encouraged him to focus on his interest in literature, which led to engagement with political and social writings, allowing him to ultimately write a book on a personal hero. Surely the proud joy of the child or of the adult achieving something of immense personal value is not morally vicious. However, it does not seem that he was proud in Aquinas' sense of the term in either of these cases, since for Aquinas there is an appropriate joy in one's excellence, which is all that is seen in such accounts.

In his *Purgatorio* X-XIII, Dante depicts those afflicted with the special vice of pride as carrying boulders on their backs while climbing up a slope. The boulders keep the people close to the ground, signifying the conformity to reality necessary to progress on the moral journey. The boulders also keep the people facing beautiful pictures on the ground, depicting scenes with moral themes for them to meditate on, such as that of Emperor Trajan, who according to a legend put aside his own journey in order to help a

[239] For an interesting analysis of numerous issues connecting with this point, see John Knasas's 2011 book, *Thomism and Tolerance.*
[240] Dyson, 2006. The main other form of pride Dyson considers is black pride, which is too complicated a social phenomenon for me to give a meaningful treatment of it here.
[241] Dyson, 2006, p. 35.
[242] Dyson, 2006, p. 38.

poor widow. Eileen Sweeney, when describing pride in Aquinas' thought, writes 'the sin is to have desired to set one's own standards and limits, to be in control.'[243] The meditating on the pictures is taken to be antithetical to pride insofar as it requires the humility to seriously reflect on and accept the moral standards and limits found in the pictures.

Amongst the most extreme instances of wrongdoing motivated by the special vice of pride would be murders done out of a need to dominate and control others. Johnson and Becker, when studying sadistically homicidal adolescents, found that 'it's the killer's need to have ultimate control over his victim that causes the sexual excitement. He probably does this because of his own poor feelings of self-worth and inadequacies. Complete control is the only way to overcome this inadequacy… the actual death itself could be anticlimactic.'[244] Louis B. Schlesinger, favourably summarising a body of literature, states that 'the desire for control [is] the primary driving force in compulsive murder and the primary element of sadism.'[245] This desire for complete control over others, where the absence of limits is motivationally central, would be an extreme manifestation of the special vice of pride, in Aquinas' understanding. We can see it at work in Eric Harris, one of the Columbine shooters, who in his journal wrote 'I am higher than almost anyone in the fucking world in terms of universal intelligence', frequently likened himself to God, and even titled his journal 'The Book of God.'[246] As Dave Cullen, in his celebrated book on the shooting, summarised, 'Eric killed for two reasons: to demonstrate his superiority and to enjoy it.'[247]

Envy

Aquinas takes envy to be a kind of sorrow at the good of another. Specifically, it is having a sorrow at another's good 'insofar as it conduces to the lessening of one's own good name or excellence.'[248] As such, it is pretty clearly grounded in pride. Envy presupposes a fundamentally competitive relation between one's own good and that of another. For this reason, Matthew Levering writes, 'we envy those whose position in life is in some

[243] Sweeney in Pope (ed.) 2002, p. 163.
[244] Johnson and Becker, quoted in Schlesinger, 2004, 10.1.2.6.
[245] Schlesinger, 2004, 10.1.2.6.
[246] Dave Cullen, 2009, p. 234.
[247] Ibid. p. 239.
[248] ST II-II, Q. 36, Art. 1.

way similar to ours. We do not envy those whose position is significantly different from ours, because their reputation does not compete with ours.'[249] This was well expressed by Gore Vidal, who is attributed to have said that 'every time a friend succeeds something inside me dies.'[250] It is not coincidental that Vidal envied his friends more noticeably than accomplished strangers. It is also obvious how envy is opposed to love. In the words of Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung, '[to] love is to seek others' good and rejoice when they have it. To envy is to seek to destroy others' good and sorrow over their having it.'[251] The charitable alternative to envy would be to rejoice at the good of the other as if it were one's own, which would be to love them as another self.

Aquinas insists that we must be careful to be precise with what we mean by envy, since there are other close phenomena which are not necessarily vicious.[252] Take, for instance, having sorrow in response to seeing another's good which we lack, but where the sorrow is not about her having it instead of us, but simply because we lack it. If the good is a moral good, then this is zeal, which is virtuous. If I see someone living a life of radical love, I might be struck by a desire to attain their virtue and experience sorrow at my lack of love. This obviously would not be an instance of envy. Similarly, we might have sorrow because we do not think the other person is worthy of the good he has received. This can be a just response if we are correct. Consider a war criminal without redeeming characteristics being given a national honour. Thirdly, we can have sorrow at the good of another because their good is incompatible with goods of our own, and may have sorrow at the goods we lose as a result. This is not necessarily vicious as it is not sorrow at another's good as such. Consider two people going for a job interview, and one of them hearing that the other had gotten the job. It is justifiable to have sorrow as a result of the goods lost (being able to feed one's children, for example) without having sorrow at the other's good. In contrast with these, DeYoung writes, 'The envious person resents another person's good gifts because they are superior to his or her own. It's not just that

[249] Levering, 2011, p. 68.
[250] See for instance the biography of Vidal with the quote as its title, by Jay Parini, 2015.
[251] DeYoung, 2009, P. 64.
[252] ST II-II, Q. 36, Art. 2.

the other person is better; it is that by comparison their superiority makes you feel your own lack, your own inferiority, more acutely.'[253]

Aquinas holds that envy leads ultimately to the envier's despair. There is no natural endpoint for envy, since even if we bring ourselves up to someone else's level (or bring them down to ours) we can always envy other things. There will always be someone better off than us in some respect, whether it be an obscure skill, possession, or lifestyle. Hence envy 'destroys peace of heart, which is highly delightful'.[254] Envy achieves despair also by stirring up hatred for the one envied.[255] A powerful illustration of this is given by Dante in his *Purgatorio*, XIII. Dante pictures the envious as wandering about with their eyes sown shut, thus unable to see where they are going or admire the beautiful landscape surrounding them. Having looked for so long only for others' failings they have become blind to the goodness they refused to admire, and as a result cannot be inspired to excellence by the excellence of others or enjoy gratitude and appreciation for others' excellences.

A powerful contrast to this scene is provided by Dante at *Purgatorio* XV:

> Because your longings focus on a point
> where company would lessen each man's share,
> envy blows up its bellows for your sighs.
> But if love for the highest heavenly sphere
> had wrung your yearnings, turning them above,
> your breast wouldn't be troubled by such fear,
> For there, the more who say, 'This joy is ours,'
> the more joy is possessed by every soul,
> the more that cloister burns in charity.[256]

[253] DeYoung, 2009, p. 53.
[254] Aquinas, 2000, p. 242
[255] ST II-II, Q. 36, Art. 4.
[256] Alighieri, *Purgatorio*, XV, trans. Anthony Esolen, 2004.

As Eleonore Stump writes, 'on Aquinas's views the hallmark of a great good is that it is shareable, that it is not diminished by being distributed.'[257] A pizza diminishes by being shared more than societal common goods do. For Aquinas, this is evidence of the greater importance of such goods. C.S. Lewis observes that genuine friendships are noticeable for being shareable in this way, writing, 'in each of my friends there is something that only some other friend can fully bring out. By myself I am not large enough to call the whole man into activity; I want other lights than my own to show all his facets.'[258] Dante expresses the same thought about Beatrice in *Paradiso* V, 'Look, here is one to make our friendships grow!'[259] This provides an alternative perspective on responding to the good of others. Envy can be avoided by focusing where possible on achieving goods which do not diminish upon being shared.

Wrath (Anger)

Anger is interesting to consider in the context of Aquinas' thought. Aquinas did not think that all anger was wrong, but this seems counter-intuitive for his system. After all, attributes are moral vices insofar as they fall short of the love that we are called towards. When we have anger towards someone it does not seem as though we are loving them. Expressing anger to the person we are angry at (perhaps essentially) has a tendency to hurt the person, and not further unite us to them. Indeed, some philosophers do regard anger as intrinsically immoral. Martha Nussbaum, in her recent book *Anger and Forgiveness*, goes so far as to argue that 'anger is always normatively problematic, whether in the personal or public realm'.[260] In earlier Christian tradition one can also find defenses of the idea that anger is inherently morally problematic. For instance, Evagrius Ponticus, a fourth century Egyptian monk, writes:

> Everything you do to avenge yourself against a brother who has wronged you will become a stumbling block for you at the time of prayer … When you are

[257] Stump, 2010, p. 387.
[258] Lewis, 1960, p. 74.
[259] Alighieri, *Paradiso*, V, trans. Anthony Esolen, 2007.
[260] Nussbaum, 2016, p. 5. I am merely setting out Aquinas' account of evil briefly here, and will be using Nussbaum as a contrast to the Thomistic position. Other thinkers disagree with Nussbaum on different grounds, including Jeffrie Murphy (2000) and Pamela Hieronymi (2001).

> praying as you should, such things will come over you that you may think it utterly just to resort to anger, but there is absolutely no such thing as just anger against your neighbor.[261]

In order to see how anger does not necessarily contradict love, we must first understand what anger is. Nussbaum (drawing from Aristotle) identifies anger as having five elements. As she summarises them, they are:

1. Slighting or down ranking
2. Of the self or people close to the self
3. Wrongfully or inappropriately done
4. Accompanied by pain
5. Involving a desire for retribution[262]

Key to Nussbaum's critique of anger is her interpretation of the notion of payback or retribution present in anger. She pointedly writes, 'Doing something to the offender does not bring dead people back to life, heal a broken limb, or undo a sexual violation. So why do people somehow believe that it does? Or what, exactly, do they believe that makes even a little sense of their retaliatory project?'[263] In her understanding, a key aspect of the desire for payback is the sense that the wrongdoing diminished the victim's social standing, and so wishes to bring down the wrongdoer's social standing in an attempt to restore her own. She gives the example of Angela, whose friend Rebecca was raped by O. Angela could feel that both Rebecca's and Angela's standing has been compromised by the offence, and so wishes O's standing to be similarly harmed so that the balance between Angela's standing and O's will be the same as it was before the rape. Nussbaum is confused by why Angela would feel personally denigrated by her friend's rape, 'given that O is a stranger who does not know her connection to Rebecca.'[264] However, Aquinas' thought on the nature of friendship as an extension of self-love helps explain such a reaction. When we love friends their good becomes

[261] Quoted in DeYoung, 2009, Chapter 6, Paragraph 11.
[262] Nussbaum, 2016, pp. 17-18.
[263] Ibid. pp. 21-2.
[264] Nussbaum, 2016, p. 26.

incorporated into our own, so an offence against the good of a friend is also a (perhaps unintended) offence against our own good, of which our friend's good is a part. Significantly, Nussbaum categorically separates the retribution of anger from the desire for punishment. If Angela does not let anger get the better of her then 'she is likely to view the punishment of O in the light of the future good that could actually be achieved by punishment.'[265] These goods include deterring O specifically from future crimes, deterring society as a whole from such crimes, and possibly even O's reform.

Like Nussbaum, Aquinas holds that there is both a physiological and a cognitive aspect of anger. 'The formal element in anger indeed concerns the appetitive soul, namely, that anger desires vengeance, and the material element belongs to a bodily disturbance, namely, that anger increases the circulation of blood around the heart.'[266] However, the 'vengeance' spoken of here is not vengeance in the gratuitously vindictive sense. He rather means simply the desire for just punishment. Since 'vengeance' in contemporary English has a narrower and purely negative meaning it would be ideal if the Latin word in question, *vindicatio*, were typically translated otherwise, however this would yield confusing discontinuities between older works on Aquinas' ethics and newer ones. Hence for Aquinas there is not a contrast between vengeance (as he uses the term) and punishment, as there is on some contemporary writers.[267] Aquinas writes:

> For if [the avenger's] intention is directed chiefly to the evil of the person on whom he takes revenge and rests there, then his vengeance is altogether unlawful: because to take pleasure in another's evil belongs to hatred, which is contrary to the charity whereby we are bound to love all men. Nor is it an excuse that he intends the evil of one who has unjustly inflicted evil on him… for a man may not sin against another just because the latter has already sinned against him, since this is to be overcome by evil… If, however, the avenger's intention be directed chiefly to some good, to be obtained by means of the punishment of the person who has sinned (for instance that the sinner may amend, or at least that he may be restrained and others be not disturbed, that justice may be upheld, and

[265] Nussbaum, 2016, p. 27.
[266] De Malo, Q. 12, Art. 1.
[267] Such as Robinson, 2008.

> God honored), then vengeance may be lawful, provided other due circumstances be observed.[268]

It is significant that for Aquinas here a chief end of lawful vengeance (and hence anger) is that the wrongdoer may be reformed. The inclusion of 'or at least' before mentioning the other considerations, such as the safety of society, show that the reform of the wrongdoer has a certain priority among the goods listed. At this point a question could be raised as to how the aspect of punishment focused on the wrongdoer's good fits with the good of justice, since it is natural to think that punishment is about justice. Aquinas thinks that this medicinal aspect of punishment is closely tied to justice. When discussing the moral nature of scandal, he writes:

> In the infliction of punishment it is not the punishment itself that is the end in view, but its medicinal properties in checking sin; wherefore punishment partakes of the nature of justice, in so far as it checks sin. But if it is evident that the infliction of punishment will result in more numerous and more grievous sins being committed, the infliction of punishment will no longer be a part of justice.[269]

Here, Aquinas takes the justice of a punishment to be in proportion to its medicinal value. It is interesting that he does not often emphasise the retributive aspect of punishment. This is because he holds that the retributive good of punishment is ultimately in the hands of God. When discussing the appropriate punishment for theft, he writes:

> The punishments of this life are medicinal rather than retributive. For retribution is reserved to the Divine judgment which is pronounced against sinners "according to the truth". Wherefore, according to the judgment of the present life the death punishment is inflicted, not for every mortal sin, but only for such as

[268] ST II-II Q. 108, Art. 1.
[269] ST, II-II, Q. 43, Art. 7, Ad. 1.

> inflict an irreparable harm, or again for such as contain some horrible deformity.[270]

As a result of retribution being ultimately in the hands of God, Aquinas holds that the medicinal end is the one we ought to be chiefly concerned with. Nor is this an isolated text. He expresses the same thought when discussing the justice of certain punishments customary in his day: 'All who sin mortally are deserving of eternal death, as regards future retribution, which is in accordance with the truth of the divine judgment. But the punishments of this life are more of a medicinal character; wherefore the punishment of death is inflicted on those sins alone which conduce to the grave undoing of others.'[271]

The argument about capital punishment is illuminating. The death penalty is not to be applied to all those who deserve it due to the fact that the punishment is meant to be medicinal. This only makes sense if the medicinal value is largely about the repentance of the wrongdoer. From the texts above it is clear that the good of society is also of great significance, but nonetheless it is clear that a great value is being placed upon the good of the wrongdoer in particular.

This makes the good of the wrongdoer a chief good being sought by anger, and hence anger (if properly ordered) can actually be a form of love for the wrongdoer, as opposed to a form of hatred. Of course, anger when disordered becomes a vice, insofar as it is not properly motivated by charity. Disordered anger easily fits the prior model for the relationship between pride and the vices. When disorderedly angry we do not sufficiently look towards our reason to sufficiently guide our wills to the good of punishment and as a result may not investigate whether the person is guilty or, if they are, how culpable they are. Rather, we just trust our instinctive judgments and will the harm of punishment accordingly, or we might even guide our reason to justify our instinctive judgments.

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[270] ST II-II, Q. 66, Art. 6, Ad. 2.
[271] ST II-II, Q. 108, Art. 3, Ad. 2.

It is useful here to summarise Aquinas' understanding of punishment.[272] By nature, different things cause us pleasure and pain, such that things that are typically good for us (such as food and sleep) cause pleasure, and things that are typically bad for us (like contact with a hot stove or severe dehydration) cause pain or displeasure. Since we are disposed towards pleasure and away from pain, this gives us a natural system of motivations which inclines us toward what is good for us and away from what is bad for us.[273] This also applies emotionally. We experience emotional pain when friendships we value break, because such relationships are good for us, and experience pleasure when they flourish. However, this system is obviously general and imprecise. Although food is good for us we can eat unhealthily, and although sex is a good, the human body does not have a fine-grained way (apart from the intellect) of distinguishing what sex acts are instances of adultery, and so we can feel pleasure indiscriminately.

Punishment and reward are primarily ways of refining this system, by causing pleasure or satisfaction when someone does something good and causing pain or displeasure when they do something bad.[274] Since virtue is good for a person and vice bad for a person, it is fitting to give rewards for acts of virtue, to help the recipient associate their virtue with desirability, and to give pain or displeasure for acts of moral wrongdoing, to help the recipient associate vice with undesirability. Feser and Bessette comment, 'Punishment is a matter of restoring the natural connection between pain and acting contrary to nature's ends—somewhat, you might say, as the gardener or horticulturalist who treats a disease of the roots or leaves is restoring a tree to its natural state.'[275]

One might object to Aquinas' interpretation of anger being directed towards the good of the wrongdoer in this way as unrealistic. To an extent this does not actually impact Aquinas' system that much. If even the vast majority of cases of anger are directed towards the harm of the wrongdoer without any thought to his good then all that would

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[272] I am here giving a summary of the extensive treatment of the purposes of punishment and retributive justice in Aquinas' philosophy from Feser & Bessette, 2017, pp. 17-97.
[273] For an in-depth analysis see Robert Miner's (2009) book, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions*.
[274] See Peter Koritansky's (2012) book, *Thomas Aquinas and the Philosophy of Punishment*. See also ST I-II, Q. 87, Art. 1.
[275] Feser & Bessette, 2017, p. 39.

follow would be that the instances of anger would to that extent be defective and vicious. Aquinas does not state how much anger in society is virtuous and how much is vicious. Nonetheless I do think that his understanding is in fact realistic with respect to everyday experiences of anger. This is clearly seen when we are angry towards ourselves. If we have hurt someone we love, our anger toward ourselves is not simply a desire for our own social standing to be decreased for the sake of our friend's standing (as Nussbaum's first element of anger would entail), but constitutive of the anger is the frustration that we would choose to do such a thing. 'What was I thinking? How couldn't I see that she would take it that way?' Such self-flagellating questions are not simply an attempt to figure out why we acted as we did, but to remind ourselves of the wrongness and stupidity of our actions, and to cause ourselves pain in association with the wrongdoing. As such, Aquinas would disagree with Nussbaum that anger essentially involves a slighting or down ranking.

Part of the intuitive resistance to the idea that anger is for the good of its recipient is the fact that when we act for someone's good we typically have a positive appreciation of the good of the person we are helping, whereas in punishment this is often not the case. When angry we are typically motivated by a resistance to the apparent bad of the person's character or his actions. Nevertheless, that an emotional response is not caused by thoughts of a person's good does not mean that the response is not itself ordered towards that good. A parent will have deep instinctive fear when seeing her child in danger of severe injury, and this fear is directed toward the child's good even if in the moment the parent does not necessarily consider the ways that the child's life may be adversely affected by the injury.

That anger can be often directed to the good of its recipient can also be seen in the fact that parents may get angrier at their children doing something wrong than if another's child had. For instance, if a parent discovered that his child was guilty of shoplifting but had gotten away with it, the parent would nonetheless be angry and would likely have significantly more anger towards his child than he would toward his neighbour's child who was guilty of similar crimes. Since he loves his child far more than the neighbour's child, it would make sense for him to be more angry, and he might punish the child in some way in an attempt to make the child see the undesirability of the crimes. Such

anger is obviously not provoked primarily by a love of the shop owners who have been robbed, since then the anger would then be the same as towards the neighbour's child, the injury to the shop owner being identical in either case. Nor is it motivated by a drop in social status, since the child's actions are unknown except to the parents.[276] Of course, this is not to say that all anger parents have towards their children is of this type.

An alternative objection would be that Aquinas' account unfairly overlooks the good of the victim of the wrongdoing in being so focused on the good of the wrongdoer. To take Nussbaum's example, surely Angela should be concerned more about the good of her friend who has been raped than the good of the rapist. However, this objection implicitly assumes that anger is the totality, or at least the most important part, of one's response to wrongdoing. Of course, one should grieve the harm done to victims of the wrongdoing and should (as appropriate) seek the victim's good by supporting them and doing what they can to protect the friend from any future wrongdoings. But it is unreasonable to try to make this the good sought by anger since, as Nussbaum pointed out, anger would be an incredibly clumsy tool for securing the good of the victim. If anger were simply focused on the good of the victim then we ought not get too angry about murder, since the victim's good cannot be significantly furthered by us. It could be said that a victim of murder in some way suffers a dishonour through being murdered, and that this honour could be restored by punishing the murderer. However, even if this is so, surely a murder victim's good is at least on balance *less* furthered than the good of those who suffer from less serious crimes, who stand to gain goods such as safety from the punishment of their afflicters and the societal good of the broader deterrent effect of punishment.

Here it could be raised that the victim of a murder could still benefit from the good of retributive justice, and that this good is not the same as the good of the murderer. As mentioned above, Aquinas thinks that 'The punishments of this life are medicinal rather than retributive. For retribution is reserved to the Divine judgment which is pronounced

[276] Of course, this is not to say that all anger had by parents for their children is of this type, but just that this kind of anger shows that anger is not inherently directed against the good of its recipient.

against sinners "according to the truth".'[277] For Aquinas, the good of the murder victim found in retributive punishment is not underplayed, but rather largely postponed until it can be adjudicated properly by God. Obviously, this contains numerous theological presuppositions which many contemporary philosophers will reject. Nonetheless, it is important to see that the reason Aquinas does not focus on the retributive end of punishment is not because he does not care about the good of the victims. Contemporary philosophers who reject these presuppositions could still hold to Aquinas' understanding of vengeance broadly, while adapting this aspect such that any desired retributive end could be included as a more important aspect of human punishment than Aquinas holds, while still placing a high value on the good of the wrongdoer.

Anger is considered a less serious vice than pure pride or acedia, because it is not a purely voluntary phenomenon. Anger (like gluttony and lust) is a combination of rational activity and natural instinct.[278] Animals lash out at what causes them pain without reasoning about justice. Humans have the same instinct, but it is coordinated with our reasoning about justice, and so is not a purely instinctive phenomenon.[279] Aquinas writes 'anger, though it follows an act of reason, can nevertheless be in dumb animals that are devoid of reason, in so far as through their natural instinct they are moved by their imagination to something like rational action.'[280] Since these instincts are not wholly within the control of the will, we are not wholly responsible for our anger (though enough responsibility remains for anger to be a serious matter).[281]

Despite having mitigated responsibility, disordered anger is still classed as a capital vice because it, like envy, blinds us to the truth and thus makes it difficult to morally navigate our lives. This is a key reason why some earlier writers took all anger to be problematic, even if the anger were about a just cause. For instance, John Cassian (who makes no

[277] ST II-II, Q. 66, Art. 6, Ad. 2.
[278] ST I-II, Q. 46, Art. 3.
[279] For more on how justice interacts with our instincts, Porter, 2016.
[280] ST I-II, Q. 46, Art. 7, Ad. 1.
[281] For an in-depth treatment of the interaction between rationality and instinct, see Cates, 2009.

distinction between anger and wrath) writes:

> For any reason whatsoever the movement of wrath may boil over and blind the eyes of the heart, obstructing the vision with the deadly beam of a more vehement illness… It is irrelevant whether a layer of gold or one of lead or of some other metal is placed over the eyes; the preciousness of the metal does not change the fact of blindness.[282]

This blindness is also well illustrated by Dante, who pictures the wrathful as walking through thick smoke which blocks their eyes as well as causes them to choke (*Purgatorio* XV). The lack of control over even basic bodily functions such as breathing corresponds to the lack of freedom that results from wrath in Aquinas' understanding. 'The second reason we should not be easily provoked to anger [the first being blindness] is that every man loves liberty and hates restraint. But he who is filled with anger is not master of himself'.[283] This is because, for Aquinas, freedom is about governing our wills in accordance with the intellect.[284] Since excessive anger clouds our judgment we thereby become less free. The American serial killer and hitman Richard Kuklinski, for example, frequently went into rages and was so afraid that he would impulsively beat his family while blinded by rage that he would knock himself unconscious when he started to get angry at them.[285]

Acedia (Sloth)

Acedia is usually translated as sloth, which brings to mind sluggishness and idleness.[286] Although these are relevant, a better translation would be 'spiritual apathy'.[287] Here, I will simply use the transliteration *acedia*. Acedia is, like envy, a sorrow for the good. However, unlike envy it is not a sorrow at the good of neighbour but rather at the good of ourselves. Aquinas describes it as 'sorrow in the Divine good about which charity rejoices.'[288] The Divine good in question is being perfectly united in love to both God and

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[282] Cassian, *Institutes* VIII.vi, quoted in DeYoung, 2009, pp. 150-1.
[283] Aquinas, 2000, p. 217.
[284] For a treatment of Aquinas' theory of free will, see Stump, 2003, pp. 277-306.
[285] Philip Carlo, 2006, chapter 29.
[286] For instance, in the English Dominican translation of the *Summa Theologica* (Aquinas, 1920).
[287] For instance, the Regan-Davies translation of *De Malo* (Aquinas, 2003).
[288] ST II-II, Q. 35, Art. 2.

neighbour. Acedia abhors this end because it finds these bonds of love too burdensome. Whenever you love someone you give up things you could have had had you not loved them. If I genuinely love someone then that precludes me from doing things incompatible with this love, such as being uncaring towards them or, in an exclusive relationship, from giving my love to another. Or, as DeYoung writes:

> There is not only an investment of time, but an investment of self that is required for the relationship to exist and, further, to flourish. Even more difficult… are the accommodations of identity: from the perspective of individual "freedom," to be in this relationship will change me and cost me.[289]

Since love is our highest good, for Aquinas, acedia is a sorrow about our own ultimate good. Acedia 'is sadness about our own loves, a revulsion and sorrow about our own happiness'.[290] Given what has previously been said about the practical importance of love in Aquinas' philosophy, acedia is particularly pernicious. When love, which ought to motivate us, results in only sorrow then human action becomes meaningless. Several philosophers take acedia to be at least partially constitutive of the nature of boredom.[291] When the goods we ought to love do not appeal to us, we commonly either fall into idleness (hence the stereotype of sloth as laziness) or seek out some sort of distraction to avoid the sorrow being felt. This tendency to seek distraction, in Aquinas' thought, often results in sufferers falling into inordinately seeking bodily pleasures, such as food, drink, or sex, which increases the moral danger of acedia.[292]

Acedia is opposed to charity and related to pride because it ignores the good of others which charity calls us towards in favour of a perceived good of ourselves. However the freedom from the obligations of charity, which the acedic person views as a good for himself, is actually opposed to his good. Hence it is also a failure to love oneself properly. As Jean-Charles Nault writes:

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[289] DeYoung, 2004, p. 192, 196-7.
[290] Snell, 2015, p. 64.
[291] For instance, Snell, 2015; Hanby, 2004.
[292] De Malo, Q. 11, Art. 4.

> Acedia… is a profound withdrawal into self. Action is no longer perceived as a gift of oneself, as the response to a prior love that calls us, enables our action, and makes it possible… The desire to save one's "freedom" at any price reveals, in reality, a deeper enslavement to the "self." There is no longer any room for an abandonment of the self to the other or for the joy of gift; what remains is sadness or bitterness within the one who distances himself from the community.[293]

It is important to distinguish acedia from clinical depression. One key difference lies in the fact that acedia is held to be freely chosen, since otherwise it would not be a moral vice. Aquinas did not have a contemporary understanding of mental illness, but his equivalent category is that of melancholia, a temperamental disposition towards sorrow. Aquinas held that there was a biological basis for the disposition, which was not freely chosen and could cloud one's ability to reason cogently. This clouding of the reason by intense emotions can mitigate or in some circumstances even entirely remove culpability for consequent actions.[294] Hence melancholia was not understood to be a moral vice like acedia.

Avarice

Avarice, or greed, is understood generally by Aquinas to be 'the inordinate love of possessing'.[295] This is a broad sense which would encapsulate many different vices, but the word is used also in a more narrow sense, to refer to the inordinate love of possessing 'all of the things that we understand under the name money'.[296] Avarice in this narrow sense is especially problematic due to the nature of what money is for Aquinas. He would not agree with Hume that avarice is sufficiently marginal to be properly met with 'wit and humor' rather than a serious reproach.[297] Money is not intrinsically valuable, but only instrumentally insofar as it achieves other goods, such as what could be purchased with it or the social status that might come with it. For this

[293] Nault, 2004,pp.245-6.
[294] De Malo, Q. 3, Art. 10-11.
[295] De Malo, Q. 13, Art. 1.
[296] Ibid.
[297] Quoted in Edward Skidelsky, 2011, p. 37.

reason, to treat money as an end in itself is inherently flawed.[298] Aquinas is clear that the mere possession of wealth does not itself entail moral wrongdoing, and conversely that the mere absence of wealth does not entail the absence of avarice, 'for there are many poor men who are rich in desire.'[299] Nonetheless Aquinas does think that it is easier to avoid the vice if one is not wealthy, since 'it is difficult and as though impossible that someone should possess riches without being gently drawn to them.'[300] Following from this, 'there is nothing that makes the soul so free as not being occupied with riches.'[301] Aquinas takes this to be one of the benefits of joining a religious order with a vow of poverty, as he himself did.[302]

Avarice is opposed to the virtue of liberality, the virtue dealing with the right usage of money.[303] However, following Aristotle, Aquinas distinguishes from prodigality, the vice of letting money go too easily, which is also opposed to liberality.[304] Dante, in the *Inferno*, VII, pictures the avaricious and the prodigals constantly remonstrating one another. The avaricious accuse the prodigals of throwing money away while the prodigals accuse the avaricious of being tight fisted. It might at first seem surprising for Aquinas to take prodigality to be a vice, seeing as he advocates that people should leave everything they have to join religious orders. It is important to remember that the virtuous mean in between vices is determined by prudence, and hence that a simple amount of wealth cannot be prescribed as appropriate for everyone in all states of life.

This negative attitude towards avarice has been criticized on different grounds. Bernard Mandeville in 1714 jovially wrote:

> The Root of Evil, Avarice,
> That damn'd ill-natur'd baneful Vice,
> Was Slave to Prodigality,

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[298] De Malo, Q. 13, Art. 2.
[299] *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, Ch. 19, Lec. 1.
[300] Ibid.
[301] Ibid.
[302] ST II-II, Q. 186, Art. 7.
[303] ST II-II, Q. 118, Art. 3.
[304] ST II-II, Q. 119; *Nichomachean Ethics,* IV.

> That Noble Sin; whilst Luxury
> Employ'd a Million of the Poor,
> And odious Pride a million more:
> Envy itself, and Vanity,
> Were Ministers of Industry.[305]

The same line of thought was expressed by Giambattista Vico in *New Science*:

> Out of ferocity, avarice, and ambition, the three vices which lead all mankind astray, [society] makes national defense, commerce, and politics, and thereby causes the strength, the wealth, and the wisdom of the republics; out of these three great vices, which would certainly destroy man on earth, society thus causes the civil happiness to emerge.[306]

Rather than a vice, avarice acts as a motivation for work, innovation, and for employing people. Does this line of argument provide us with sufficient reason to conclude that avarice is in fact not a vice at all or perhaps that it is a practically necessary vice if so? The first thing to note is that even if the criticism is correct about the practical benefits of people seeking money, it would not follow that avarice is not a vice. Aquinas lists seven negative effects of avarice, which ought not be controversial, namely: 'treachery, fraud, falsehood, perjury, restlessness, violence, and insensibility to mercy.'[307] It is indisputable that the love of money leads to fraud and all kinds of dishonesty. Well known financial embezzlement scandals provide clear proof of avarice leading to treachery. It is equally clear that violence is often brought about by avarice. There are numerous cases like that of Anthony Bluml, who murdered his adoptive parents for inheritance money, not to mention both the murder and violent debt collecting methods employed within organised crime. Closer to home for most people, love of money frequently causes insensibility to mercy by being a major reason why we do not give to charities for causes we notionally support. In light of these, it is clear that avarice is a

[305] Quoted in Skidelsky, 2011, p. 36.
[306] Ibid.
[307] ST II-II, Q. 118, Art. 8.

vice, even if we might disagree about precisely how great a love for money is appropriate.[308]

Temperance

Josef Pieper frames his explicitly Thomistic discussion of the virtue of temperance within two definitions of it. Firstly, the 'primary and essential meaning' has to do with 'dispos[ing] various parts into one unified and ordered whole.'[309] Secondly, it denotes 'serenity of spirit.'[310] It is the realization of inner order from which the serenity of spirit comes. This is at first surprising, since Aquinas takes temperance to be the virtue which moderates sense pleasures, especially as pertaining to the sense of touch.[311] These are primarily the 'pleasures of meat and drink and sexual pleasures.'[312] Pieper's framing is, however, appropriate. Our desires for different kinds of pleasure can pull us in numerous different directions, leaving us in a state of disunity and disorder. Temperance involves bringing these desires into harmony with our reason, which allows for the serenity of spirit Pieper describes.

Bringing sense pleasures under the direction of reason could be objected to on two different grounds. Firstly, there could be a worry that such a control could be put to nefarious ends.[313] Immanuel Kant expresses such a worry as follows:

> Moderation in affects and passions, self-control, and calm reflection… lack much that would be required to declare them good without limitation (however unconditionally they were praised by the ancients); for, without the basic principles of a good will they can become extremely evil, and the coolness of a scoundrel makes him not only far more dangerous but also immediately more abominable in our eyes than we would have taken him to be without it.[314]

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[308] For an in depth analysis of how a contemporary Thomistic philosophy can be economically plausible, see Mary L. Hirschfeld's 2018 book, *Aquinas and the Market: Toward a Humane Economy.*
[309] Pieper, 1966, p. 146.
[310] Ibid. p. 147.
[311] ST II-II, Q. 141, Art. 4.
[312] Ibid.
[313] As described by Reginald Mary Chua, 2019.
[314] Immanuel Kant, 1785/1996 *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:394.

Aquinas would entirely agree with Kant's sentiment here. A good will is central to temperance, insofar as it is a virtue, since charity includes the proper directionality of the will and is the form of virtue. It is impossible to use any virtue for nefarious ends when the nefariousness of an end is in conflict with the very principle of virtue. That being said, even if one were to ignore the centrality of charity the worry would not be well founded, insofar as to use temperance nefariously would conflict with prudence, which cares about the highest goods and is what determines the measure of temperance.[315] It is certainly true that someone could use the same capacities to direct their sense pleasures in nefarious ways, such as Aquinas' example of a man who commits adultery with a woman for the purpose of later robbing her, but since these capacities are not virtues this is not a problem for Aquinas.

A second objection to the idea of bringing sense pleasures and desires under the direction of reason is that doing so undercuts the goodness of such pleasures and desires. Aquinas is wary of intense desire antecedent to an act of the will overwhelming our capacity to guide our actions by reason. As Reginald Mary Chua accurately summarises him, 'In sum, the temperate person, while having mild antecedent passions like everyone else, will ideally tend towards the sort of 'despotic' control over his passions through reason… The temperate lack *strong* antecedent passions, and their passions are (by and large) *voluntary*.'[316] Prima facie, there seems to be something cold and unrealistic about such a view. Desires are meaningful, and there is a worry that in order to guard against being swept away by unreasonable desires Aquinas also precludes intense yet good desires and pleasures.

Chua astutely observes that the distinction between desires antecedent to the will and consequent to it is significant in this regard. Aquinas does not have any objections to intense desires, provided they follow a reasoned act of the will. At this point there is a natural follow up question: does this approach eliminate the place of desires for pleasure prior to the relevant act of the will? Desires for pleasure seem in fact to be

[315] This point is also made by Reginald Mary Chua, 2019, p. 12.
[316] Chua, 2019, p. 16. Emphasis in original.

inextricably bound up in the way we reason about making such decisions. For example, the desire to enjoy the taste of a cake is one of the things I take into consideration when deciding whether or not to eat the cake. Similarly, sexual attraction is clearly a relevant factor to be taken into consideration when deciding whether or not to engage in a sexual act. In fact, Aquinas' position does not rule out such things. He is only morally critical of antecedent desire when it is sufficiently intense so as to overwhelm one's reason about the decision.[317] Given Aquinas' understanding of freedom as the guidance of the will by the intellect, his take on temperance does not seem so unrealistic. Indeed, his remarks can rather be read as an affirmation of the goodness of our desires in that they need not compromise the integrity of our freedom, and hence find their true meaning within the broader context of ourselves as free agents.

Gluttony

Within this overall context we can understand Aquinas' account of gluttony, a disordered excess regarding the pleasures of food and drink. More than any other vice on this list, gluttony is the one that seems the most far-fetched. Perhaps we would be willing to recognize it as a vice, indeed a vice which many people struggle to get free from, but it seems ludicrous to name it as one of the capital vices, one of the handful of vices to be so emphasised. Aquinas would agree that gluttony is in some ways less dangerous than the other members on the list. Aquinas distinguishes between three ways of measuring the gravity of gluttony. Firstly, regarding 'the matter in which the sin is committed,' gluttony is to be classed as one of the lower sins, due to its relative distance from the moral and spiritual life.[318] Secondly, the gravity is dependent upon the nature of the wrongdoer. This further diminishes the gravity of gluttony, 'both on account of the necessity of taking food, and on account of the difficulty of proper discretion and moderation in such matters.'[319] Thirdly, there can be gravity relating to the consequences of the vice, which Aquinas thinks does give it 'a certain gravity.'[320]

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[317] This is a complex point, explored well by Steven J. Jensen, 2013. It is worth noting that many desires which are antecedent to one act of the will are consequent to another. I choose to attend to the smell of the doughnuts and then after smelling them experience a desire for them, which I then take into account when deciding whether to eat one.
[318] ST II-II, Q. 148, Art. 3.
[319] Ibid.
[320] Ibid.

Given these considerations, why does Aquinas still include gluttony on the list? Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung clarifies that regarding gluttony 'The main question we should be asking is not, "How much is too much?" but rather, "How dominated by the desire for this pleasure am I? How difficult would it be to have to give it up or do without it?"'[321] Aquinas is concerned, for instance, about the 'dullness of mind' that can result from gluttony.[322] This can follow either from some property of the food or drink itself, or just from being frequently distracted by thoughts about food or drink. In one respect this is especially a problem for gluttony, since our constitution requires us to frequently be around food and to frequently think about it. One can avoid a person likely to make us angry more easily than avoid being around food. Related to this, gluttony is also connected to drunkenness.[323] Although Aquinas takes drunkenness to be its own vice, it is relevant to the gravity of gluttony as a capital vice, since drunkenness often arises as a result of seeking the pleasures of food and drink, which is the domain of gluttony.[324] Aquinas also thinks that gluttony can deleteriously affect one's behaviour. This is fairly intuitive, as seen in the common trend of being irritable when hungry.[325] Indeed, the fact that parole judges are significantly more likely to grant parole after lunch than before it suggests that the effects of gluttony can be quite serious, even if it lacks intrinsic gravity.[326]

Lust

Medieval Christendom has the popular reputation for being overly obsessed with the ethics of sex, and for viewing it as inherently bad. It might therefore be somewhat surprising that, in the list of the capital vices, lust is the last and least serious member of the list. To be sure, it is still a capital vice, a deadly sin, but it by no means takes a disproportionate amount of ethical attention for thinkers like Aquinas.

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[321] DeYoung, 2009, ch. 7, para. 7.
[322] ST II-II, Q. 148, Art. 6.
[323] Although I will not treat it in depth here, it is important to note that Aquinas does not condemn drinking, provided it is not done to excess such that one loses command of one's reason (ST II-II, Q. 149).
[324] Of course, people can drink excessively for other reasons too.
[325] Of course, being hungry is not gluttonous, but responding improperly to the proper desire for food can lead to other vices.
[326] Danziger, Levav & Avnaim-Pesso, 2011.

Of course, it still might be objected that lust is on the list at all. Some philosophers, such as Simon Blackburn, while acknowledging that lust is commonly viewed as 'the black sheep of the family, the ill-bred, trashy cousin of upstanding members like love and friendship', seek to rehabilitate lust to the status of being a virtue.[327]

Blackburn takes lust to be 'the enthusiastic desire, the desire that infuses the body, for sexual activity and its pleasures for their own sake'.[328] He is highly critical of Aquinas and his associates for their take on lust as being inherently morally problematic. After noting that Aquinas takes lust to be primarily about excessive seeking for venereal pleasures, which 'above all debauch a man's mind',[329] he implies that Aquinas' negative take on lust is question-begging, since 'the word "debauch" is scarcely neutral, implying riot and ruin.'[330] He concludes, 'So we must not allow critics of lust to intrude the notion of excess, just like that. We no more criticize lust because it can get out of hand, than we criticize hunger because it can lead to gluttony, or thirst because it can lead to drunkenness.'[331]

Significantly, Blackburn fails to consider whether his own definition of lust captures the same concept as that of Aquinas. Aquinas does not view lust as being any sexual desire or even intense sexual desire, but only sexual desire which is disordered and unreasonable. He writes:

> A sin, in human acts, is that which is against the order of reason. Now the order of reason consists in its ordering everything to its end in a fitting manner. Wherefore it is no sin of one, by the dictate of reason, makes use of certain things in a fitting manner and order for the end to which they are adapted, provided this end be something truly good… Wherefore just as the use of food can be without sin, if it be taken in due manner and order, as required for the welfare of the body, so also the use of venereal acts can be without sin...[332]

[327] Blackburn, 2004, p. 1-2.
[328] Blackburn, 2004, p. 19.
[329] ST II-II, Q. 153, Art. 1.
[330] Blackburn, 2004, p. 27.
[331] Ibid.
[332] ST II-II, Q. 153, Art. 2.

Hence Blackburn's criticism seems to fall quite short of the mark. It is not at all question-begging to criticize lust for being unreasonable or excessive if we only mean by 'lust' those sexual acts and desires which are in fact unreasonable or excessive. Several chapters later Blackburn does quote this passage, but only to assert that it means that sexual activities are permissible 'provided of course that they are something in the nature of a handshake, and above all done under the guidance of reason.'[333] This is a caricature of Aquinas' position, assuming that reason and natural desires are inherently competitive with one another. Aquinas clearly rejects this, holding that lust is 'a disorder by reason of excess regarding desires for sexual pleasures.'[334] The implication being that if someone is having sex under the proper guidance of reason then there will be the satisfaction of proper desire for sexual pleasures. Indeed, Aquinas thinks that there is a corresponding vice of deficiency if someone were to unreasonably shun sexual pleasure, since 'the natural order requires that man should make use of these pleasures.'[335] That being said, the Thomistic tradition is sceptical of sex had merely for the purpose of pleasure independently of other factors, since it fails to adequately love the good of one's sexual partner as an end in themselves, treating them rather as a mere means to sexual satisfaction. If sexual pleasure is functioning properly, from the Thomistic perspective, the pleasure is always pleasure in the other and must be subservient to the other's good, and subservient to union between the partners. Plausibly, sexual pleasure cannot be simply separated from the union between the sexual partners. Alexander Pruss writes:

> The perception of union account of sexual pleasure is better able to explain the integration between sexual pleasure and romantic love. This integration is deeper if the pleasure is taken directly in the consummation of romantic love, for then the pleasure is itself unitive, because it is a perception of union, and a perceived union is a deeper, more personally integrated union than an unperceived union. It is phenomenologically plausible that pleasure is important

[333] Blackburn, 2004, p. 67.
[334] De Malo, Q. 15, Art. 1.
[335] ST II-II, Q. 142, Art. 1. Due to the gendered nature of sex it is worth noting explicitly that Aquinas here uses 'man' in the older, gender inclusive sense.

> to sex, and important in a unitive way. The union account of sexual pleasure does justice to this phenomenology.[336]

That sex ought to be kept under the guidance of reason does not in any way reduce the meaning of sex to 'something in the nature of a handshake', as Blackburn thinks. Rather, for the Thomistic tradition it is reason that elevates the meaning of sex from being merely a biological impulse to a powerful medium of communicating love and the gift of one's self.[337] In sex, the partners are united as rational persons in addition to being united physically, since their actions are imbibed with rational meaning as a result of being deliberately chosen.

The unitive aspect of sexuality also helps to make sense of the wrongness of uncontroversially disordered sexual practices, such as sexual harassment. An important part of the wrongness of sexual harassment is that it violates the will of the victim, but another aspect of the wrongness is that the victim is being instrumentalised when viewed solely through the lens of sexual desire and pleasure. Common phrases like not wanting to be treated 'like a piece of meat' get at the fact that sexual desire is degrading when taken out of the context of union between persons.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have briefly surveyed Aquinas' thought on the capital vices, with an emphasis on how they deviate from charity and the rule of reason, as Aquinas understands it. The primary purpose of this chapter has been to put flesh on the bones of Aquinas' analysis of charity and rationality as developed over the previous two chapters, and to get a sense for how the principles can be applied in dysfunctional cases. The ideas present here also pave the way for the analysis of evil character that will occur in the final two chapters. For instance, the way in which all wrongdoings are instances of pride by effect if not by intention theoretically underpins the way in which I will propose evil acts are opposed to the common goods of society. The following chapter changes focus, exploring the metaphysics of evil, which itself paves the way for an

[336] Pruss, 2013, p. 329.
[337] For an influential neo-Thomistic treatment of the personal nature of sexuality, see Wojtyla, 1981. Also see Pruss, 2013.

analysis of the morality of human action. Without understanding Aquinas' metaphysics, we are not able to fully understand his thought about why it is that all human action must be motivated by love, as mentioned in the first chapter. In this chapter we have seen how the vices fall short of the virtues and are in that sense privations of the good. In the coming chapter I examine what it means for evil to be a privation of the good more generally and consider objections to this account of evil as privation.

Chapter 4: The Metaphysics of Evil

Introduction

As we saw in the last chapter, moral vices involve falling short of the goods aimed at by the moral virtues. This is typical of evil generally for Aquinas. All evils involve the falling short of some good. Aquinas understands evil to be the privation of a good, but goodness is a metaphysically loaded concept for him. Hence it is important for us to ask to what extent a Thomistic ethical theory is dependent upon traditional scholastic metaphysics. This is of central importance for the account of moral evil to be developed over the following two chapters. No matter how attractive the account in question might happen to be on its own terms, if it requires a comprehensive metaphysical apparatus then objections to this apparatus would also be objections to the account of evil. There is a debate involving this point with Thomists on both sides, namely the debate between Old and New Natural Law theorists. In this chapter I provide an account of this debate and conclude that, though the Thomistic metaphysical structure is certainly of relevance to Thomistic ethics, it is not required for the project I am putting forward. Since a number of Thomists hold that such an apparatus is in fact necessary for Thomistic ethics in general, I then provide a summary of this metaphysical system so that it will be clear to Thomists of this stripe that my account of evil is acceptable to them, too. Thus, I will be presenting an ecumenical account of moral evil, acceptable both to those who accept traditional Thomistic metaphysics and to those sceptical of it. In my summary of Thomistic metaphysics I examine the basic contours of Aquinas' thought on the convertibility of the transcendentals, act and potency, the four causes, and then turn to the nature of privation. I examine questions such as how privations are to be ontologically grounded and respond to objections from Todd Calder against the privation theory of evil.

New and Old Natural Law Theory

As is well known, Aquinas grounded his ethical thought within the context of natural law theory, but there are two different schools of how to interpret Aquinas' natural law theory which need to be examined. Classical or Old Natural Law theorists focus on analysing ethics within the broader context of Aquinas' metaphysics, and argue that

from this metaphysics it is possible to derive the specific answers to questions about what is good, and these answers can serve as our motivations for acting rightly. It is not as simple as saying that this view corresponds to Mackie's portrayal of Plato above, however. These Thomists, who include figures such as Edward Feser and Ralph McInerney, do not believe that the problem is merely an intellectual one, but for them moral philosophy is nonetheless firstly a theoretical exercise.[338] Feser, for instance, writes:

> Among the features that crucially distinguish the "old" natural law theory from the "new" is the former's grounding of ethics in specifically Aristotelian-Thomistic metaphysical foundations. In particular, natural law theory as Aquinas and the Neo-Scholastics understand it presupposes an *essentialism* according to which natural substances possess essences that are objectively real (rather than existing in a Platonic third realm); and a *teleologism* according to which the activities and processes characteristic of a natural substance are "directed toward" certain ends or outcomes, and *inherently* so, by virtue of the nature of the thing itself (rather than having a "directedness" that is purely extrinsic or entirely imposed from outside, the way artifacts do).[339]

He goes on to describe the relationship between reasoning and moral action on the Old Natural Law view as follows:

> In short, practical reason is directed by nature toward the pursuit of what the intellect perceives to be good; what is *in fact* good is the realization of the various ends inherent in human nature; and thus a *rational and correctly informed* person will perceive this and, accordingly, direct his actions towards the realization or fulfillment of those ends.[340]

Robert P. George summarises this camp as follows:

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[338] Edward Feser, 2015, pp. 378-413; and Ralph McInerny, 1980.
[339] Feser, 2015, pp.pp. 379-80.
[340] Ibid. 385-6. Italics in original.

> When these critics talk about the need to ground morality in 'nature,' they mean to refer principally to *human* nature and the place of *man* in nature. In their view, a sound natural law ethics derives moral norms from methodologically antecedent knowledge of the nature of man and man's place in nature.
>
> According to this approach, metaphysics—in particular that branch of metaphysics that studies man—precedes ethics. Metaphysical anthropology reveals the facts about human nature; ethics then prescribes or prohibits possible acts (or classes of acts) on the basis of their conformity, or lack of conformity, to these facts.[341]

By contrast, there is a group of Thomists known as New Natural Law theorists, including John Finnis, Robert P. George, and Germain Grisez.[342] These theorists do not put much focus on the metaphysics underlying Aquinas' thought. Instead they begin by observing what we are motivated by and ask what precisely it is that motivates us. For example, I go to the library to get a book. I am getting the book to help with my study, and I am studying because I want to find truth, or because I need to study in order to secure employment, which in turn I seek in order to support yet more basic goods. Or, as Finnis puts it:

> … when one pursues the question "What for?" to the point where no further such question is intelligent, one arrives, not at a "contingent desire" or state of feeling… to be explained in turn by mechanics, biology and/or psychology of "human nature." Rather, one arrives at the perception (i.e., the understanding or intelligent discernment) of a basic form of human flourishing in which, not one human being on one occasion, but somehow all human beings in appropriate circumstances can participate.[343]

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[341] George, 1999, p. 84.
[342] See Finnis' *Aquinas: Moral, Political, and Legal Theory*, 1998; George's *In Defense of the Natural Law*, 1999; and Grisez, 1965. It is also worth noting that Finnis regards his natural law theory to be classical, going back to the way it was done by Aquinas, and regards Old Natural Law theorists to actually be a modern distortion of the theory.
[343] Finnis, 1983, *Fundamentals of Ethics*, p. 21.

Jean Porter makes the same point as follows:

> According to the alternative, widely influential interpretation defended by Germain Grisez and John Finnis, Aquinas holds that moral norms are dependent on basic goods and modes of responsibility that are rationally apprehended through the operations of practical reason. On this view, morality does not depend on either theological or metaphysical presuppositions.[344]

New Natural Law theorists will even at times give lists of such basic goods. For instance, William May lists such things as self-integration and inner peace, friendship, human life (including basic physical needs), aesthetic appreciation, knowledge of truth, and play.[345] Finnis's list includes life, knowledge, play, aesthetic experience, sociability (friendship), practical reasonableness, and religion.[346] New Natural Law theorists hold that the exact items on these lists can be reasonably disputed. As Finnis writes of his own list:

> But are there just seven basic values, no more and no less? And what is meant by calling them basic? There is no magic in the number seven, and others who have reflected on these matters have produced slightly different lists, usually slightly longer. There is no need for the reader to accept the present list, just as it stands, still less its nomenclature (which simply gestures towards categories of human purpose that are each, though unified, nevertheless multi-faceted). My brief discussion of the problem of whether procreation should be treated as an analytically distinct category of human good illustrates the scope that exists for modification of the details of the list. Still, it seems to me that those seven purposes are all of the basic purposes of human action, and that any other

[344] Porter, 2016, p. 51.
[345] May, 2003, pp. 95-6. This is analogous in approach to Martha Nussbaum's approach to rights, which is based in human capabilities. Nussbaum also provides a list which partially overlaps with the New Natural Law lists, including life, bodily needs, play, and affiliation (Nussbaum, 2003, pp. 41-2). The similarity between Nussbaum and the New Natural Lawyers could be in part explained by the fact that both approaches have been significantly influenced by Aristotle.
[346] Finnis, 2011, pp. 85-90.

> purpose which you or I might recognise and pursue will turn out to represent, or be constituted of, some aspect(s) of some or all of them.[347]

Both groups of theorists, predictably, have criticisms of the other. Steven A. Long, a prominent Old Natural Law theorist, identifies what he views as five root errors in New Natural Law theory. They are not all relevant for my concerns, but the first of these alleged errors, which is relevant, is 'the denial of the primacy of speculative over practical truth.'[348] Henry Veatch similarly objects to what he views as a 'wall of separation… between practical reason and theoretical reason, between ethics and metaphysics, between nature and morals, between "is" and "ought".'[349]

On the other side, the most common objection made by New Natural Law theorists against the Old is, in the words of Robert P. George, that 'it involves 'the naturalistic fallacy' of purporting to infer moral norms from facts about human nature,'[350] or what Finnis calls the 'illicit inference from facts to norms.'[351] By contrast, Finnis, after forcefully claiming Aquinas as a New Natural Law theorist, writes that:

> Of course, Aquinas would agree that 'were man's nature different, so would be his duties'. The basic forms of good grasped by practical understanding are what is good for human beings with the nature they have. Aquinas considers that practical reasoning begins not by understanding this nature from outside, as it were, by way of psychological, anthropological, or metaphysical observations and judgments defining human nature, but by experiencing one's nature, so to speak, from the inside, in the form of one's inclinations.[352]

There are also thinkers, such as R.J. Snell, who argue that the difference between these two traditions of Natural Law theory is not fundamentally one of disagreement, but

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[347] Ibid, pp. 91-2.
[348] Long, 2013, p. 107.
[349] Veatch, 1981, p. 265
[350] George, 1999, p. 84.
[351] Finnis, 2011, p. 33.
[352] Ibid, p. 34.

rather of answering different kinds of questions.[353] We can ask 'what ought a human being do?' (as the Old Natural Law theorist does) and give a metaphysically informed theoretical answer grounded in the nature of what it means to be human. We can also ask 'what ought *I* do?' with a fundamentally different meaning of 'ought'. 'Ought' could be meant in the second question not to be asking what would be in conformity with my nature, since that is not usually how we make practical decisions. It could, rather, be simply referring to that process whereby we decide what to do. In Snell's language, it is reasoning in an 'interior' as opposed to a 'theoretical' mode.[354] Since these are different kinds of questions the answers of new and old natural law theorists do not need to be read as contradictory, but rather could be read as complementary.

A somewhat similar approach is taken by the New Natural Law theorist, Christopher Tollefsen, who writes that:

> The New Natural Law theory takes the first-person agential standpoint very seriously, and this methodological emphasis, I'll argue, explains several characteristic features that distinguish the NNL theory from many other styles of Thomistic natural law theory… Across four areas of controversy, then, the methodological approach that privileges the agential standpoint plays an important role.
>
> Yet in none of these domains is the third-person standpoint neglected. Important third-personal truths are brought on board in each case and play necessary roles in the account, whether as specificatory premises for moral argument; as parts of the general anthropology within which some set of claims is more broadly situated; or as dialectical support for the essential theses of the view. It is thus false that the NNL view places either too much emphasis on the first-personal standpoint, or too little on the third. It is arguably, the only natural law theory currently on offer that does justice to both.[355]

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[353] Snell, 2014, *The Perspective of Love*. It is worth noting that Snell has no relation to the author.
[354] Snell, 2014, pp. 12-13.
[355] Tollefsen, 2016, p. 95.

This emphasises that the New Natural Law theory is not interested in denying the traditional Thomistic metaphysical system, but views it as epistemically posterior to the project of ethics. It is not my purpose here to adjudicate the debate. The account of evil to be developed in the coming chapters does not itself presuppose Thomistic metaphysics, though it is compatible with this metaphysics. As such, I will not attempt a full defence of the metaphysical framework in question. Even if one rejects such a framework, they might still find my account of evil plausible. I will, however, briefly exposit a few aspects of traditional Thomistic metaphysics so that the reader will know how my account would fit into that broader intellectual context. This will help to make it clear that my account should be plausible to Old as well as New Natural Law theorists.

Convertibility of the Transcendentals

Aquinas opens his *Disputed Questions on Truth*, quite naturally, by asking the question 'What is truth?'. In response, he lays out an idea often referred to as the convertibility (or interchangeability) of the transcendentals.[356]

> Now Ibn Sīnā [Avicenna] says our first mental conception—the most known as it were to which analysis of all our conceptions leads us—is what exists. Consequently, every other mental conception adds something to what exists. But to what exists you can't add anything from outside as it were, in the way specifying differentiations are added to a genus, or supervening properties to a substance, since any sort of nature already is by its nature something that exists (and this is how Aristotle proves that what exists names no genus). So adding something to what exists means expressing some way in which what exists exists not expressed in the word existing… Human souls can both know and desire, and to express the way in which what exists is agreeable to desire we call it *good* (for as Aristotle says *everything desires the good*), and to express the way in which what exists is agreeable to mind we call it *true*… So this is what being true adds to

[356] For example, see Scott Macdonald, 1991, pp. 31-55.

> existing, namely, the conformity or match of a thing and understanding, from which knowledge of a thing follows, as we have said.[357]

Cornelio Fabro understandably, if hyperbolically, describes Aquinas' answer as 'the most dense and formal text in the whole history of western thought'.[358] Nonetheless the essential idea is not overly complicated. All concepts in some way refer to being. Some do so in a partial way that refer only to certain beings or groups of beings, whereas others describe everything that has being. The former are genera and their species, the latter are the transcendentals. Transcendentals are certain central concepts which are taken to be just different ways of describing being. In the above quote Aquinas mentions truth and goodness, but also typically included are unity and (more controversially) beauty. Truth refers to being considered as the object of the intellect, as something to be known, whereas goodness refers to being considered as the object of the will, as something to be desired and sought. Unity is a transcendental in the sense that all that exists is unified in the manner in which it exists. Aquinas writes, 'every being is either simple or compound. But what is simple is undivided, both actually and potentially. Whereas what is compound, has not being whilst its parts are divided, but after they make up and compose it. Hence it is manifest that the being of anything consists in undivision'.[359]

Beauty refers to being considered as an object of contemplation. It is more controversial since it has sometimes been interpreted to be a kind of goodness, such as by Jacques Maritain.[360] By contrast, Francis J. Kovach calls beauty 'the richest, the most noble, and the most comprehensive of all the transcendentals.'[361] Umberto Eco, in his book on Aquinas' aesthetics, takes a middle position, affirming it to be a transcendental in an implicit way, while noting that 'Aquinas's text is filled with uncertainties and hesitations.'[362] The beautiful, Aquinas writes:

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[357] *Disputed Questions on Truth*, Q. 1, Art. 1. Translation in McDermont, 1993, *Aquinas: Selected Philosophical Writings,* pp. 52-53.
[358] Fabro, 1966, p. 407.
[359] ST I, Q. 11, Art. 1.
[360] As interpreted by Maritain, 1939, in *Art and Scholasticism,* p. 172.
[361] Kovach, 1961, as translated in Jan Aertsen, 1996, p. 336.
[362] Eco, 1988, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, pp. 118-9.

> Is the same as the good, and they differ in aspect only. For since good is what all seek, the notion of good is that which calms the desire; while the notion of the beautiful is that which calms the desire by being seen or known…Thus it is evident that beauty adds to goodness a relation to the cognitive faculty: so that "good" means that which simply pleases the appetite; while the "beautiful" is something pleasant to apprehend.[363]

Interesting though the question of beauty is, I will focus primarily on the convertibility of being and goodness.[364] This helps us to understand Aquinas' understanding of the metaphysics of goodness, which in turn is necessary to properly understand his metaphysics of evil. At first glance, the idea that being and goodness are convertible seems ridiculous. Surely Aquinas cannot mean that every being is good, if looked at in a certain way. We would not ordinarily think that Hitler was good, but he was surely a being.

The first thing to note is that the concept of goodness being used here is not an exclusively moral concept. As David Oderberg writes:

> According to the Scholastics, goodness is being considered from the point of view of *perfectibility*. Despite the misleading terminology, perfectibility is not about becoming, literally, perfect. No finite thing can be perfect. There are always unactualised potentialities. You may be smart, but you could be smarter. The tiger may be swift, but it could be swifter. Even if it could run as fast as biologically possible for any tiger, it would still lack other 'perfections', that is to say, actualities that belong to its nature, such as a higher level of cunning or climbing ability.[365]

At this point there might appear to be a confusion, since the understanding of goodness as perfectibility described by Oderberg does not seem the same as the description of the

[363] ST I-II, Q. 27, Art. 1, Ad. 3.
[364] For more on the debate, see Aertsen, 1996, and Servier, 2015.
[365] Oderberg, 2020, p. 2.

transcendental of goodness above. For the Thomist, goodness is simultaneously understood as the fulfillment of something's being, and also as that which is desired. At first glance these seem to be two quite different approaches to goodness.[366] However, they are linked by the Thomistic understanding of appetites. We do not desire things arbitrarily, but because they appear to be in accordance with our appetites. Our appetites are themselves metaphysically grounded in our natures and are directed towards the fulfillment of these natures. In order to unpack this, I will first elaborate on what it means for something to have a nature and what it means for that nature to be fulfilled. Secondly, I will examine the nature of appetites for the Thomistic view, and explain how in light of this the good as desired comes together with the good as metaphysical fulfillment.

The Natures of Things

In the first three chapters of his work *On the Principles of Nature*, Aquinas makes three different distinctions which can be used to frame his metaphysical system.[367] In chapter 1 he examines the distinction between act and potency; in chapter 2 three principles of nature, namely matter, form, and privation; and in chapter 3 he affirms Aristotle's categorisation of the four causes. I will use these three sets of categories in order to explain the Thomistic understanding of natures and their fulfillment, following Aquinas' order.

Act and Potency

The Thomistic account of act (or actuality) and potency (or potentiality) has its historical origins in Aristotle's response to Parmenides and to Heraclitus regarding the nature of change and permanence.[368] It is worth first noting though, with John Wippel, that 'Thomas was primarily dependent on Aristotle for his knowledge of Parmenides

[366] As will be promptly explained, perfectibility is understood as the fulfilment of a thing's being. It is also worth emphasising that the transcendental of the good is linked with desirability rather than that which ought to be desired, at this stage.
[367] As John F. Wippel notes, this text has an advantage over many of Aquinas' other metaphysical works due to 'being presented in an independently written work, not in a commentary on Aristotle.' (Wippel, 2000, p. 296).
[368] Feser, 2014, pp. 31-36.

and other Pre-Socratic philosophers.'[369] Parmenides held that change required being to come from non-being, and since nothing could arise from non-being he deemed change impossible.[370] Aristotle responded by saying that there was a middle category between actuality and non-being, namely potentiality (or potency).[371] Change does not in fact require being to arise from non-being, but only from a potential for being. If a table is made from the wood of a tree, the table arose due to the fact that the wood of the tree had the potential to be made into a table. Wood has the requisite strength as well as the ability to be carved into various shapes. When the table was made from the wood, the potential for the wood to be cut into the relevant shape was actualised. These potentialities are grounded in the actual being of the thing in question. This is why you could not make the same table out of water. The prerequisite potentials for being made into a typically functional table are not present in water. Heraclitus held a different extreme position from that of Parmenides. He thought that change was not only real but constant, such that there is no stable subject (except perhaps the world as a whole) that undergoes the changes.[372] Heraclitus could be interpreted as going wrong by ignoring the category of actual beings, which themselves have the potentialities that make change possible. As David Oderberg summarises, 'At its most general, a potency is a way that something *could* be and an actuality is the way that something *is.*'[373]

There is an important distinction between active potentialities and passive potentialities. An active potential is the capacity for something to effect some change on something else, whereas a passive potentiality is the capacity for something to be changed by something else. Both are necessary in causal interactions. If a piece of wood is to be cut then the saw must be sharp enough to cut it, and the wood must be such that it can be cut. For the Thomist, active potentialities are technically an aspect of the

[369] Wippel, 2000, p. 66.
[370] See Parmenides in Waterfield, 2000, pp. 49-68.
[371] Aristotle, Metaphysics, Bk. Delta.
[372] It has been the opinion of some that this is not representative of Heraclitus' philosophy as such, but merely his philosophy as filtered through Plato and Aristotle (Kahn, 1979). See Taran, 1990 for a defence of Aristotle's reading.
[373] Oderberg, 2020, p. 11.

actuality of the thing that has them (the saw), though they are viewed as a type of potentiality relative to the action they ground.[374]

Principles of Nature

Aquinas distinguishes between 'three principles of nature: matter, form, and privation.'[375] Aquinas famously takes evil to be a kind of privation, but in order to understand what this means we must look at his account of form and matter. Following Aristotle, Aquinas takes all physical things to be composed of form and matter. The wood has a shape, structure, colour, and other properties which make it wood and not just a bundle of atoms. Even a bundle of atoms has a form insofar as the group have some kind of arrangement and structure. Indeed, each atom in itself can only be understood by recognising that it has both a principle of order and also that which instantiates such a principle (the electrons, protons and neutrons). It has been argued by Kathrin Koslicki that these forms, the principles of order, might be simply structure, with matter being the content which has this structure.[376] Although structure is certainly relevant to form, Oderberg argues that the structure-content distinction breaks down when discussing physical objects in a way that the form-matter distinction does not. Central to his critique is that the structure-content distinction requires there to be 'a separately identifiable content whose content can be specified.'[377] Such a separately identifiable content cannot in fact be found with physical objects. The same point, albeit in a different context, was made by Bertrand Russell:

> It is not always realised how exceedingly abstract is the information that theoretical physics has to give. It lays down certain fundamental equations which enable it to deal with the logical structure of events, while leaving it completely unknown what is the intrinsic character of the events that have the structure… All that physics gives us is certain equations giving abstract properties of their

[374] Koren, 1955, p. 59; Feser, 2014, p. 43.
[375] *De Principiis*, Ch. 2.
[376] Koslicki, 2008.
[377] Oderberg, 2014a, p. 170.

> changes. But as to what it is that changes, and what it changes from and to – as to this, physics is silent.[378]

For Aquinas, this would not be a surprise. He does not believe it possible to actually have matter abstracted from any form (prime matter). Aquinas holds that prime matter is what endures across all changes that happen to a thing, even if the changes in question are changes of substance, like a tree being reduced to ash and smoke. The tree does not endure across this change, but the basic matter of which the tree was composed does endure.[379] Indeed, Aquinas understands prime matter itself to just be the 'pure potentiality for the reception of form.'[380]

In addition, Oderberg argues that there are dynamic and qualitative aspects of a thing's form which are not reducible to structure.[381] The physical structure of an organism changes over time and its matter will also change over time. If there were just structure and content then we would struggle to find a meaningful sense in which the fully grown and weathered horse is the same thing as its newborn self. For these reasons Oderberg takes form to be the principle that grounds the properties of a thing in a way that includes but is not limited to a thing's structure. A form is, as Bernard Wuellner puts it, 'the principle of intelligibility in a thing.'[382] It is the principle of order by virtue of which a thing is the kind of thing that it is.

The final thing I will say about forms here is to do with the distinction between substantial and accidental forms. Eleonore Stump writes, 'The difference between the substantial forms of material objects is a function of three things: (1) what the form organizes or configures; (2) what the configuration effects; and (3) what kind of change is produced by the advent of the configuration.'[383] Regarding (1), a substantial form is viewed as configuring prime matter itself, whereas an accidental form is held to

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[378] Russell, 1985, p. 13.
[379] If not at the chemical level then at the atomic level or, in the case of nuclear reactions, at a sub-atomic level.
[380] Feser, 2014, p. 40.
[381] Oderberg, 2014a, p. 177.
[382] Wuellner, 2012, p. 47.
[383] Stump, 2003, p. 38.

configure something which is its own form-matter substance. The matter of a bronze statue is the bronze, but the bronze itself is composed of matter with a certain form. Regarding (2), being configured by a substantial form results in the being of a thing which did not exist before. Since substantial forms are the most basic forms a thing can have (configuring prime matter itself), they are viewed as giving things their basic metaphysical species, with accidental forms viewed as further qualifying a member of a species in a certain way. If a substantial form gives a thing its metaphysical species, then it follows that a change of substantial form entails a change of metaphysical species. It also follows tautologically that changes which are accidental to a thing's species do not by themselves change a thing's species, which explains point (3).[384]

Another key aspect of the difference between a substantial and accidental form is the structure of the thing's causal powers. Substances have causal powers irreducible to those of the substances' parts. Feser compares the way water has properties lacked by both hydrogen and oxygen with an axe, the causal powers of which are reducible to those of the wood and metal the axe is made of.[385]

I will say more about the nature of privation shortly, but for now it is important to note that privation involves some lack in a thing. The lack in question is a lack of form as opposed to a lack of matter. Aquinas writes:

> In order that there be generation three things are required: being in potency, which is matter; non-existence in act, which is privation; and that through which something comes to be in act, which is form. For example, when a statue is made from bronze, the bronze which is in potency to the form of the statue is the matter; the shapeless or undisposed something is the privation; and the shape because of which it is called a statue is the form.[386]

In this context, it is not enough for there to be matter with the potential to become a statue, but it is also necessary for the matter to lack the form of the statue, otherwise it

[384] To see this brief sketch unpacked in far more depth, see Wippel, 2000, pp. 197-375.
[385] Feser, 2014, p. 168.
[386] *De Principiis*, Ch. 1.

will not become the statue (already being one). That being said, although presupposed by the statue's coming into being, the privation is not properly speaking a cause of its coming into being. The point is a useful one for two reasons: firstly, because it makes explicit that though Aquinas views evil to be a privation, not every privation is an evil. Secondly, it is useful because it also makes explicit that privations have to do with a lack of form as opposed to a lack of matter. It is easy to think of a privation as being like a cavity in a tooth, which is a privation, but a tumour would be no less of a privation, since it would also involve deviation from the relevant organic form. To be clear, a tumour is an excess of matter, which may have its own form, but it is a privation of the form of the body, and hence an evil for the body. Indeed, a tumour can be an evil for the body both in the sense that it is itself a deviation of the form of the body, and also in the sense that tumours tend to cause further disruption to the body as they grow.

The Four Causes

Aquinas holds that when analysing a thing's etiology there are four different factors to consider: the formal cause, the material cause, the efficient cause, and the final cause.[387] This is because the above three principles, form, matter and privation, are not sufficient to explain how things come into being. 'What is in potency cannot reduce itself to act: for example, the bronze which is in potency to being a statue cannot cause itself to be a statue. Rather, it needs an agent so that the form of the statue can pass from potency to act.' This is the efficient cause, which is what actualises the potential in question. In addition, every potentiality is the potentiality *for* some state of actuality. A passive potentiality is in some sense towards being acted upon, and active potentialities are in some sense directed towards their possible effects. Indeed, perhaps the most obvious thing about causation is its directional nature, from cause to effect. Obviously, this directionality should not be taken to be necessarily conscious in nature. Aquinas does speak of this directionality as being intentional but clarifies that 'to intend this is nothing else than to have a natural inclination to something.'[388] This is the final cause. Aquinas takes all the other causes to presuppose the final cause. He writes:

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[387] *De Principiis, Ch. 3.*
[388] *De Principiis*, Ch. 3.

> Even though the end is the last thing to come into being in some cases, it is always prior in causality. Hence it is called the cause of causes, because it is the cause of the causality of all causes. For it is the cause of efficient causality, as has already been pointed out… and the efficient cause is the cause of the causality of both the matter and the form, because by its motion it causes matter to be receptive of form and makes form exist in matter. Therefore the final cause is also the cause of the causality of both the matter and the form. Hence in those cases in which something is done for an end (as occurs in the realm of natural things, in that of moral matters, and in that of art), the most forceful demonstrations are derived from the final cause.[389]

He fleshes out the same idea in *De Principiis Naturae*:

> The end does not cause that which is the efficient cause, rather, it is a cause of the efficient cause's being an efficient cause. For health – and I mean the health resulting from the physician's ministrations – does not make a physician to be a physician; it causes him to be an efficient cause. Hence, the end is the cause of the causality of the efficient cause, for it makes the efficient cause be an efficient cause. Similarly, it makes the matter be matter, and form be form, since matter receives a form only for some end, and a form perfects matter only for an end. Wherefore the end is said to be the cause of causes, inasmuch as it is the cause of the causality of all the causes.[390]

The final cause thus has a place of special prominence in Aquinas' thought, but it does not eliminate the proper explanatory scope of the other three modes of causation he recognises.[391]

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[389] *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, V.3.782.
[390] *De Principiis*, Ch. 5.
[391] Far more could be said here. See Feser, 2014, pp. 88-105 for a survey of the importance of finality in Thomistic metaphysics.

The Fulfillment of Appetites

Natures

From what has already been said it is clear that Aquinas holds to the existence of natures or essences. As David Oderberg writes, 'For an object to have an essence is for it to have a suite of properties, both actualities and potentialities, definitive of the kind of object in question.'[392] Everything we come into contact with has some kind of nature at some level, which is relevant to its causal powers. This is presupposed in everyday discourse, such as when we say that the Labrador will eat whatever it can because it is a Labrador, or say that a stone will fall if dropped because that is what stones do, since having mass is included in the kind of thing a stone is.

Of course, realism regarding natures and essences has been disputed. One could, like Sidelle, hold that 'natures' are mere human social conventions and have no reality beyond such conventions.[393] Crawford L. Elder has argued that such an approach is self-defeating, insofar as it requires conventions to be grounded in human society, and human society cannot be a convention of itself.[394] Yet if one is to be a realist about humans having some kind of nature by virtue of which they can be grouped then there is no reason to refuse to be a realist about the natures of other animals or of chemicals. There is a similar objection from W.V.O Quine, who doubted natural kinds since our 'sense of comparative similarity… is presumably an evolutionary product of natural selection.'[395] Apart from plausibly being an instance of the genetic fallacy, such responses have been alleged to be self-defeating insofar as all of our cognitive faculties, including those used by Quine when formulating his doubts about natural kinds, are presumably evolutionary products of natural selection.[396] There is a large amount of literature on this topic and I do not intend to defend essentialism here. It is useful for clarity's sake, however, to make a few points.[397]

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[392] Oderberg, 2020, p. 13.
[393] For instance, see Sidelle, 1989, p. 65, 67.
[394] Elder, 2004, chapter 1.
[395] Quine, 1969, p. 171.
[396] Feser, 2019.
[397] For a full length Thomistic treatment of the topic see Oderberg's 2007 book *Real Essentialism*.

Apart from making sense of our everyday modes of explaining things' causal powers, being a realist regarding natures also makes sense of what Philippa Foot calls 'Aristotelian categoricals.'[398] These are truths such as that dogs have four legs. When we affirm dogs' four-leggedness we do not mean that every dog has four legs, that some do, or that most do. The fact that dogs typically have four legs is clearly grounded in dogs in a way that other facts, like that dogs typically eat canned dog food, is not, even if the latter were to be true. We mean that it befits what it means to be a dog to have four legs, and that this explains why in fact dogs tend to have four legs. Such truths require that there be some kind of canine nature to ground them. Of course, this kind of explanation is not taken to be in competition with standard biological explanations of how it is that, for instance, the DNA of a dog results in it having four legs. Rather, the essentialist would argue that these processes themselves implicitly presuppose the kind of metaphysics found here.[399]

One worry about essentialism, at least as it applies to biology, is that it would require species to be fixed and hence lack the dynamism necessary for evolutionary processes. As Patrick Madigan writes, 'Under the influence of Darwin and more recently through the work of Willi Hennig [the Aristotelian essentialist] system has been jettisoned in favour of the attempt to define organisms through descent from a common ancestor. This has resulted in the effective death of 'essentialism' and the threatened disappearance of biology into chemistry and physics.'[400] However, Oderberg argues:

> It is an elementary mistake to think that fixed essences exclude substantial change. Hydrogen has an essence but it can still fuse into helium. That an essence is fixed means that nothing that possesses it can cease to possess it without ceasing to exist, and that when something comes to possess it that thing begins to exist. It does not mean that nothing possessing an essence can ever be created, destroyed, or substantially changed into something with a different essence.

[398] See Foot, 2001, Chapter 2; Michael Thompson, 1995.
[399] See, for instance, Feser, 2019, pp. 375-456.
[400] Madigan, 2011, p. 302.

> There is no reason *in principle* why the same could not apply to biological species.[401]

Of course, this response does not settle the debate. David Stamos has argued that the same plausibly could not apply at the level of biological species, since that would entail formal contradictions emerging about the abstract essences of organisms.[402] In addition, there are other arguments against essentialism's compatibility with evolution, such as that essentialism requires sharp boundaries between biological species, whereas evolution presupposes only vague boundaries.[403] Okasha argues that essentialism is incompatible with the way contemporary biology is done, writing:

> Virtually all philosophers of biology agree that… species are not individuated by essential characters. … Empirically, it simply is not true that the groups of organisms that working biologists treat as con-specific share a set of common morphological, physiological or genetic traits which set them off from other species.[404]

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to go through all the arguments and counterarguments for both sides.

Goodness and the Fulfillment of Nature

With all of this in place, we are in a better position to understand the convertibility of being and goodness. Goodness has to do with the fulfillment of something's nature. The fact that it is good for a dog to have four legs as opposed to three is grounded in the fact that having four legs is in canine nature. As seen in the dog example, it is sometimes possible for a thing to fall short of the fullness of its nature in some way. This is not necessarily a moral falling short (dogs are not moral agents), but nonetheless it is a defect for a dog to have only three legs. The defect of the leg does not necessarily rob the

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[401] Oderberg, 2007, p. 204. Much more could be said about the relation between evolution and essentialism. See Feser, 2019, pp. 400-456.
[402] Stamos, 2003, p. 122.
[403] This argument has been made by Erehefsky, 1992, pp. 188-9; and Hull, 1992.
[404] Okasha, 2002, p. 196.

dog of its doghood. It still has the substantial form of a dog. But even so it instantiates the form of doghood less well than it would have had if it had four legs.

Since things exist only as instances of their kinds, a thing's being can be said to be corrupted in a certain sense if it does not instantiate its nature well. At its extreme, a thing could lose its substantial form altogether, as happens to a body when an organism dies. This is why Aquinas holds that a corpse can only be said to be a body in an equivocal sense of the word.[405]

This sense of goodness is a general one that can apply to non-organic examples. Oderberg gives the example of a triangle.[406] We would ordinarily say that a carefully drawn triangle is a good triangle. One drawn with computer accuracy would be better still. Both would still have minor flaws**,** but we would not on that basis say that they were not triangles at all. Rather the hand drawn one would be a triangle, if not a very good one by comparison. A better triangle would be one that better instantiates the form of triangularity. It is a better triangle because it is more triangular. It is also not the case that the triangle is only good in this way because it was a human artefact. We would just as easily say that a naturally occurring triangular structure was a better or worse triangle.

Teleology and Appetite

In the Thomistic mindset, it is analytically true that things are directed towards their characteristic ends. The language typically used is that of 'appetite.' In the contemporary use of the word, this is a little misleading. We tend to take appetites as being our felt propensity to desire biological necessities. In the older, Thomistic sense, however, 'appetites are simply tendencies or dispositions of objects to or away from certain end states.'[407] Technically, only sensitive or rational appetites require cognition. As Oderberg writes, 'The fulfillment of a natural appetite… does not entail any striving, trying, wanting, or anything else that comes under the general term 'conation'. Particles of opposite charges attract; salt dissolves in water; snowflakes tend to grow six branches;

[405] *Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima*, bk. 2, ch. 1.
[406] Oderberg, 2014b; also Feser, 2009, pp. 33-4.
[407] Oderberg, 2020, p. 15.

stars burn out: these are all examples of natural appetites.'[408] Of course, it does not make sense to have a tendency without having some end state which the tendency is directed toward. Insofar as an object's final cause is the ground of its formal cause, the fulfillment of the ends the object is directed toward involves the fulfillment of the object's form. To put it concretely, all other things being equal a dog flourishes when achieving the characteristic ends of canine action. This is true both of the ends a canine is conscious of, like nutrition and reproduction, but also unconscious of, like supporting a flourishing immune system. It is good for the dog herself to achieve these ends.

Of course, we have to be clear with the kind of goodness we mean. Obviously, a snowflake does not experience any satisfaction at growing six branches, but if it does grow its branches then it is in a meagre sense a good instance of a six-branched snowflake.

At this point we are able to discuss human goodness. Human goodness involves the instantiation of what it means to be human. As discussed in chapter 1, Aquinas follows Aristotle by understanding humans as being rational animals by nature. As a result, the same things that are goods for other animals tend to be good for us, but we have an added dimension of our good, namely goods to do with our rational nature. This is what grounds the importance given to the role of reason in the first three chapters. Because we are rational animals we fulfil our natures and hence our good by reasoning well and acting in accordance with right reason. In addition, humans are by nature social animals, and hence to live in society, within a network of functioning relationships, is good for us metaphysically.[409]

Included in the human good are various non-moral goods. Some are ones we share with other animals, like the goods of health, while others are more distinctive of humans, such as the goods of intellectual fulfillment and of linguistic excellence. For Aquinas, the

[408] Ibid.
[409] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1, 1. We are social animals in the sense that we are naturally disposed to live in societies, which Aristotle describes as being political in nature.

specific domain of the moral good has to do with the proper functioning of the will (the rational appetite) as guided by reason.[410]

Before moving on I will frame three objections that could be made against the general understanding of goodness laid out above.[411] These objections are mainly being used as a dialectical tool, with possible responses helping to clarify the understanding of goodness. The objections could certainly be developed in greater depth. Firstly, it could be objected that identifying goodness with being in the Thomistic fashion entails the absurdity that more being would mean more goodness. A world with more and larger objects would by that fact alone be a better world.

The objection commits the fallacy of composition. It may be in a sense good for a rock to be a rock, but it does not follow that it would be good for the world to have an extra rock in it, since the goodness of the world would depend upon the nature of the world in question. If the universe were taken to be an arbitrary grouping of the things that happen to exist then one could even argue against there being some goodness of the world as a whole.

Secondly, it could be objected that the concept of goodness has an inherently evaluative component to it. In chapter 1 I argued that a central component of distinctive human activity was the appreciation of the good. Yet on this account it seems as though everything ought to be judged as good and appreciated as such, which humans cannot in practice do. In addition, some things are evaluatively neutral and so it is a mistake to judge them as good. Hence the account of goodness is unrealistic and also false.

It is true that in a sense all things ought to be appreciated for being what they are. It is part of being a rational animal that we delight in understanding the being of all sorts of unexpected things. A civil engineer who studies soil mechanics because she finds it

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[410] Aquinas clarifies that we can speak of acts as intrinsically wrong, but that even then we are only guilty of a moral wrong from voluntarily choosing the wrongful act. *De Malo,* Q. 2, Art. 2, Ad. 1.

[411] The objections in question, alongside others, are listed and discussed in Oderberg, 2020, pp. 18-26. That being said, my responses to the objections differ from Oderberg's responses.

fascinating is in this way fulfilling her nature. That being said, it should be clarified that simply because each thing is directed toward its own distinctive ends it does not follow that we are directed toward the same ends. The fulfillment of our rational faculties by understanding a proton's propensity to attract electrons is not the same as the propensity of the proton itself. Hence it does not matter if we do not care about whether such propensities are in fact realised. In this way, a great many things are indeed evaluatively neutral for humans on the Thomistic view.

Thirdly, it could also be objected that the Thomistic account entails that when an impersonal object does not manifest a tendency it has by nature it thereby lacks goodness. This would be highly counterintuitive. Surely, we should not think of an electron as lacking in goodness if it does not happen to attract a proton.

The Thomistic account should not be interpreted as holding that goodness is achieved when *every* tendency of a thing is realised. Indeed, this would be problematic since things can have multiple conflicting tendencies at the same time. A lukewarm cup of coffee has the potential to be either heated up or cooled down. Rather, the metaphysical fulfillment should be interpreted as manifesting 'every essential tendency an object has, *in the conditions in which it finds itself.*'[412] Non-living substances do not ever fall short of the fulfillment of their substantial natures. Artefacts produced by human design can, however, fall short of fulfilling the ends that we make them for, however.

Evil as Privation

At the beginning of *De Malo*, Aquinas addresses the question of whether evil is an entity. He makes a distinction between the thing that is evil, and that by virtue of which it is evil.[413] The thing which is evil is an entity, but that which makes it evil is a privation. This seems to be a distinction between an evil and its evilness, where the evil is that of which evilness is predicated. This is an important distinction to keep in mind, though it is slightly tricky since in everyday language we would describe both simply as 'evil,' since 'evil' is both an adjective, noun, and an abstract noun. In order to avoid being

[412] Oderberg, 2020, p. 24.
[413] De Malo, Q. 1, Art. 1.

cumbersome I will use 'evil' for these different senses where context makes clear in which sense I am using the word. Not just any lack is an evilness, properly speaking. Humans lack tails, but it is not evil for humans to lack tails, since tails are not due us by virtue of our nature. An evilness is, rather, the lack of a good that should have been present but is not. That is, 'something being deprived of a particular good that is required for its perfection.'[414] This is a very general sense of evil, which corresponds to the general sense of goodness that was just discussed. It is not an essentially moral category. Even a plant being dehydrated is evil for the plant, in this sense. It is also worth noting that the good of different things can come into conflict. A lion eating a lamb is good for the lion, but being eaten by the lion is evil for the lamb.

This applies to moral evils too. As we have already seen, Aquinas understands moral vice to be a falling short of human nature. Humans, as rational animals, flourish when they act in accordance with right reason. It is therefore an evil if we act opposed to reason. What makes an evil a particularly *moral* evil is its relation to the will. Aquinas writes, 'sin has the nature of moral wrong only because it is voluntary, since we do not impute any disordered act to anyone as moral wrong unless the act is within the person's power.'[415] If we act against reason involuntarily then it is still an evil for us, but it is not a *moral* evil. This allows us to better understand Aquinas' understanding of the morality of human action, which will be dealt with in greater depth in the next chapter. Aquinas, when discussing whether there can be evil actions, spends most of his reply summarising the convertibility of being and goodness before concluding:

> We must therefore say that every action has goodness, insofar as it has being; whereas it is lacking in goodness, insofar as it is lacking in something that is due to its fullness of being; and thus it is said to be evil: for instance is it lacks the quantity determined by reason, or its due place, or something of the kind.[416]

He goes on to specify the different components that make up an act, and hence the different ways an act can fall short of being a good act. The three relevant features of an

[414] Ibid. Ad. 1.
[415] De Malo, Q. 2, Art. 2.
[416] ST I-II, Q. 18, Art. 2.

act are its object, its end, and its circumstances.[417] A privation of due order in any of these three aspects of an act can make an act morally problematic. In chapters six and seven I will argue that the distinction between the object of an act and its end helps to explain how it is that a person without an evil character (in the narrow sense of evil) could perform an evil action.

In this final section of the chapter I will first address the question of truthmaking, as to how truths about privations can be ontologically grounded. Secondly, I will respond to two objections raised against the privation theory of evil by Todd Calder.[418]

Truthmaking

It might seem at first that the privation account of evil suffers since it is not clear exactly what it is that makes it true. The proposition that <the cat is on the mat> is made true by the cat actually being on the mat. Privations, however, look mysterious inasmuch as there is not something obviously *there* for propositions about privations to correspond to. Given the Thomistic understanding of the relation between being and goodness we certainly should not attempt to solve the problem by reifying privations in some way.

It should be noted that this is not a unique problem for privations. There are other kinds of negative truths which require truthmaking. Everyday statements about the existence of holes and of the mat being cat free need some kind of ontological grounding. One account which tries to deal with this problem is Armstrong's totality theory, according to which we could speak of a total state of affairs being positively true, which entails negative truths.[419] If we want to ground the proposition that <the flower is not yellow>[420] then we should say that there is a conjunction of all the positive truths about the flower in question, and that <the flower is not yellow> is not included in this conjunction. This is what grounds the flower's lack of yellowness, for Armstrong.

[417] ST I-II, Q. 18, Art. 4.
[418] Calder, 2007.
[419] Armstrong, 2004, pp. 54-60.
[420] Example from Oderberg, 2020, p. 155.

There are a few plausible objections to this account. Firstly, though it is an attempt to do away with negative truths by relying on the absence of such truths in the total description of a state of affairs, this plausibly just pushes the question back a notch, with this absence itself requiring grounding. Julian Dodd responds that the account 'does not provide a solution to the problem of the ontological nature of negative states of affairs so much as presuppose one,' and as a result, 'any appearance of genuine explanation here is illusory.'[421] Secondly, Oderberg notes that this account is undesirably extravagant.[422] It is incredibly unwieldy to have a truthmaker account on which you have to know everything about a state of affairs before you can figure out how negative truths are grounded.

An alternative account is the exclusion theory.[423] On the exclusion account negative truths are made true by positive realities which contradict the negation of the negative truth. Or to reword the point, negative truths can be entailed by positive truths. What makes <the flower is not yellow> true on this account would be a proposition of the sort <the flower is red> when conjoined with <if the flower is red then it is not yellow>. An advantage of the exclusion account over the totality account would be that it does not require a full knowledge of the totality of a state of affairs, but only of the aspects of the state of affairs actually relevant to the negative truth. It is also beneficial that the negative truths are themselves entailed by the relevant positive truths, rather than merely left out of the total description.[424] One objection to this account is given by Mumford, 'The chief defect of this proposal, as Russell saw … is that a true incompatibility is itself a negative truth… We would have explained negative truth only by invoking another negative truth so this has done no more than displaced the problem, swapping one negative truth for another.'[425]

For my purposes, it does not matter which account of negative truthmakers is itself true. Since there are in fact negative truths, such as that there are no winged cats that breathe

[421] Dodd, 2007, p. 389.
[422] Oderberg, 2020, p. 156.
[423] Defended by Demos, 1917.
[424] Oderberg, 2020, p. 158.
[425] Mumford, 2007, p. p. 46.

fire, some account or other will be true, and there is no reason to suppose that such an account would not apply equally to privations. As a result I will not devote more space to the question here.

Objections from Calder

Todd Calder, in his 2007 essay *Is the Privation Theory of Evil Dead?* offers two objections to the privation theory of evil which it is worth addressing in relative detail.[426] His first objection is that the privation account is unable to characterise paradigmatic cases of evil. His second objection is that one could construct a theory on which goodness was the privation of evil as easily as the other way around, and hence there is no reason to accept that evil is the privation of goodness as opposed to vice versa. I will respond to the objections in order.

Calder thinks that the privation theory of evil fails to address key instances of evil. For instance, he gives the example of a malicious torturer. On the privation theory, evil does not have positive weight to it. But some kind of positive weight seems necessary. The malicious torturer should be taken as:

> not just not as good as she could be. She is not simply withholding gestures of kindness which a morally decent person would bestow; her actions are positively bad and these actions are constituted by attributes she possesses, i.e., desires for other people's pain for pleasure, and not by attributes she lacks.[427]

On this point the privation theorist could heartily agree with Calder. Aquinas certainly affirms the existence of the passion of hatred, and does not interpret it as merely an absence of kindness. Positive dispositions can be lacking from someone without them having negative dispositions in their place. Take someone in a coma, for example. What Calder overlooks is that there can be an apparently positive aspect to privations. It is helpful here to recall the earlier distinction between the thing that is evil and the evilness of that thing. Take the distinction between justified anger and unjustified wrath

[426] Calder, 2007.
[427] Calder, 2007, p. 373.

in the previous chapter. Wrath is not just the absence of love, but nonetheless it is a privation in the sense that it is a deviation from the proper governing of the emotions. It is a lack of proper order, but that does not mean a lack of emotion or of intent. One could object that it is not obvious what this proper order could be. It would seem at first glance to be in the wrathful person, but there is a problem. Take two near identical cases where someone, Bob, is angry about a racist act reported to them by a trustworthy witness. In one case the witness was right and in the other they were honestly mistaken. As a result, in one case Bob's anger is justified and in the other it is not (though he is not culpable of the fact). In the latter case Bob's anger is an evil, due to the lack of correspondence between his anger and reality. Hence the form of due order regarding anger depends on something outside of Bob, with the interior disposition of Bob identical in the two cases. This would seem to show that the evil of wrath is not located within the wrathful person. The problem with this objection is that it equivocates on different kinds of evil that can occur in anger. The evil of innocent disproportion between anger and what it's about is an evil, but not a moral evil for Bob. The evil is that the person wrongly maligned has a right to a good reputation which they have lost. It would not be an evil of Bob's wrath per se, which was entirely reasonable given what he knew. Hence it does not show that moral vices do not inhere in the vicious person. Incidentally, even if the example did show that moral vices can depend on factors outside of the vicious person, this would not necessarily be problematic, since one of the functions of prudence just is to take into account the relevant circumstances when deciding how to act. Hence a purely insular character whose actions were not related to external factors would have the vice of prudence, on the Thomistic view espoused in the second chapter. Similarly, someone who desires other people's pain for pleasure is seeking pleasure inordinately. It can be rightly described as a lack of virtue, but that does not entail that the pleasure being sought is not being sought vehemently or aggressively.

Calder's second example of a paradigmatic case of evil which the privation theory cannot make sense of is that of pain. 'Pain is not simply the absence of feeling or pleasure, it is a positively bad sensation or feeling.'[428] Calder considers a couple possible responses

[428] Ibid.

from privation theorists. Firstly, that pain 'just is a lack of pleasure even though it appears to be its own phenomenological experience.'[429] It is not clear that a privation theorist would be tempted to give this kind of response. Secondly, he observes that 'some have argued that the evil of pain is best characterised as an absence of health or normal functioning rather than as an absence of pleasure.'[430] He notes that this would be implausible since a painful, dysfunctional finger is a greater evil than a merely dysfunctional one. It will not do to claim that the reason why the throbbing finger is worse is that 'the pain affects our functioning more globally,' and that pain is by itself directed towards our good. Clearly there is a sense in which pain is bad. Who in their right mind would be indifferent between experiencing intense pain and not experiencing it, if all other things were equal?

Regarding pain, it is useful to distinguish between the experience of pain and what the pain signifies. Calder assumes that the only kind of value of pain lies in it instrumentally safeguarding our safety, like when we pull away quickly from a burning surface. However plausibly there is another aspect of pain, namely as a perception of some ailment. This has been influentially defended by Armstrong and Pitcher.[431] If I am wounded and experience pain it is quite plausible that the pain itself is not bad, but rather that it is the badness of the wound that I am perceiving by means of the pain. It is also worth noting that from the mere fact that we have an aversion to something it cannot be concluded that it is an evil. I would choose to avoid the experience of intense pain wherever possible, all other things being equal. The whole point of pain is that it includes a powerful impulse of aversion. Stating that pain, when functioning properly, is not itself an evil is not to say that we should cease to flee from it. If my faculties for experiencing pain were malfunctioning such that I experienced pain when there was no underlying ailment, then the pain would indeed be an evil. But in that context the privation theorist seems to have a plausible explanation, namely that the pain is an evil because it is deviating from the proper order and function of pain. Of course, to say that pain when functioning properly is not in and of itself evil is not to say that it cannot have serious negative effects or be of immense personal significance. Surgeries would

[429] Ibid.
[430] Ibid.
[431] Amstrong, 1968; Pitcher, 1971.

naturally result in pain were anaesthetics not used, since the incisions in and of themselves are wounds. However, since the benefits of surgery outweigh this cost we are willing to do the surgery and anaesthetise the patient so that they do not undergo psychological distress as a result of the pain.

Here one could raise a possible counter-example analogous to the one raised above when discussing anger. We can imagine two near identical situations where Bob is experiencing pain as though he had stepped on a nail. In one case, he actually stepped on a nail, whereas in the other he had nerve damage in his knee resulting in the pain. What would the appropriate form be that is present in the first case but is absent in the second? A complete answer would require medical analysis of a particular case, but the form in question would presumably be the structure of the system of nerves that has been damaged and impeded from fulfilling its characteristic function. Since a form just is a principle of intelligible order, the privation of the neural structure, which is ordered towards delivering data including pain to the brain, would itself be a privation of form. In light of these considerations I do not in fact think that Calder's counterexamples are clearly unassailable for the privation theorist.

Calder also takes aim at privation theorists Anglin and Goetz for arguing that moral evils are privations such that the evils of murder and letting people starve are both grounded in the nonfulfillment of duties.[432] Calder rightly criticizes such a response as not capturing the moral richness of murder, but this does not have to reflect badly on the privation account as a whole. As we have seen in the previous chapter and will see in the next, the privation theorist has access to moral categories apart from mere nonfulfillment of duties. Both the moral character of a person and the nature of his actions can be analysed in richer categories. For instance, Aquinas' analysis of action includes both an analysis of what the act is about and of its intent, both of which would be relevant to an analysis of murder.

Calder's second objection to the privation theory of evil is that one could 'just as easily say that goodness is the absence of evil as we can that evil is the absence of goodness.

[432] Anglin and Goetz, 1982.

For instance, health is just as much an absence of disease as disease is an absence of health, and justice is just as much an absence of injustice as injustice is an absence of justice.'[433] This objection, though interesting, does not apply to Aquinas' privation theory due to the ontological asymmetry of goodness and evil. If we were to simply swap them around then we would need to say that being, the fulfillment of something's nature, is evil for it, and that falling short of a thing's nature would be good for it. Calder pre-empts this, stipulating that in this parallel theory 'all created being is evil and goodness is the absence of evil.'[434] It immediately follows from this that goodness would involve the absence of created being. This would not be equally plausible to the Thomistic privation theory, but would be patently absurd. It would entail that my good would be achieved by the cessation of my bodily existence, since instantiating my nature would be evil in the way it would be good for the Thomist. Since such a parallel theory has absurd consequences which the Thomistic theory does not, we do in fact have good reasons to prefer the conventional privation theory over the parallel account. Hence it seems as though the privation theory is in fact not dead, despite Calder's protestations.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have surveyed Aquinas' overall metaphysical framework within which we can understand the nature of evil as privative of goodness. We have seen that privations do have a plausible mechanism for being ontologically grounded. We have also seen how contemporary objections to the privation theory of evil of the sort raised by Calder are unpersuasive. This metaphysics has significant implications for understanding the Thomistic account of evil. For instance, an implication of evil being a privation of goodness where goodness is convertible with being is that pure evil is impossible, since a pure privation would have no being at all.[435] This metaphysical backdrop enables us to turn to an examination of the Guise of the Good, the principle that all actions are done for the sake of a real or perceived good, as well as of the moral nature of human action. In keeping with the metaphysical principles outlined here, actions will be interpreted as morally good insofar as the different components that

[433] Calder, 2007, p. 375.
[434] Ibid.
[435] SCG Bk. III, Ch. 15.

make them up are complete, and morally wrong insofar as they lack some proper aspect of their order as actions.

Chapter 5: The Nature of Action and Cooperation with Evil

Introduction

In the previous chapter I examined Aquinas' overall metaphysical framework. This chapter opens from where the previous one left off, with an analysis of the principle known as the Guise of the Good, the idea that every act is done for the sake of some real or perceived good. This is a serious issue for a Thomistic account of evil to overcome, since it is highly counter-intuitive to think of evil actions like genocide being done for the sake of some good.[436] This could be interpreted as minimising the radicality of evil actions and providing a partial justification of evildoers, as if they were really trying to achieve the good and were just horribly mistaken about it. I argue that the Guise of the Good turns out to be a metaphysical truism, for Aquinas, and can be applied at several different levels of reality, albeit in different ways. This leads into a discussion of the moral nature of human action, which forms important background for formulating an interpretation of evil action in the narrow sense from within a Thomistic framework. From this I turn to the question of cooperation with evil.[437] Many people who participate in gravely immoral acts are not themselves the primary wrongdoer but are simply cooperating with the wrongdoing to one degree or another. This is a significant issue for an account of evil acts and persons to consider. Were those who assisted the Nazis out of fear themselves guilty of evil acts, and were their characters rendered evil by their assistance? In the traditional Thomistic discourse cooperation with evil (in the broad sense of moral wrongdoing) has been understood by placing a great deal of emphasis on the distinction between formally and materially cooperating with evil. Formal cooperation with evil is where one's will is united with that of the principal evildoer, and material cooperation with evil is where one's actions are in some way utilised by the principal evildoer against one's will. Some recent Thomists have questioned this

[436] This chapter does not deal with the concept of evil in the narrow sense, though the extent to which the Guise of the Good applies to evil in the narrow sense is dependent on the extent to which it applies to human action in general.

[437] As will be made clear in the section, 'evil' here has to do with moral wrongdoing in general, not the narrow sense of evil. It is perhaps confusing, but the language of 'cooperation with evil' developed independently of the language of evil as found in contemporary philosophy of evil.

approach, arguing that acts of cooperation should be interpreted through the Thomistic analysis of action as any other act is. I assess this position, and in doing so prepare for an analysis of evil in the narrow sense in the following two chapters.

The Guise of the Good

The Guise of the Good is the principle that every act is done for the sake of some real or perceived good. It is an important principle within Thomistic thought, though has also been influential outside of Thomism, being developed by thinkers like Joseph Raz and Amir Saemi.[438] The principle has not escaped criticism, most notably that of Michael Stocker and J. David Velleman.[439] These writers either defend or critique the principle on primarily psychological grounds, and do not typically place much emphasis on its older, scholastic context. As Tenenbaum observes, 'most of the criticism of GG [the Guise of the Good] is by means of counterexamples.'[440]

The classic expression of the idea, that all acts are done 'under the guise of the good,' is a translation from the writings from Aquinas (sub ratione boni. 'ratione' has been translated both as 'guise' and as 'aspect'), present in Summa Contra Gentiles, book III, chapter 3.[441] In this chapter, Aquinas embeds the Guise of the Good as a psychological principle within a broader context about action in general being directed toward ends, even when not done by humans. He provides nine different arguments for the conclusion that every agent acts for a good, though I will only mention three of them here. He writes:

> All action and movement would seem to be directed in some way to being, either for the preservation of being in the species or in the individual, or for the acquisition of being. Now this existence itself is a good, and for this reason all things desire being. Therefore, all action and movement is for a good…

[438] Feser, 2015, pp. 297-320; Raz, 2010; and Saemi, 2014.
[439] Stocker, 1979; and Velleman, 1992.
[440] Tenenbaum, 2013, p. 4.
[441] Amongst other texts, such as his *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* (lib.1, d. 48, q. 1, a. 2, ad. 1.).

> Moreover. The intellectual agent acts for an end as determining on its end. The natural agent, however, though it acts for an end (as proved above), does not determine on its end, since it does not know the *ratio* of end, but is moved to the end determined for it by another. Now an intellectual agent does not determine the end for itself except under the aspect of good [sub ratione boni], for the intelligible object does not move except it be considered as a good, which is the object of the will. Therefore, the natural agent is also not moved, nor does it act for an end except insofar as this end is a good, since the end is determined for the natural agent by an appetite. Therefore, every agent acts for a good.
>
> Again. To shun evil and to seek good are in the same *ratio*, even from movement from below and upward movement are in the same *ratio*. Now we observe that all things shun evil, for intellectual agents shun a thing for the reason they apprehend it as an evil, and all natural agents resist corruption, which is the evil of everything, in proportion to their strength. Therefore, all things act for a good.[442]

The overall principle at play in the chapter is that since every act is directed toward some being as an end and, as discussed in the section on the convertibility of the transcendentals in the previous chapter, the good is understood to be the being of a thing considered as an end, acts are of necessity directed towards their ends 'under the aspect of good.'[443]

Here I argue that the Guise of the Good is a principle which can be applied at three different levels: at a metaphysical level, at what Aquinas would refer to as a sensitive level, and finally at a rational level, which is of primary moral significance. I argue that criticisms of the principle can be to a good extent defused by being clear about which level of the principle we are talking about. Philosophers who reject Thomistic metaphysics might not fully accept the discussion of the metaphysical level of the

[442] SCG III, 3.
[443] Ibid.

principle, but could still be in sympathy with the account of the sensitive and rational levels being exposited.

As Edward Feser summarises:

> Aquinas identifies three general categories of goods inherent in our nature. First are those we share in common with all living things, such as the preservation of our existence. Second are those common to animals specifically, such as sexual intercourse and the child-rearing activities that naturally follow upon it. Third are those peculiar to us as *rational* animals, such as "to know the truth about God, and to live in society," "to shun ignorance," and "to avoid offending those among whom one has to live." These goods are ordered in a hierarchy corresponding to the traditional Aristotelian hierarchy of living things (i.e., those with vegetative, sensory, and rational souls respectively). The higher goods presuppose the lower ones; for example, one cannot pursue truth if one is not able to conserve oneself in existence. But the lower goods are subordinate to the higher ones in the sense that they exist for the sake of the higher ones.[444]

It is in line with this kind of categorisation that I propose it makes sense to speak of the Guise of the Good being operative at different levels. It is worth noting that, as discussed in the previous chapter, there is in fact a category of goods even prior to the vegetative category, namely that of things that exist more generally. However, since the overall aim of the Guise of the Good here has to do with its moral implications, I will discuss both the general vegetative category and the sensitive category as though they were the same level, though it is good to keep in mind that there is technically a distinction between them. It is also worth noting that there could well be kinds of goods above the ones contained in our nature. I will not endeavour to speculate on the question, but merely want to stress that by placing the distinctive rational good of humans as in some sense 'above' those goods we have in common with plants, etc. I am not thereby trying to

[444] Feser, 2015, p. 302.

assert some kind of ontological human dominance. Aquinas himself viewed humans as only half way up the hierarchy of being, after all.[445]

The Metaphysical Level

As discussed in the previous chapter, there is a certain sense in which every cause is directed towards its effect as an end, though of course not in a way that requires anything akin to conscious intention. Insofar as every being and every end are in a sense good, there is weak but real sense in which every causal interaction can be said to be an instance of the Guise of the Good.

One aspect of this metaphysical level of the principle is that everything appears to be directed towards its own existence. This can be seen in the fact that things that exist tend to keep existing unless impeded from doing so. As Spinoza writes, 'Each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being.'[446] Or, as Paul Ross writes:

> Things seem to have existential inertia. That is, things seem to keep existing if undisturbed. My dining room table… will continue to exist as long as it isn't destroyed by the western New York climate, my two young boys, or any other force of nature. Now, we know some things degrade. A penny left outside will eventually rust away, but that's because of interactions with oxygen and so forth. A penny in my backyard, then, isn't really undisturbed. Alone in the void, perhaps it would last indefinitely. An organism, on the other hand, would not. Animals need oxygen and food to survive. But even an organism, it seems, wouldn't cease to exist without any causal activity. You or I wouldn't just blink out of existence in the void. Rather, certain internal processes that are adapted to keep us alive in our usual environs would do the opposite in a void. So it still seems that the default is for undisturbed and inactive things to keep existing.[447]

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[445] For a full length discussion of Aquinas on this point, see Oliva Blanchette's 1992 book, *The Perfection of the Universe According to Aquinas.*

[446] Ethics, 3p6.

[447] Audi, 2019, p. 1.

This idea could be held in varying degrees of strength. Here I am interested in a comparatively weak form of the idea, that substances have a tendency to continue to exist unless impeded from doing so. Since substances can have multiple tendencies simultaneously, a thing's tendency to continue in existence could be overcome by an active, competing tendency of that thing. This would still be an example of the metaphysical variant of the Guise principle since the overcoming tendency would still be directed toward an end. A sperm and an egg, for example, appear to be directed towards uniting and becoming a zygote, and hence there no longer being a sperm and an egg. Such cases are far from exceptions to the metaphysical Guise principle being defended. Clearly both gametes are directed towards becoming a zygote, and hence if they have a natural tendency to cease existing when becoming a zygote then it is only by virtue of the fact that they are positively directed towards an end. This point can be generalised. In cases where a thing's nature is directed towards transforming into something else, this direction would itself be a metaphysical instance of the Guise of the Good and so not a counterexample to the principle.

Aquinas thinks that everything that exists is like God in two respects. He writes:

> For every creature endeavours, by its activity, first of all to keep itself in perfect being, so far as this is possible. In such endeavour it tends, in its own way, to an imitation of the divine permanence. Secondly, every creature strives, by its activity, to communicate its own perfect being, in its own fashion, to another; and in this it tends toward an imitation of the divine causality.'[448]

As Oderberg also writes, 'By continuing to exist, they satisfy their tendency, and that is good pure and simple: it is an example of the general Scholastic thesis that good is the fulfillment of appetite.'[449] Again, it is important to remember that appetite is being used in a very general way not particular to organic substances. It might be objected that the fact that things continue to exist is not an example of the Guise principle, but is rather simply a fact about the way things are. Things tend to have a certain 'existential

[448] Compendium of Theology, 1, 103.
[449] Oderberg, 2020, p. 61. The case of suicide will be dealt with in the section on the rational level.

inertia.'[450] This is precisely the point. The metaphysical form of the Guise of the Good should not be taken as a fancy piece of metaphysical speculation. It is in fact just describing basic features of what we already know about the way things are from our uniform experience.

Another objection could be levelled from a more Thomistically inclined position. This point comes up in the context of debates about the existence of God. Aquinas argues that God is ultimately necessary in order to explain not just how things came into being originally but how they stay in existence now. Things are, so to speak, continuously being created by God, for Aquinas. An objection to Aquinas' position comes from the idea of existential inertia, that things just continue in existence by themselves and so do not require divine assistance.[451] As such, it could be thought that a Thomist ought to reject the metaphysical Guise principle if they want to also defend Aquinas' natural theology. Indeed, Aquinas would seem to himself be sympathetic to this objection, writing:

> Now, from the fact that God rules things by His providence it follows that He preserves them in being… [T]o be is not the nature or essence of any created thing, but only of God… Therefore, no thing can remain in being if divine operation cease.[452]

He writes elsewhere:

> Both reason and faith bind us to say that creatures are kept in being by God… [T]he being of every creature depends on God, so that not for a moment could it subsist, but would fall into nothingness were it not kept in being by the operation of the Divine power, as Gregory says.[453]

However, it is not necessary from these kinds of remarks to infer that Aquinas holds that things in fact are not significantly directed toward their own existence. In his defence of

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[450] Norman Kretzmann, 1997, p. 98.
[451] See John Beaudoin, 2007; Paul Audi, 2019; and Joseph Schmidt, 2020.
[452] SCG Bk. 3, Ch. 65.
[453] ST I, Q. 104, Art. 1.

the existence of God in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*,[454] Aquinas makes a distinction between accidentally and essentially ordered causal series. An accidentally ordered series is one like a one domino knocking over the next, or a parent begetting a child. The cause really causes the effect, but the effect does not need the cause in order to be sustained. The fallen domino stays fallen even after the initial domino has been moved. A child can still survive when his parents are absent or have died. A grandparent does not still need to be alive for her granddaughter to herself have children. An essentially ordered series, by contrast, is one where the effect is continuously dependent upon the cause, like a chandelier being continuously dependent on the chain and ceiling in order to stay suspended in the air, or my body's functioning being dependent upon the proper functioning of my heart. If the ceiling stops supporting the top of the chain, each subsequent ring of the chain becomes unable to hold up the ring below it. Aquinas argues that God is a sustaining cause of what exists by way of an essentially ordered series. As such, there is no conflict between maintaining that God might be both the ultimate ground of something's existence here and now and also that this causation operates by animating a thing's own inclination to continue in being. When Aquinas states that existence is not in a thing's essence he merely means that it cannot exist by itself, not that it would not be a severe blow (to put it euphemistically) to a thing's nature were it to cease to exist.

In addition to these concerns, it could be objected that this metaphysical version of the principle presupposes that presentism about time is true, since if the B-theory is true. The B-theory holds that the past and future are as equally real as the present, and that time is to be understood as simply another dimension. On this view, the tendency of things to persist through time would simply mean that things would tend to be as long as possible in the future direction. If time is another dimension then being as extended as possible in the future direction might not be good for the thing that exists, analogous to how someone can be excessively tall for their own wellbeing. In response to this argument it should be noted that the persistence idea is about things being causally directed toward the fulfilment of their own nature. It only has to do with things persisting in time insofar as causality is temporally asymmetrical, with causes typically

[454] SCG Bk. 1, Ch. 13.

in the past of their effects and vice versa. Hence someone who rejects presentism could accept the idea that things tend to remain in existence temporally to the extent that they agree that causality is temporally asymmetrical.

It might finally be objected there are counter-examples to the Guise of the Good. I will address two such counter-examples. Firstly, one could object that the Guise of the Good does not apply in cases where an organism appears to be actively directed towards its death. Some fish like the Pacific Salmon die soon after reproducing when they could have otherwise continued alive. In response, it should be noted that like other semelparous species, the function of the salmon dying is to maximise the resources available to the offspring, and hence is itself directed toward an end.

The second potential counter-example is that the principle does not seem to apply at the atomic or quantum levels. For instance, radioactive substances are unstable and tend to break down on their own over time. Surely this suggests that they are not directed toward their own existence? Firstly, even if it were the case that the Guise did not apply at such a level it would still be a useful general principle which ought not be jettisoned. Secondly, though, it does not appear as though these kinds of examples when looked at closely do in fact violate the Guise of the Good. The internal principles which cause substances to break down still need to overcome a tendency of the substance to continue, hence a tendency to continue in existence exists even at the sub-atomic level. As Oderberg points out:

> Alpha decay involves the overcoming of the strong nuclear force by the electromagnetic force; beta decay involves the overcoming of the strong force by the weak force; both involve internal interactions such that a force that tends to destroy the particle overcomes one that tends to keep it together… Hence whatever tendency to corruption an isotope may have, it still presupposes, ontologically, a tendency to stability and cohesion that must be overcome, whether internally or externally, for the corruption to occur.[455]

[455] Oderberg, 2020, pp. 67-8.

The Sensitive Level

Everything that is true at the metaphysical level applies also to living things. The matter which composes organic tissue also tends to stay in existence unless impeded from doing so, and every incidental causal interaction presupposes some kind of basic directionality towards a good. However, these same principles are also found in living organisms at a higher level. Living things have patterns of acting in such a way as to achieve characteristic ends of their species and to sustain their existence. Sunflowers incline themselves towards the sun in order to aid their growth and sustained life. Animals have a complex system of appetites, sensations, desires and emotions which are directed toward various ends including their life. This is why they eat food, flee out of fear from harm, and reproduce.

At this point we should make a distinction between two different ways of being directed towards something. When a cat eats some tuna, we can explain the act from the fact that the cat's hunger is formally directed toward the good of nourishment. We can also meaningfully say, however, that the cat is not only seeking nourishment in general but *this tuna* in particular. Of course, the reason why the cat desires the tuna is that the cat's hunger is directed toward nourishment, so these should not be viewed as being in competition with one another. The attainment of the material object of the cat's desire (the tuna) is directed toward the attainment of the formal object of the cat's hunger (nourishment).[456]

It might be objected that there are counterexamples to the Guise principle at this level. A male praying mantis, for instance, offers himself up to be consumed after engaging in reproduction. Living tissue can also become cancerous, compromising the sustained existence of the whole organism. There are also organisms whose characteristic ends are things we would shudder to call good. Some parasitoid species of wasps, for instance, do not kill insects for their own sustenance but instead lay eggs inside the insect. When the eggs hatch the host slowly dies by being eaten from the inside by the wasp larvae. Certainly, we would not ordinarily call such organisms or practices good.

[456] Saemi, 2014.

However, these instances are not in fact counterexamples to the overall principle. The praying mantis does have a natural inclination toward its continued existence and will ordinarily fight to defend his life. But this inclination exists within a network of other goods which the mantis is directed towards, including the nourishment of his offspring. Nothing about being directed toward a good means that there are no circumstances in which it is appropriate to sacrifice the good for some other legitimate good.

Living tissue can indeed become cancerous, but the causal effects of the cancer are not being achieved by the organism. The organism is not acting to give itself cancer. Rather, the cancer is a result of a genetic breakdown within the organism's cells. The tendency of the cells to multiply is itself formally directed toward the organism's flourishing and cannot be understood without reference to this end. To the extent that this tendency of the cells is malfunctioning and acting against their own formal object, they are falling short of being good cells of a living organism. As such, the proper way to understand their action is on the more basic metaphysical level. For Aquinas, body parts are properly parts of a body insofar as they are properly directed toward the good of the whole.[457] Hence to the extent that cancerous cells are malfunctioning and are acting in opposition to the good of the body, it is reasonable to not call cancerous cells parts of a body. As such, cancerous cells are not parts of the overall living organism, so that their systematic disorder cannot be attributed to the organism. Of course, we cannot understand the history of why a cancerous cell multiplies without reference to the role of cell division in the original organism. However, this is no longer the formal reason why the cancerous cell divides. The only ends still present are the low-level metaphysical ends of whatever the immediate effect is of each causal interaction within the cell.

Parasitoid wasps that lay their eggs within hapless hosts are merely a particularly distasteful instance of any number of species that flourish at the expense of others, as seen in any kind of carnivorous animal. It should be stressed that the sense of goodness here is not of human desirability, or the desirability of the victim of such practices. It is bad for a lamb to be eaten by the lion, but the act is still done for the sake of a good,

[457] More could be said on this, but see ST I, Q. 76, Art. 8.

namely the good of the lion. Similarly, it is certainly bad for the host to be devoured painfully from the inside by wasp larvae. However, it does not thereby follow that there is not a good which the egg-laying is directed towards. Obviously, it is directed toward the good of nourishment for the larvae. Since the sense of goodness at play here is not one of particularly human desirability the fact that we find the process particularly distasteful is irrelevant.[458] Of course, far more could be said about these cases. My primary purpose here is to illustrate what these levels of the Guise of the Good would be. Full defences of the idea at these levels can be found elsewhere.[459]

The Rational Level

The Guise of the Good is most commonly taken as a psychological principle to describe particularly human action and choices.[460] As previously discussed, Aquinas understands humans as rational animals. We master our actions in a particularly rational way by using our intellects to judge what the good is that we should seek, and then with our wills we choose the good so identified. This allows for a third level at which the Guise of the Good can be operative, namely with regard to our deliberate actions. Of course, humans are also things that exist and are animals, so that the previous levels of the Guise apply to us as well. It is worth noting that humans do not always act based on some prior consideration of the good. Aquinas gives the example of a man scratching his beard or absentmindedly moving his foot. He states that such 'can be called actions *of a man*, but not properly *human* actions, since they are not proper to man as man.'[461] To say that they are not proper to us as humans is not to say that they are improper, but just that they are proper due to our animal nature in general, and not due to our peculiarly human nature. Distinctively human actions are those which 'proceed from a deliberate will.'[462] C.S. Lewis, in is insightful essay *Transposition*, explores not just how the animal goods are compatible with the rational goods but how the goods we share with other animals are elevated to themselves embody rational activity.[463] Hence it is

[458] See Davies, 2011, for a fuller treatment of this idea.
[459] Most recently, Oderberg, 2020, though he does not use the language of the Guise of the Good.
[460] E.G. Anscombe, 1957; Raz, 2010; Williams, 1979.
[461] ST I-II, Q. 1, Art. 1.
[462] Ibid.
[463] Lewis, 2000b, pp. 267-278.

not as though the animal aspect of humans is a separate part from the rational aspect. Rather, the rational aspect supervenes on the animal aspect. This is why activities we share with other animals, like eating or sexual activity, can be given a deeply personal meaning.

This is useful when interpreting the proper scope of the rational form of the Guise of the Good in Aquinas' thought. It applies only to acts and decisions freely chosen.[464] Since Aquinas takes the will to be free when guided by reason, the Guise does not apply at a rational level when the will is not guided by reason, though it will still apply in the previous senses discussed. As Aquinas writes, 'acts are called human, inasmuch as they proceed from a deliberate will. Now the object of the will is the good and the end. And hence it is clear that the principle of human acts, insofar as they are human, is the end.'[465] Indeed, Aquinas would take the Guise of the Good in this sense to be an analytic truth.

There are different possible formulations of the Guise of the Good with varying degrees of strength. The sense in which it is analytic, here, is a comparatively weak one. Although good as far as it goes, it could be objected that this formulation makes the Guise trivial. As Tenenbaum writes:

> A number of philosophers argue that GG [Guise of the Good] faces a dilemma. One way to understand the claim that the good is the constitutive aim of practical reason is to provide a substantive characterization of the good (for instance, pleasure or knowledge) and then claim that all intentional actions aim at pleasure or at knowledge. But this would be an extremely implausible view; obviously, not all intentional actions aim at pleasure or knowledge, and it is dubious that we could do better by replacing "pleasure" or "knowledge" with any other candidate for a substantive theory of the good. On the other hand, we could just define the good as "whatever we aim at in an action." But this would obviously make GG trivial. In other words, there is no understanding of "good" in

[464] There is a discussion of how this applies to incontinence (akrasia) in the following chapter.
[465] ST I-II, Q. 1, Art. 3.

GG that makes the thesis neither false nor trivially true.[466]

One alternative, stronger formulation of the sense of 'good' is summarised by Velleman, that of a thing being 'correct to approve.'[467] As he points out, 'That desire doesn't aim at correctness explains why desire can be perverse.'[468] The fact that we can act against our consciences provides obvious evidence against a form of the Guise principle predicated upon this conception of goodness. It is clear that we can in some sense choose to do what we know to be wrong. It does, however, raise the important question of what the role of ignorance in wrongdoing is.

Aquinas thinks that there is always some degree of ignorance of the good present in moral wrongdoing. He writes, 'since the object of the will is a good or an apparent good, it is never moved to an evil, unless that which is not good appear good in some respect to the reason; so that the will would never tend to evil, unless there were ignorance or error in the reason.'[469] He goes on to clarify that this ignorance can mean a few different things. A person could know that something was not the kind of thing to be done but not know that they are engaged in such an action, as though their case were an exception. Someone can legitimately believe that cheating on one's taxes is generally wrong but not infer from this that their own tax cheating is wrong. Someone may overlook an important consideration due to a lack of attention. Someone could also know that something is wrong but not avert to this knowledge when making their decision.

A harder case for the Guise of the Good has to with what Ashley Dressel calls wilful wrongdoings, what Aquinas refers to as sins of malice.[470] A sin of malice, for Aquinas, has to do with a wrongful act done while the actor knows that the act is wrong. Aquinas accepts that these wrongdoings occur, though he does not think that they contradict the Guise of the Good. Before giving his own take on malice, he presents several objections to this idea of malice which seem to be along Guise of the Good lines:

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[466] Tenenbaum, 2013, p. 6.
[467] Velleman, 1992, p. 16.
[468] Ibid.p. 17.
[469] ST I-II, Q. 77, Art. 2.
[470] Dressel, 2014; ST I-II, Q. 78, Art. 1.

> Objection 1. It would seem that no one sins purposely, or through certain malice. Because ignorance is opposed to purpose or certain malice. Now "every evil man is ignorant," according to the Philosopher (Ethic. iii, 1); and it is written (Proverbs 14:22): "They err that work evil." Therefore no one sins through certain malice.
>
> Objection 2. Further, Dionysius says (Div. Nom. iv) that "no one works intending evil." Now to sin through malice seems to denote the intention of doing evil [Alluding to the derivation of "malitia" (malice) from "malum" (evil)] in sinning, because an act is not denominated from that which is unintentional and accidental. Therefore no one sins through malice.[471]

Given what he has already said about there being some ignorance involved in every wrongdoing, one might expect Aquinas to have endorsed these arguments. However, he replies that:

> Man like any other being has naturally an appetite for the good; and so if his appetite incline away to evil, this is due to corruption or disorder in some one of the principles of man: for it is thus that sin occurs in the actions of natural things. Now the principles of human acts are the intellect, and the appetite, both rational (i.e. the will) and sensitive. Therefore even as sin occurs in human acts, sometimes through a defect of the intellect, as when anyone sins through ignorance, and sometimes through a defect in the sensitive appetite, as when anyone sins through passion, so too does it occur through a defect consisting in a disorder of the will. Now the will is out of order when it loves more the lesser good. Again, the consequence of loving a thing less is that one chooses to suffer some hurt in its regard, in order to obtain a good that one loves more: as when a man, even knowingly, suffers the loss of a limb, that he may save his life which he loves more. Accordingly when an inordinate will loves some temporal good, e.g. riches or pleasure, more than the order of reason or Divine law, or Divine charity,

[471] ST I-II, Q. 78, Art. 1.

> or some such thing, it follows that it is willing to suffer the loss of some spiritual good, so that it may obtain possession of some temporal good. Now evil is merely the privation of some good; and so a man wishes knowingly a spiritual evil, which is evil simply, whereby he is deprived of a spiritual good, in order to possess a temporal good: wherefore he is said to sin through certain malice or on purpose, because he chooses evil knowingly.[472]

Aquinas specifies that in an act of malice someone might know that there is a serious evil attached to what they are doing such that it is a bad decision, however the person can be said to lack the knowledge that such an evil should not be accepted for the sake of whatever particular good is being sought.[473] A husband might know full well that committing adultery will be on balance bad due to the effects on his spouse, children, and himself long term. He could know that these goods are conclusive reasons not to engage in the act in question. He might nonetheless choose to do the act, preferring the small but more immediate goods of adultery to the more important but less immediate goods he is betraying. As Steven Jensen notes, 'a sin from an evil will [malice] is a sin that initiates with the will itself. The person does so because he desires some false good more than the avoidance of evil.'[474]

Aquinas' responses to the objections quoted above are worth including too:

> Reply to Objection 1. Ignorance sometimes excludes the simple knowledge that a particular action is evil, and then man is said to sin through ignorance: sometimes it excludes the knowledge that a particular action is evil at this particular moment, as when he sins through passion: and sometimes it excludes the knowledge that a particular evil is not to be suffered for the sake of possessing a particular good, but not the simple knowledge that it is an evil: it is thus that a man is ignorant, when he sins through certain malice.

[472] Ibid.
[473] ST I-II, Q. 78, Art. 2, Ad. 1.
[474] Jensen, 2018, p. 162ff.

> Reply to Objection 2. Evil cannot be intended by anyone for its own sake; but it can be intended for the sake of avoiding another evil, or obtaining another good, as stated above: and in this case anyone would choose to obtain a good intended for its own sake, without suffering loss of the other good; even as a lustful man would wish to enjoy a pleasure without offending God; but with the two set before him to choose from, he prefers sinning… to being deprived of the pleasure.[475]

These are helpful for assessing Aquinas' position on stronger forms of the Guise of the Good. Aquinas does not think that all actions must be done out of the belief that they are the best actions to do in the circumstances. One can even know them to be morally wrong. In the case of malice what one is ignorant of is 'the knowledge that a particular evil is not to be suffered for the sake of possessing a particular good.'[476] Aquinas is explicit that malicious wrongdoings are especially grave because the disorder is more to be found in the will itself than in either the intellect or the passions.[477] There is obviously a certain conflict between knowing that a certain act is on balance bad to do and also not knowing that it is not to be done. As will be discussed in depth over the next two chapters, this moral wrongdoing requires a certain fragmentation of the will. As Steven Jensen writes, 'This profound confusion rests upon another confusion to which Aquinas does not explicitly advert when discussing sins from an evil will. The person is confused concerning his identity.'[478]

One could object that malice seems to be a kind of folly, and that if someone is so foolish as not to be able to reason from the fact that something is bad to do to the fact that they ought not do it ten they are unlikely to be culpable for their actions. Aquinas addresses the concept of this kind of folly, and distinguishes between folly due to 'natural indisposition,' where someone is not guilty, and folly due to one's free choice, where someone is guilty.[479] Malice is of the second category and, as previously stated, has to do

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[475] Ibid.
[476] Ibid.
[477] Ibid, Art. 4. Malice will be discussed in greater depth in the following chapter.
[478] Jensen, 2018, p. 164.
[479] ST II-II, Q. 46, Art. 2.

with when someone has hardened their will over time due to non-malicious wrongdoing. Aquinas holds the will of someone with this kind of folly to have gradually hardened themselves to an appropriate good, 'even as sweet things have no savor for a man whose taste is infected with an evil humor: and such like folly is a sin.'[480]

It is worth noting briefly that Aquinas even thinks that the Guise of the Good applies to the case of suicide. He writes, 'No man wills and works evil to himself, except as he apprehend it under the aspect of good. For even they who kill themselves, apprehend death itself as a good, considered as putting an end to some unhappiness or pain.'[481]

Objections to the Guise of the Good

Several different worries could be expressed about the scope of the Guise of the Good as it applies to human action. Here, I will address two standard criticisms. Firstly, that the Guise assumes as over-intellectualised account of human action. Secondly, J. David Velleman's influential criticism that it actually does seem possible for a rational agent to act out of a motivation that he does not consider good, and might even consider positively bad.[482] Velleman uses the example of Milton's Satan, who does what is evil precisely because he believes it to be evil. If such a character is even possible, Velleman argues, the Guise of the Good is false.

The over-intellectualisation objection is phrased by Amir Saemi in response to the kind of presentation of the principle found in Joseph Raz.[483] Raz defends a version of the Guise of the Good on which every intentional action is done by an agent who, when doing the action, believes that there is some good present in the action, and that this belief is one of the reasons why he does the action.

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[480] Ibid.

[481] ST I-II, Q. 29, Art. 4, Ad. 2. Of course, the suicide will typically have significantly mitigated culpability for the act due to the involuntary manner in which the passions of sorrow can cloud reason.

[482] Velleman, 1992.

[483] Saemi, 2014; Raz, 2010.

Saemi points out two problems with this view which I will discuss here.[484] His first criticism is that this approach renders the actions of young children as unintentional. Small children, after all, will often act without knowing precisely why they are acting. Surely it does not follow that there is no reason for their action at all, so Saemi believes that such actions should in fact be viewed as intentional. Raz himself responds to this concern by saying that the children might in fact be acting from beliefs even if they are not aware of the beliefs they are acting upon. Raz likens this to how people are not always aware of their beliefs regarding value, but can still act upon them. Other examples of the same idea can be found to supplement Raz's response. Speaking autobiographically, I have at times written essays late at night when, due to fatigue, I am no longer quite aware of what I am writing or what the topic even means. Nonetheless, upon waking I often find that the essay accurately expresses my beliefs, clearly suggesting that I acted upon beliefs that at the time I was not conscious of. However, Raz does not quite escape the objection as it pertains to his view as he is elsewhere explicit that beliefs act as reasons only when the agent recognises them as reasons.[485] It could be questioned, however, whether Raz could just accept that small children do not always act intentionally.

Saemi believes that this is an overly intellectual threshold which is not essential to the Guise of the Good. Saemi distinguishes between two forms of the Guise principle. Firstly, one can treat the principle as being concerned with the material object of an act, that is, with the content of the desire or plan that the agent has when choosing to act. Secondly, one can treat the Guise of the Good to be referring to the formal object of the act, that is, whatever good the desire itself points towards. This distinction was noted in previous section, between a cat's desire for a specific piece of tuna (the material object) and the cat's nourishment which explains this desire (the formal object).

Saemi believes that we should affirm the Guise of the Good in the formal variation, and that by doing so he can avoid the over-intellectualisation problem with Raz's view. Saemi applies this to non-human animals as well.[486] On this view one does not need to

[484] Saemi, 2014.
[485] Raz, 2011.
[486] Saemi, 2014, p. 499.

be consciously aware of the good that one is acting for in order to act for it. When rats run away from a fire they need not have a conception of how fire could burn them, but even so they are acting on instinct for the sake of their physical wellbeing.

The Guise of the Good thesis as I have elucidated it can grasp the merits of both Raz's and Saemi's versions. When animals flee from fire they are doing so under the Guise of the Good, as are humans when acting from considered plans, albeit at different levels of application of the principle. Non-intentional human acts, like withdrawing a hand from a burning stove, can also be explained due to our animal nature, even if it is not an instance of intentionally acting for a rationally perceived good.

We come now to Velleman's criticism of the Guise of the Good. Velleman writes that:

> The agent portrayed in much philosophy of action is, let's face it, a square. He does nothing intentionally unless he regards it or its consequences as desirable… All of his intentional actions are therefore directed at outcomes regarded *sub specie boni*: under the guise of the good… Our moral psychology has characterised, not the generic agent, but a particular species of agent, and a particularly bland species of agent, at that. It has characterised the earnest agent while ignoring those agents who are disaffected, refractory, silly, satanic, or punk.[487]

His criticism has several components, of which I will address only one in depth here.[488] Firstly, Velleman surveys various positions in contemporary philosophy of action and argues that they imply the falsity of the Guise of the Good thesis. Velleman emphasises the distinction between a belief and a desire, where a belief 'is responsible for conforming itself to the world,' while a desire 'makes the world responsible for conforming itself to the attitude.'[489] He argues that the Guise of the Good comes from an assumption that belief and desire are structured the same way, whereas in fact they are not. It is difficult to assess his argument from a Thomistic perspective since the theory of

[487] Velleman, 1992, p. 3.
[488] For a Thomistic response to the full essay see Feser, 2015, pp. 297-318.
[489] Velleman, 1992, p. 13.

belief and action in which he frames his argument is not Thomistic. Understandably, Thomism is simply not the target for his argument. As a result, I will not devote space to it here.

More applicable is the second part of Velleman's paper, where he attempts to disprove the Guise of the Good by counterexample. In particular, Velleman argues that the Guise of the Good cannot make sense of figures such as Milton's Satan, who:

> responds to his defeat with the cry, "Evil be thou my Good." Satan is here resolving to desire and pursue evil, and hence—as he himself puts it—to regard evil as good. But he cannot reasonably be interpreted as adopting new estimates of what's valuable—that is, as resolving to cease judging evil to *be* evil and to start judging it to be good. If Satan ever loses sight of the evil in what he now desires, if he ever comes to think of what he desires as really good, he will no longer be at all satanic; he'll be just another well-intentioned fool. The ruler of Hell doesn't desire what he wrongly thinks is worthy of approval; he desires what he rightly thinks isn't.[490]

Milton's Satan here is supposed to be acting for a reason he does not believe is good. This does have a certain superficial grounding in the text. Milton's Satan does acclaim, 'To do aught good never will be our task, | But ever to do ill our sole delight.'[491] However, upon reflection and closer reading this seems quite implausible. Satan would have to at least view his reason as a good enough reason for doing his evil action. If not, then it is difficult to see in what sense his reason could meaningfully be interpreted as a motivation for his acting at all. If the reason were not sufficient to motivate his action then it would not be the reason for his action at all. Indeed, after Satan's initial defeat he offers this little speech:

> What though the field be lost?
> All is not lost; the unconquerable will,

[490] Velleman, 1992, p. 18.
[491] Paradise Lost, Bk. 1, 159-60.

And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield:
And what is else not to be overcome?
That glory never shall [God's] wrath or might
Extort from me.[492]

Satan gives several motivations for his rebellion here, most notably his conviction that submitting to the will of God is somehow contradictory with his own good. Indeed, the point is well seen in Satan's most quoted lines from Paradise Lost, that 'Here [in hell] we may reign secure, and in my choice | To reign is worth ambition though in hell: | Better to reign in hell, than to serve in heaven.'[493] Here, reigning in hell is taken to be *better* than serving in heaven. He is not making his choice because he takes reigning in hell to be *worse* than serving in heaven. Clearly, reigning is being taken as a good.

This could be objected to by a claim that I am equivocating on the word 'good'. Perhaps Velleman did not mean that Satan's reason was insufficient for motivation, but just that it would bring about long-term suffering to Satan and was against his self-interest, or something of the sort. However, this is not enough. Milton's Satan may know that he is choosing despair, but that is entirely consistent with him choosing his despair for the sake of a perceived good. One can easily imagine Satan choosing it out of spite against God. By damning himself to hell he can frustrate God's love for him, because he knows that God would rather he live in happiness than despair. Indeed, Milton's Satan would be an instance of malice, for Aquinas. Aquinas does not think that the Guise of the Good renders a morally despicable person merely 'just another well-intentioned fool,'[494] as Velleman assumes. A malicious person seeks a good while knowing that in doing so he is abandoning more important goods, but he is still acting under the Guise of the Good at least in a broad sense, since he is still acting for an end. He is not acting, however, under a Guise of the Good principle which took the good to be 'the best, on the whole.'[495]

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[492] Ibid. 105-11.
[493] Ibid. 261-3.
[494] Velleman, 1992, p. 18.
[495] Saemi, 2015, p. 200. Saemi states that he believes that the Guise applies even to this strong conception of the good, but that he is only interested in arguing for a weaker principle.

The Nature of Human Action

Aquinas has a very nuanced understanding of human action that is at times difficult to interpret. As Stephen Brock comments, 'Aquinas's treatment of the specification of actions is complex, sometimes downright bewildering.'[496] Much progress has been made with distilling a coherent system from his writings, but '[N]evertheless, the multiple attempts to unite these diverse terms into a coherent account have left the application of these terms obscure. The followers of Aquinas give us a plethora of views, sometimes differing from one another by the most subtle of details.'[497] In this section I will try by and large to avoid taking stands on controversial points of interpretation. Although interesting, these intricate exegetical discussions would require a far more rigorous discussion than is relevant for my purposes in constructing an account of evil in the narrow sense. As such I will simply lay out the basics of Aquinas' account mainly as it is in the *Prima Secundae* of the *Summa Theologiae*, and will endeavour to make only uncontroversial points of interpretation, before turning to the issue of cooperation with evil.

Aquinas usefully summarises his general account of the goodness and evil of human acts as follows:

> [A] fourfold goodness may be considered in a human action. First, that which, as an action, it derives from its genus; because as much as it has of action and being so much has it of goodness, as stated above (A1). Second, it has goodness according to its species; which is derived from its suitable object. Third, it has goodness from its circumstances, in respect, as it were, of its accidents. Fourth, it has goodness from its end, to which it is compared as to the cause of its goodness.[498]

Each of these aspects of the goodness of an act are discussed by Aquinas in their own articles. The goodness that derives from the genus of the act seems to be merely

[496] Brock, 1998, p. 198.
[497] Jensen, 2010, p. 15.
[498] ST I-II, Q. 18, Art. 4.

describing the fact that every act has a certain degree of goodness insofar as it actually happens and its being is convertible with goodness.[499] This respect of goodness is useful to keep in mind but does not have as much application as the other three aspects of an act. Aquinas comments that 'every action has goodness, insofar as it has being; whereas it is lacking in goodness, insofar as it is lacking in something that is due to its fullness of being; and thus it is said to be evil.'[500] Hence an act can be criticised for lacking right order in any of the four aspects Aquinas emphasises.

The goodness of an act according to its species as given by its object takes more unpacking.[501] The object of an act is that which the act is about. If I throw a rock through a window and thereby break it, then the window is the object of the act. The object in some sense specifies the kind of act I perform. The object of an act of theft is the property of another. If the object of some act is not the property of another then whatever the act is, it cannot be an act of theft. However, it is not enough to simply look at the patient of the act. We also have to look at what happened to the patient of the act. The species of an act thus in some way is given by the object. Kevin Flannery writes:

> [T]here are various types of movement that might have a window as their end point: washing a window, for example, or removing a window. So, in order to correctly identify the object of 'breaking a window,' one must speak not only of the window but also of the context within which it is the terminus of a movement, that context being a breaking.[502]

Species can themselves be good, evil, or indifferent.[503] This is not to say that if the species of an act is good then the individual act will necessarily be good overall. An act of the right kind, like almsgiving, might still have a morally problematic element, like the intent or a circumstance. However, even if the other aspects of the act are good, that does not justify doing an act of an inherently wrong kind, like murder or theft. It is worth

[499] ST I-II, Q. 18, Art. 1.
[500] Ibid.
[501] See ST I-II, Q. 18, Art. 2.
[502] Flannery, 2019, p. 57.
[503] ST I-II, Q. 18, Art. 8.

noting, though, that this does not produce many counterintuitive implications since not all acts of taking are theft and not all acts of killing are murder.

There could be resistance to the very idea that the moral species of an act could depend upon the external object of the act and not its subjective intention. This is significantly qualified later on, when discussing the moral significance of the end of an act. That being said, Aquinas does certainly think that the external act can have its own principles of intelligibility built in to a certain extent, though this is disputed among some interpreters.[504]

The goodness of the circumstances of the act have to do with the accidental properties of the act in question. Aquinas gives a traditional list of the circumstances, as '*who, what, where, by what aids, why, how, and when*.'[505] An otherwise innocent act might be rendered improper by accidental features outside of the act's nature. For instance, the son of the Queen can and should relate to his mother with warmth and intimacy, as befits their family bond. However, when meeting her at a formal event he could disrespect her *as his Queen* if he spoke to her as he would normally at home. It might seem unusual for Aquinas to include *what* in his list of circumstances, since what happened presumably cannot be accidental to the act. Aquinas clarifies that things can happen alongside an act, perhaps as consequences of the act, that are not themselves part of an act and yet nonetheless are worthy of moral consideration:

> The same is to be said with regard to the circumstance *what*; for that a man by pouring water on someone should happen to wash him, is not a circumstance of the washing; but that in doing so he give him a chill, or scald him; heal him or harm him, these are circumstances.[506]

[504] See, for instance, Boyle, 1977; Finnis et al. 2001.
[505] ST I-II, Q. 7, Art. 3. For a helpful synopsis of the history of the list of circumstances, see Flannery, 2019.
[506] ST I-II, Q. 7, Art. 3, Ad. 3.

Aquinas argues that what is in one case a circumstance, accidental to an act, may in another case be so central to the intelligibility of an act that it becomes part of the object.[507] For instance, killing a monarch is not only an act of murder, but of regicide.

An action also can have or lack goodness by virtue of its end. Aquinas holds that in addition to the species an act derives from its object there is another kind of morally relevant species it derives from its end. This is confusing at first, but Aquinas helpfully explains:

> Certain actions are called human, inasmuch as they are voluntary, as stated above (Q1, A1). Now, in a voluntary action, there is a twofold action, viz., the interior action of the will, and the external action: and each of these 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. Therefore just as the external action takes its species from the object on which it bears; so the interior act of the will takes its species from the end, as from its own proper object. Now that which on the part of the will is formal in regard to that which is on the part of the external action.[508]

There is a form-matter relationship between the interior act of the will and the exterior act. This is significant because it suggests that the two moral species should not be interpreted to be in some kind of competition with one another. In Aquinas' philosophy form-matter composites work as unified wholes. Interpretations which attempt to do away with the principles of intelligibility contained in external acts for the sake of the moral centrality of interior intentions or vice versa[509] should thus be regarded with a degree of suspicion. It is worth noting that we can see the Guise of the Good present within this aspect of a human act. Every human act has some end which gives it a moral species. As discussed in the previous chapter on metaphysics, to treat something as an

[507] ST I-II, Q. 18, Art. 10.
[508] ST I-II, Q. 18, Art. 6.
[509] The former is what Steven Jensen (2010) refers to as 'Abelardian' interpretations of Aquinas. Though Jensen is clear that Aberlardianism is a dialectical position which different interpreters seem to accept in various different respects. The latter, a 'physicalist' family of interpretations, is similarly dialectical.

end just is to treat is as good. Hence, since all human acts have an end, they are necessarily directed towards something taken as a good. This distinction between the species of an act from its end and from its external object will be significant in the following two chapters, where I will argue that it is possible for a person to perform an evil act (in the narrow sense) without being an evil person as a result of this distinction. This form-matter relationship between the end of an act and its external object is an essential one for approaching traditional Thomistic approaches to the issue of cooperation with evil, which make it central.

Cooperating with Evil

An aspect of evil not touched on yet is the nature of cooperation with evil.[510] Not everyone involved in an evil act has the same degree of evil intent or guilt for their involvement. Plausibly, a murderer who threatens someone into helping him carry out a murder is guiltier than his unfortunate helper.[511] Even less would we blame a postal worker who unknowingly delivered plans for a bank robbery to a conspirator. The issue is clearly not simply one of knowledge, either. We would not always blame an undercover police officer for knowingly delivering such plans. Just from these examples it is clear that in an act of wrongdoing there can be many people with different relations to the act. The issue of cooperation with evil has to do with figuring out what kinds of relations to a wrongful act can be morally permissible and which ones cannot be. This raises the question not just of whether reluctantly cooperating with an evil is wrong, but also of whether and in what circumstances such a cooperation would itself count as evil in the narrow sense, as opposed to merely wrong. This latter question is one that I will answer in chapter seven, with the content in this chapter serving as preparation. I will propose that formal cooperation with an act that is evil in the narrow sense itself constitutes an evil action, though it by itself would not necessarily make the co-operator

[510] It should be noted that 'evil' here refers to moral wrongdoing, but not necessarily the narrow concept of egregious moral evil. The word 'evil' might appear misleading here, but it is used since it is the accepted nomenclature in both scholastic ethics and contemporary philosophy of evil when discussing this topic. Hence, except where otherwise stated, in this section 'evil' refers to morally wrong actions including crimes as serious as murder, and comparatively less serious wrongdoings such as minor cases of theft.

[511] All other things being equal, which they might not be. For instance, if the murderer's capacity for practical reasoning were sufficiently warped he conceivably might be less culpable than his helper.

an evil person. The standard way in the Thomistic tradition for addressing cooperation with evil (used here in the broader sense of moral wrong as opposed to the narrower contemporary sense) is by way of the formal-material distinction. This has recently been criticised by Kevin Flannery, who thinks that we ought to analyse instances of cooperation as we would analyse any other act.[512] In this section, I first examine the formal-material distinction as it has been taken to pertain to cooperation with evil. I then move on to examine some of Flannery's criticisms of this approach to cooperation with evil and conclude that Flannery's contributions are well made but do not wholly supplant the categories of formal and material cooperation.

The formal-material distinction as it pertains to ethics generally can be seen in a classic example Aquinas gives where someone commits theft for the sake of committing adultery.[513] Materially they are guilty of theft, but the theft is formally included in the overall act of adultery. Aquinas does not himself explicitly apply the formal-material distinction to cooperation with evil. The first known writer to do so was Paul Laymann in his influential 1625 work, *Theologia moralis*. He comments, 'For this reason, rightly is it said by some: it is illicit to cooperate in the sin of another formally, as it is sin; it is licit, however, to cooperate materially in a work which is a sin'.[514] In the same place he fleshes out under what circumstances he thinks material cooperation is permissible:

> To concur or operate only materially with sin by providing an object or ministering the matter and faculty of sinning, it is not always wrong or prohibited; but rather it is licit, if three conditions are present: 1. That the cooperation be morally good or at least indifferent in itself. 2. That it be done with good intention or from a motive of some virtue; and in no way by the intention of moving the other to sin … 3. That you be unable to prevent the sin of your neighbour or at least that you be not bound to prevent it; but for some reason you can permit it…[515]

[512] Flannery, 2019.
[513] E.g. ST I-II, Q. 18, Art. 6-7.
[514] *Theologia moralis*, Lib. II, tract. III, cap. Xiii, nr. 4. Quoted in Cummings, 2014, 38-9.
[515] Ibid.

It is interesting to note in passing that Laymann's three criteria roughly correspond to three of the four traditional criteria of the doctrine of double effect. The doctrine was itself drawn out ultimately from Aquinas' treatment of self-defence, and aims to discern when an action is permissible if it will have both good and bad effects.[516] The four principles, as they stand in the contemporary literature, are:

1. The act intended by the agent must be at least permissible.
2. The good effect of this act must follow from it at least as immediately as its evil effect.
3. The evil effect must itself not be intended.
4. There must be a proportionate, or sufficiently serious, reason for causing the evil effect.[517]

The similarities are potentially relevant, and a natural question would be whether contemporary Thomists could take the doctrine of double effect as a way of determining whether an act of material cooperation with evil is justified. Indeed, Andrew McLean Cummings writes, 'Concerning the applicability of the [doctrine of double effect] to cooperation, most authors do assume that this is how material cooperation should be justified.'[518] That being said, this position has been plausibly disputed. For instance, L. J. Fanfani objects that the question in the case of double effect is 'whether it is licit to posit a cause, from which follow two effects, one good and the other evil', whereas the question regarding cooperation is 'whether it is licit to cooperate *in the evil action itself*, which is carried on by another'.[519] The idea has to do with acts that are wrong by their very nature. As previously discussed, Aquinas thinks that one source of immorality in an act is its species itself. Independently from circumstances and intention, an act of murder could be criticised simply on the grounds of being an act of murder. The doctrine of double effect does not justify actions that are wrong by their moral species.

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[516] ST II-II, Q. 64, Art. 7.
[517] This wording of the principles is from David Oderberg, 2010, pp. 325-6. For a history see Cavanaugh, 2006, chapter 1.
[518] Cummings, 2014, p. 195.
[519] *Manuale theorico-practicum theologiae moralis ad mentum D. Thomae,* quoted in Cummings, 2014, p. 196.

As such, Fanfani's objection is that if an act of cooperating in an evil act participates in the inherently wrong species of the evil act, then it will never be permissible.

Regarding cooperation with evil, the Thomistic understanding of the material-formal distinction has been heavily shaped by Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787), who fleshed out the concept in depth. After summarising how some previous writers interpreted the distinction, he writes, 'But it is better, with [yet] others, to say that cooperation is formal which contributes to the bad will of the other and cannot be without sin, but that cooperation is material which contributes only to the bad action of the other, beside the intention of the cooperator.'[520] Liguori tried strongly to reduce the burden of potential co-operators with evil by separating the co-operator's act from the act of the principal evildoer. In defence of this separation, he writes:

> [W]hen you offer an indifferent action without evil intention, if the other should want to abuse it to accomplish his sin, you are not held to impede that except out of charity. And because charity does not oblige under grave inconvenience, therefore, positing your cooperation with just cause, you do not sin: Then indeed his sin does not come from your cooperation, but from his own evil which abuses your action. Nor does it hold to say that your action, although indifferent, nevertheless having been conjoined with the circumstance of the evil intention of the other, turns out evil; for, truly, your action is not *per se* joined with his evil will, but he joins his evil will with your action; whence your action will not then be a cause *per se* influencing the sin, but only an occasion, which the other abuses in order to sin.[521]

An 'indifferent action' here means simply an act that is not rendered either good or bad by the species of action that it is. Due to Liguori's immense influence, passages such as

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[520] Alphonsus Maria de Ligorio, *Theologia moralis*, ed. L. Gaudé (Rome: Typographia Vaticana, 1905–1912) (4 volumes), 2, § 63 (vol. 1, p. 357). Translation from Flannery, 2013, p. 665.

[521] Theologia moralis, lib. II, tr. 3, cap. 2, dub. 5. "De scandalo," art. 3, n. 63. Translation from Cummings, 2014, p. 68.

this have led to widespread acceptance among Thomists that what in the Thomistic tradition makes cooperation a formal participation in the evil act is the intent of the cooperator. For instance, when discussing ethical objections to heterologous embryo transfer as a practice, Stempsey summarises:

> Traditional analysis of the problem [of cooperation with evil] distinguishes between formal and material cooperation. Cooperation is formal if the cooperator helps another to do some evil and also intends the evil. Formal cooperation is always wrong. Cooperation is material if the cooperator helps another to do some evil, but does not do anything evil in rendering assistance, and also does not intend the evil action.[522]

However, this interpretation is not only absent from Aquinas himself, but is perhaps not even a consistent way to interpret Liguori. For instance, despite the natural interpretation of passages such as those quoted above which emphasise sharing the intent of the evildoer being cooperated with, Liguori gives examples which do not seem to fit this analysis. He speaks of someone acting as a lookout for an assassin, to stop the assassin from getting caught. He describes this as a formal cooperation with the evil, and as such intrinsically evil, even if motivated by fear of death. He writes:

> Let it be understood here that one thing is formal cooperation, which comes about when one directly cooperates in a sin… or else when it flows into the bad will of one's neighbor who wills to sin, as would be serving as a lookout ['watching the back'] for an assassin so that he might steal or kill more securely: to write amorous letters for an adulterer or to convey gifts to a concubine; to accept gifts from him who would undermine your integrity. These and similar acts of cooperation are intrinsically evil, for by them a hand is given to one's neighbor in committing a sin—or, at least, the bad will of the latter is fostered—and so for no reason, not even that of death, can they be dismissed as not mortal

[522] Stempsey, 2007, p. 37.

sin.[523]

Clearly, if the lookout is motivated by fear of death then his intent in cooperating with the act differs from that of the assassin who is causing the fear. However, the issue is perhaps not quite as clear. It could be responded that even if the lookout had a different overall end in mind to the assassin, he still willed the assassin's success as a means to the end of his life, and hence could be said to intend the act of the assassination in a certain sense. It is also worth noting that how we judge this case will depend upon specific details not present in Liguori's presentation. For instance, if the lookout was so overcome by fear that he was unable to think clearly he might have mitigated culpability. In addition, a lookout who was really hoping a guard would come by so that he could give up the assassin rather than alert him to the threat would plausibly not intend the successful assassination in the way Liguori supposes in his giving of the example.

Apart from this, there is a stock example which generated much debate in Liguori's day and for over a hundred years afterwards, which clarifies how many Thomists interpreted the distinction. The example is about a rich man who wants to break into a woman's house through the window in order to rape her. Worried that the ladder would fall, he demands that his servant comes to hold the ladder steady, and he would fire the servant if he refuses. It was fiercely debated as to whether this was an example of a formal cooperation in evil.[524] The servant clearly does not seek the same end that is motivating the evil act in question. He merely wants to save his job and feed his family. He may well be desperately hoping that the woman is out and so might not be harmed. It is potentially significant that the servant's keeping his job is not dependent upon the rape actually taking place, but rather on his willingness to assist his master break in in order to enable the rape.

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[523] Alphonsus, *Homo apostolicus instructus in sua vocatione ad audiendas confessiones, sive praxis et instructio confessariorum* (Mechlin, Belgium: H. Dessain, 1867–1868) (3 volumes), tract. 4, punct. 5, §31 (vol. 1, pp. 120–121). Translation from Flannery, 2013, p. 667.

[524] For a full book length treatment of the history of this example, see Andrew McLean Cummings' (2014) book, *The Servant and the Ladder*.

However, matters are potentially complicated by how we interpret the structure of the servant's intention. It could be argued that the fact that the servant's intention (to save his job) is only achieved by holding the ladder is in the first place because his act of holding the ladder is included in the evil will of his master, which is directed towards rape. If his master did not will that in order to commit the rape the ladder would need to be held, then holding the ladder would be totally irrelevant to the servant's job security. It could be argued, therefore, that the servant intended to save his job by means of fulfilling the evil will of his master as it pertained to him, which in turn the servant achieves by holding the ladder. On this reading, because the servant's overall action is unintelligible without reference to the evil will of the master, his will does in fact enter into his master's will.

By contrast, consider an analogous case of a porter whose job is to open the door to everyone who comes in. A man comes in to the building one day with the intent to rape someone inside. If the porter knows of this intention then he would be obligated to do what he could to stop the rape, and so would bear guilt for simply opening the door to the rapist like to anyone else. But he would plausibly not be guilty of participating in the evil of the rape in the same way as the servant in the previous example, if we accept Liguori's understanding of material cooperation being an instance where the evildoer uses an otherwise innocent action for his own nefarious ends. The porter would be doing effectively the same thing as the servant, and perhaps for the same reason. Both might be helping the rapist enter the building for the sake of keeping their jobs. But the porter does not participate in the evil of the rape in the way that the servant does, since his act of opening the door is related to his intent of keeping his job without any reference to the rapist's evil will. The rapist's sordid plan is accidental to the porter's act in a way that is not true regarding the servant. Hence it could be argued that he contributes to the matter of the rapist's plan without participating in it formally, even if he is guilty of some grave omission. This example is useful not only because it shows the difference between formal and material participation, but also because it makes clear that even when the cooperation with evil is only material, the act can be seriously bad for other reasons too, namely in failing to prevent the rape (if the porter knows about it).

By this stage, the exact nature of what the intent of the servant is and how it relates to the formal-material distinction might seem too burdensome. Andrew McLean Cummings argues that the nature of intentionality is too nuanced to be clearly separated into just the two categories of formal and material cooperation, and that a third category is needed in between.[525] To this end, he distinguishes between the *explicit* formal cooperation with evil and the *implicit* cooperation with evil, with both distinct from merely material cooperation. One cooperates with evil in an explicitly formal way when one is willing the end of the evil act being cooperated with, such as if the servant wanted his master's plan to succeed because he hated his master's prospective victim, or if a gun seller sold weapons to the Ku Klux Klan and was himself a supporter of the abominable things he foresaw they would do with them. By contrast, the cooperation would be implicitly formal if the co-operator did not share the evil end being sought by the principal evildoer, but if his actions were only directed towards his actual motivating end by means of the evil intent of the evildoer. Or to put it more concretely, the servant not sharing his master's end of rape but nonetheless holding the ladder to secure his job, where the only thing connecting the end (his job) and the act (holding the ladder) is the evil will of his master intent on rape. Cummings holds that explicitly formal cooperation is always wrong, whereas the other two possibilities are not always wrong.

Kevin Flannery thinks that the common application of the formal-material distinction to cooperation with evil misses several potentially relevant aspects of Aquinas' thought. Contrasting Alphonsus with Aquinas, he writes:

> Although the formal/material distinction, especially as understood by Alphonsus, serves some purpose as an approximate way of indicating what cooperation is morally acceptable and what cooperation is not, more sustainable theoretically is the Thomistic approach, which obsesses neither about intention nor indifference. Thomas… clearly regards intention as an important factor in the analysis of human acts, but not in any sense that excludes the possible importance—even the predominance—of other factors in particular acts.[526]

[525] Cummings, 2014.
[526] Flannery, 2019, p. 54.

It is important to emphasise that Flannery is not arguing for a wholesale rejection of the formal-material distinction but is rather arguing that such a distinction should supplement an analysis grounded in Aquinas' understanding of action. Plausibly, the formal-material distinction regarding cooperation is best situated within Aquinas' distinction between the external object of the act and its end. Since the predominant species of an act is that given by the end and not the external object, the intent of the actor is important for determining what it is that the actor is doing. The bank employee who hands over money to a robber is not herself a bank robber if she does it merely out of duress, since the end of her act is not aligned with the bank robbery. If, however, she handed over money because she knew that she would get a share later on then her act would be an act of robbery, due to the end for which she was doing it. It is also worth noting that we can distinguish between intending the bank robber to own the money, and willing the bank robber to hold the money. One could argue that the employee does not actually intend for the robbery to be successful even if she does will the money to be in the robber's hands or bag temporarily, before hopefully getting caught. It could be objected that real, legal ownership would not be intended even by the accomplice, since the legal ownership of the money would not change with the robbery's success, and that as a result the lack of such an intention cannot set the innocent bank employee apart from an accomplice. However, what would be intended by the robber and accomplice is that they have the opportunity to use the money. This intention would not be shared by the innocent employee when handing the money over if she wants them to be promptly caught.[527] Flannery argues, however, that this kind of analysis must also include factors such as the circumstances surrounding the act. An essential reason why the employee is not held to be guilty is because the circumstances surrounding her handing over the money include the imminent danger to her life. This circumstance is so immediate that it becomes part of the object of her act, and so partly defines what it is that she is doing.

Flannery also criticises Liguori's position as follows:

[527] This is made quite explicit in real life scenarios, since bank tellers are trained to place either GPS trackers in the money being handed over or dye bombs to render it useless to the robbers.

> Alphonsus, at least with respect to cooperation and scandal, is locked into an approach to such issues that looks to particular two-person relationships… He does not think to look elsewhere: not to any third (fourth, fifth, …) who might be involved and/or harmed by the cooperation or scandal.[528]

The issue of scandal is that of leading others astray morally by one's own actions.[529] Even when acting rightly it is possible to accidentally cause someone to fall into acting badly. To take an obvious example, it might not be a good idea to drink when having dinner with an alcoholic friend whom you know is on the verge of relapse. To take an instance of cooperation, the servant holding the ladder has to worry about not just providing for his children well but also the example he is giving them. If his son hero worshipped him then this could add yet another reason to be careful of helping his master perform criminal activities. Technically scandal is a circumstance of the act, and is easily overlooked when examining questions of cooperation, but Flannery is right that it adds another dimension to the question. It is also worth noting that the servant's willingness to go along with his master could also cause scandal for his master himself. Depending on the moral character of the master, he might rethink his actions upon seeing that his faithful servant would rather leave his service than help him with his crimes.

Related to this is the duty of fraternal correction. Aquinas holds that we have a duty to correct one another in order to save a wrongdoer from the corruption of their wrongdoing. Aware that not every way of correcting someone would be prudent, he does qualify that the obligation is 'not so as we have to correct our erring brother at all times and places,'[530] but rather we must take circumstance into consideration. In cases of severe wrongdoing where the negative consequences of the act are great, there would be more reason for correcting the wrongdoer promptly, so as to protect both the victim from harm and the wrongdoer from further corruption. So the question is not simply whether or not the servant may hold the ladder for his master or ought not to, but there

[528] Flannery, 2019, p. 122.
[529] See Flannery, 2019, chapter 3.
[530] ST II-II, Q. 33, Art. 2.

is also the question of whether merely abstaining from holding the ladder without rebuking his master would itself be permissible.

In light of these considerations it seems likely that the formal-material distinction as it applies to cooperation with evil would be more useful when situated within a broader analysis of cooperative acts as human acts. This would include an analysis of the object, end (which includes the formal-material distinction) and circumstances of the act in question. In chapter seven I will propose that formal cooperation with an act that is evil in the narrow sense itself constitutes an evil action, though it by itself would not necessarily make the co-operator an evil person.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have defended the Guise of the Good thesis as applying in different though related ways on three different metaphysical levels. I argued that Aquinas only defends a fairly weak and uncontroversial version of the Guise of the Good as applied to intentional human action. I have examined Aquinas' understanding of the moral nature of human action and have also explored the traditional Thomistic discourse regarding cooperation with evil. I found that, though interesting, there are rich areas of Aquinas' thought which are overlooked when the issue of cooperation is interpreted primarily through the lens of the formal-material distinction, and that this distinction ought to be used in the broader context of Aquinas' analysis of human action. This prepares well for the account of evil action in the narrow sense that will be given in the following two chapters.

Chapter 6: The Distinctiveness of Evil as a Moral Category

Introduction

In this chapter I lay out the essence of the account of evil I am proposing, by drawing on and extending Aquinas' thought covered thus far in the thesis. This account will then be unpacked and elaborated on in the following chapter in which I examine how it makes sense of common intuitions about evil and relates to existing theories of moral evil. In the first section of this chapter, I lay out Aquinas' distinction between mortal and venial sin. Venial sin, named from the Latin word for 'pardonable', is a sin that damages the bond of charity which binds humans with God understood as the good as such, which can be healed without extraordinary means, by reorienting ourselves to the good. Mortal sin, by contrast, not only damages the bond of charity but severs it, entirely extinguishing love for God and for other things loved as participations in God's goodness. Whereas with venial sin, where the remaining charity a person has can be nurtured back, the case of mortal sin leaves a person morally dead. Aquinas holds that it can only be restored by divine intervention, though that is not relevant for our purposes here.[531] I will argue that the mortal-venial distinction is not the same as the evil-wrong distinction, but that they are analogous to one another.

In the second major section I address how communities are bound together and how interpersonal rupture resulting in alienation follows moral wrongdoing. All communities are bound together by certain characteristic common goods which are participated in by each member of the community. If a person acts against these goods, her relation to the community will be damaged. If she knowingly acts in a way diametrically opposed to these goods, she is thereby alienated from the community. Since the common goods just are the principles of unity for a community, a person directed strongly against these goods would in fact be alienated from the community qua community, even if no one in the community realised it. Although applicable to communities generally, I focus mainly on the political society, understood as the community which contains all others within itself. A serial killer is in fact alienated from

[531] ST III, Q. 82, Art. 2

society even before he is discovered and caught, even if his alienation has not been socially reified yet, since he is not in fact directed towards the common good, and it is by virtue of being directed towards the common good of a society that one is a member of it. What is more, every participant of the common good is harmed by the good itself being harmed, since the goods of the society are partly constitutive of one's own good even while one is not conscious of experiencing the direct benefits of the good in question personally. As such, even the members of a mafia family are in fact harmed by one another's crimes, even if they are not aware of the harm. I propose that the concept of evil in the narrow sense can be analysed as referring to grave opposition to the basic goods. An immediate implication of this approach is that evil persons are in a meaningful sense alienated from society.

In the third major section of the chapter, I turn to an examination of Aquinas' treatment of capital punishment. I am not interested in wading into the debate over whether capital punishment should on balance be retained or abolished. However, the principles that Aquinas raises when discussing capital punishment are of great relevance. The main case which Aquinas seems to refer to in the following discussions of capital punishment is the case of the brutish person, which he inherits from Aristotle. Aquinas holds that the brutish man is one who is incapable of functioning as a human being and as a result performs acts which might be evil in type. The brutish man is in a functional and very qualified sense more like an animal than a human, and if they commit acts deserving it Aquinas holds they can receive capital punishment for the sake of society as a whole. At the same time, Aquinas does not think that they are fully culpable for their actions and he does not want to describe their wrongdoing as essentially moral in nature. It is unclear whether Aquinas would advocate for capital punishment in the case of a brutish person were there other methods of protecting society, such as long-term imprisonment. Since the brutish man in some sense 'exceeds the limits of human vice' for Aquinas[532], I argue that it is not proper to consider him evil in the narrow sense, since this category of evil is meant to describe the worst that someone can morally be, and the brutish man is not held to be in the realm of moral action. Aquinas does, however, also provide the category of the malicious. In the case of malice, a person acts

[532] *Commentary on the Nichomachean Ethics*, bk. VII, Lec. 5, 1377.

wrongly due to a perverted will being set on an improper end. I argue that evil personhood in the narrow sense is due to a will being maliciously directed against those goods which human societies are necessarily directed towards. In the following chapter this account will be brought into more direct contact with the work of other philosophers of evil.

The Distinctiveness of Evil as a Moral Category

In order to isolate the sense of evil utilised by contemporary philosophers of evil, it is necessary to make two distinctions. Firstly, between evil as badness and moral evil. The first sense is very broad, and can be used to include almost anything that is undesirable, including natural evils like hurricanes, but also more mundane undesirables like having a poor diet, as when Shakespeare explains in *Richard III* that the king had 'kept an evil diet long.'[533] This sense is not purely archaic, either, with Terry Eagleton using it to describe 'dengue fever, Britney Spears [and] tarantulas.'[534] The second sense, that of moral evil, is a narrower category contained within the first, including only those bad things which moral agents are culpable for. In this sense, writes Todd Calder, 'Murder and lying are examples of moral evils'.[535] The second distinction necessary is between moral evils in general, and a yet narrower species of moral depravity. In this final sense, ''evil' … is the worst possible term of opprobrium imaginable.'[536] It is the sense in which someone might comment upon a particular crime and declare 'it's not just wrong, it's evil'. It is the distinctiveness of this final sense of evil which is the subject of this chapter.[537] It is worth noting that not all languages represent these distinctions. In Latin, for instance, the word *malo* can be used to refer to badness, everyday forms of moral wrongdoing, as well as the most extreme kinds of moral depravity.

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[533] Shakespeare, *Richard III*, I.i.139.
[534] Eagleton, 2010, p. 138.
[535] Calder, 2013a, paragraph 2.
[536] Singer, 2004, p. 185.
[537] This final sense of evil has been elucidated in various ways by, among others, Arendt, 2006; Calder, 2007; Card, 2010; Cole 2006; de Wijze, 2018; Formosa, 2008; Garrard, 2002; Haybron, 2002a; Kekes, 2005; Morton, 2004; Neiman, 2003; Nys & de Wijze (eds.), 2019; Russell, 2014; Singer, 2004l Steiner, 2002; Thomas, 2003.

It might seem counter-intuitive to try and construct a Thomistic understanding of this narrow sense of evil, since although Aquinas wrote an entire lengthy book titled *Disputed Questions on Evil*, evil here (*malo*) is being used in the first, general sense. When discussing the question 'Does Sin Consist Solely of the Will's Act?', he helpfully provides a brief taxonomy of his terms which is worth quoting in full.

> And we should note that the three things – evil, sin, and moral wrong – are related to one another as more or less general. For evil [*malo*] is the most general, since the privation of form or right order or due measure in anything, whether subject or act, has the nature of evil. But we call sins acts lacking due order or form or measure. And so we can say that a crooked leg is a bad leg, but we cannot say that it is a sin, except perhaps in the manner of speaking whereby we call the effects of sin sin. And we call limping itself a sin, since we can call any disordered act a sin, whether of nature or human skill or morals. But sin has the nature of moral wrong only because it is voluntary, since we do not impute any disordered act to anyone as moral wrong unless the act is within the person's power. And so sin is evidently more general than moral wrong, although the common usage of theologians takes sin and moral wrong to be the same.[538]

It is interesting to note that Aquinas' usage of 'sin' is not that of an explicitly religious violation and is in fact quite a mundane category. It does not fit the attempted categorisations of sin by writers such as Luke Russell, who argue that 'the concept of sin is an exclusively religious or supernaturally loaded concept.'[539] That being said, insofar as Aquinas' theology cannot be separated from his moral theory, his writings on sin might well be found by some writers to be 'religious or supernaturally loaded', but this would not be because Aquinas is dealing with a separate religious concept of sin. Rather, it would be because Aquinas' explanation of the shared concepts of moral goodness and evil are in partly theological terms. That he is trying to explain the same basic concepts as non-religious philosophers can be seen in the great relevance he accords to Aristotle's moral theory when developing his own moral framework.

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[538] *De Malo*, Q. 2, Art. 2.
[539] Russell, 2014, p.16.

Within the category of morally wrong acts mentioned by Aquinas above is another useful distinction, that between venial and mortal sins. I will argue that, although Aquinas' concept of mortal sin is not identical to the contemporary concept of evil in the third sense, they are analogous to one another and closely related, and the former concept helps to illuminate the latter.

Aquinas notes that the word 'venial' is in Latin derived from that of 'pardon' (*venia*). A venial sin is a morally wrong act which 'does not of itself exclude pardon.'[540] As a result, the punishment and alienation fitting such acts need not be permanent. A mortal sin, by contrast, is one that 'excludes pardon, that is, a limit to punishment.'[541] Aquinas likens the distinction to that between curable and mortal illnesses, writing:

> [S]in is a disease of the soul, as it were, and pardon is for sin what healing is for disease. Therefore, as there are some curable diseases and some incurable diseases, which we call mortal, so there are some quasi-curable sins, which we call venial, and some sins of themselves incurable, which we call mortal.[542]

A venial sin is one that corrupts one's virtue of charity, the love for God as the good as such, and everything else as participations in the good. A mortal sin, by contrast, is an act so contrary to the good that it totally severs one's charity. Since charity is the very principle of spiritual and moral life, a mortal sin is great importance, for Aquinas. Whereas a person who has committed a venial sin can, due to their remaining charity, potentially recover morally, Aquinas does not think that this is possible in the case of mortal sin, without divine intervention.[543] For Aquinas, it is possible to speak of acts as being mortal sins by virtue of their moral species, but they only destroy charity if such an act be chosen voluntarily, with knowledge of its gravity.

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[540] De Malo, Q. 7, Art. 1.
[541] Ibid.
[542] Ibid.
[543] ST III, Q. 82, Art. 2.

Already, the notion of mortal sin as distinct from a venial sin touches upon an area strongly relevant for the philosophy of evil, namely the extent to which forgiveness and reconciliation are possible for someone who is guilty of a radical evil.[544] When he raises the concept of forgiveness of sins, Aquinas discusses forgiveness of humans by God, but he has less to say about interpersonal forgiveness. A full treatment of forgiveness is beyond the scope of my project here, but it is worth noting that Aquinas, in his *Commentary on Colossians*, writes, 'One forgives an injury when he does not hold a grudge against the person who did it to him, and does not injure him in return. Still, when punishment is necessary, the person committing the injury must be punished.'[545] This helps us to understand what Aquinas means by the term 'forgiveness', and it also fits in well with his understanding of punishment, as previously discussed. Aquinas thinks that the retributive end of punishment is best left to divine wisdom, though that someone deserving of punishment can be justly punished for medicinal reasons, which include both the wellbeing of the wrongdoer and of society as a whole. With this background, we can understand the necessity being referred to by Aquinas not as a necessity due to retributive justice but rather as a necessity due to either the wellbeing of the wrongdoer or of society more broadly. Hence, whatever else might be going on in forgiveness, Aquinas seems to take it to include both a forbearing of resentment as well as a qualified renunciation of punishment.

The famed Jewish, Nazi concentration camp survivor, Simon Wiesenthal, assembled a powerful book on the topic, *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness*.[546] Wiesenthal recounts being summoned to the death bed of a Nazi soldier who had committed a horrible atrocity. He told Wiesenthal that he had compelled over a hundred and fifty Jews to carry petrol cans into a house, and had then thrown hand grenades inside, while shooting anyone who tried to escape the explosions and fire. The soldier was, on his death bed, desperately seeking the forgiveness of a Jew. He told Wiesenthal about the alienation he experienced as a result of his crime. Even within the

[544] See Kathryn Norlock's essay 'Evil and Forgiveness' in Thomas Nys and Stephen de Wijze (ed.), 2019, pp. 282-93.
[545] *Commentary on Colossians,* Ch. 3, Lec. 3.
[546] Wiesenthal, 1997.

platoon itself the soldiers would avoid one another after the atrocity.[547] Wiesenthal is convinced that the soldier was genuinely repentant for his atrocity, and yet found himself unable to forgive him. The rest of the book consists in responses he courageously invited from fifty-three various figures to reflect on whether or not Wiesenthal ought to have forgiven the soldier.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel replies starkly, '[no] one can forgive crimes committed against other people. It is therefore preposterous to assume that anybody alive can extend forgiveness for the suffering of any one of the six million people who perished.'[548] Heschel's daughter, Susannah, commented, 'my father… wrote that "the blood of the innocent cries forever." Should that blood cease to cry, humanity would cease to be… Rather than asking for forgiveness, the descendants of the Nazis should continue to hear the cries of Jewish blood, and thereby preserve their own humanity.'[549]

These responses eloquently get at the sheer, brute facticity of the Nazi atrocities, and there does not seem to be anything the soldier could do to even start to make amends for his crimes to its actual victims. The question then arises, if one has done such a crime, what is he to do?[550] Since there are numerous aspects of such a crime and its effects, there is not a single answer to this question, but Aquinas' moral thought can describe the situation well. We might distinguish between those aspects of the situation grounded in the interior of the criminal, and those aspects external to him.

The most obvious problem facing the criminal is that his intellect and will are directed such that he chose to commit the crime, and the first thing he has to do is repent, to reorient his will to the good. As Lawrence Thomas writes, 'even where amends are not possible, acknowledgment on the part of the transgressor along with extraordinary contrition and sorrow are.'[551] This is not necessarily a straightforward process, since he may have developed any number of habits of intellect and will that might dispose him

[547] Ibid, p. 49.
[548] Ibid, p. 171.
[549] Ibid, p. 173.
[550] For an interesting discussion of a parallel case, see Lawrence Thomas, 2003.
[551] Thomas, 2003, p. 207.

toward his former crimes, and hence a thorough repentance might be a lengthy process. As Thomas writes regarding anti-Semitism:

> A significant change of heart (for the better in this case) typically takes time because it involves a change in a complex nexus of beliefs which have to be unraveled [sic] and replaced. One does not just stop believing that a given group of people is inferior, but that belief regarding this group is replaced by another belief. What is more, the belief that a group of people is inferior involves a complex set of beliefs about the nature of that inferiority, its manifestations, false positives (that is, instances where a member of the inferior group does not appear inferior), and the appropriate responses to both the displays of inferiority and the members of the group in general.[552]

However, even after wholeheartedly repenting, it does not seem as if he has adequately dealt with the effects on himself of having committed an atrocity. An obscure and hence often overlooked idea of Aquinas is that through serious moral wrongdoing one receives 'a stain on the soul'.[553] It is a kind of moral quality which stays with a person after doing something wrong. He writes, 'the stain is neither something positive in the soul, nor does it denote a pure privation: it denotes a privation of the soul's brightness… It is like a shadow.'[554] Even after the wrongful act is completed, the metaphorical stain remains. It is 'a blemish in the brightness of the soul, on account of its withdrawing from the light of reason or of the Divine law.'[555] Eleonore Stump insightfully expands on this concept beyond the writings of Aquinas himself to explore how this stain could be grounded in a Thomistic understanding of the human person, and also explores its implications for interpersonal relations.[556] For instance, Stump notes that the 'very memory of having engaged in a great evil that caused suffering to others diminishes something in the loveliness of the wrongdoer's psyche too. By staying in memory, the evil a person has done remains part of the wrongdoer's present.'[557] Even were the Nazi war criminal to

[552] Ibid. p. 214.
[553] ST I-II, Q. 86.
[554] ST I-II, Q. 86, Art. 1.
[555] ST I-II, Q. 86, Art. 2.
[556] Stump, 2019, pp. 57-61.
[557] Ibid. p. 58.

live a repentant life doing charity work, he would not be able to escape the memory of what he had done. Indeed, should he even want to forget about it, it seems as though he would be doing something wrong in failing to remember his victims, or in Susannah Heschel's language above, he is obliged to 'hear the cries of Jewish blood'. It must be remembered that the stain being spoken of here is not the same thing as moral guilt itself. Hence, if someone were to suffer amnesia and forget a crime from his past, he would still bear the guilt of the crime, though it would not have the same psychological impact on him that it would had he retained the relevant memories.

Another aspect of the stain on the soul as Stump analyses it is the effect an atrocity has on the wrongdoer's empathic capacities. There are some things, argues Stump, that we ought not be able to empathise with, like wanting to kill innocent people. The war criminal, however, knows precisely what it is like to desire such things. I am not totally convinced by this line of reasoning. For one thing, what is necessary for this empathic state is not that one has actually decided to commit an atrocity, but merely that there is a first-person understanding as to how someone could. We might not like to think about it, but we do not know what we would actually do were we in the same situations as those of the evil perpetrators of atrocities. Christopher Browning studies in depth the case of one battalion of police officers working in Poland while under Nazi control.[558] Most of them were not devoted Nazis, but ordinary men gradually committing more and more heinous acts including murdering civilians. Although we may hope that we would not do such things in analogous circumstances, we cannot be sure.[559] If we were to honestly introspect and successfully figure out how we ourselves might have fallen into such atrocities, we are surely not thereby damaging our moral character. If anything, such soul-searching ought to be good for our characters insofar as it instils humility and might alert us to what areas in ourselves might be susceptible to severe moral corruption. The empathy arising with, for instance, the police officers in Poland who were guilty of atrocities, would plausibly not be a state of moral degradation. In

[558] See Browning's 2017 (2nd ed.) book, *Ordinary Men*. See also Daniel Goldhagen, 1996 for an alternate view which emphasises the anti-Semitism of even these ordinary officers. Since their heinous acts were not solely against Jews Browning's point is interesting if we were to accept Goldhagen's interpretation.
[559] See Nagel, 1979, pp. 24-38.

addition, even where one has done something wrong, the resulting empathy with others involved in the same wrongdoing could well itself be a good thing if it allows for a morally richer response to the wrongdoers. Indeed, this would seem to be part of the rationale of governments and charitable organisations utilising reformed criminals to help keep youth away from crime.

The final aspect of the stain on the soul that Stump raises has to do with the relational effects of the evil committed. For Aquinas, the human person cannot be wholly directed towards evil, such that if someone commits an atrociously evil act, there will be internal division within the person (as discussed previously in the chapter on love and friendship). This has implications for how the wrongdoer can relate to himself, and also derivatively to others. If the Nazi soldier confides his atrocities to his sister, his sister will, unless she is also morally corrupted, be strongly opposed to his activities. Since (as previously discussed) harmony of the wills is an essential aspect of relationship, for Aquinas, there will be strong limits to how relationally close they can be while they remain passionately opposed to one another. This kind of relational rupture applies on a broader level, too.

Friendship, Relational Rupture, and Communities

Evil acts in some way alienate the evildoer from society. The question then arises, is this alienation permanent and irrevocable, or can reconciliation between the evildoer and society be achieved? Also, even if it could be achieved, would it be desirable? In order to answer these questions, I will briefly recap Aquinas' understanding of relationships[560] and discuss in light of this how evil acts rupture relationships, before turning to the nature of forgiveness.

For Aquinas, following Aristotle, there are different kinds of relationship depending on the motivations of the people in the relationship for wanting to interact with one another. He follows Aristotle's classic division of friendships united by pleasure, by usefulness for some end, and for the good of one another, where 'friendship' is taken in a

[560] As was discussed at length in chapter one. The question of what alienation looks like in a morally disordered society is discussed later on.

broad sense to potentially encompass not just unrelated companions but also relatives and (at least for Aquinas) spouses. It is this last category that both writers place the greatest emphasis on. In these relationships the friends relate to one another as other selves. Aquinas writes:

> For since love in a certain way unites lover to beloved, the lover therefore stands to the beloved as if to himself or to that which concerns his perfection. But to himself and that which belongs to him, he stands in the following ways. First, he wishes whatever concerns his perfection to be present to him; and therefore love includes *longing* for the beloved, by which the beloved's presence is desired. Second, in his affections a man turns other things back to himself and seeks for himself whatever goods are expedient for him; and so far as this is done for the beloved, love includes the *benevolence* by which someone desires good things for the beloved. Third, the things a man desires for himself he actually acquires for himself by acting; and insofar as this activity is exercised toward, love includes *beneficence*. Fourth, to the accomplishment of whatever seems good in his sight, he gives his full consent; and insofar as this attitude comes to be toward a friend, love includes *concord* by which someone consents to things as they seem [good] to his friend.[561]

The four ways mentioned here in which we can love people as other selves can be taken as a partial definition of friendship. A friend is someone we love as another self, which we can characteristically see in these four ways, which fit well with Aquinas' overall theory of love. Longing for a friend's presence is a way of desiring union with him. Benevolence (and the beneficence that flows from it) involves willing the other's good, and friends are united together through concord, also called harmony of the wills, which Aquinas elsewhere explains as 'will[ing] and reject[ing] the same things'.[562] These four conditions can be taken to provide necessary conditions for friendship, for Aquinas.[563]

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[561] *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum Petri Lombardi, On Love and Charity*, III, D. 27, Q. 2, Art. 1., quoted in Flood, 2014, p. 14.
[562] Quoted in Daniel Schwartz, 2007, 1.3 Acts of Friendship, para. 1.
[563] Schwartz, 2007.

These four conditions are to an extent interrelated. Humans are naturally directed towards willing their own goods, which means that if Paula wills Jerome's good then this benevolence is itself a source of concord for them.[564] They are united in willing Jerome's good.

Rupture due to wrongdoing

Wrongdoing can rupture a friendship through undermining the above conditions (though I am not asserting that they form an exhaustive list of all the ways such rupture can occur). This is easiest to see in relation to longing for the presence of the other and concord of wills. The significance of the condition of longing for the presence of the friend for a deep friendship to flourish can be seen in the pain that often occurs in relationships when one friend decides to seek goods incompatible with spending time with the other friend. The suffering caused seems in part to be a function of how deep the friendship in question is. An analogous point can be made for the concord of the wills. If Jerome has set his will on ends contradictory with those Paula has set her will on, then they cannot have harmony between their wills at least on that point. Insofar as the dispute concerns goods that they both deeply care about, this can impede the intimacy and closeness of their friendship. Since the goods we set our hearts on can to an extent be incorporated into our own goods, for Jerome to oppose goods close to Paula's heart can be experienced by Paula as an attack on herself.

Since Paula is naturally directed toward her own good, acts done by Jerome that are to Paula's detriment will also often damage their friendship. In order to maintain harmony between her own will and Jerome's will, Paula would need to be able to will against her own good, which is contrary to her nature. Since this directionality of the will towards one's own good cannot be wholly eradicated, Paula will not be whole-heartedly in union with Jerome even if she tries to go along with what he wills in order to secure the friendship. For the friendship to escape unscathed either Jerome must change his will to remove the conflict, either by repenting of his acts or by finding some way of seeking the same goods that does not conflict with Paula's wellbeing.

[564] The general characters of Paula and Jerome are from Stump, 2010.

Relational rupture and common goods

This kind of discord of wills which disrupts Jerome's relationship with Paula can plausibly happen also between Jerome and a group of people who are united together in the pursuit of some good. Jerome might be a member of the cricket club, but he will likely not fit in with the community if he intensely hates cricket and is trying to get the sport banned. He could, perhaps, be friends with several members of the club, but he could not be united with them as a fellow lover of cricket. He could not, except by a club-level legal fiction, be considered a full member of the cricket community.

Communities, like individual relationships, can plausibly be understood as functions of the shared goods of the members of the community. Some of these goods, like the good of playing cricket, are contingently sought by the members. This is not to say that the good of cricket is sought simply arbitrarily. The goods of making friends, of physical health, and of play which are instantiated in the activities of the cricket club are necessary for the holistic flourishing of the human person. But the good of cricket is contingent for us in the sense that cricket is not strictly necessary for the attainment of these more basic goods, which are plausibly sought for their own sake as necessary aspects of human flourishing. As Aristotle opens the *Politics*:

> Every state is a community of some kind, and every community is established with a view to some good; for everyone always acts in order to obtain that which they think good. But, if all communities aim at some good, the state or political community, which is the highest of all, and which embraces all the rest, aims at good in a greater degree than any other, and at the highest good.[565]

The Neo-Thomistic philosopher Jacques Maritain makes a technical distinction between community and society, on the grounds that 'social life as such brings men together by reason of a certain common *object*… In a *community*… the object is a *fact* which precedes the determinations of human intelligence and will.'[566] Examples of communities in this sense would be 'regional, ethnic, [and] linguistic groups.'[567] Societies, by contrast, are

[565] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1.1.
[566] Maritain, 1951, p. 3.
[567] Ibid.

taken to receive their common object from the deliberations of reason, they are where 'social relations proceed from a given initiative, a given idea, and the voluntary determination of human persons.'[568] The cricket club would technically be a society in Maritain's sense, though he acknowledges that the terms are used more or less interchangeably in everyday discourse. Basically, people have to choose to be members of a society in this sense. Political society contains other societies and communities within itself. I will be primarily focused on political society, and so will leave aside a more in-depth treatment of the community-society distinction here and will use the terms as basically interchangeable.

Aquinas takes the chief end of political society as the lives of its members being well lived.[569] As such, political society is bound by those goods which are necessary for a well lived life. John Finnis attempted to provide a list of seven such 'basic values': life, knowledge, play, aesthetic experience, sociability (friendship), practical reasonableness, and religion.[570] These are, for Finnis, those goods for the sake of which all other goods in life are at least implicitly sought. I am not wedded to Finnis' account in general. As such I only wish to use his list provisionally, and do not treat it as exhaustive as Finnis himself does. If someone were to argue that something should be added or taken away it is incidental to my purposes here. Finnis does not mean that every human will in fact think of each of these values positively. Rather, the idea includes two claims. Firstly, that in fact all of these values are required for a fully flourishing life; secondly, that all human action is informed by these values in some way, at least implicitly. This is obviously not to say that humans cannot act against one or other of these goods and indeed fail to recognise its goodness. Rather, Finnis thinks that even when someone acts against one such value, they are ultimately doing so for the sake of at least one of the other values.[571]

If it is the case that human communities are properly understood as a function of the shared goods of their members, then those goods which humans are as such directed towards will also be common goods of a properly functional community. This is not to

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[568] Ibid, p. 4.
[569] Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Politics*, book 3, chapter 5.
[570] Finnis, 2011, pp. 81-97.
[571] For more on this, see Finnis, 2011, pp. 29-32; 90-96.

say that every cricket club must also include an art gallery devoted to aesthetic experience. Humans, though directed towards all of the above goods, do not seek every one of them at every moment. We seek friendship more when socialising than when walking on our own in the woods. But it is still the case that we are directed towards the other goods at least implicitly at other times, and will seek them actively if the need emerges. The sudden phone call of an old friend might well be enough for us to abandon the planned solitude in the woods. Analogously, it seems plausible that properly functioning communities are always directed at least implicitly to all of the basic goods that constitute holistic human flourishing, even if they are explicitly directed towards a different good. The cricket club will often jump into action if its members witness someone having a heart attack, even though it disrupts the game. Someone might object that the cricket club is not as such directed towards the good of life, but the club members abandoned their activities because they, as opposed to the community as a whole, were directed towards the life of the person having a heart attack. However, if the community is constituted by the goods sought by its members then this is a false distinction.[572] We should observe that clearly communities in fact can act contrary to the basic goods. The cricket club could continue with the game instead of helping the person afflicted by a heart attack. The cricket club would thereby be shown to be dysfunctional, however. Hence, although communities are in fact constituted by the ends actively being sought by the members in their participating in the community, if they are functioning properly then they will at least implicitly be directed toward the basic goods necessary for their members overall wellbeing, as well.

It is worth noting that the approach advocated by Maritain and Finnis can be situated fairly easily within the field of social ontology as a whole. As Brian Epstein writes, 'Another prominent set of approaches is closely related to conventionalism, but instead of appealing to structures of individual attitudes, these approaches take the social world to be set up by collective attitudes and dispositions. (Some, though not all, of these

[572] 'Constituted' is meant in the sense that the goods are the principle of unity for the community, not in the sense that the goods are matter of which the community is composed.

accounts go on to analyze collective attitudes in terms of individual attitudes).'[573] Advocates of this family of approaches include Hart, Searle, and Tuomela.[574]

It could also be objected that this line of reasoning would entail that communities could not do anything incompatible with the basic goods, which is patently absurd. Of course, the argument is not that no community could act against the basic goods, but rather that in doing so the community would become dysfunctional. The nature of this dysfunction can be best understood by analogy to how the human will can be divided within itself.

As Eleonore Stump discusses at length in her book *Wandering in Darkness*,[575] the will can be seriously divided against itself, both by moral wrongdoing as well as by undeserved shame. Due to the Guise of the Good principle as understood by Aquinas, people can never be wholly directed against the good, but can be opposed to it in a certain respect. Since the will is necessarily directed towards the good at a basic level, evil cannot be sought whole heartedly, and results in the evildoer's will being fragmented. Stump gives several examples of high ranking Nazis' psychological fragmentation, since they are 'our most thoroughly studied examples of people who would be the best candidates for persons integrated around evil if any persons ever were; and they are as remarkable for their self-regarding slavishness to power, internecine fighting, and loneliness as for their evil.'[576] To repeat just one example, Adolf Eichmann wrote of his own psyche during the Nazi years: 'It would be better to call it a split state, a form of splitting, where one fled from one side to the other side and vice versa.'[577]

If this is so, then we could also plausibly speak of communities being divided against themselves regarding what goods unite them together. This could be either due to

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[573] Epstein, 2018. 'Conventionalism' here refers to approaches to social ontology that ground the reality of social groups in social conventions.
[574] Hart, 1961; Searle, 1995; Tuomela, 2002. Finnis Interacts heavily with Hart in *Natural Law & Natural Rights*, Finnis, 2011.
[575] Stump, 2010, pp. 129-50.
[576] Stump, 2010, p. 139.
[577] David Cesarani, 2004, p. 301: Quoted in Stump, 2010, p. 139.

division between different members of the community, or due to widespread internal division within the wills of the members themselves.

If we can meaningfully speak of someone's relationship with a local community being ruptured, then it is plausible that we can also apply this at larger levels, such as an entire country or even the entire community of moral agents seeking the common good. Indeed, numerous forms of punishment imposed by states can be naturally interpreted as externalising the rupture that the wrongdoer has caused between himself and society. In the United States, criminals while in jail cannot vote in federal elections, and exiling citizens is a traditional punishment which is difficult to interpret in a way that does not involve manifesting the rupture between a wrongdoer and society.

We can distinguish between wrongdoings which damage one's relationship with society, and ones that sever such a relationship entirely. This is analogous to the distinction between venial and mortal sin in Aquinas' thought, the former of which damages one's relationship with God, while the latter severs it entirely. With venial sin, for Aquinas, one is ultimately directed towards God but is inordinately attached to other goods in a way that fractures the will somewhat, while one's highest order desires are still for God as the good as such. With mortal sin, one's will is also fractured but is ordered such that God, understood as the good as such, is not the highest order desire, but is supplanted in the will by a particular good, being preferred to the good as such.[578] Similarly, it is possible to act in a way that tends to hinder the well-living[579] of people in society, but this is distinct from acting in a way that would typically make it impossible. This aligns with Paul Formosa's observation that evil acts 'normally have a life-wrecking impact on the victim.'[580]

I do not think that this kind of wrongdoing that is radically directed against the common goods of society is the same thing as mortal sin as Aquinas understands it. Most importantly, the goods which are being violated are, though related, not identical. Aquinas does think that mortal sin is a violation against charity and hence must be

[578] ST I-II, Q. 88.
[579] For lack of a better phrase.
[580] Formosa, 2008, p. 228; 230.

either directed against the good of God or of persons.[581] Evil acts would be mortal sins by their genus, as they are gravely opposed to the goods of persons; however, for Aquinas it would be possible for someone to sin against God directly without thereby being directly opposed to the good of other persons. Or to put it another way, it is possible to have the moral virtues 'with regard to the human good' without charity, even if this is not the fullness of virtue, for Aquinas.[582] Plausibly, evil acts just are these kinds of wrongdoing which are radically directed against the common goods of society that are necessary in order for humans to live well.

As will be discussed in the following chapter, the radicality of opposition to the common goods can be measured by the tendency of such actions to wreck human lives. Hence murder would clearly be an evil action. Ordinary instances of assault and battery would not be evil, though severe acts of torture clearly would be, due to the deep, lifelong injuries they predictably have on their victims.

One might object that evil actions can clearly be done against people who are not members of one's own community, and that as a result evil should not be analysed in terms of the goods undergirding one's community. This involves a misunderstanding of the view being proposed. What is primary is the opposition of evil acts to the basic goods. That the basic goods bind societies together and evil acts result in alienation from society are important ideas associated with this understanding of evil, as opposed to the essence of it. As a result, acts against the wellbeing of people outside one's own society would still be evil, since the basic goods are not themselves dependent on a specific society. This will be further discussed in the following chapter.

This has a bearing on the question of forgiveness, which it is worth noting in passing. As previously mentioned, Aquinas thought that mortal sins could only be forgiven with divine intervention, which makes sense if they are fundamentally sins against God.

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[581] *De Malo*, Q. 7, Art. 1. Though it is worth noting that since Aquinas holds that charity in a different sense also is directed toward the goods of non-personal beings there can be sins against charity which are not immediately directed against persons, depending on the meaning of such acts.
[582] *Disputed Questions on Virtue*, On the Cardinal Virtues, Art. 2.

However, there might be a capacity for humans to forgive evildoers specifically for the harm they do to the common good, and to individual people. As Kathryn Norlock writes, 'Some victims report forgiving evils and some report refusing to forgive; the latter only makes sense if forgiveness is an option, a moral power that they can sensibly claim.'[583] However, as both Stump and Margaret Walker argue, forgiveness is only one component of the moral repair we aim at after wrongdoing.[584] Walker plausibly argues that what precisely forgiveness means might depend on the nature of the wrongdoing being forgiven.[585] As such, there might not be a single, unified answer to the question of forgiveness for evil acts that captures the relevant aspects of all such actions. For instance, if someone close to me is murdered then I too am harmed by virtue of our closeness. I can choose to forgive the harm done to me, but others hurt in the same way by the murder might refuse to forgive the perpetrator. The perpetrator has been forgiven in one respect, but not in others.

I now turn to Aquinas' treatment of capital punishment, since capital punishment is the act whereby a community most decisively exiles the wrongdoer not only from that particular community, but from the human community as a whole. Thomists are divided about capital punishment, as we shall see below, and I am not going to enter arguments about its prudence here. The debate can be interpreted as being over whether or not any act can decisively alienate a person from the human community as such while they remain an instance of homo sapiens, which is relevant to the account of evil I am presenting.

Capital Punishment and Brutishness

In *Summa Theologiae, secunda secundae*, Question 64, Aquinas addresses the topic of murder. Here he discusses, among other things, issues such as whether it is ever licit to kill an innocent person, whether it can be licit to kill someone guilty of a serious moral wrongdoing, and if so, whether it may be done by a private individual or only by an agent of the state. In addressing these questions he expresses a number of thoughts relevant to his understanding of moral evil and its relation to the community.

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[583] Norlock in Nys and de Wijze (eds.), 2019, p. 284.
[584] Stump, 2019; Walker, 2012.
[585] Walker, 2012.

Firstly, when asking whether it can be licit to kill the perpetrator of a serious wrongdoing, he answers yes. He controversially likens the wrongdoer to a body part of the community as a whole, who may be excised as a diseased limb needs to be amputated. 'Therefore if a man be dangerous and infectious to the community, on account of some sin, it is praiseworthy and advantageous that he be killed in order to safeguard the common good.'[586] He addresses the potential objection that this would violate our obligation of charity towards the wrongdoer as a fellow human being, and gives the steely reply:

> By sinning man departs from the order of reason, and consequently falls away from the dignity of his manhood, insofar as he is naturally free, and exists for himself, and he falls into the slavish state of the beasts, by being disposed of according as he is useful to others… Hence, although it be evil in itself to kill a man so long as he preserve his dignity, yet it may be good to kill a man who has sinned, even as it is to kill a beast. For a bad man is worse than a beast, and is more harmful, as the Philosopher states (*Polit.* i, 1 and *Ethic.* vii, 6).[587]

John Finnis, despite being an avowed Thomist, comments that 'this embarrassingly flawed argument not only fails to attend to the profound difference between the political community's relation to the persons it serves and an organism's relation to its parts. It also fails to indicate why it would not also justify the killing of innocent citizens with intent that putting them to death save the state from, say, terrorists who demand such sacrifices, as one might amputate a healthy hand to save oneself from fire or water.'[588]

Aquinas' comments certainly do come across as quite jarring. As Steven A. Long observes, 'Note that Thomas does not limit the reason for putting criminals to death to their immediate physical danger to others; rather, he clearly speaks of the *nature* of the criminal. Hence, the illustration is of a member that demands excision because it is "decayed or infectious"—that is, severe enough corruption ("decay") is in its own right

[586] ST II-II, Q. 64, Art. 2.
[587] Ibid.
[588] Finnis, 2018, para. 14.

harmful to society, apart from any issue of "clear and present danger" in the physical order.'[589]

Defenders of capital punishment in the Thomistic tradition, such as Edward Feser and Joseph Bessette, are quick to point out that it 'cannot be emphasised too strongly that, contrary to what some commentators suppose, Aquinas' defence of capital punishment simply does not *require* the premise that an offender loses his dignity'.[590] They argue that the correct context for interpreting Aquinas' view of capital punishment is his belief in the proportionality of punishment, and that in this regard there are crimes for which no lesser punishment than death would suffice. For my purposes, it is not particularly important where one stands regarding capital punishment overall. There are Thomists, like Feser and Bessette, who support it and there are other Natural Law Theorists, like E. Christian Brugger and Christopher Tollefsen, who oppose it.[591] Rather, I am focused on what the passage reveals about Aquinas' understanding of moral depravity. In some sense, Aquinas seems to hold that through serious wrongdoing humans can so pervert their rational faculties that their very dignity is lost. 'In the very next article (q. 64, a. 3), however, Thomas seems to contradict this notion.'[592]

When Aquinas addresses the question of whether a private individual can kill a wrongdoer, he answers no, but considers the objection that, if evildoers are like beasts then a private individual should be able to kill them, as wild beasts can be killed by anyone. He responds:

> A beast is by nature distinct from man, wherefore in the case of a wild beast there is no need for an authority to kill it; whereas, in the case of domestic animals, such authority is required, not for their own sake, but on account of the owner's loss. On the other hand, a man who has sinned is not by nature distinct from good men; hence a public authority is requisite in order to condemn him to death for the common good.[593]

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[589] Long, 1999, p. 532.
[590] Feser and Bessette, 2017, p. 64. Italics in original.
[591] See Brugger's 2014 book, *Capital Punishment and Roman Catholic Moral Tradition*; Tollefsen, 2011, 'Capital Punishment, Sanctity of Life, and Human Dignity'.
[592] Gardner, 2009, p. 62.
[593] ST II-II, Q. 64, Art. 3, Ad. 2.

This passage seems prima facie to be in tension with the prior argument. Aquinas here explicitly states that the relevant wrongdoer is of the same nature as a virtuous person, which seems contrary to his remarks equating them with the slavish state of beasts. Although he does not explain exactly how, Aquinas evidently holds that the loss of dignity resulting from a serious wrongdoing does not, as it would seem from the earlier argument, completely reduce one's moral status to that of a non-human animal. The apparent tension is partly resolved in article six, where he addresses the question of whether or not it is ever licit to kill the innocent. Predictably his answer is no, but his reasoning is interesting. He writes:

> I answer that, an individual man may be considered in two ways: first, in himself; second, in relation to something else. If we consider a man in himself, it is unlawful to kill any man, since in every man though he be sinful, we ought to love the nature which God has made, and which is destroyed by slaying him. Nevertheless, as stated above (A. 2) the slaying of a sinner becomes lawful in relation to the common good, which is corrupted by sin. On the other hand the life of righteous men preserves and forwards the common good, since they are the chief part of the community. Therefore it is in no way lawful to slay the innocent.[594]

Here it seems as if Aquinas qualifies his prior remarks, with a wrongdoer's dignity not being diminished as such, but rather only the way that the community is to relate to him. Elinor Gardner writes:

> From this it is clear that we must understand Thomas's statement that an evil man "falls into the slavery of the beasts" as a figure of speech. Though the evildoer may lose "the dignity of his manhood," he does not lose his manhood itself. The psalm he quotes in support of the comparison speaks in terms of simile: "compared to senseless beasts, and made like to them." Even the idea that the bad man is worse and more harmful than a beast supports the fact that even the worst evildoers retain their human nature. The reason the bad man is worse, according to Aristotle, is that he has an internal principle of his badness: his

[594] ST II-II, Q. 64, Art. 6.

> intellect. A beast can destroy, but it can never act with malicious design. Thomas states the case even more exactly when he says that moral evil (fault) exists only in an intellectual nature. Thus, the wickedness of the evildoer does not indicate a change of nature; rather, it presupposes the possession of that nature.[595]

However, this reading by itself does not seem to do justice to what Aquinas actually says in the first passage. He does not state merely that a serious wrongdoer might be treated like a beast by the community, but that 'by sinning man departs from the order of reason, and consequently falls away from the dignity of his manhood, insofar as he is naturally free, and exists for himself, and he falls into the slavish state of the beasts.'[596] It is because he has fallen away from his reason and hence lost his dignity that the state can in some way relate to him as if he were not human.

It is not clear how to reconcile Aquinas' remarks here. One hermeneutical option would be to say that perhaps Aquinas forgot his earlier remarks in article two when writing articles three and six. This is rendered problematic by the fact that they are only a few pages apart from one another as well as by the fact that in both articles three and six Aquinas references what he wrote in article two. A more plausible option would be to say that Aquinas had two contradictory thoughts: that serious wrongdoers were no longer members of the moral community and so could be treated as non-human animals, and also that serious moral wrongdoers still deserve some kind of recognition as moral agents. While writing the later articles, so the reading goes, he figured out a way to synthesise the two thoughts by way of the distinction between whether we consider a wrongdoer as he is in relation to himself or in relation to the community.

I will accept a variant of this last option, but there is still a little more to be done to properly contextualise Aquinas' argument in article two that serious wrongdoers could be like beasts. In question sixty-four of *Summa Theologiae*, it is not even clear how serious the wrongdoing in question would need to be. This can be seen if we look to the texts from Aristotle that Aquinas plausibly refers to when making his argument, book VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and book I of the *Politics*, both of which Aquinas wrote full length commentaries on. At the start of the Politics, Aristotle sets out in general terms

[595] Gardner, 2009, p. 63.
[596] Ibid, Art. 2.

that humans are essentially social, and gives the analogy of the person as a part of the body of the whole community that Aquinas makes use of in his first argument for why the state can kill a wrongdoer, like amputating a diseased limb. Aristotle states that 'he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must either be a beast or a god: he is no part of a state'.[597] He goes on to say that, if a man uses his natural capabilities for ill ends, 'he is the most unholy and the most savage of animals'.[598]

Aristotle expands on the comment that one who cannot live in community must be either a beast or a god in his discussion of brutishness in book VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. There, Aristotle argues that the state of the 'brutish' is opposed to that of the 'godlike', someone like Homer's Hector. As Aquinas interprets Aristotle in his commentary on the *Ethics*, 'this is not to be understood, Aristotle says, in the sense that human nature is changed into divine nature but in the sense that the excellence of virtue exceeds the usual human mode.'[599] Whereas the godlike exceed the excellences ordinarily possible for human beings, the brutish fall short of what is typically possible for us. Indeed:

> [N]either vice is attributed to a dumb animal who is inferior to man, nor virtue to God who is superior to man. But divine virtue is more noble than human virtue, which for us is called virtue in the fullest sense. On the other hand, brutish perversity is a kind of vice different from human vice.[600]

In a certain sense, for Aquinas, the brutish are beyond the normal categories of moral evaluation. As Aristotle puts it, 'to have these various types of habit is beyond the limits of vice.'[601] Helpfully, Aristotle gives a few examples which help us understand what kind of perversity is being associated with brutishness. For instance:

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[597] Aristotle, Politics, bk 1, 2.
[598] Ibid.
[599] Aquinas, *Commentary on the Nichomachean Ethics*, bk. Vii, lec. 1, 1300.
[600] Ibid, 1301.
[601] Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, bk. Vii, 5. For Aristotle, this is related to the idea that the brutish lack the rational part of the psyche.

> [T]he case of the female who, they say, rips open pregnant women and devours the infants, or of the things in which some of the tribes about the Black Sea that have gone savage are said to delight – in raw meat or in human flesh, or in lending their children to one another to feast upon.[602]

As Aquinas approvingly interprets him, Aristotle distinguishes between those who engage in such unnatural pleasures due to illness (Aquinas includes both physical and mental illness), due to habit, or due to having a vicious nature, by which he means someone with 'perverse bodily temperaments'.[603] Perhaps a more modern version of the idea would be that a condition such as psychopathy might have a partly genetic basis.[604]

An interesting aspect of Aquinas' treatment of the case of the brutish is the lack of blame he directs towards them. People are not responsible for their temperamental make up or for being impacted by illness. Even with the case of someone seeking improper pleasure by habit (examples include eating dirt) he is quick to point out that such habits can follow custom and one's experiences as a child. No murderous example is given for those who seek unnatural pleasures due to habit. Due to all of these factors, 'these individuals [the brutish] are not called incontinent or continent simply but only in a restricted sense, insofar as some judgment of reason remains with them.'[605] As Aquinas notes elsewhere, the intensity of emotion can mitigate culpability through involuntarily robbing one of the ability to guide oneself with reason.[606] This would apply to the effect of one's temperament, as Aquinas understands it, if one were actually not able to reason properly as a result.

This helps us to better understand the apparent tension in Aquinas' treatment of capital punishment. He both explicitly refers to Aristotle's treatment of brutishness and also situates his argument for capital punishment within the context of Aristotle's image of

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[602] Ibid.
[603] Aquinas, *Commentary on the Nichomachean Ethics*, bk. Vii, lec. 5, 1370.
[604] For instance, see Blonigen et al. (2005), 'Psychopathic personality traits: heritability and genetic overlap with internalizing and externalizing psychopathology', *Psychol. Med.*, 35(5), pp. 637-648.
[605] Aquinas, *Commentary on the Nichomachean Ethics*, bk. Vii, lec. 5, 1375.
[606] De Malo, Q.3, Art. 11.

society as a body, in which Aristotle himself brings up brutishness. As a result, it is plausible that Aquinas is mainly thinking of brutish cases as opposed to that of clear minded criminals when making his remark about the condemned being below the order of reason and being like animals.[607] This raises a question over whether executing the brutish would be permissible, since it would seem to entail that those being executed were not fully responsible for their crimes. Though an interesting issue, I will not address it here, since it is not important for my purposes to settle whether execution, be it of rational or 'brutish' individuals, is in fact just. This makes Aquinas' remarks seem somewhat softer than they would otherwise appear. As Gardner writes:

> What then is the *servitus bestiarum* [servitude of the beasts], if not a change in nature? Thomas contrasts this state of servitude with the *dignitas humana*: the good man "is naturally free and exists for himself." Essentially, the evildoer is a man, but in relation to the whole community he is like a beast precisely in his state of servitude. For Thomas, as we will see in Chapter III, all individual men are parts of a civil community. They are free parts, voluntarily subjecting themselves to the civil order. Those who refuse to subject themselves to that order by committing grave crimes can still be subject to that order, but only involuntarily, through punishment. It is not that because a man has become like a beast, he may be treated like a beast. Rather, because he does not order himself to the common good, he must be ordered to the common good by an extrinsic agent, as a beast is.[608]

We have seen that in the brutish case a person can be effectively alienated from human society as such by his actions and dispositions to further action. We can affirm this whether or not we think it best to inflict capital punishment to reify the alienation or to refrain in order to emphasise the fundamental unity of our species as those organisms who are formally directed towards human common goods, whether this directionality is actualised or not. But is this the only case? Aquinas does not fully regard the brutish as morally responsible, and hence does not regard their vices as the worst human vices.

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[607] Though Aquinas does think that non-brutish criminals can be justly executed, he plausibly does not think that this is to be justified by the criminals falling from their capacity for reason as in the case of the brutish.
[608] Gardner, 2009, pp. 63-4.

Plausibly, though the kinds of actions done by the brutish as Aquinas understands the concept might be evil in nature, the individuals who perform the acts are not properly regarded as evil people, due to their mitigated culpability. This can be phrased in terms of the analysis of action presented in the previous chapter. There are two different though related moral species of an action: one from the external object of the act and the other from the end of the act. Plausibly, a brutish person can do an act which is by its object diametrically directed against the well-living of another person, for instance by brutally stabbing them numerous times. However, since a brutish person is not capable of governing themselves by reason they lack the proper capacity to freely choose the act. As such they can really be spoken of as having performed the act in a material way, but the formal principle of the act (given by reason) would be missing. The act would be an example of the actions discussed in the previous chapter which are not human acts even if they are done by humans. Hence a brutish person can plausibly perform an evil action without thereby becoming an evil person, since they were not functional as a rational agent when performing the act. The same line of reasoning also applies to other cases where a person might do an evil act while stripped of the capacity to govern themselves by reason, for instance if afflicted by a temporary but serious neurological condition or was sufficiently rationally impaired in some other way. The worst category of moral wrongdoing for Aquinas is thus not that of the brutish, but that of malice.

Malice

The category relating to evil that would be most expected to be a difficulty for Aquinas would be that of malice. While Aquinas, as discussed, thinks that all action and intention is done for the sake of an apparent good, malice seems to be directly contrary to the good. It is useful to have concrete examples of moral phenomena when discussing such things, to keep the discussion grounded and to keep it from becoming needlessly abstract. A plausible example of malice would be that of Carl Panzram. Panzram was an American serial killer and rapist, given a life sentence after confessing to three murders, and executed in 1930 after he murdered the prison laundry foreman with an iron bar. Panzram never expressed any remorse for his actions, but agreed that they were morally wrong. Upon being sentenced to death, he wrote in a letter, 'the findings of the court and the sentence of the judge meet with my approval… this sentence of death is

absolutely just.' He finished the same letter stating that 'I have no desire whatever to reform myself. My only desire is to reform people who try to reform me, and I believe that the only way to reform people is to kill 'em. My motto is: "Rob 'em all, rape 'em all and kill 'em all."'[609] During the same period, he summarised his actions as follows:

> In my lifetime I have murdered 21 human beings, I have committed thousands of burglaries, robberies, larcenies, arsons and last but not least I have committed sodomy on more than 1,000 male human beings. For all of these things I am not the least bit sorry. I have no conscience so that does not worry me. I don't believe in man, God nor Devil. I hate the whole damned human race including myself.[610]

During his trial, Panzram's lawyer had him examined by a team of psychiatrists to determine whether or not he was fit to stand trial. They determined that he was, and Panzram agreed. He said to one psychiatrist who examined him that 'I absolutely refuse to permit you to get up and testify about my mental condition and blab a lot of stuff about insanity and irresponsibility. I am saying I *am* responsible and I *am* guilty.'[611] One of the striking things about Panzram's writing is the general coherence of his thought. He reads like a character in a Flannery O'Connor story. At the request of a guard he wrote an autobiography wherein his attitude to himself and his crimes is unchanging. He is glad for having committed murders while knowing full well that they were morally wrong.

In order to see how Aquinas might deal with the case of Panzram, it is necessary to first look into his writing on malice.[612] Aquinas describes malice (*malitia*) as a cause of moral wrongdoing in question seventy-eight of the *Summa Theologiae, Prima Secundae*. There he distinguishes it from wrongdoing out of ignorance and out of the emotions. Since the moral, for Aquinas, has to do with what is chosen by the will, every immoral act has something to do with the will not functioning properly. The wrongdoing can have its

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[609] *Panzram: A Journal in Murder*, ed. Gaddis and Long (1970), pp. 219-21.
[610] Ibid. p. 6
[611] Ibid, p. 205. Italics in original.
[612] See Reichberg, 2002; McCluskey, 2017, pp. 116-47; Jensen, 2018, pp. 158-184.

cause in a defect in a different faculty which then impacts the will, but in order for it to be a moral failing the will must actually choose badly as a result.

In sins of ignorance, we lack knowledge of a relevant aspect of the act being committed.[613] The ignorance can excuse someone entirely, partially, or not at all depending on its significance to the will's act of choosing. Aquinas gives the example of striking one's father. If you struck him only knowing you were striking a man but not your father, and would have refrained had you known, then you would be guilty for striking a man (since that is what you chose to do) but would not bear added guilt for it being your father in particular, whom Aquinas thinks deserves more respect than someone not related to you. If you struck him unknowingly but your character and dispositions were such that you would not have cared even if you had the knowledge, and indeed were glad to find out that it was your father, then the ignorance would not excuse guilt at all, since it did not affect the act of the will. If you struck him thinking you were striking a threatening intruder then your ignorance could entirely excuse you of the act, since your choice was not disordered in itself, even if consequentially unfortunate. It could be objected that this does not correspond to how we respond to cases of negligence. If Alice kills Bob by negligence, without even realising that it was Bob she was endangering, then we will hold her responsible for the negligence, but would not change the charge to murder if she admitted that she murderously hated Bob and was glad that he was dead by her hands even though it was in fact an accident. It might reflect badly on her moral character, but we would not treat her as a murderer. True though this is, it ignores the fact that we only punish people for their choices, and not for their character except where it directly bears on those choices. This lack of punishment would not mean that Alice did not have a murderous character.

Similarly, sins can start in the emotions.[614] The emotions have a legitimate part to play in the moral life, informing the intellect and the will, but can also be disordered. Like in the case of ignorance, emotions can entirely, partially, or not at all mitigate one's guilt for a wrongful act. Aquinas considers Socrates' position, as represented by Aristotle, that

[613] ST I-II, Q. 76.
[614] ST I-II, Q. 77.

knowledge cannot be overcome by passion and that all wrongful acts are done out of ignorance.[615] 'In this' Aquinas remarks 'he was somewhat right, because, since the object of the will is a good or apparent good, it is never moved to an evil, unless that which is not good appear good in some respect to the reason.'[616] Aquinas is not convinced by this, though. 'Experience, however, shows that many act contrary to the knowledge that they have.'[617] He makes a distinction between one's knowledge of general principles and knowledge of particular acts, and argues that there are three different ways in which intense emotions can overcome the reason. Firstly, by distracting us from the general principles we know so that we do not apply the principle to this particular case. Secondly, by directly opposing the general principle, with the intense emotion convincing us temporarily that the principle is false. Thirdly, by 'bodily transmutation,' where our ability to guide our wills properly is impeded by some bodily change brought about by the emotion. He does not go into detail, but likens the possible effects on the will to the way drunkenness or drowsiness can affect our deliberation.[618]

If the intensity of the emotion clouds one's reason, making it impossible or difficult to discern what goods to seek, then to that extent the proper functioning of the will is impeded, but not due to a fault in the will itself. Hence the freedom of the will can be impeded by intense emotions, resulting in mitigated culpability for the wrongful acts.

Malice is the most serious cause of sin, for Aquinas, since what is distinctive of malice is that it not only ends in the will choosing something wrongly but begins in the will itself, implying a deeper disorder of the will. It might be thought that Aquinas would not think that people could do wrongdoing out of deliberate malice, given his emphasis on the will being of itself directed towards the good. Indeed, when he asks the question in the *Disputed Questions on Evil*, Aquinas presents no fewer than thirteen arguments purporting to show that sins of malice are not possible. However, upon considering them he rejects all thirteen.

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[615] *Nichomachean Ethics*, vii, 2.
[616] ST I-II, Q. 77, Art. 3.
[617] Ibid.
[618] Ibid.

It is true that the will is necessarily directed towards the good, but the will can still choose goods in a disordered way, if we prefer lesser goods to greater ones. Aquinas writes, 'the will is out of order when it loves more the lesser good. Again, the consequence of loving a thing less is that one chooses to suffer some hurt in its regard, in order to obtain a good that one loves more.'[619] Aquinas gives the dramatic example of someone willing to lose a limb that he may save his life. Everyday examples abound, though, in any act of minor sacrifice done for some end, like sacrificing a small amount of time and money to buy a gift for a friend. In cases of malice, the will is directed towards lower goods more than it loves the order of reason and the universal good. The will does not seek the lower good for the sake of excluding higher ones, but rather for its own goodness, and puts up with the attendant loss of a different good.

The question then naturally arises as to how the will could become directed maliciously towards a lower good in the first place. Aquinas answers in article three of question seventy-eight that the will does not become maliciously formed directly by the will itself. Rather, the person must already have some kind of disposition to the lower good in question, acquired by custom, bodily disposition, or habit from prior choices. Aquinas does not elaborate on the relevant aspects of bodily disposition, but we could potentially understand it as including genetic predispositions to unfavourable patterns of behaviour. Aquinas mainly focuses upon habit as an initial cause of malice. If someone engages in a wrongful act repeatedly due to ignorance or intense emotions one may have acquired a habit of seeking the relevant goods that lasts even after the ignorance or initial emotions have ceased motivating the will. Perhaps the person is no longer ignorant or no longer experiences the same intensity of the relevant emotions but is now used to the disordered pattern of choice. The American serial killer Richard Kuklinski first killed a neighbourhood bully while in a rage, and his first several murders were motivated by intense emotions, but as time passed he got used to solving problems through murder and no longer needed strong emotions. This would be an instance of malice.

[619] ST I-II, Q. 78, Art. 1.

We can now return to the case of Carl Panzram and see whether Aquinas' understanding of malice describes him well or not. In the following three ways we can see that Panzram illustrates Aquinas' understanding of malice.

Firstly, Aquinas' distinguishing malice from sins of ignorance and emotion describes Panzram's attitude to his crimes well. Panzram was apparently not ignorant of the wrongness of his murders and was not inclined towards them simply due to emotion. This can be seen in the fact that, as Panzram portrays himself, he was consistently glad that he had killed his victims, even when calm and recollected.

Secondly, Aquinas' analysis of the initial causes of malice describe the development of Panzram's moral character. Although not motivated in the end by intense emotions, Panzram seems to have initially developed his violent patterns of relating to people through repeatedly doing violent actions motivated by emotion. For example, a key moment in Panzram's early life was when he was being beaten unfairly by a schoolmaster and the boy pulled the rod out of his hands and unleashed his anger by passionately beating the schoolmaster. In addition, Panzram's behaviour is also consistent with Aquinas' comment that custom can be a factor in developing malicious patterns of choice. The community Panzram grew up in contained regular violence which made it far easier for him to develop violent patterns of behaviour. Panzram himself interpreted this as an important aspect of his moral development. He wrote shortly before his execution, directed apparently to society at large:

> I have done as I was taught to do. I am no different from any other. You taught me how to live my life, and I have lived as you taught me. If you continue teaching others as you taught me, then you as well as they must pay the price, and the price is very expensive. You lose your all, even life.[620]

Thirdly, Aquinas' understanding of malice also describes well the at first paradoxical phenomenon of Panzram simultaneously judging his actions to be wrong without regretting them. In the quote immediately above, it can be seen that Panzram does not

[620] Gaddis and Long, 1970, p. 5.

think it good that there be people like him in society. He wants future children at risk of going down the same path to be averted and live more virtuously, but nonetheless he told a psychiatrist 'I am proud of having killed off a few [humans] and regret that I didn't kill more.'[621] Panzram hated humans in general as corrupt and evil. He appeared to think that this was not the morally best course of action, and that he was doing far more harm than good, but he was habitually directed toward various ends which could only be achieved through murder. In this we can see that the Thomistic interpretation explains well this at first paradoxical aspect of Panzram's moral character.

One might object that Panzram ought not to be judged as malicious in Aquinas' sense since he obviously did have hatred for his victims and gained enjoyment from hurting them. Hence his actions do not seem to be done without emotion. However, this betrays a misunderstanding. Aquinas' position is not that the malicious lack emotions, but rather that the actions in question are not merely motivated by them. The fact that Panzram is glad that he committed his crimes long after the fact shows that, even if he had emotions at the time of the crimes, his will and not just his emotions are disposed towards the actions he did.

It is important to note that one need not be maliciously attached to extraordinary evils as in Panzram's crimes. As Aquinas understands the concept, someone could sin in minor ways out of malice. All that is required is for the will to be set on something wrong in a clear-eyed way, knowing it to be wrong and freely choosing it nonetheless. Malice does not describe the content of the wrongdoing being done, but simply how the will is related to the wrongdoing. As such, malice is not a sufficient condition for an evil act. However, it is plausible that malice is a necessary condition for evil character. If someone were overcome by horrific and uncharacteristic desires for sadistic murder but came to his senses after the act and legitimately repented, turning himself in, then we might describe him as having brutish inclinations and as being morally incontinent, but we would not describe his character as evil. After all, it was not by virtue of his character that he acted horribly.[622]

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[621] Ibid. p. 205.
[622] The relation between evil character and evil actions will be developed further in the following chapter.

At this point we can usefully compare an instance of malice with one of brutishness. It is important to remember the distinction in the previous chapter between the two different objects of a human act, the exterior and the interior. If a brutish man brutally kills someone then his act will be a killing by virtue of the object of the exterior act, the person being killed. However, since the brutish man lacks the requisite rational judgment he does not really decide to perform an act of killing with his reason and will. As such, although there is a real sense in which the brutish man killed the victim, there is a significant, morally relevant sense in which he, *as a rational agent*, did not kill the victim. By contrast, a malicious person in the same situation would be guilty of the killing both externally as well as interiorly, having fully chosen to kill the victim in a clear-eyed way.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the foundations of my account of moral evil in the narrow sense. Society is of necessity bound together by the good of its people living well. Living well requires the achievement of certain goods, specified by human nature, including things like life, health, psychological integrity, knowledge and friendship. Evil acts in the narrow sense of the worst type of wrongs are interpreted as being acts directed gravely against these foundational goods. The gravity of an act for this purpose is determined by the extent to which the act has a tendency to destroy the victim's prospects of living well. Evil acts result in a stain on the soul of the evildoer, involving numerous negative effects on the evildoer's psyche. Evil acts, in addition to the life-wrecking effects on their victims, also result in alienation from society, as a result of being diametrically opposed to the goods that serve to unite society together.

I propose that an evil person is a person who is maliciously, gravely, and dispositionally directed against the common goods of society, where gravity is interpreted by how radically opposed the person's will is to the well-living of others. Since these goods are things the evildoer is herself necessarily directed towards, the evildoer at some level

experiences interior fragmentation of the will.[623] Evil action and evil character are clearly closely related, with evil acts building evil character and evil character disposing a person towards committing evil acts.

Aquinas' treatment of capital punishment provides some textual support for this account of evil through his justification of capital punishment as being like the body of society amputating the limb of the extreme wrongdoer. This image makes the alienation of an evildoer from society of central importance to how the society is to respond to him. In the context of this treatment of capital punishment I also examined his thought on brutishness, where a person is disposed to perform at times horrible acts but without the proper consent of their reason and will. I concluded that it is possible for a brutish person to perform an evil act in a certain respect, though without thereby being an evil person. In the following chapter I examine several common intuitions about evil and survey what this account has to say about them.

[623] The meaning of the passage is that, as discussed in the section on the Guise of the Good, the will is structured such that it is formally directed toward the human good. Since evil actions are diametrically opposed to this good, there is a kind of conceptual incoherence present in the decision to do an evil action. It is not a strictly psychological claim, though for an interesting (if perhaps overambitious) treatment of psychological disorders among serial killers, see N. Mehra & A. Samavati Pirouz, 2012.

Chapter 7: Evil Intuitions

Introduction

In his 2014 book on evil, Luke Russell helpfully provides a list of fifteen common intuitions had by recent philosophers of evil. The first eight relate to evil actions, whereas the latter seven relate to evil persons.[624] Some are inconsistent with each other, but any account of evil ought to be able to have something to say about each one. In this chapter, I systematically discuss what the Thomistic account of evil being presented here would have to say about these intuitions. I address the intuitions regarding evil action in order, but due to the interconnectedness of the topics I briefly address some of the intuitions about evil personhood while discussing evil action. The first four 'are almost universally accepted in the recent literature, and can be described as forming a common core of intuitions about evil.'[625]

Regarding Evil Actions

1.) 'Saying that an action is evil is a means of expressing very strong moral condemnation of that action.'[626]

This intuition is certainly a common one. Eve Garrard expresses the thought clearly when she writes, 'The terrible massacres of the twentieth century, the hideous and endless ingenuity of its tortures, seem to require description in terms of evil… because other kinds of moral condemnation do not capture their nightmarish horror.'[627] Marcus Singer notes that the word 'evil' is the 'worst term of opprobrium.'[628] The intuition is one endorsed by the Thomistic account I am proposing, insofar as it means that all evil acts deserve to be condemned, and that one can condemn an evil act simply by calling it evil. To call an act evil on this account is to say that it is diametrically opposed to the

[624] Russell, 2014, p. 34 for the intuitions pertaining to action, and p. 135 for the intuitions pertaining to persons.
[625] Ibid. p. 35.
[626] Russell, 2014, p. 34.
[627] Garrard, 2002, p. 321.
[628] Singer, 2004, p. 190.

goods by which humans are of necessity bound. It is a radical falling short of what it means to act as a human and can never be tolerated. That being said, it is worth clarifying exactly what we mean by the intuition. It is not the case that the only possible reason for describing an act as evil is to condemn it. We could raise the example of an evil act, like one of the murders of Ted Bundy, for the sake of analysing or explaining the concept of evil, as I am doing here. I do condemn the murders of Bundy, but that is not the reason I am currently describing them here as evil. Hence, it is certainly common and proper to condemn an act by describing it as evil, but the word has a descriptive function as well as a condemnatory one. For this reason Russell notes that it would also be in principle possible for an amoral person to call someone evil without there being any note of even implicit condemnation.[629] The reason why it is proper to use the word 'evil' as a term of condemnation, when used in the narrow, contemporary sense, is that every evil act is worth condemning, since evil acts are directly opposed to the goods that humans are naturally directed towards.

2.) 'Evil actions are morally wrong.'[630]

This intuition, though virtually universally accepted, does have two possible candidates for dissent, namely John Kekes and Todd Calder. Kekes at one point writes that, though evil is virtually always wrong, 'exceptional circumstances demand that evil be done in order to prevent even greater evil.'[631] The Thomist would strenuously disagree with such a sentiment, holding that if an act is intrinsically evil it can never be licitly done. Russell plausibly interprets Kekes' overall position to be that acts which are typically evil can sometimes not be evil, and so Kekes can be interpreted as still ultimately affirming the intuition.[632] It is not strictly the case that there are evil acts that are not morally wrong, but rather there are acts which are not morally wrong which would have been evil if performed in other circumstances. Even phrased like this, the Thomist would have reservations about Kekes' position. As previously discussed in the chapter on action, the moral species of an act, for Aquinas, is determined by the object of the act, that is, what the act is about. The circumstances of the act can impact the gravity of the

[629] Russell, 2014, p. 38.
[630] Russell, 2014, p. 34.
[631] Kekes, 2005, p. 207.
[632] Russell, 2014, p. 41.

act, but cannot change its moral species unless they are so central as to change the inherent meaning of the act in question. Murdering a child by shooting her in the head is intrinsically evil, regardless of the circumstances. The only way for the context to make a difference is if it changes it from an act of murder. For example, if the child was shot by mistake, or if a secret ally knew that the child was about to be murdered and so attempted to non-lethally shoot her so as to convince the murderers she was already dead, but accidentally killed her in the process. These might be justifiable for the Thomist, but only because the context so transforms the act that it is no longer an act of murder. Should some great evil only be averted by an actual act of murdering the child, the Thomist would deny that guilt could be avoided due to the circumstances.

Todd Calder has a different objection to the intuition.[633] He raises a case called the Malicious Hirer, where a person works at a charity and has to choose who to hire as an employee, between two equally competent candidates. One happens to be a celebrity, and would draw more attention and donations to the charity if hired. The Hirer chooses the celebrity, but not due to the benefits to the company. Rather, he wants to cause the other candidate to suffer and fall into depression as a result of not being hired. Calder thinks that the act of the hiring is morally acceptable, even though it is also evil.[634] This is an interesting case, and one that well illustrates Aquinas' understanding of action. As previously discussed there are two different components of an action, the interior act within the will and the exterior act, each with their own object and species. What Calder is in effect saying is that the external act (the hiring) is not an immoral kind of act, which is correct. However, the interior act, dealing with the end being sought by the hirer, has an evil object, the candidate being thrust into depression. Since, for Aquinas, the interior act relates to the exterior act as form to matter, the act when considered in its fullness would be evil even if the external act of the hiring would not be evil when treated b, y itself. The act of hiring the celebrity is not evil due to the hiring of the celebrity per se, but due to the intent of the hiring, which is itself an integral part of the act. Hence the

[633] Calder, 2013b, p. 184.
[634] For views consonant with Calder's, see F.M. Kamm, 2007 *Intricate Ethics: Rights, Responsibilities, and Permissions*, Oxford University Press, New York; J.J. Thomson, 1991 'Self-Defense,' *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 20, pp. 283-310; and T. Scanlon, 2008 *Moral Dimensions: Permissibility, Meaning, Blame,* Belknap Press, Cambridge.

Thomist would say that this overall act of hiring is evil by virtue of its end. Whether this act in question would be evil as opposed to just wrong would plausibly depend on the severity of depression being aimed at by the hirer. After all, severe depression can certainly have the tendency to make it practically impossible to live well, which is the criterion for gravity at play in my account.

3.) 'The person who performs an evil action is blameworthy and properly held accountable for that action.'[635]

In responding to this intuition, it is important to be clear that the acts in question are in fact evil, and are not acts which simply bear some similarity with evil acts. As Calder notes, if someone performed an act with horrible consequences but had a good excuse, we ought not describe the act as evil.[636] Singer states, in a similar line, that by 'accident or misadventure one can do something wrong or bad, even terrible, but not something evil.'[637]

Generally, a person who commits a wrong act is blameworthy if they know that the act is wrong and freely choose to do it anyway.[638] The same criteria plausibly apply to evil actions in particular. Someone who commits a massacre might have mitigated culpability due to mental illness corrupting the freedom of the action, or if they somehow did not know that it was wrong, and lacked responsibility for this ignorance. For the Thomist, both of these are real possibilities. As discussed in the previous chapter, Aquinas, commenting on book seven of Aristotle's *Politics*, discusses the case of the brutish person who can do horrible things like tear pregnant women open to devour their babies, but whose actions are not properly regarded as moral in nature. He both gives the example of someone whose bodily disposition makes them incapable of guiding their actions by rational thought and of someone who learns barbaric practices

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[635] Russell, 2014, p. 34.
[636] Calder, 2013b, p. 187.
[637] Singer, 2004, p. 190.
[638] For treatments of the knowledge criterion outside the Thomistic tradition, see Levy, 2011; Rosen, 2004; Zimmerman, 1997. The freedom criterion has been criticised on deterministic grounds (see van Inwagen, 1983, p. 16), though these are not relevant for the Thomistic understanding of freedom, which only requires that the will be guided by the intellect.

from his upbringing as ways that someone could lack full responsibility for their actions. Neil Levy discusses the former category in relation to the observed dysfunction in the amygdalae of psychopaths.[639] The extent to which someone is blameworthy, for Aquinas, is determined by the extent to which they freely choose what they know to be wrong. Working this out in practice is difficult, both because it is hard to judge someone's moral knowledge and also because it is hard to judge someone's degree of freedom. Manuel Vargas argues that psychopaths do not bear responsibility for their evil acts since their psychopathy reduces their freedom.[640] It could also be plausibly argued that, even if psychopaths are sufficiently free to bear blame, they could still fail to bear it due to a lack of moral knowledge, which is typically and properly informed by emotional cues such as empathy.[641] Plausibly, those who lack the moral agency to be responsible for their evil actions are not properly characterised as evil persons. If evil character is a subset of moral character and a person can lack the capacity for proper moral character, then the person thereby would not have the capacity for an evil character, even if they perform an externally evil act.

This provides a response to Russell's fourteenth intuition, that 'not every evildoer is an evil person.'[642] This implies that there could be evildoers who are not evil persons, and also that not every evil action is always fully culpably wrong. Both of these points deserve further elucidation. Regarding the first, Peter Barry insightfully observes:

> Mass murder and genocide are paradigmatic cases examples of evildoing but the typical perpetrators of such evildoing are not that different from the rest of us, "extraordinary only by what they did, not by who they were" (Waller 2002: 8). But if typical evildoers just are evil people, then, supposing that evil people are not that different from the rest of us but for their evildoing, most of us are evil people too since our characters are not terribly different from theirs. This result is at odds with the popular belief that evil people are rare.[643]

[639] Levy, 2007.
[640] Vargas, 2010, pp. 74-6.
[641] This line is argued by Fine & Kennett, 2004.
[642] Russell, 2014, p. 135.
[643] Barry, 2019, 234.

One might be tempted to respond that even if we might have committed evil acts had we been in different circumstances, there is still an important difference insofar as we in fact have not committed such acts. As discussed in the previous treatment of the stain on the soul, performing gravely immoral acts can serve to deaden the conscience and can have numerous moral-psychological effects. Even if it is by mere good fortune that we have avoided committing such acts, we have really avoided them and really avoided their effects on our character.

True though this point is, it ignores the important fact that we do in fact judge the character of such hapless evildoers differently from the character of more willing participants. We would say of someone who enjoyed his atrocities that he was even worse than someone coerced into the same atrocities. If so then we judge the latter as less culpable by comparison.

Regarding the second point, that not every evil action is always fully culpably wrong, it is worth noting that to say that an evil act can be reduced culpability is not necessarily to say that it bears none at all. Aquinas would hold that, since there can never be sufficient reason for doing an intrinsically wrong act, if a person committing an evil act had any freedom at all then he would bear at least some responsibility for his crime. Plausibly not just any culpability for an evil act would render a person an evil character. A terrified governing figure whose life and family are in imminent danger unless he signs a document authorising an atrocity might still be guilty, but since his act involved no disorder in his will, being overcome by fear, he need not be judged an evil person (though this is not to say that he avoids all responsibility).

That being said, we should avoid speaking too confidently in this regard. As Aristotle famously states in book one of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, 'it is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits.'[644] However, in cases of malice, understood by Aquinas as cases where the cause of the evil lies in the will itself as opposed to being due to the emotions or due to

[644] Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, book 1, chapter 3, 1094b.

ignorance, the evildoer is blameworthy and hence is properly held accountable for his action.

4.) 'Evil actions are extreme and never merely trivial.'[645]

If by 'evil' we mean to designate the morally worst kind of acts, then clearly there is some sense in which evil actions are extreme, being by definition at the extreme end of moral wrongness. This is, however, sometimes disputed. Hillel Steiner, for instance, thinks that an act is made evil by the pleasure taken in the wrong in question.[646] For Steiner, evil comes in degrees, determined by both how wrong the act is and the degree of pleasure taken in it. This would allow for apparently trivial wrongdoing to be made evil if a great degree of pleasure were taken in it. Aquinas would disagree strongly with Steiner's proposal. It is, to be sure, often a sign of someone's depravity that they would take great pleasure in wrongdoing. That being said, it is possible for someone to experience depraved pleasure without them bearing guilt for it. The serial killer John Christie, for instance, reported being filled with a trembling sensation he described as 'fascinating and pleasure,' at age eight upon viewing his grandfather's dead body.[647] In the particular situation Christie did no wrong act, but if he had the same experience while committing a trivial infraction, such as stealing a single grape from a supermarket, it is counter-intuitive to think that he would be guilty of an evil as a result. For Aquinas, the experience of pleasure is not by itself morally significant, with moral wrongness relying on the will. Of course, it would be a defect to have improper pleasures, but if someone did not will wrongly with regard to them then they would not be blameworthy. If someone does something wrong like theft due to a perverted pleasure they experience in it, that is less serious than had they committed the theft out of malice. Steiner's proposal has also been criticised by Jason Neidleman, who argues that it 'justifies (1) complacency with respect to ourselves and (2) eliminationism with respect to adversaries.'[648] These criticisms seem somewhat unfair. Complacency regarding ourselves is always something to be aware of, but Steiner's position in no way entails that we do not need to care about our own moral failings, or that perceived adversaries

[645] Russell, 2014, p. 34.
[646] Steiner, 2002, p. 189.
[647] Berry-Dee, 2019, p. 63.
[648] Neidleman in Nys & de Wijze (eds.) 2019, p. 106.

need to be eliminated. A more satisfying criticism is made by Russell, who points out that it is 'implausible that even the most intense pleasure taken in certain kinds of minor wrong, such as shoplifting or exaggerating deductions on a tax return, could elevate those actions to the status of evil.'[649]

Even if we accept that evil is in a sense extreme then it is still controversial what this extremity consists in. Singer writes that 'evil acts are acts that are horrendously wrong, that cause immense suffering.'[650] Formosa is more detailed, taking evil actions to be those 'where an agent perpetuates a moral wrong that makes him at least partly responsible for the harm others suffer' and where the harm in question will 'normally have a life-wrecking impact on the victim.'[651] The extremity of evil acts on my account is grounded in how radically opposed the act is to the goods which bind society together by enabling people to live well. As such, an act is evil of itself depending on whether it would tend to make it impossible to live well. This is consonant with Formosa's view. It is important, though, to distinguish between the interior and exterior acts which are components of a whole human action. The interior act involved when deciding to torture someone is radically opposed to the common goods of society and is directed towards wrecking lives even if the perpetrator is obstructed from carrying out his intention. His interior act is therefore still properly described as evil.

It is important to clarify here what the teleology towards being life-wrecking is. Does it refer to a kind of act that will, a significant portion of the time, wreck lives (such as torture, since tortures often wreck lives)? Similarly, though not identically, it could be taken to the probability that a specific act will wreck a life (the probability that this particular act of torture will wreck a life). These are clearly distinct categories. If it were the case (which it probably is not) that a specific group of US Navy Seals were unlikely to have their lives wrecked by enduring a moderate form of torture which would wreck the lives of most civilians generally, then performing such an act on one of these Seals would be life-wrecking in the first sense but not in the second. Finally, we could consider a kind of conceptual teleology between acts and some of their consequences, which is not

[649] Russell, 2014, p. 47.
[650] Singer, 2004, p. 193.
[651] Formosa, 2008, p. 228; 230.

reducible to a probability judgment. Deciding to kill someone, for instance, is clearly directed (by intention) towards a person's death even if the decision is highly unlikely to actually result in a person's death.

As stated above, I include this intentional form of teleology toward wrecking lives as evil. Between the two kinds of probabilistic directionalities mentioned here, I include the first, but with an important proviso. Aquinas, as previously discussed, thinks that the circumstances of an act cannot strictly change the moral species of an act, but only because if the circumstance were central enough to the meaning of the action to change its species, it would no longer be classed as a circumstance. This plausibly applies to the distinction between the two kinds of life-wrecking directionalities mentioned here. If the circumstances are such that an act is known to be far more life-wrecking than that kind of act usually would be, then by virtue of this fact an otherwise not evil kind of action might become an evil action. Take, for instance, the serious bullying of someone known to be already suicidal. The bullying might in normal circumstances been merely wrong, but could plausibly become actually evil in this particular case.

Morton has an account on which evil acts can be lacking extreme harm, holding that 'A person's act is evil when it results from a strategy or learned procedure which allows that person's deliberations… not to be inhibited by barriers against considering harm or humiliating others that ought to have been in place.'[652] The idea is that we have barriers to prevent us entertaining harmful actions as live options, and an act is evil if it bypasses these barriers, even if it does not itself cause harm.

Although not the same as the account I am proposing, the role of psychological barriers in Morton's account is in a limited sense analogous to the role of common goods in mine. The disanalogy would be that on the Thomistic account merely bypassing care for the common good would not necessarily totally alienate one from the political community. A psychopath who lived by societal norms for the sake of his self-interest could remain in some kind of communion with the rest of society, even while falling short of the fullness of union with others as a result of actually seeking the same goods.

[652] Morton, 2004, p. 57.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the ultimate end of the political community is to live well, and hence includes all the subordinate goods necessary to live life well.[653] Given that humans are essentially social animals, we cannot live well in isolation. If evil is interpreted as opposition to the common good of political society, then when acted out evil will ordinarily result in making it hard for people to live life well. This fits well with Formosa's observation that evil acts typically wreck lives, but it also does not require that every evil act in fact cause a concrete harm. It also fits well with Russell's observation that evil acts vary in the kind of harm they tend towards.[654] Since living well has numerous aspects there are numerous ways it can be hindered, and hence there is a variety of ways in which evil acts can be directed against the common good. Evil acts are always by definition extreme, but I suggest that rather than being extreme in their concrete effects, what is necessary is that they are extreme in their opposition to the common good of the people living life well.

5.) 'Evil actions are incomprehensible.'[655]

The intuition that evil acts are incomprehensible is widespread. Joel Feinberg describes pure evil or wickedness as 'defy[ing] reason and puzzl[ing] the investigating intellect as much as they offend moral judgment.'[656] According to Singer, 'an evil action is one so bad, so awful, so horrendous that no ordinary decent reasonable human being can conceive of himself (or herself) doing such a thing.'[657]

Susan Neiman interprets the incomprehensibility of evil as being an important aspect of evil, writing that by 'designating something as evil is a way of marking the fact that it shatters our trust in the world.'[658] As Russell shrewdly observes, though, this 'implies that an action could be judged to be evil only while it was new and shocking.'[659] True, evil acts often do not fit our expectations of how the world works, but to make that the

[653] Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Politics*, book 3, chapter 5.
[654] Russell, 2014, p. 51.
[655] Russell, 2014, p. 34.
[656] Feinberg, 2003, p. 128.
[657] Singer, 2004, p. 196.
[658] Neiman, 2003, p. 9.
[659] Russell, 2014, p. 56.

very essence of evil subjectivises it to whatever I happen to expect. As a result of this, evil would cease to designate the limit cases of moral wrongdoing, since I might be acquainted with certain horrendous evils while not expecting certain lesser evils. For instance, if I had read about Nazi Germany but had been sheltered from far lesser racism in my own country, to discover such racism might well shatter my trust in the world more than my knowledge of the Nazis does, since my trust in the world assumed the virtue of my own fellow citizens but not the virtue of the Nazis.

Morton, by contrast, interprets the incomprehensibility of evil in terms of the inability to imagine oneself doing the evil act even if in the same circumstances.[660] A similar view (or perhaps an elaboration of the same view) is taken by Russell to be the folk view of incomprehensibility of evil, namely that, 'I believe that I would never freely choose to perform that action under any circumstances, whether I can visualise doing it or not.'[661] Both of these views are subject to the same criticisms offered against Neiman, above, namely that they would make evil dependent on psychological properties of the believer and not on the actual nature of the act.

For these reasons, the subjective sense of incomprehensibility ought not be taken as an infallible guide to the evil of an act. It does, however, make sense on the Thomistic view that there should be such a sense of incomprehensibility. After all, if to commit an evil act is to act gravely against the common good of society, which each person including the wrongdoer has an interest in, then there is an obvious question as to why they would do it.[662] The evildoer's own wellbeing as a social animal is tied up with their union with the community and the goods which bind the community together. In acting against the common good the evildoer acts against his own good as well as against the good of everyone he loves. There is no good reason for committing an evil act. However, this is not conceptually problematic for the Thomist, who is committed not to the idea that every act has a *good* reason but rather that it has at least *some* reason, even if a woefully insufficient one. As a result, there is a certain kind of incomprehensibility

[660] Morton, 2004, p. 21.
[661] Russell, 2014, p. 58.
[662] This is not unique to evil actions, on the Thomistic view. All wrongdoing involves some kind of irrationaility, though this seems particularly pronounced in cases of evil action.

proper to evil acts in the sense that they are in fact irrational, but this does not entail that the causes and nature of evil action cannot be understood. That being said, it is worth noting that the incomprehensibility of an evil act can make it harder to judge the culpability of the evildoer, since acting incomprehensibly could be taken as evidence that he is of diminished mental capacity in some respect.

6.) 'Evil actions can be banal.'[663]

The idea of the banality of evil is best framed in the way the idea emerged for Hannah Arendt. Arendt, upon witnessing Adolf Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem, was struck by how ordinary and mundane he seemed. Despite the fact that he had coordinated the transport of countless Jews to Nazi death camps, he did not come across as a moral monster. Rather:

> Except for an extraordinary diligence in looking out for his personal advancement, he had no motives at all… He *merely*, to put the matter colloquially, *never realized what he was doing*… He was not stupid. It was sheer thoughtlessness—something by no means identical with stupidity—that predisposed him to become one of the greatest criminals in the period.[664]

She comments, 'It would have been very comforting indeed to believe that Eichmann was a monster… The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal.'[665] By banality of evil, what is being referred to is an ordinariness of both motive and of the character of some evildoers. Arendt's interpretation of Eichmann's character and motives has been seriously called into doubt, but the concept raised is still an interesting one.[666] Evil acts can certainly be motivated by mundane reasons. For instance, the American mafia hitman and torturer Richard Kuklinski noted taking on more murderous work at times in order to put his daughters

[663] Russell, 2014, p. 34.
[664] Arendt, 2006, pp. 287-8.
[665] Ibid. p. 276.
[666] Cesarani, 2007.

through expensive high schools.[667] This is a banal motivation, but speaks of an incredibly hardened heart.

The possibility of the banality of evil does not pose a problem for the Thomistic view, since what is significant is that one's will be opposed to the common good, not that the reason why the act is done is to damage the common good. That is to say, opposing the common good does not have to be the end being sought by an evildoer, since their will could be opposed to the common good for the sake of other ends which happen to be incompatible with it, such as sending a child to an expensive school. To intend an end is also to intend the means for achieving the end.[668] Since the means in this case (murder) is radically opposed to the common goods, to intend to educate children by means of murder involves pitting one's will against the common goods. The banality of evil might appear to be in conflict with the idea that malice is an essential aspect of evil character. However, it must be remembered that malice is being used in the Thomistic sense to say that the will itself, as opposed to merely the passions, is directed toward the evil in question. Malice in the everyday, stronger sense of willing something for the apparent sake of its evilness could not be considered an essential aspect of evil character without excluding banality cases.

7.) 'There is a psychological hallmark for evil action.'[669]

By 'psychological hallmark for evil action', Russell refers to the intuition that there is a distinctive psychological motivation, or family of motivations, for evil acts. He provides three common folk options for what such a motivation might be: malice, sadistic pleasure, and defiance.[670] It is worth clarifying at the outset that 'malice', as it is used here, is meant differently to what Aquinas means by the term. An example of the malice view as Russell presents it is John Kekes, who writes, 'evildoers cause more serious harm than is needed for achieving their [other] ends. They are not just unscrupulous in their choice of means, but motivated by malevolence to gratuitous excess. They treat

[667] Carlo, 2006.
[668] See Jensen, 2010, p. 69.
[669] Russell, 2014, p. 34.
[670] Russell, 2014, pp. 80-86.

their victims with ill-will, rage, or hatred.'[671] For Aquinas, by contrast, 'malice' is simply used to designate wrongdoing that has its cause in the will itself as opposed to either being due to the emotions or due to ignorance. In malice, someone knows full well that an act is wrong and is not being moved by passions like anger but chooses to do the wrong nonetheless. Since the moral has to do with the voluntary, that is, with what is willed, malice is (all other things being equal) the worst way to choose to commit a wrongdoing.

For the Thomistic position I am defending, there is no necessary psychological hallmark of evil, since evil can be motivated by any number of reasons. As already mentioned, Kuklinski was sometimes motivated to kill to pay school fees. Jodi Ann Arias killed out of social jealousy. As Adam Morton notes, 'many participants in evil are not moved by extraordinary hatred or sadism.'[672] Indeed, ordinary police officers in Poland during World War II chose to continue their jobs under the Nazi occupation, and though they were free to quit at any time many kept working even as the Nazi government had them do monstrous things like marching pregnant women into a field and then executing them. Most of them were not committed Nazis themselves, and a major motivation for them was a sense of comradeship, and not wanting their fellow officers to have to do these horrible things alone if they themselves quit.[673]

Eve Garrard has an understanding of evil where there is a different kind of psychological hallmark. For Garrard, an evil action is a wrong act where one silences any considerations against performing the act in question.[674] This is remarkably similar to the Thomistic analysis of moral wrongdoing in general provided by Jacques Maritain, who conceived of the start of a morally wrongful act to be where someone does not advert to the rule of reason to see whether an act is overall good or not but instead, based only on a superficial perception of the desirability of the act, chooses to pursue the act.[675] Maritain's ascribing of the phenomenon to moral wrongdoing in general

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[671] Kekes, 2005, p. 2.
[672] Morton, 2004, p. 8.
[673] Browning, 2017. Though this is not to deny that antisemitism was present among the officers in question, as emphasised by Daniel Goldhagen (1996) in response to Browning.
[674] Garrard, 1998, pp. 49-53.
[675] Maritain, 1966.

seems more probable than Garrard's restricting it to the case of evils. For example, it is possible, when annoyed at someone, to not let oneself examine the issue from the other person's point of view for a while in order to be able to wallow in an indulgent sense of indignation.

8.) 'Evil actions are qualitatively distinct from ordinary wrongs.'[676]

A controversial question in the evil literature is whether the difference between evil and merely wrong actions is quantitative or qualitative in nature. Todd Calder notes three reasons why we should care about what the answer is.[677] Firstly, if the difference is merely quantitative we might be able to abandon our concept of evil and just refer to the most morally horrible actions as very wrong. Secondly, the answer would allow us to easily cast aside any account of evil which answers the question incorrectly.[678] Thirdly, since we seek truth for its own sake it is worth figuring out even apart from instrumental concerns.

It is worth briefly noting what we might mean by a qualitative as opposed to quantitative distinction, before going further. As Calder remarks, 'The question of whether two things are qualitatively distinct is not whether there are any, or even many, qualitative or quantitative similarities and differences between them. The question is whether one of the things is *just* a greater or lesser form of the other.'[679]

Luke Russell helpfully distinguishes between three different versions of the intuition. Firstly, he considers a hypothetical reading on which evil (whatever it is) would be a quality that by definition evil actions would have but which non-evil actions would not have. On this reading, the intuition is trivially true. Whatever it is by virtue of which an act is evil is by definition had by evil acts. Russell calls this 'the cheap version of the qualitative difference thesis.'[680] Secondly, he notes a 'more substantial, but still fairly

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[676] Russell, 2014, p. 34.
[677] Calder, in Nys & de Wijze, 2019, pp. 218-9.
[678] It could be fairly objected that if this question were not of central importance for a particular theory of evil then even if it answered the question incorrectly it would be improper to thereby dismiss the entire account.
[679] Ibid. p. 219.
[680] Russell, 2014, p. 113.

weak' reading of the intuition held by Calder, on which, 'there is at least one essential property of evil action that is not an essential property of wrong action.'[681] Calder prefers to call this 'the moderate version.'[682] Finally, Russell considers a stronger version of the intuition, on which evil acts are only qualitatively distinct from non-evil wrongful acts if there is an essential property of evil acts that is totally absent from merely wrong acts.[683] For several writers this extra property has an important phenomenological aspect to it. For instance, Stephen de Wijze writes:

> Evil, in a different way from merely wrongful actions, leaves behind a moral residue which, if it is possible to remove, requires a special ritual of purification. The horror, the disgust and incomprehension evoked by evil suggests a *qualitative* difference, something that distinguishes it from wrongful or even *very* wrongful acts.[684]

Similarly, Morton writes:

> We have a visceral revulsion from extremely evil acts. The revulsion is most vivid when the acts involve physical violence, but it extends to other acts produced by similar patterns of motivation, even if they do not have the same emotional immediacy. Evil acts have a quality that in ancient times would have made us fear that the Gods might send a plague in reprisal, rather than simply making us despair at the incapacities of mere mortals to manage their lives together.[685]

This 'moral residue' left behind by evil acts is plausibly not merely one phenomenon. Evil acts can leave different moral effects on different people related to the act. Aquinas' aforementioned discussion of the stain on the soul seems to capture well part of the distinctive effects of an evil act on the perpetrator. The perpetrator's will, intellect, and memories will be affected by the act in question. But different tragic effects can be felt

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[681] Ibid.
[682] Calder, in Nys & de Wijze, 2019, p. 223.
[683] Russell, 2014, pp. 116-8.
[684] De Wijze, 2002, p. 213.
[685] Morton, 2004, p. 13.

upon those related to the perpetrator. The children of Nazis, though innocent themselves, are themselves deeply affected by their parents' evil actions. A Nazi general responsible for murdering Jews in Russia had a daughter who only learnt about her father when she was an adult, who said '… as of then I always wanted to punish, hurt myself; if I had this father, I told myself… I must pay for it.'[686] The wife of another Nazi's son said of her husband, 'His father ruined his life. He doesn't think he has a right to be happy after what his father did.'[687]

A different mark of evil can be left on its victims. Lal Bibi, a young Afghani woman, was brutally beaten and gang raped by a local militia group. She brought a formal complaint against her attackers, and said, 'If the people in government fail to bring these people to justice, I am going to burn myself. I don't want to live with this stigma on my forehead.'[688] Amery notes another effect regarding the victims of torture. 'Whoever was tortured, stays tortured. Torture is ineradicably burned into him, even when no clinically objective traces can be detected.' And further on, 'Whoever has succumbed to torture can no longer feel at home in the world. The shame of destruction cannot be erased. Trust in the world, which already collapsed in part from the first blow, but in the end, under torture, fully, will not be regained.'[689]

Even if these kinds of horrific effects are characteristic of evil actions, it would be a mistake to make them the definitive characteristics of such action. If evil were to be defined by these effects then were a survivor of evil to be less affected it would follow that the evil act would not be as severe.[690]

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[686] Quoted in Stump, 2004, p. 35.
[687] Ibid.
[688] Quoted in Stump, 2018, p. 50.
[689] Amery, 1980, pp. 34, 40.
[690] Another way that the strong version of the intuition could be taken is that of Philip Cole, who interprets evil as a concept to be inextricably bound up with outlandish supernatural and fictional ideas, and hence out to be dispensed with. (Cole, 2006, pp. 1-23). Steiner's (2002) aforementioned account, on which evil action is defined by the pleasure taken in wrongdoing, would be another example of this kind of strong qualitative account. As would be Eve Garrard's (1998, 2002) silencer account.

As Calder points out, the strong version of the intuition could rest on a potential equivocation between evil acts and the *concept* of evil acts.[691] It could be the case, argues Calder, that the concept of evil acts is qualitatively distinct from the concept of merely wrongful acts even if there is only a quantitative difference between a particular evil act and a particular non-evil wrong act. In this case, the strong version of the intuition would find no qualitative difference, even if the concepts of evil action and wrong action were relevantly distinct. Calder takes this to be an argument for the moderate version of the intuition.

One could think that the Thomist would need to give a quantitative rather than a qualitative account, since presumably someone could be more or less directed against the societal goods which I have been discussing. If someone is angry and punches an enemy, deliberately breaking his nose, she seems to be opposed to the bodily integrity of the enemy, but we would not ordinarily describe the act as evil.

I suggest that the distinction could be made on analogous grounds to Aquinas' distinction between mortal and venial sin, as in the last chapter. In a venial sin, one does not reorient her will against God, the highest good, but nonetheless she is falling short of loving God as she ought. Analogously we could say that someone is not committing an evil action if she is merely failing to seek the societal goods as she ought, but rather if in choosing the action she sets her will decisively against the goods in question and in doing so alienates herself from the society.

Our participation in society comes in degrees. Someone can be a better or worse citizen. If someone has committed a serious wrongdoing like a bank robbery they have seriously fragmented their relationship with society. This fragmentation is well illustrated in the punishments we give for various crimes and infringements. If someone has committed a relatively minor infringement then they may be fined or have to do community service, both of which are directed towards the good of the community, illustrating that the wrongdoer needs to be more fully directed towards the good of the community in question. For more serious crimes, someone may be imprisoned, which (in addition to

[691] Calder, in Nys & de Wijze, 2019, p. 222.

the standard reasons given for punishment) illustrates the criminal's relative alienation from society. The degree of alienation can be readily seen in the debates over whether people should be able to vote while in prison. If imprisonment were not in part a way of reifying this alienation then to deny inmates the ability to vote would be unequivocally to deny them of their political rights.

Yet, even if one's relation to society comes in degrees, there is a qualitative difference of Calder's moderate sort between being mostly alienated from society and being totally alienated from it. As discussed in the previous chapter, this can be seen in traditional punishments such as exile or capital punishment, both of which aim not just to keep someone largely away from society for a period of time, but to mark one's severance from society permanently. Even in contemporary societies which may lack either punishment an analogous role is played by sentences of life imprisonment. Of course, should the evildoer be repentant the society (by means of its executive and judicial structures) does have the ability to allow the person back into society, as when a person is officially pardoned or released from prison before the end of a life sentence.

It is impossible to give a metric by which to measure clearly one's degree of alienation from society due to a particular act. This is because an evildoer's degree of awareness of what he is doing cannot be accurately measured. His degree of freedom in choosing the act and the moral significance of the circumstances surrounding the act also cannot be accurately measured. This means that there is of necessity a degree of at least epistemic vagueness when judging whether or not someone is guilty of an evil act, and so we should not be discouraged by hard cases which we have difficulty in determining. That being said, we can say that an evil act (on this account) is an act gravely opposed to the goods undergirding society which alienates the actor from society, by virtue of the free choice of the act while knowing of its grave opposition to the basic societal goods.

Another interesting account is given by Stephen de Wijze, who summarises it in the following:

> Evil actions, projects, or states-of-affairs are *always* wrongful actions, projects, or states-of-affairs but *differ qualitatively* in that they fulfil one or more of the following conditions:
>
> A There is a *deliberate violation* of persons *with the intention* to *dehumanise* (that is, deny basic respect and dignity to) those powerless to retaliate.
>
> B The action or project will gratuitously inflict, or bring about, one or more of "The Great Harms" to sentient beings with the relevant moral standing.
>
> C The action or project (or professed morality) seeks to annihilate the "moral landscape."[692]

The Great Harms are described by de Wijze as 'situations which are to be avoided by all living creatures in virtue of being living creatures with the needs common to such beings, such as great physical suffering, illness, starvation, death, destruction of home or habitat and the misery of continual and unrelenting terror and harassment.'[693]

One natural question to arise regarding this account is the relation between the different criteria. De Wijze is quite explicit that any one of them being satisfied would constitute an evil action, even without the others. Why, then, are we to take these three criteria as being attached to the same concept, evil, and not three different concepts? De Wijze does not respond to this question in his paper, though he does voice his resistance to attempts at explaining the concept as a Wittgensteinian family resemblance.[694]

My Thomistic account, though by no means identical, bears certain similarities with de Wijze's. In fact, I contend that the conceptual unity of the three criteria can be seen if we interpret them through a Thomistic lens. The similarities are perhaps most easily seen in de Wijze's explanation of what he means by the moral landscape in criteria C, namely, 'those prerequisite values needed for any civilised attempt to manage conflict and to

[692] de Wijze, 2002, p. 218, emphasis in original.
[693] Ibid. p. 119.
[694] Ibid. p. 226.

establish a minimal level of respect and dignity between persons.'[695] The 'minimal level' can be naturally interpreted as the minimum to sustain basic societal relations, in which case the values which constitute the moral landscape are closely parallel to the necessary societal goods I have discussed.

These goods could be related to the Great Harms, which de Wijze himself grounds in the shared nature of living creatures. The harms in question, by being directed against the characteristic goods of our nature, are thereby directed against the values which societies must be bound by. For instance, we must value life and basic health if we are to 'establish a minimal level of respect and dignity between persons' in society. This explains why it is that privating these goods constitutes a Great Harm.

The necessary societal goods are also a possible way of linking criteria A with B and C. The reason why deliberate violation of persons with the intention to dehumanise is classed under the same overall concept of evil as the other criteria is that our societies are societies of persons who are human beings. As such, though we share much of our nature with other living beings, our societies must also be directed towards distinctively personal goods.

It could be objected that by linking the three criteria in this way I lose some of the variety that is included in de Wijze's account. For instance, as de Wijze observes, criterion B allows for acts done against non-human animals to potentially be classed as evil, which criteria A and C would not. There seems to be something relevantly distinct between the evil of torturing a kitten and that of making a father watch his daughter being tortured. This distinction makes sense if the first is merely against criterion B whereas the latter fulfils all three. It could also be relatedly worried that even if my account could class kittens being tortured as evil, it would only be by reference to effects on humans in society, which would get the moral emphasis of the act wrong.

However, the Thomistic account can also make sense of these points. Humans share much of our natures with other animals, such as the goods of survival, self-movement,

[695] Ibid. p. 221.

nutrition, and reproduction. As previously discussed, Aquinas thinks that connaturality is the ground on which relationships can be based. We are naturally directed toward our own good and hence take the goods of our own nature to be valuable. This allows for us then to value the same goods in others and ultimately enables us to love them as other selves in friendship. For this reason, we can have deeper relationships with other humans than would be possible with other animals that lack personhood. That being said we can still bond with, say, a dog, by virtue of the goods we share (food, capacity for physical affection, etc.). In the same way, we could hold that the goods humans are directed towards which are not distinctively personal still ought to be relevantly pursued by society. A person who tortures and then slaughters a kitten for fun is attacking goods which we share with the kitten, such as bodily integrity, etc. This is not to say that we ought to condemn as evil the torturing of a kitten merely because the person might go on to torture humans (though this is a real concern), but due to our being directed towards goods which the kitten shares in. Even so, since the kitten lacks a personal nature, torturing and slaughtering the kitten would obviously not be as evil as doing the same to a human. The difference between the personal and non-personal aspects of our nature ground not only the greater evil of gratuitously killing humans than of cats, but also the distinctiveness that marks making a father watch his daughter being tortured out from torturing a kitten. The former is an offence against our distinctively *personal* good whereas the latter is not. The rich variety of goods humans are directed toward grounds the moral variety present within evil activity.

It could be objected here that the possible inclusion of offenses against animals merely raises a whole slew of complications which a theory of evil could do without. I do not intend to provide a nuanced ethical framework of our duties toward animals here, though it is worth exploring the question briefly, since it helps to elucidate the limits of evil on my view.[696] Intuitively, slaughtering kittens is evil due to the motivation present and its wrongness is contributed to by the harm on the kitten. Though there is not a distinctive motivation for evil acts, we would be more likely to judge this act evil if it were motivated by sadistic pleasure and the enjoyment of control than if it were in a

[696] The question is underdeveloped by Thomists. For a Thomistic book which addresses some of the relevant concerns regarding animal value and capacities, see Kyle Keltz, 2020.

quest for increased medical knowledge (though we might still be critical of it then). We accept that the same kittens could be killed in a government effort to protect local wildlife or to slow the spread of disease, even if the harm done is the same, and the deaths are in both cases intended. By contrast, we would regard analogous intended deaths of humans to be evil even if they were for increased medical knowledge. Hence it seems that, to the extent that we would call acts against animals evil, it would be due to the motivations of the evildoer and not due to the harm done to the animals, although the harm done might be an important aspect of the ordinary moral wrongfulness of such actions.

We are directed towards the goods of distinctively human society. Non-human animals are not members of this human society, since they are incapable of being rationally directed toward the goods of the society, which are rational in nature.[697] As such, we are not strictly bound to treat animals in the same way as humans. It is not an offence against the goods of human society per se to slaughter a cow for food. That being said, due to our shared nature with other animals it is fitting to treat them with respect. If someone slaughters a cow for pleasure he still directs himself against the goods of human society, insofar as he is treating the destruction of life, bodily integrity, and associated goods as an end in and of itself. Since these are goods for humans, to treat their destruction as an end in itself is to place oneself against goods which bind human society, even if the life of the cow itself is not a good of human society. This explains why the motivation of the cat killer seems to be the main relevant factor when determining the evil present in this case, whereas other factors like harm are more important in cases with human victims. Again, it should be stressed that I am only talking about specifically evil acts here, and not merely wrongful acts.

Regarding Evil Persons (Intuitions 9-15)

Since the content of the intuitions to do with evil persons overlaps with those dealing with evil actions, a few of Russell's intuitions regarding evil persons have already been

[697] There are writers who hold that animals are members of society, though it is not obvious that they are using society in the Thomistic sense employed here. See Robert Gardner's 2013 book, *A Theory of Justice for Animals: Animal Rights in a Nonideal World.*

answered in the previous section. Nonetheless, it is useful to state what the seven intuitions regarding evil personhood are. They are:

> 9.) There some actual evil persons.
> 10.) Evil persons are rare.
> 11.) Evil persons deserve our strongest moral condemnation.
> 12.) In some cases the fact that S is an evil person helps to explain why S performed an evil action.
> 13.) Not every evildoer is an evil person.
> 14.) It is possible to become an evil person by performing evil actions.
> 15.) It is possible, though very difficult, for an evil person to become a good person.[698]

Before responding to the remaining intuitions listed by Russell about evil persons it is first necessary to say briefly what an evil person is, on my account. It is also important to note that I am dealing here with evil *persons*, not evil communities, which would require their own treatment. An evil person is a person who by virtue of his will is maliciously, gravely, and dispositionally directed against the goods which bind us together as members of a human society, with the gravity determined by how radically opposed the person's will is to the capacity for others to live well. It is to be noticed that neither evil personhood nor evil acts are being defined by reference to the other.[699] Of course, they are closely related, but what unites them both as evil is their shared teleology against the goods which of necessity bind society together, and by implication their direction towards alienation from such a society.

One question that immediately emerges is whether an evil person must do or have done an evil act. If not, it must then be asked whether an evil person is still alienated from society in the absence of an evil act. Human character is formed through choosing to act

[698] Russell, 2014, p. 135.
[699] Most accounts of evil start with evil acts and understand evil personhood by virtue of some relation to the acts, such as Barry, 2013; Kekes, 2005; Thomas, 1993; Russell, 2014. A few, however, start from evil personhood and derive an account of evil acts from there, such as Haybron, 2002a; Singer, 2004, p. 190.

in different ways. As discussed at length in both the previous chapters on virtue and on vice, the human will is habitually directed toward ends by repeated choices. As such, a person typically becomes an evil person through making evil choices. Of course, this is not to say that the evil choices themselves come from nowhere. Often in the case of evildoers, morally wrong choices gradually orient the will further away from important goods until finally leading to actually evil choices.

For instance, the Polish-American serial killer and hitman Richard Kuklinski started breaking the law first in small matters which we would not judge him badly for, such as stealing food to help support his family. From there he started stealing luxury goods and became involved in more serious robberies. His early instances of violence were fights amongst his peers. One day, at age fourteen, he wanted to take revenge on a bully who had beaten him up, so he ambushed the boy but accidentally beat him to death. Although not intended, he later felt like he had attained justice for being bullied and did not regret the other boy's death. This opened him up to thinking of killing people as a live possibility for him when approaching later problems he faced, culminating in him enjoying feeding live people to rats.[700] This addresses Russell's fourteenth intuition, that 'it is possible to become an evil person by performing evil actions.'[701] As Russell notes, the evidence for this intuition 'is comparatively anecdotal.'[702] However, since the intuition only deals with the *possibility* of becoming an evil person by doing evil acts, well documented individual cases suffice.

Nevertheless, it does not follow from this that it is impossible for someone to become evil without doing an evil act. A committed neo-Nazi, for instance, might never commit an atrocity but thoroughly approve of atrocities he hears of. By stipulation, the only reason he has not committed an atrocity himself is that he does not want to cause a wave of sympathy for the groups he hates should he attack one of them. As to whether or not such a person would be alienated from society, we must first make a distinction between two kinds of alienation.

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[700] Carlo, 2006
[701] Russell, 2014, p. 135.
[702] Ibid, p. 136.

As previously discussed, we are bound together in society by the shared willing of goods, in the same way that shared goods bind people together in friendships generally. If someone sets his will against these goods then he is in fact alienated from society. That being said, this alienation might not be socially reified or even recognised. This is seen in the case of serial killers before they are caught. For instance, Ted Bundy was generally regarded as handsome and charismatic, and before being caught was largely socially accepted. Frequently, the people serial killers interact with in society are not aware that the person is a violent killer who does not care about the lives and wellbeing of others in general. The killer might be able to live a life of apparent external conformity to societal goods. Even so, on my account, the killer would be alienated from society.

To give a fictional case, this can be seen in the 1989 film *Crimes and Misdemeanors.* The film is about a successful doctor named Judah who is a highly respected member of his community, being a philanthropist and family man. Secretly, he has an affair with a woman who threatens to reveal their relationship if he does not divorce his wife to marry her. Amidst significant inner turmoil, Judah ultimately decides to have her murdered through family criminal connections he had long disavowed. The murder is carried out successfully and he is not caught. As I interpret the story, Judah, though in the end being externally united both with his family and society at large, is in fact alienated from them. His wife may think him to be faithful and a good man, but her admiring thoughts are not properly ascribed to him. She does not really admire him as he is, but an imagined version of him. Similarly, though he is admired by society at large, his reputation is ultimately vacuous. It is not really him that is admired but a false image of him. Since no one knows Judah as he really is, he does not truly have deep union with anyone and is thereby alienated from those around him, even if they believe that they know him. Although this alienation is not socially reified and recognised, it is still real and tragic. It is difficult to give real life examples of this in an illuminating way, since if an evil person is only found out after they have died and their alienation remained implicit then there would not necessarily be much there empirically there to note.

Plausibly, when an evil person guilty of evildoing is found out, part of the point of punishing them is to reify this alienation that was previously implicit. Hannah Arendt reports having said to Eichmann upon his death sentence:

> Just as you supported and carried out a policy of not wanting to share the earth with the Jewish people and the people of a number of other nations – as though you and your superiors had any right to determine who should and who should not inhabit the world – we find that no one, that is, no member of the human race, can be expected to want to share the earth with you. This is the reason, and the only reason, you must hang.[703]

With this distinction between socially recognised alienation and un-recognised alienation in play, we are in a position to discuss the case of an evil person who has not done an evil act. Certainly, society should not formally recognise and reify the alienation of someone who has not committed an evil act as it would had they committed it. We ought not imprison neo-Nazis for private beliefs and acts of the will which they have in no way acted out externally. That being said, such a person would, I argue, still have unrecognised alienation from society. We can see this in the natural social effects that would follow should his beliefs be revealed, such as if he left his anti-Semitic diary at work. His colleagues would probably not know how to relate to him, knowing him as he in fact is. His alienation would then be reified amongst his colleagues, even without him having done an evil act. We could say that he was already experiencing unrecognised alienation beforehand insofar as people were not relating to him as he actually was, thinking they were united with him by numerous goods and commitments, whereas such a union was in fact illusory. Of course, that is not to say that the neo-Nazi was incapable of having any union with people at all. If he had been a tennis enthusiast he would have been able to engage positively with many people in a somewhat authentic way through the sport. Hence even if evil characters do have unrecognised alienation from society it does not seem as though this alienation is total without evil acts.

One might object that it is impossible to develop malice without prior action, for Aquinas, and hence that one cannot become an evil person without an evil action, since malice is necessary for evil character. However here it is important to remember Aquinas' distinction between the external act and the interior act of the will. Plausibly, a

[703] Arendt, 1994, p. 279.

malicious character could be developed by way of a series of evil acts of the will, even if they are not manifested externally.

As to the question of whether there are some actual evil persons, Russell's ninth intuition, my answer is a clear yes.[704] Plenty of people throughout history have totally alienated themselves from society through their actions. Obvious examples would include high ranking Nazis and their associates when they lost the war. Famously, Goebbels' wife Magda killed her six children and committed suicide in Hitler's bunker. In a letter she explained her decision to kill her children, which also explains her own suicide, as follows:

> In the world coming [after the war] Joseph [Goebbels] will be regarded as one of the greatest criminals Germany has ever produced. His children would have to hear that daily; people would torment them, despise and humiliate them. They would bear the burden of everything that he has done.[705]

Although her children were innocent of any wrongdoing, we see Magda Goebbels' profound sense of alienation from the society she would have to live in. She would be so alienated from it that she preferred to take her own life. In the lives of children of Nazis who survived the war, such an undeserved alienation can be observed.[706] If she and her innocent children would have been so profoundly alienated from society then *a fortiori* the Nazi officials themselves would have been even more deeply alienated, an alienation often recognised through execution.

The main objection to the idea of there actually being evil people is the claim that there is no such thing as evil and hence no evil people. The main defender of this view is Philip Cole.[707] Cole writes, 'The fundamental problem is one of explanation, and whether the concept of evil can play any constructive or useful role in explaining human action. Is

[704] Russell, 2014, p. 135.
[705] Quoted in Stump, 2004, p. 34.
[706] Ibid. pp. 34-6.
[707] Cole, 2006.

'because she was evil' ever an explanation, even a partial one?'[708] If not then evil probably is not a moral category that actually refers to anyone.

On the account of evil that I am proposing, the answer to Cole's question is yes. To say that someone is evil is to say that she is directed against goods necessary for living well which society is predicated upon. The direction of her will explains why she acts as she does and hence can be explanatorily useful. This provides a response to Russell's twelfth intuition as well, that sometimes the fact that a person is evil helps to explain why they performed an evil action. That being said, I see no reason for assuming that all moral categories need to be explanatorily useful regarding human action. To assert that a moral category needs to explain human behaviour is to reduce ethics to psychology. As Russell notes, 'Many moral concepts, such as the concepts of good, right, bad, and wrong, appear to be purely evaluative or prescriptive… Nonetheless, we could not build an ethical theory without such basic, non-evaluative concepts.'[709]

Now I move on to the next intuition, whether evil persons are rare (the tenth intuition).[710] It is an intuitive idea since if evil people were not rare then society would not be able to be held together in a stable fashion, lacking commitment to the goods which give a society its integrity. In addition, if evildoing can be separated from evil personhood, as in the case of the brutish, then not all those who commit evil acts will necessarily bear full guilt of them. Hence, we cannot simply judge the frequency of evil persons from the frequency of evil actions. This point, though relatively uncontroversial, needs to be fleshed out somewhat.[711] After all, it is possible for a large community of people to participate in evil practices, such as slavery. It is also possible for them to share views which are directed against the ability of people to live well (such as that degrading slaves is morally permissible). Such views and the behaviour that can go along with them can be commonplace within a community, which casts doubt on the idea that it is *necessary* that evil people be rare, even if they are in fact rare in most

[708] Cole, 2006, p. 18.
[709] Russell, 2014, p. 197.
[710] Ibid. p. 135.
[711] Garrard, 2002, p. 321; Haybron, 2002a, p. 287; Kekes, 1990, p. 5; The intuition is helpfully discussed by Russell, 2014, pp. 160-163.

societies. Speaking of slavery in the American South and of Nazi Germany, Diane Jeske notes, 'there are those… who resist the evil with which they are confronted, but for the most part, people remain passive as great evil is done by others around them.'[712] She observes that even a number of those critical of the great evil present, such as Thomas Jefferson, actively participated in the same practices they objected to.

It could be thought paradoxical that a significant portion of a population might have evil inclinations if evil has to do with being opposed to the goods which bind a society. Is it really the case that brutal slaveholders were alienated from society while in a society that endorsed their behaviour, since the goods they were opposed to were unrecognised? It is important to note that what we are dealing with in these cases is a large-scale institutional evil, which plausibly does not function in exactly the same way as when an individual is evil in a non-evil society. When an individual evil person is in a society that is itself not evil, the individual is thereby alienated from society in at least the unrecognised way discussed above. It is also worth noting that, in cases such as the American South, slaves were also an important part of the society. As such, the deep division within the society between slaves and slaveholders could plausibly be taken to in part involve the explicit alienation of the slaveholders from at least a significant portion of their society.

The case of institutional evils implicating a whole community is a serious one which warrants far more attention than I can give it here.[713] The only thing I will say is that if a whole community is evil then it is not a political society in the sense that I have been describing. Recall the distinction between a political society and other groups discussed in the previous chapter. Political society is that community which includes all others, directed toward the people living well. If a certain large group, perhaps with its own governing body, is unjustly directed against the good of living well for a class of people, then the group does not instantiate a political society in this sense. Evil people in such groups would still be alienated from the goods grounded in human nature which do in fact bind political societies, but this alienation would not be socially reified. Brutal

[712] Jeske, 2018, p. 15.
[713] Claudia Card has developed an account of institutional evils, see Card, 2010, pp. 62-87.

slaveholders were not ostracised from communities which saw nothing wrong with brutal slaveholding.

We now turn very briefly to Russell's eleventh intuition, that 'evil persons deserve our strongest moral condemnation.'[714] My account affirms this intuition. As discussed in the above treatment of the first intuition, to recognise someone's alienation from society and from the goods which bind society is to condemn them. In this way, evil persons deserve our strongest moral condemnation because they have most alienated themselves from the society and such deliberate opposition to these goods is worthy of our strongest moral condemnation. Of course, though, it should also be noted that there is a distinction between the kind of condemnation due to an evil person who is not an evildoer and one who is both. The private neo-Nazi should be condemned for his beliefs and desires, but not for having done evil things.

The last intuition to be addressed is the fifteenth, that 'it is possible, though very difficult, for an evil person to become a good person.'[715] As discussed in the previous chapter, evil people who commit evil acts suffer from numerous impediments to having a good moral character. The first and most obvious is the direction of the person's will, which can be rectified through repentance. It can be hard to judge the sincerity of the repentance of evildoers. Robert Lee Willie kidnapped a young woman, raped her, and stabbed her seventeen times. Despite reporting sorrow at her death, he repeatedly denied his responsibility for her fate, claiming that he only kidnapped her, raped her, and held her down while someone else stabbed her, and as a result was not truly responsible.[716] By contrast, Elmo Patrick Sonnier seems to have genuinely repented of his crimes. Over the months before his death he reportedly grew in contrition, and accepted responsibility for his crimes. When about to be executed, he addressed his final words to the father of his victim, 'I can understand the way you feel. I have no hatred in my heart, and as I leave this world, I ask God to forgive what… I have done. I ask you to have forgiveness.'[717] David Alan Gore, who had murdered young girls, similarly

[714] Russell, 2014, p. 135. See Garrard, 2002, p. 321; Singer, 2004, p. 190; Kekes, 2005, p. 58.
[715] Russell, 2014, p. 135.
[716] See Feser & Bessette, 2017, pp. 262-3.
[717] Ibid. p. 264.

volunteered to his victim's family 'I want to say to the … family I am sorry for the death of your daughter. I am not the same man I was back then 28 years ago. I hope they can find it in their hearts to forgive me.'[718] Gore reportedly expressed contrition for his crimes repeatedly over the decades he was in prison. Similarly, David Berkowitz's repentance for his murders (the 'Son of Sam' killings) can be seen in the fact that he argued against himself being paroled when he became eligible, even refusing to go to the hearings to cause his parole to be automatically denied.

Feser & Bessette analyse the records of those criminals executed in the United States in 2012, and find what they judge to be persuasive evidence of repentance in eighteen of the forty-three cases, while acknowledging that it is impossible to be certain as to their sincerity. This provides some evidence for thinking that repentance can be possible for evil persons. Since repentance involves the will being restored to right order, some significant degree of moral rehabilitation for evil persons seems plausible. If we take the disorder of the will to be an essential part of evil character, then by repenting an evil person ceases to be evil. Similarly, Daniel Haybron interprets an evil person to one without any morally significant good side, such that were someone to be remorseful it would either follow that they were never evil or that they are no longer evil.[719]

Russell objects that periods of genuine remorse might in fact make an evil person more dangerous. He gives the example of 'genuine episodes of remorse that are felt by a fixedly paedophilic priest… [which] could give us the false impression that he has changed his ways, and thus lead to his being forgiven, trusted, and given more opportunities to commit the extreme wrongs to which he remains disposed.'[720]

Here the difference between remorse and repentance is significant. Feeling sorrow for one's actions is not the same thing as reorienting one's will and actually changing one's ways. It is worth noting that in Russell's example there are two different mistakes at play. There is the mistake of the priest if he is trusting in his experience of remorse to change his ways, and the mistake of whoever it is that gives him more opportunities to

[718] Ibid. p. 270.
[719] Haybron, 2002a, p. 269.
[720] Russell, 2014, p. 194.

abuse. Regarding the first, the priest lacks either realistic self-knowledge about the habitual nature of his abusiveness or the determination of will to do what needs to be done to stop himself from continuing abuse, namely turning himself in. Since willing an end includes willing the necessary means for that end, full repentance would include the determination to do whatever it would take to prevent oneself from falling back into evil. The mistake of the abuse-enabler is helpful to keep in mind regarding how we approach repentance from evil generally. Even if an evil person in prison is genuinely repentant it does not automatically follow that he will not fall back into his patterns of evil behaviour given the opportunity, especially if his evildoing was habitual in nature.

Even repentance, however, does not fully restore someone's moral character. The effects on the evildoer discussed by Stump in the previous chapter, such as the vivid memory of enjoying doing evil acts, are not reversed by repenting. Plausibly, such memories and other psychic effects of perpetrating evil would need to be carried for the remainder of one's life. To the extent that these detrimentally effect one's moral character, the full effects of evil upon one's moral character might not be able to be completely cleansed. Hence, though it is possible, albeit very difficult, for an evil person to cease being an evil person, the effects of their past evil acts might still remain indefinitely.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have surveyed common intuitions about the nature of evil actions and persons, in order to show that the Thomistic account of evil I proposed in the last chapter addresses the kinds of questions a theory of evil ought to be able to address. With the essence of the account now laid out, I turn in my concluding remarks to an examination of the prospective merits of this account, using the test for a theory of evil proposed by Paul Formosa.[721]

[721] Formosa, 2013.

Concluding Thoughts: Assessing a Theory of Evil

A Summary of the Project

In this thesis, I have argued that a Thomist could in fact construct an account of evil in the narrow sense from conceptual resources within Aquinas' work, and have proposed such an account. On my account, an evil action is an act that is gravely opposed to the goods that bind society together and are necessary for living well, where the gravity is determined by how radically the act tends to undermine the capacity of its victims to live well. An evil person is a person who is maliciously, gravely, and dispositionally directed against the common goods of society, where gravity is interpreted by how radically opposed the person's will is to others living well.

In coming to this account, it was first necessary to examine Aquinas' understanding of love and of friendship in chapter 1. Love is the principle of all moral motivation for Aquinas and is understood through the interaction of two principles: willing the good of someone and willing relation-appropriate union with them. Friendship is understood to be formed by loving someone as another self, and necessarily includes harmony of the wills, wherein the friends have love for the same goods which draw them together. This prepared for Aquinas' understanding of virtue in chapter 2 as well as the Thomistic understanding of society as grounded in common goods exposited in chapter 6.

Following this, in chapter 2, I surveyed Aquinas' understanding of virtue as united by charity, the love of God and neighbour, and by prudence, the application of wisdom. Since Aquinas understands evil (taken broadly) as a privation of the good it was necessary to see what a flourishing moral agent looks like for Aquinas before dealing with what dysfunctional moral character looks like, which was done in chapter 3 on moral vice. Since evil persons are a subset of morally dysfunctional persons more broadly, an understanding of moral vice in general is important background for understanding evil character in particular. Of special importance was the treatment of pride, since Aquinas' analysis of how a proud person chooses perceived goods incompatible with higher goods applies to the case of evil in the narrow sense when examining violations of the common goods of society.

In chapter 4 I surveyed Aquinas' metaphysical thought, framed by his understanding of the convertibility of being and goodness, in order to elucidate what he means when writing that evil is a privation of goodness. I showed that, for Aquinas, there is a deep link between what something is and its goodness, and between what it is and the ends that it is directed towards. In this context something falls short of its goodness by acting contrary to the ends it is by nature directed towards, which is developed in relation to evil acts and personhood in particular in chapter 6.

In chapter 5 I looked at Aquinas' understanding of human action, read within the context of his overall metaphysics. I examined the principle known as the Guise of the Good, on which every action is done for the sake of some real or perceived good. After briefly examining Aquinas' general understanding of human action, I turned to the question of how to interpret cooperation with evil. I concluded that the traditional distinction between formal and material cooperation with evil is helpful but needed to be read in the context of Aquinas' broader understanding of action. The understanding of action presented in this chapter was later applied in chapters 6 and 7 to help clarify the distinction between an evil person and an evildoer.

In chapter 6 I examined Aquinas' treatment of capital punishment and brutishness and found that it provided helpful information regarding his understanding of human dignity as it pertains to those who perform evil actions. I concluded that those who perform evil actions without the requisite governance of reason are not properly counted as evil persons. I also examined the way societies are bound together by common goods and how evildoers are alienated from society, before finally treating the nature of malice, which I argued was to be taken as an aspect of evil character. In chapter 7 I applied this account to fifteen common intuitions about evil and argued that my account of evil had something plausible to say about each one of them, and brought my account into conversation with contemporary philosophers of evil.

Theoretical Virtues

It is not my aim to argue that it is a better model than existing theories of evil, though I do wish here to argue for its plausibility as an account. Paul Formosa suggests that, in

addition to the usage of pro-examples and counter-examples of the sort used throughout the thesis so far, it is beneficial to assess theories of evil by way of five different theoretical virtues that a theory of evil ought to have. He summarises these virtues as follows: '1) meshing well with important theories of moral wrongdoing; 2) being based on a plausible moral psychology; 3) explaining the basis of our judgments about evil; 4) being able to alter, revise and expand our judgments about evil; and 5) being pitched at the right level of generality.'[722] In this final section, I will argue that my account of evil does in fact have these virtues, and hence is a plausible theory of evil.

Virtue 1.) 'a theory of evil that is able to mesh well with an important theory or important theories of wrongdoing is preferable (all else being equal) to a theory that cannot.'[723]

Formosa argues that 'since a theory of evil (as opposed to a theory of the good, the right, or virtue) is not the most basic component of our moral theorizing about morality,' it is important that a theory of evil fits well with a broader account of moral theory, especially of moral wrongdoing.[724] My account of evil is explicitly grounded in the more basic components of Aquinas' moral theory, such as his understanding of love and virtue in the first two chapters, and of moral wrongdoing in particular. My account of evil fits well with the broader account of vice discussed in the third chapter, and my analysis of evil action fits well within Aquinas broader understanding of the morality of human acts. Since Aquinas' accounts of love, virtue, and action are not only historically important but have been defended as very plausible,[725] my account of evil fulfils this theoretical virtue.

Virtue 2.) 'being based on a plausible moral psychology'[726]

The second theoretical virtue has the same justification as the first. The philosophy of evil is intimately tied to moral psychology and so would be detrimentally affected if there were no system of moral psychology consistent with its claims. Aquinas has a

[722] Formosa, 2013, p. 235.
[723] Ibid, p. 239.
[724] Ibid.
[725] Stump, 2006; Budziszewski, 2017; Jensen, 2010.
[726] Formosa, 2013, p. 235.

nuanced and thoughtful system of moral psychology which has also been defended independently of the account of evil I am presenting.[727] This moral psychology is intimately bound up with topics discussed in depth throughout the thesis, including the relationship of love to human motivation and the Guise of the Good, which serve as conceptual foundations for my account of evil. As such, the account I propose also has this theoretical virtue.

Virtue 3.) 'a theory of evil that is able to explain in a theoretically cohesive manner why it is that we condemn evil acts in the strongest possible moral language is preferable (all else being equal) to a theory that cannot'[728]

It is uncontroversial that we condemn evil acts in the strongest possible terms. A theory of evil ought to be able to give a theoretically cohesive account of why we condemn such acts as we do. On my account evil acts are flatly contrary to living in a flourishing society. As such, evil acts cannot be tolerated in society and so ought to be condemned in the strongest possible terms. This is a direct implication of my account and so this explanation coheres well with my overall theory. As such, my account also satisfies this theoretical virtue.

Virtue 4.) 'a good theory of evil should, by making sense of the basis of our intuitions, be able to (not merely *match* but also) *modify, expand* and *rearrange* our intuitions.'[729]

Formosa is clear that the intuitions in question are not those intuitions about particular cases, 'but rather… more general intuitions about evil's meaning and implications.'[730] My account has the capacity to make sense of and modify these kinds of intuitions in illuminating ways. For instance, evil acts are often in folk contexts described in ways that deliberately neglects the humanity of the evildoer, for instance describing them as *inhumane, monstrous*, and *like an animal*. It is not a coincidence that fictional examples of evil are often half-human but not fully, such as with vampires, werewolves, and zombies. My account makes of these kinds of descriptions and the nature of these

[727] Much of the moral psychology undergirding this work comes from Stump, 2010. See also Jensen, 2018 and Snell, 2014;
[728] Formosa, 2013, p. 239.
[729] Ibid.
[730] Ibid, p. 240.

fictional examples. Evil people fall short of the full meaning of their humanity by acting contrary to the characteristic goods of human nature. This is grounded within Thomistic metaphysics. Hence it makes sense that we could be tempted to describe them in ways that conveys this falling short of the form of humanity. However, the metaphysical distinction between the proper accidental forms of a thing and its substantial form also provides a basis for recognising that evil people, though in a real sense monstrous, are still humans and hence cannot be treated as mere animals. This is why Aquinas, as we saw in chapter 6, holds that capital punishment could only be justified by reference to safeguarding the people in society in something like a corporate self-defence model and cannot be killed as wild animals. Even should we be inclined to disagree with Aquinas regarding capital punishment, his metaphysics both explains the general intuitions people can have regarding the inhumanity of evildoers and also provides a basis for respecting their human dignity, which might otherwise be cast aside by the intuition. This example shows that my account of evil can both explain and importantly modify our general intuitions about evil. Hence the account seems to have this theoretical virtue as well.

Virtue 5.) 'being pitched at the right level of generality'[731]

Formosa notes that this virtue has both a corresponding vice of deficiency and a vice of excess. If a theory of evil is too general, then it will not take us far beyond acknowledging that there is a concept of evil. If a theory is 'overly specific and too fine-grained'[732] then it will tend to be ad hoc and depend upon controversial assumptions. Where the right level of generality is can be difficult to judge, but my account seems to be at about the right level. It clearly goes further than merely stating that there is concept of evil. It provides an account how the concept can be grounded metaphysically by way of being disposed and acting contrary to the characteristic moral ends of human beings, and it explains the characteristic alienation that results from evil action. At the same time, it is not too specific. I do not give an exact system of which goods bind society but give the general principle that they are the basic common goods required for living

[731] Formosa, 2013, p. 235.
[732] Ibid, p. 240.

well, leaving room for debate as to the exact number and relation of the specific goods. Giving a more specified system would inevitably make controversial assumptions which could only be defended in a full-length work of political philosophy. Hence it appears that my account has the right level of generality and so has the fifth theoretical virtue as well.

In conclusion then, it appears as though a Thomistic framework can support a theory of moral evil in the narrow sense, and that the account I have provided is a plausible one, exhibiting the theoretical virtues desired for a successful theory of evil. The project also indicates two promising areas for further Thomistic work in this area. First is an elaboration of precisely what goods unite a society and how they relate to one another, which would allow for further analysis of the nature of the alienation caused by evildoing. Second is an analysis of institutional evil, including an analysis of what it means for a community to be evil and of how both evil and non-evil persons relate to an evil community.

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