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SAIN T THOMAS AQUINAS

ON

HABIT

by

Francis Austin Brown

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts in the  
Department of Philosophy of the University of Western Ontario  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Master of Arts

Assumption College  
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O N

H A B I T

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## INTRODUCTION

The question of habit is a very important one and has many applications in our daily lives, particularly in the field of education and teaching. In our age, when so many and such varied systems of education are being discussed and utilized, and the results achieved are so meagre, those responsible for education should conscientiously be seeking the cause of the weakness or weaknesses in their educational program. If any advantage is to accrue from mass education as it is available today, it is necessary that that education be solid, its system built upon a sound philosophical foundation. Now unless the essence of man and the true purpose of life are correctly understood and constantly borne in mind by those who regulate the education of youth, it will be impossible that the instruction imparted to those being educated will in any permanent way be to their advantage. The purpose of this paper is to set down some of the more basic notions regarding habit and to apply them to the question of education. With this in mind there will first be dealt with the nature of man, secondly, the meaning of "habit" and lastly, intellectual and moral habits as the basis of education.

## CHAPTER I

### THE NATURE OF MAN

Just as a painter, before undertaking to practise his art, must have a working knowledge of the materials with which he paints, or a sculptor, before he begins to mold a figure, must study the material at hand in order to determine the best end to which it can be put, so the educator must know the material with which he is to work in the process of educating. Not only must he understand the nature of the material which he sets out to mold, but like the painter and the sculptor, he must have in mind the finished product of his endeavours. Unless he keeps in mind these two basic notions, it is quite probable that the results of his work will be nothing short of catastrophic, and the monstrosity produced will be comparable to that resulting from the work of the sculptor who simply begins to manipulate the clay without a definite picture in his mind of what he is going to mold.

In the first place, then, we must ask - what is the nature of man? What is there about this creature that makes it possible to educate him? To the human eye there appears a material form many parts of which can be trained to perform various functions.

Thus he can be taught to move his limbs in such a way as to run, jump, dance, to move his arm in such a way as to throw a ball, to write and such like actions. But obviously education does not consist entirely in training man's body to perform all the actions of which it is capable. As well as a body man possesses a soul, a mind, which is capable of being trained to produce effects, and which raises man above the order of all other material creation. The mind of man is the principal element of the subject with which the educator is concerned, and which he must endeavour to understand in order to produce the best results.

According to St. Thomas, there is in all being a certain stability, that is, each thing is what it is and not something else, - a thing cannot be and not be at the same time under the same aspect. But man's senses also make him aware of the fact that there is definite change and motion in the universe. So he finds himself confronted with what appear to be two distinct notions or totally opposite principles. However the Thomist does not sacrifice one in favor of the other, as does the Pragmatist or Idealist. On the other hand he realizes that both principles seem to be natural complements of each other - and that reality with one of them is meaningless. Therefore he posits his metaphysical bases in the following schema. Underlying all reality there are two fundamental principles, act and potency. Act simply means that a thing must first be, before it can change or become something else. In other



words, before a thing can change it must first exist or be in act as some definite thing. Potency follows upon act, and means the possibility of changing or becoming something other than what a thing is. Thus once a thing actually exists or is in act, there must be a possibility of change before it can change or become something other than it is. So potency means only the possibility of changing, and it is found only in something already in act. For the Thomist all change consists merely in the realizing or actualizing of potencies which are to be found in a thing. Everything then is first in act, - it has an essence - it is itself and not another thing, or considered from the point of view of existence, it is a substance - it exists as some definite thing. But the thing not only has existence, it also has possibilities of undergoing various changes, - changes, however, which are accidental - they do not change the nature or being of the thing which remains the same throughout all change. Thus potencies are spoken of as accidents, since they are accidental to the fundamental nature of the thing. To sum up: the Thomist defines change as the actualization of a potency, that is, the realization of the possibility of change, or simply the modification or development of a substance through its accidents. The unity of the universe and of all reality is made possible by the essence or stable definite nature possessed by everything, while diversity and change are accounted for by reason of the potencies, the indeterminations

waiting to be determined, the accidents possessed by each thing. The changes and developments of a thing do not change the nature of the thing, but merely qualify it in an accidental way.

Now let us examine briefly the Thomistic conception of man.<sup>1</sup> Man, like the rest of reality, has two underlying principles. First, he actually exists, he is in act, - he exists as a man. He has a definite unchangeable essence or nature - that which makes him to be a man and not something else. Secondly, he has the potency or possibility of doing many things, of growing, of changing, and such like, - potencies which are accidental to his essence or nature. These potencies, which in themselves are purely indeterminate, and considered alone are nothing, are called matter, while the act, or that which determines the potency to be something, the matter to be a man and nothing else, is called the form, that is, the determining principle. These two principles, which can be considered under various aspects such as act and potency, essence and change, substance and accidents, matter and form, exist naturally in conjunction with each other, so that together they make up the whole man. The form "man" always remains the same, the nature never changes, but the matter is in potency to many changes; thus, for example, a child grows ultimately into a man, but the nature or essence of man has always been there, the matter alone has changed, the form has remained.

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<sup>1</sup>. Summa Theologica - Prima Pars - Qu.75

The following passage from Thomas F. Woodlock states quite precisely the Thomistic teaching regarding the nature of man:

"Man is an animal and has much in common with other animals, high and low. He shares with them life, feeling, imagination, memory, instinct, appetite and passion. His body in many respects resembles the bodies of other animals. But he is different from all others in two fundamental respects. First, he has intellect, which they have not. His intellect is reflective; he can turn it upon himself and become at the same time subject and object. He can reason, that is, he can pass by logic from one idea to another. He can form concepts, as distinguished from images. Second, and most important of all, man has free will. He alone among living things is not bound by his impulses. He can, as no other animal can, reject their demands and choose to act against them. He alone in the visible universe has the power to frustrate his own nature. Peter Wust has a very interesting study of the 'insecuritas humana' - 'the insecurity of man' - as contrasted with the 'security' of the animal. Man is compelled by every step to 'make decisions' and 'take the risks', while for the animal, its instincts decide and its instincts are all directed to its safety.

Man is a hybrid of two worlds, the world of matter and the world of spirit; he has body and soul. But body and soul are a single entity, a single substance, as the metaphysicians call it. The soul is the form and the body the matter that together constitute the human person. Fifteen hundred years ago or so Boethius defined the human person as 'a reasoning animal' - and that definition has not since been bettered."<sup>1</sup>

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1. "The Catholic Pattern" - Thomas F. Woodlock; New York, Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1942.

## C H A P T E R   I I

### M E A N I N G   O F   H A B I T

We see then that man is composed of two elements, body and soul, matter and form, and in this unison there is the possibility of change. Such change may take place in both of these elements. The matter which goes to make up the body can and does undergo many changes in the course of a man's life. The soul, regarded as the seat of the intellect and will, is also in potency to many different things, and so may undergo various changes. These changes can be directed and brought to a desired effect by the careful development of what are known as habits. The true role of a Christian educator, in the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas, is to help to develop proper habits in the mind of the one being educated.

Habit may be defined as a quality of body or mind, which develops the powers of the body and mind, whether those powers be vegetative, sensual, volitive or intellectual.<sup>1.</sup>

Habit is something distinctively human. God's infinite perfection precludes habits; the animal cannot have habits because its growth in perfection is completely arranged and totally limited

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Summa Theologica - Prima Secundae - Qu 49. - Art. I.

by the principles of its nature. But man cannot get along without habits and his human powers are perfected only insofar as he has developed habits. Animal nature may be regarded as a cup that has been filled to the brim and can hold no more; human nature is a vessel that expands, its capacity increasing with the amount poured into it; while God, being infinite in his divine nature, can have nothing more added. These additions, changes, capabilities by which human nature along changes are habits. Habits are necessary in man because of the imperfect, created character of human nature, which has not as yet all the perfection it can have; there is still something that can be added to it. Habits are possible because of the indetermined, indefinite possibilities of human nature. Three conditions are necessary for the existence of a habit; first, that the subject have a potentiality still possible of realization, - this makes habit impossible with God; second, that this potentiality be not to one determined object, as the ear to hearing; third, that this potentiality be capable of being realized in different ways, not just in one determined way.<sup>1</sup> The last two conditions make it impossible to have habits in animals. Determination, then is an essential notion of habit. The human mind and will are capable of universal truth and universal goodness; but in order that they get to work on particular kinds of truth and goodness, it is necessary that they be determined. Now our acts are

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Summa Theologica - Prima Secundae - Qu 49 - Art. III.

definitely determined, aimed at definite objects; so our mind or our will, of its very nature indifferent to particular things and forced to action only by the universal, chooses this action rather than that because of a determination in the faculties brought about by reason of habit. The function of habit is to change a man, to give a definite channel along which his limitless powers will flow. It is a determination, a qualification of a man disposing him well or badly either as to his nature itself or as to the operations for which that nature exists. Habit has quite frankly to do with the end of nature, and human things are good or bad morally according as they lead man to his end or lead him away from it. So habits are clearly moral, - they are morally good or morally bad. They either help a man to his end or they lead him away from it; they contribute to the perfection of his nature and of his operation or they detract from his nature and hinder his operation.

Habit is not to be compared with a mere transitory disposition. By its very nature habit is permanent, or at least difficult to uproot. Habits are really capabilities that have been developed by hard, repeated effort, consciously, deliberately, until these capabilities are deeply imbedded in nature. They become, as it were, second nature to us and like the operations of nature itself, the habits at work give us that joy that comes with

easy, masterful action. At the beginning of habit, conscious effort and attention and forceful will are necessary; as the habit becomes more deeply rooted, less and less of this effort and will are needed; but habit always remains subject to our command, the obedient servant of the true master of human life.

Some habits are directly ordained to operation, while others are directly ordained to nature itself and only indirectly to operation. The latter are called entitative habits, as opposed to operative habits, and are to be found in the body of man, that is, they dispose the body of man more perfectly in accordance with his soul, his form. But the operative habits are located in the soul of man, for the soul is the source of all human activity. It is then in the spiritual side of man that we must chiefly look for habits in their full operation. But the operative habits of the soul belong in the faculties by which the soul operates, the intellect and will, which are the spiritual principles of action. In these habits are not only possible, but are direly needed. The intellect does not run along a predetermined track, nor does it begin with a supply of ideas. It is, as it were, a blank page capable of receiving every truth; it can seek truth for the sake of truth itself, or with a view to action; it can judge by first principles, or from immediate things of the world. Determination is a sine qua non

condition of action; such determinations are habits and are known as intellectual virtues. The same is true of the will. It is capable of all good, real or apparent; it can move towards its proper end or away from it; it can be good or bad. Its movements need to be directed by certain determinations, for upon the will depends the goodness of man's actions, or the absence of goodness in them. Determinations in the will are habits, and are known as the moral virtues and vices.

We see, then, that habits are very necessary; they must be developed, particularly in the intellect and in the will. We might ask now "How do we go about developing them?" and "What has nature done for us beforehand in the matter of developing habits?" In answer to this second query, St. Thomas points out that habits have their roots in nature, but only their roots.<sup>1.</sup> The rest of their growth demands some explanation that must be sought apart from nature. As for the intellectual habits, more may be traced to nature than in the case of the moral habits. There is one habit, common to all men, which has substantial beginnings in nature, the habit by which we understand first principles. So every human, once he has had experience with a part and a whole realizes that the whole is greater than the part. Indirectly also nature provides the foundation of intellectual

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Summa Theologica - Prima Secundae - Qu 51 - Art. I



habits in the perfection of the senses. Sense organs are needed in the work of understanding, and keen, alert and true sense organs are a good help towards intellectual habits. As for the habits of the will, nature gives a start to them, by planting seeds, so to speak. Our natural inclinations, natural tendencies, are the slight motive power which start us out on our journey of determinations. So nature provides the roots for both the intellectual and the moral virtues or habits. But earnest effort on the part of the individual himself is the basic <sup>cause</sup>~~course~~ of habits. Our own personal acts are the only way to acquire natural habits. We might say that a habit is a well developed groove down which our activities slip to their proper objects. Our repeated acts wear that groove deeper and deeper, and the more the acts are repeated the smoother becomes the groove. It is true that on the intellectual side, a truth may be so clearly presented that the intellect grasps it by just the one act. The habit has been formed by a single act. But outside the intellectual order, time and effort are needed to build up the solid structure of habit. The reason cannot dominate the will or the sense appetite as truth dominates the intellect. The will and the sense appetite can reach out to many objects that appear desirable, and it is evident from our daily experience that a habit in the will cannot be established by a solitary act, as

may be true in the case of the intellect.

It might be remarked here that many modern philosophers have been occupied with a one-sided view of man, the animal side. These materialists, when considering the question of habits, see a purely physical, at most an animal, phenomenon. To some of them, habit is merely a chain of mechanical reflexes (Behaviourism); to others, besides stimulus and response, there must be a consideration of the history and present dispositions of the organism, but only of the physical history and disposition; others again, insist it is merely a case of imprinting or erasing physical associations (Thorndike). But to all of them it appears that habit is to be found only in the animal powers, as man is nothing more than an animal. It is possible that something of this attitude has found its way into the thought of those who profess a belief in man's spiritual soul; as though, since there is no co-ordination of parts in the operations of the intellect and will, there is really no place for the kind of habit we have been describing, that is, the habit which is really an accidental form determining and perfecting the faculty as the substantial form determines and perfects the body. Such men prefer to call habits mere associations, even if spiritual associations; some, indeed, do away with habits altogether as far as the will is concerned, explaining the differentiation of the will's acts according to the power of the motive held before

it. But no compromise in the matter is possible. The very indeterminate nature of the will and intellect demands the determination offered by the accidental form of habit.

Just as habit is established by the performance of an act, so it is increased by the repeated performance of the act. While the act proceeds from the habit, at the same time it has the ability to increase the habit. Obviously to do this the act must be more intense, more earnest than the habit itself. If it is to give anything to the habit, it must have something to give beyond the perfection of the habit at the time. The act cannot just run along the groove - it must cut the groove deeper; if it is itself imperfect, it is impossible that it should confer perfection on its habit. Habits may be destroyed by the acquisition of contrary habits, or even by the disuse of the habit. Particularly is this true of the moral habits, or habits of the will. These regulate external acts and the passions; and since these do not stop, if they are not being regulated they are proceeding without regulation. In other words, if a man is not producing good acts, he is producing bad acts; when he is not using his good habits, he is building up bad habits as well as neglecting his good habits, for no human action is morally indifferent. In the field of intellectual habits, disuse very much weakens and sometimes entirely destroys a habit. It is true that those intellectual habits which nature

has bestowed from the very beginning, the habits of first principles, both speculative and practical, cannot be effected by any corrupting influence. But other acquired intellectual habits need the constant use of their acts if they are to avoid a weakening or even a complete destruction.

## CHAPTER III

### INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL VIRTUES

The intellectual and moral habits of which we have been speaking, when good, are known to the Thomist as intellectual virtues and moral virtues. The word "virtue" is one which has been grossly misunderstood by some moderns. To them virtue has a twofold meaning, repression and ignorance. The term virtuous is associated with a simple, eccentric person or with nuns and cloistered individuals, cut off from the rest of humanity. Nothing, of course, could be farther from the truth, and such views result only from ignorance, ignorance both of virtue and of humanity. It is impossible to understand virtue if we have a complete misunderstanding of man. So to picture man as nothing more than a machine or an animal, makes it impossible to have virtue at all. But we have seen that man is spirit as well as animal, that he has a soul as well as a body. In view of this, virtue then appears as something by no means extraordinary or mysterious, for it is merely another name for a certain kind of habit, that is, a good habit ordained to facilitating operation. The actions of inanimate creation as well as of

animal creation are strictly determined by nature from the very beginning, but the actions of man must be qualified, determined by the habits which a man develops. These habits which become practically a second nature to man, and make it possible for him to act easily and with pleasure are known as operative habits, perfections of his faculties which determine the path his activities will take. If such habits direct his activities towards his proper goal they are good habits or virtues; if they direct his actions away from that goal they are bad habits or vices. Identifying virtue with good habit immediately destroys the modern view of virtue as a repression, for habit is a principle of action, and thus virtue by its very nature is a principle of activity. Moral virtue can be defined as a good habit by which a person lives rightly, and which may not be put to a bad use. If it is a human virtue, it is the result of a man's actions; if it is a supernatural or infused virtue, it is the result of God's kindness.

Virtues are also known according to the faculty of man in which they reside. Some are found in the intellect, others in the will of man, those two great principles of human activity.<sup>1.</sup> Those in the intellect are known as intellectual virtues, while those in the will are designated as moral virtues.

St. Thomas shows that the intellect of man is perfectible by acquired habits, in such a manner that it is rendered capable of

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Summa Theologica - Prima Secundae - Qu.56

performing its operations well, irrespective of whether these operations are morally good or not. Such a habit of the intellect is not a virtue in the strict, ethical sense;<sup>1.</sup> though, since virtue in a broad acceptance of the term means a fully developed power, it is possible to speak of purely intellectual virtues. Such a use designates the primary perfection of an intellectual potency. An additional perfection is possible for the human intellect. It may be directed by acquired habits to the performance of morally good operations. This second perfective habit involves the notion of final perfection; it disposes a man, not only so that he can use his intellect or will well, if he so desires, but also so that he will use his potencies in a morally good manner. When a man's intellect, for instance, is perfected primarily by habits, he may be a good grammarian, or a good carpenter, etc; good is thus predicated of him relatively, *secundum quid*. When, on the other hand, a man's intellect and will are perfected finally (i.e. morally) by habits, he is called simply a good man; in this case he is good without restriction (*simpliciter*).

Now it is possible that the intellectual virtues be possessed by any individual to a high degree, and at the same time that the moral virtues be utterly lacking. Thus it is possible to find highly educated criminals, in fact their very education tends

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*Summa Theologica* - Prima Secundae - Qu. 56 - Art. III

to make them more dangerous, more thorough and often more vicious criminals. The intellectual virtues make a man good in this or that line, but do not make him a good man; they are imperfect or incomplete virtues. This is so because some virtues give a man the ability to produce a good act, but do not assure him of always using that faculty well. On the other hand a man with the habit of justice not only has the faculty of acting justly, but actually does here and now act according to justice. It is only with difficulty and by deliberately pulling himself out of the habit of justice that he can act unjustly. So these latter habits, the moral virtues, make a man good not only in this or that line, but simply good. The moral virtues reside in the appetite of man, which is the centre and source of all movement, whose proper object is the final goal of man, and it is by reference to this goal that man's actions are called good or bad. Of the intellect it may be said that it is false or true, but only of the will can it be said that it is good or bad. These complete or perfect virtues, which make the entire man, and not merely his faculties, good, reside in the will, and are found in other faculties only insofar as those faculties are moved by the will. The moral virtues of fortitude and temperance are found in the sensitive appetite, conforming man's passions to reason; but they are virtues only insofar as the sensitive powers of man can participate in his spiritual powers.



They are merely the habitual conformity of the sense ~~of~~ appetites to reason.

The will itself needs to be directly determined by habit. To move to its own proper good presented to it by the intellect, no help from habits is needed, but to reach out to a good beyond its own field, for instance, the good of a neighbour or the divine good, it needs the habits known as charity, justice, and the virtues associated with justice. Now the pursuit of merely selfish goals does not perfect man but destroys him, for it cuts him off from all social life, human and divine, and makes it impossible for man to attain the goal of all human living.

The intellectual and moral virtues, then, are the good habits in man, perfecting the sole principles from which human actions flow. Justice, temperance and fortitude, the moral virtues, are those that perfect the will of man, and make him good. Among the intellectual virtues, there are some that perfect the intellect without any view to something to be done or to be made.<sup>1.</sup> These are known as speculative virtues, and are familiarly titled understanding, science and wisdom. Some modern educators deny or neglect the first and last of these three, and concentrate only on the second one. But they are not three inseparable, unconnected habits, but rather steps up in perfection; science presupposes and absolutely demands understanding, while both of these are included in

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Summa Theologica - Prima Secundae - Qu.57 - Art.II

wisdom. To understand these virtues we need only consider the way the human mind works. At the beginning it gathers first principles; from these it proceeds to determined conclusions in this or that line; and finally it goes back to the roots of things, to final causes. The habit of first principles is understanding; as the habit of the first principles of thought it contains the seeds of all sciences, and as the habit of the first principles of action it contains the seeds of all morality and of all the moral virtues. The virtue of science, being an intellectual virtue, is concerned with truth, as are all the intellectual virtues. Its particular truths are those which are known through demonstration. Thus it always operates along particular lines, and we have the science of mathematics, of chemistry, of physics, etc. Another name often given to the virtue of science is knowledge, that which many modern educators more or less hold out as the final aim of education. But knowledge itself may be a chaotic conglomeration of memorized facts, fitting a man to operate a machine in an industrial plant or to occupy a professor's chair in a modern university; something more is needed to fit a man for proper living. And that something more is order, the fitting in to their proper places of the facts of the sciences that are known. This order is provided by the virtue of wisdom. Wisdom is not satisfied with the immediate truth, but seeks out the last truth; it is not content with a principle from some other science, but goes back to the very first and very last principle.

It sees the relation of one truth to another, one science to another, and the relation of all truths and all sciences to the last and final goal. Giving wisdom its ordinary names, if it is divine wisdom it is known as theology, if human wisdom, first philosophy or metaphysics. In both cases it is the supreme speculative virtue needed for any human life, and should be the prime object of education, but actually is one intellectual virtue utterly ignored by much modern education.

In the field of practical intellectual virtues we find the virtues of prudence and art.<sup>1</sup> The former deals with the direction of human action, the latter with the perfection of the craftsman. Here again many moderns have completely blundered in stressing the less important of these two practical virtues, art. Even in their treatment of it they have been guilty of injustice, in that they so often neglect the true virtue in order to acquire precise speed to keep pace with the tools of mass production. Art is an incomplete, an imperfect virtue, having no relation to the appetite of man. But prudence is a complete or perfect virtue, making the whole man good. It is really partly an intellectual, partly a moral virtue. It resides in the intellect, but deals with human acts, distinctly moral material, such as the acts of seeing, hearing, willing etc. Thus it has a close relation with

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Summa Theologica - Prima Secundae - Qu. 57 - Art. IV

the appetite of man. In the speculative order, the truth of a conclusion depends upon the truth of the principle from which the conclusion proceeds. But in the practical order, the principles are the ends of the actions, the purpose for which the actions are performed. Prudence presupposes right ends for human actions, and for this reason is of vital importance in the formation of man's character. In losing sight of this virtue modern educators have practically rendered it impossible for men to benefit from their education.

We have been dealing here with five intellectual virtues, - understanding, science, wisdom, prudence and art. But these are not sufficient for full, successful human life. In addition the appetite of man needs good habits which will direct its activities along the lines demanded by reason. For this the moral virtues are needed, virtues which are as distinct from the intellectual virtues as the intellect is from the appetite.<sup>1</sup> And yet, while distinct, they are related in some ways to the intellectual virtues. Without understanding and prudence, it would be impossible to have any moral virtues. The moral virtues, as we have seen, direct the activities of man's appetite, making those activities conform to reason; Thus, they are elective habits, constantly making choices aimed at the goal of life. By their very nature they demand a

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Summa Theologica - Prima Secundae - Qu. 58 Art. II

striving towards the right end and the counsel, judgment and command needed to select suitable means to the end in view. Counsel, judgment and command are the work of prudence. So it is impossible to produce right moral action without prudence; and the latter, considered as an intellectual virtue proceeding from first principles, cannot exist without the virtue of understanding. On the other hand, prudence is the only intellectual virtue which cannot exist without the moral virtues. Understanding, science, art and wisdom may be had by a man who is thoroughly bad; but not so prudence. This dependence of prudence on the moral virtues is due to the fact that prudence is concerned with concrete human acts. It cannot be satisfied with general principles and conclusions, but must have an intimate grasp of the particular principles affecting this particular act. Thus it demands rightness of intention here and now, demands striving towards ~~the~~ particular ends that are good here and now. This striving for good ends in the concrete is the work of the moral virtues. Thus there can be no moral virtues without prudence, and no prudence without moral virtues.

Some modern educators, with their materialistic view of man, speak of the necessity of the integration of personality. They seem to realize that to be properly educated man must have a proper balance in the parts that go to constitute the man. So they aim at the development of man's sensual and bodily faculties. What

they fail to realize is that over and above the co-ordination of these inferior parts of man to his reason, which directs all human activity, there is a further co-ordination and subordination necessary for the complete perfection of human development - a subordination and co-ordination to the supreme director of all activity, God Himself. It is no wonder that such modern materialistic educators are bewildered by the product that results from his efforts. He begins and finishes his task without an idea of what it is he is trying to produce. On the other hand, the Christian educator is aware that man once possessed that perfect subordination of sense life to reason, and reason to God, and lost it. He knows too that it is possible to regain that balance, and how to regain it. He knows that it is regained and maintained by means of habit or virtue and grace. In the man whose life is properly regulated, passion is always subordinate to reason, and it is the moral virtues which direct passion along the path of right reason. There is not a conflict between passion and the moral virtues in man, but rather perfect harmony.<sup>1.</sup> Passion starts from the sense appetite, and if it is to be human passion, its goal is reason, measuring up to the rule laid down by reason, keeping to the road mapped out by reason. But moral virtue starts from reason, with a knowledge of the proper path to

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Summa Theologica - Prima Secundae - Qu. 59.

be followed. Its goal is the sense appetite which it is to guide along the road of reason. So passion and moral virtue go hand in hand. But passion is not the material of all the moral virtues. The sensitive appetite in its entirety is controlled by moral virtues, which direct that appetite to the common good of the complete individual, which good is the good of reason, according to the rules of reason, proceeding to the ends of reason. Thus everything and anything that can be governed, ordained to the good of reason, is the proper subject of the moral virtues.

In practise, man's external actions, as well as his passions, must conform to reason, if man is to have an integrated personality. In other words, reason must guide not only the sensitive appetite of man, but also the intellectual appetite or will, since this is the principle of all man's activity. Thus moral virtues are as necessary in the intellectual appetite, where they regulate the actions of man, as in the sensitive appetite, where they regulate his passions. Thus we might say that man needs virtues of passion and virtues of action, personal virtues and social virtues which deal respectively with the passions and the actions of man, the personal virtues aiming to confirm man's inner life to the rule of reason, while the social virtues regulate man's relations with others to the rule of reason. The basis for this distinction is simply that there are some acts whose goodness or

malice must be judged in reference to the individual performing them, according as they affect this or that man differently, or even the same man differently at different times, while other acts are good or bad for all individuals at all times, independently of how the individual may feel about them. Clearly then the social virtues have one common note, a note of justice, of what is due to another. This note is particularly important because of its insistence on the fundamental truth that the bond of social life is mutual communication, the external relations of man to man, for only by these externals can men communicate with one another in this life. The personal virtues, which regulate the passions of man, may be divided into the virtues of concupiscible appetite, and those of the irascible appetite. This division, of course, is merely a general one, and does not by any means give a clear cut idea of all subsidiary virtues. Just as the note of justice in the social virtues does not mean that when justice is present all the equipment for a successful social life is present, so when we say that the personal virtues may be divided into concupiscible and irascible do we intend to outline clearly the entire field of virtues. However the entire array of virtues may be reduced to just four: prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance.<sup>1.</sup> They are the principal or

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Summa Theologica - Prima Secundae - Qu. 61 Art. II



cardinal virtues, the root virtues to which all others may be reduced. These are the virtues which are absolutely necessary if there is to be integration of human personality in the product of education. Remembering that the goodness of man consists in conforming himself to the rule of reason, it is evident that order can exist in reason itself (prudence); or it is imposed on actions (justice); or it is imposed on the passions, either insofar as they move a man to something contrary to reason (temperance) or tend to draw him away from that which is according to reason (fortitude). Looking at the seat of these virtues, we find prudence in the reason, justice in the will, temperance in the concupiscible appetite, and fortitude in the irascible appetite. Thus through these four virtues we have the basic perfection of all possible sources of human acts.

If the modern educator mentioned above, had this proper view in mind when he speaks of the integration of personality, then we might expect worthwhile results. But nothing can be hoped for until he realizes that personality is not mere existence, life or feeling; it is the peculiar characteristic of a living, feeling, intellectually knowing substance that is responsible for its acts. The perfection of that personality, then, will be the perfection of the mastery of life, the command of action. In other words the integration of personality means bringing the entire man under the rule of reason, extending those controlled

acts that alone are human to every department of man's activities. The human personality is integrated when the will and the sensible appetites and their passions are controlled and directed by reason. More simply, personality is integrated according as the individual grows in virtue, for the whole purpose of virtues is to extend the sway of reason to the sensible appetites and to all human acts. This is the end of education, and only when the educator sets about to accomplish it, will there result the integration of personality of which he speaks.

Man is moved to activity, as we have seen, by his reason. But there is also another mover, outside of man, namely, man's Creator, God Himself. Just as some habits dispose man to act quickly and easily in response to the movement given him by reason, so there are other habits that dispose him to respond easily to the movement that comes from God. These latter habits are known as the gifts of the Holy Ghost.<sup>1</sup> It has been shown that virtues are necessary for easy and perfect action resulting from movement by the reason. For like actions proceeding from the movement by God, the gifts of the Holy Ghost are just as necessary. So necessary are they, in fact, that without them it is impossible for man to win eternal reward. We need no particular

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Summa Theologica - Prima Secundae - Qu. 68.

help in those things that belong to our nature. But the whole supernatural life, supernatural action and supernatural goal are not a part of our nature. That supernatural life is made possible by the supernatural virtues, but there is need of even something more to carry out the swift divine instinct which makes supernatural action an actuality. That something more is given us in the gifts of the Holy Ghost. These gifts may be compared in some ways with the moral virtues. We saw that these virtues dispose the appetites of man, rational and sensitive, to ready obedience to reason; the gifts dispose the whole man to easy and ready obedience to the Holy Ghost. The gifts, then, are habits, as are the moral virtues;<sup>1</sup> like the virtues, too, they are principles of action; they are to be found along with the other habits, in the reason and in the appetites of man. In reason can be found the gifts of understanding, knowledge, wisdom and counsel; in the appetites are the gifts of piety, fortitude and fear. Like other habits they are permanent qualities, being removed from us only with the loss of charity through mortal sin. Unlike other habits, however, the gifts produce their acts in a divine, not a human, way. And yet these acts are ours, although produced in a way far superior to our mode of acting. The gifts prepare us for action, but it is our reason that actually

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Summa Theologica - Prima Secundae, Qu. 68 Art. III

acts, that produces the judgment, counsel, etc. In education, then, it is necessary to seek to set up in the child habits that dispose him to prompt and easy response to the movements by God, as well as to those of reason. In other words, unless the gifts of the Holy Ghost are acquired as well as the intellectual and moral virtues, it is not possible that education should bestow on the child the benefits which are his due.

## CHAPTER IV

### BAD HABITS

So far in this treatise we have been dealing only with the good habits of man, the virtues and gifts. It does not seem out of place to say something also of possible bad habits, the vices.<sup>1</sup> For though every habit is a perfection of a potency, it does not follow that every habit is morally good. Moral perfection is final perfection. It is based on the relation of a being to its ultimate end or purpose. Metaphysical, or fundamental perfection simply denotes an increase in actuality. It is possible for a being to be possessed of a potency which is at once metaphysically perfect, and morally imperfect. A faculty may be possessed of a primary perfection with regard to morally good, or morally bad acts. Thus, one can speak of a perfect thief, meaning a person who has specially developed his abilities so that he may steal with dexterity, facility and even with pleasure. In every one of us there are unsuspected possibilities of vice as well as of virtue.

St. Augustine defined sin as "a thought, word or deed against the Eternal Law". Thoughts, words and deeds are the

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1. Summa Theologica - Prima Secundae, Qu. 71.

material elements of sin, and their opposition to the Eternal Law is the formal element of sin. Such thoughts, words and deeds proceed from bad habits or go into the formation of bad habits. They are human acts, acts for which we are responsible, and which proceed under our control and to an end which we have freely chosen. Acts that result from virtues are in accord with the rule of reason and tend towards the end of reason, whereas acts that result from vices, while they are deliberate, lead us away from the end of reason and therefore are in opposition to the rule of reason. The gravity of sin depends upon the degree to which the object of the particular sin is opposed to the ends of reason. Thus a sin which is totally opposed to and destroys the end of reason is mortal sin, while one which is not so opposed as to destroy utterly that end is venial sin.

Those moderns who admit the existence of sin have frequently erred in looking for it in the nerves, muscles, health or ill-health of a man, or in his home life or surroundings. They have failed to find it because they have failed to recognize the humanity of man and his control over his actions. Sin is a human action proceeding from a human habit, and like good habits, those habits which produce sin are to be found in the principles of human action, the intellect and particularly the will, which is the prime mover of man. Sin is found in the intellect, and the sense ~~and~~ appetites only insofar as these faculties are subject to the

deliberate will of man. These moderns do not know sin because they do not know man. It is impossible to realize the indignities of which man is capable, unless we have some notion of the dignity of man; and when we do away with the spiritual element of man and consider him a mere animal we cannot have a proper notion of his dignity. It follows then that neither can we grasp the possibility of sin that is to be found in man.

We have said that sin is a distinctly human action. If we are to find the causes of sin, then, we need merely look at the causes of human action. Here we find that the remote principles, the senses, imagination and sense appetites, present an apparent good to be realized from this particular action, and an inclination to that apparent good. The intellect then fails to provide proper and due regulation, for from it should come that prudence which rightly directs every human action. But so far there is no sin. It is only when the will, the first principle of movement in man, moves man to the positive act involved in sin that the sin is present. The real cause of sin, then, is to be found within man himself. From experience it is known that one sin leads to another, that quite frequently when a man begins to fall into sin, he falls rapidly until he reaches the lowest depths of sin. But it is not true that one sin causes another. Rather is it true that one sin makes it easier for another to follow, for each one cuts a groove of action down which the next like action can follow more easily. Just as the acts resulting from good habits facilitate subsequent

actions from the same virtue, so each act flowing from a bad habit makes it easier to repeat like actions. But still one sin does not cause another sin. The will alone is the sufficient cause of sin, for it alone is the direct positive cause in the human act of sinning. Ignorance in the intellect, and passion in the sense appetites may lessen the gravity of sin, but when the will plays no part in the act it is not a human act and there can be no sin at all.

In our day there are some who try to fix the cause of sin as something outside of man. Some even go so far as to attribute the cause of sin to God Himself. But God created man with freedom and if He were to cause man to sin, it would mean that He was destroying his humanity by taking away from him that freedom which makes him a man. God permits sin, but does not cause it, anymore than the manager of a large concern causes the disaster that results from one of his salesmen disobeying his orders. The salesman had instructions from the manager, but deliberately acted against the instructions; so man has instructions from God, and when he sins by disobeying those instructions, he himself, and not God, is the cause of the disaster, the sin involved. Again the devil is frequently cited as the cause of sin. But the devil cannot force the human will to consent to the suggestion offered it. He may act on the human senses and imaginations, thereby offering inducements to sin, but there his



power ends. Neither the devil nor creatures can force the will of any human. We cannot force even the will of a child to desire a drink of milk; we may force the child to drink the milk, but we cannot force him to want it. Neither can the devil or any other creature force the will of any man to want to do this particular act. It is only from the will itself that that desire can come. The one effective cause of man's sins from outside man himself is original sin, which is, after all, not completely outside man. All men are born into the world with original sin on their souls as a result of the sin of the common parents of all mankind. This stain causes a weakness in man's will, a darkness in his intellect, which inclines him to sin. Despite this weakness, with which man comes into the world, his will remains entirely free, he is still the master of his own actions, and every sin of which he is guilty is his own doing.

In view of this fact the modern educator should be endeavoring by all means in his power to assist those being educated to build up those virtues, those good habits, which make his will good, and to root up, to destroy or to avoid those bad habits or vices which make his will bad. Man, being more than an animal, has a destination to be sought which excels the destination of the animal. That end can be reached only by the production of good acts flowing from good habits and by the avoidance of evil acts or sins which flow from bad habits. The

end of education is to assist man to the realization of the end for which he exists. This assistance takes the form of the establishment of good habits and the eradication of evil habits.

C O N C L U S I O N

Since the formation of habits determines the heights or the depths to which the individual will proceed, it is evident that those responsible for that formation have a tremendous responsibility. They are the ones who practically determine the destination to which the child is bound. Thus parents have entirely at the mercy of their careless neglect and ignorance or of their zealous love and intelligent effort, the failure or success of their children's lives. And who can measure the tremendous contribution to the welfare of society that has been made by those who devote their lives to the work of assisting, by their example and efforts, the youth of the land to acquire those good habits that will lead them to the goal for which they were created, and at the same time to avoid or to destroy the evil habits that lead them away from that goal? On the other hand, what great harm is being done to youth and to humanity itself by those modern educators who fail to realize the true nature of man, and in that failure have set up as the goal of education nothing more than an animal development!

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