

# A Contribution to the Understanding of St. Thomas Aquinas' Theory of Free Will

## Abstract:

This paper is a threefold analysis of the free will theory of Thomas Aquinas (1225/1226 – 1274). The analysis is based on four works in which Thomas Aquinas deals with the topic of free will – *Scriptum Super Sententiarum*, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*, *Summa theologiae*, and *Quaestiones Disputatae de Malo*. The first part analyzes the theory of the primacy of the intellect over the will in the soul. In this chapter, the author proposes Thomas Aquinas' change of focus from earlier to later works regarding the primacy of the intellect or the will in human freedom. The second part analyzes the relationship between the will and the intellect, which is described as a relationship of intermingling. An example of such a relationship is given in the analysis of the distinction between *exercitio* (exercise) and *specificatio* (specification) in the act of human choice. In the third part, Aquinas' theory of the rootedness of freedom of human choice in the indeterminacy of rational judgments is analyzed and explained.

**Keywords:** history of philosophy, medieval philosophy, St. Thomas Aquinas, free will, action theory, facultative psychology

## Abbreviations

*In sent.* - Scriptum super libros Sententiarum

*QDV* - Quaestiones disputatae de veritate

*ST* - Summa theologiae

*QDM* - Quaestiones disputatae de malo

*d.* distinctio

*q.* quaestio

*a.* articulus

*arg. in opp.* argumentum in oppositum

*s.c.* sed contra

*c.* corpus articuli

*ad pr., sec., ter.* ad primum, secundum, tertium, etc.

*e.t.* expositio textus

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

This article deals with Thomas Aquinas' theory of the human will. After giving a short biographical introduction to Thomas Aquinas and the primary sources used, I analyze his theory of free will in the main part of the article. Then, in the *Conclusion*, I give a summary of the work done and a pointer for possible further research. This article is a close reading of Thomas Aquinas' philosophical ideas as expounded in his works.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it is primarily focused on my interpretation of Aquinas' facultative psychology, and only secondarily with the abundant historiographical debates<sup>3</sup> regarding Thomas Aquinas' thought.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This article is based on a chapter of my M.A. thesis, entitled "Thomas Aquinas and Henry of Ghent on the Freedom of the Human Will" (supervised by G. Geréby and I. Perczel), that will be defended at the end of this Academic Year at the CEU.

<sup>2</sup> The modern editions of Thomas' works are cited according to the placement in the text (cf. list of abbreviations at the beginning) and the page. The editor and the year are not mentioned in the footnotes, since they are easily searchable in the Bibliography. The primary source is cited in its original language. When cited in English, all translations are my own. The brackets [] signify that the original sentence from the edition has been shortened.

<sup>3</sup> The most prominent current historiographical debate regarding free will is whether Thomas Aquinas was a 'libertarian' or a 'compatibilist'. A 'libertarian' is someone who thinks that any kind of determinism is incompatible with freedom of the will. On the other hand, a 'compatibilist' thinks that freedom can exist alongside determinism. Be that as it may, I do not find these debates particularly fruitful for historical research of Thomas' thought, since they mostly rely on contemporary analytic terminology and understanding. Quite frequently, they do not consult Thomas' works outside of a couple citations from the *Summa theologiae*. What's more, they usually do not consider the deeply theological roots of Thomas' ideas. For a critique of such debates based on the second point, cf. Brian J. Shanley, *Beyond Libertarianism and Compatibilism (Freedom and the Human Person)*, Washington D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 88-89.

<sup>4</sup> Still a great introduction to St. Thomas' metaphysics is John F. Wippel, *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1984). As regards the context of the free-will debate in the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> century, cf. Pasquale Porro, "Trasformazioni medievali della libertà I: Alla ricerca di una definizione del libero arbitrio," in *Libero Arbitrio: Storia Di Una Controversia Filosofica*, ed. Mario De Caro, Maurizio Mori, Emidio Spinelli (Rome: Carocci Editore, 2014), 171-188, and Pasquale Porro, "Trasformazioni medievali della libertà II: Libertà e determinismo nei dibattiti scolastici," in *Libero Arbitrio: Storia Di Una Controversia Filosofica*, ed. Mario De Caro, Maurizio Mori, Emidio Spinelli (Rome: Carocci editore, 2014), 191-217. For an introduction to Aquinas' theory of the will, his facultative psychology and the subsequent intellectualist tradition, cf. Tobias Hoffmann, *Free Will and the Rebel Angels in Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), esp. 40-54.

### 1.1. A biographical note

Thomas Aquinas was born in Roccasecca, near Naples, around 1226. He was educated at an early age in Monte Cassino by the Benedictines and studied philosophy at the Faculty of Arts at the newly established University of Naples. He entered the Dominican Order in 1244 and spent three years at the Dominican Priory in Paris (1245-48) studying theology. From 1248 to 1251 or 1252 he studied under Albert the Great in Cologne. In 1252 he was sent to Paris again as a Bachelor of Theology. There were three stages a Bachelor had to pass to become a master in Theology. Firstly, lecturing and commentating on the Scriptures. Secondly, commentating on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, and thirdly, assisting on formal university disputations. In 1256 he completed all three conditions and was granted the title of Master in Theology. From 1256 to 1259 he held the Dominican Chair at the University of Paris. In 1260 or 1261 he was named priory lector at Orvieto, where he was in close contact with Pope Urban IV. In 1265 he was called to found a Dominican house of studies (*studium generale*) in Rome, for which purpose he started writing the *Summa theologiae* (The Summary of Theology). His second regency at Paris was from 1268 to 1272. In 1272, he founded a *studium generale* (general study) at Naples. Thomas Aquinas died on March 7, 1274 at the Cistercian abbey in Fossanova, on his way to the Second Council of Lyon (1274).<sup>5</sup>

### 1.2. The sources used in the analysis

#### 1.2.1. *Scriptum Super Sententiarum*

After Alexander of Hales subdivided Peter Lombard's *Sentences* into distinctions and articles in the early 13th century, it became a general theology textbook throughout the medieval period (and up until the 17th century). This meant that everybody who wanted to become a master in theology had to write a commentary on this work. This is Thomas Aquinas' earliest great work, written in the early 1250s. In this commentary, Thomas Aquinas offers more than a simple commentary. It is the only one of his works comparable to the *Summa Theologiae* in size and scope, and it includes topics that Thomas Aquinas never treated in the *Summa* or anywhere else in his opus. Moreover, the *Commentary on the Sentences* often contains detailed and in-depth accounts of arguments or positions that Thomas Aquinas refers to only implicitly or as subtext in his later works.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Main dates from the life of Thomas Aquinas are taken from Dominic Legge, "Thomas Aquinas: A Life Pursuing Wisdom," in *The New Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Thomas Joseph White (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 7-28. For further details on Thomas' life and works, cf. Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Person and his work* (Washington D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> The main information about the *Scriptum super Sententiarum*, the *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* and the *Quaestiones disputatae de Malo* are taken from Torell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 39-45, 59-69, 101-111, 201-207.

### 1.2.2. *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*

The form of the disputed questions was part of the curricula of the medieval universities. It consisted of objections, responses, and a magisterial determination. It was usually a work gathered from numerous scholastic years, in the case of the *Disputed Questions on Truth*, three academic years (1256-59). *De veritate* is an assembly of 253 articles grouped into 29 questions. The first question has given its name to the entire series (*De veritate*), but the other questions are more or less distant from that subject. We can see quite well that the whole is subdivided into two large parts. Firstly, on truth and knowledge (qq. 1-20) and secondly, on the good and the appetite for the good (qq. 21-29).

### 1.2.3. *Summa Theologiae*

*The Summary of Theology* is the most influential work of St. Thomas Aquinas. It was never finished, and the writing of the work began in 1265 in Rome, for the needs of the newly established *studium generale* of the Dominican Order in Rome. It is divided into three parts – the first deals with God's existence and nature (questions 1-43), God's creation (q. 44-49), angels (q. 50-64), days of creation (q. 50-64), human nature (q. 75-102) and Divine authority (q. 103-119). The second part deals with morality in general and has two subdivisions. The first portion of the second part (*Prima Secundae*) deals with human happiness (q. 1-5), human actions (q. 6-17), the good and the bad character of human actions (q. 18-21), passions (q. 22-48) and sources of human actions – intrinsic (q. 49-89) and extrinsic (q. 90-114). The second portion of the second part (*Secunda Secundae*) deals with the three theological virtues and their corresponding vices (q. 1-46), the three cardinal virtues and their corresponding vices (q. 47-170), and life goals with particular reference to the religious life (q. 171-189). The third part deals with the Incarnation, i.e. Christ's embodiment (q. 1-59) and the sacraments (q. 60-90). Each part is further divided into questions and articles. The *Summa* was written as a tool for the further study of novitiates within the Dominican Order. This explains the synthesizing tendency of the work. It should also be said that the *Summa*, in addition to being a capital work in the history of philosophy and theology, is also important in the study of the history of education, given its prevalence in curricula both inside and outside the Catholic Church since the 13th century.<sup>7</sup>

### 1.2.4. *Quaestiones Disputatae de Malo*

*The Disputed Questions on Evil* were written in two phases: around 1270 for Questions 1-15; in 1272 for Question 16. According to the first question (on Evil), the whole set of questions is called Disputed Questions on Evil. These questions must be read in connection with Thomas Aquinas' other explanations to fully understand his views on the subject. Two questions then follow on sin and its causes (Questions 2 and 3), and two others on original sin and the

<sup>7</sup> The main information about the *Summa theologiae* is taken from Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2003), 9-10 and Brian Davies, *Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) 6-8.

punishment that followed it (Questions 4 and 5). Question 6, *De electione humana*, is the most important for this article since in it Thomas Aquinas deals most exhaustively with free choice (*electio*). The seventh question is on venial sin, followed by the seven deadly sins (Question 8), presented in this order: vainglory, envy, sloth, anger, avarice, gluttony, and luxury (Questions 9–15). Finally, question 16 offers the reader an exposition of demonology relatively complete in twelve articles.

## 2. Thomas Aquinas on the Freedom of the Human Will

This chapter is divided into three subchapters. Each of them will deal with one aspect of Thomas Aquinas' philosophical psychology.<sup>8</sup> Before going into each separate theme, I will shortly introduce some presently relevant concepts Thomas Aquinas uses.

Both the will and the intellect are faculties of the soul. A faculty is a power that is under the subject's command.<sup>9</sup> The will is a faculty of the soul, although it is sometimes understood by its proper act, which is to will (*velle*).<sup>10</sup> The definition of the will is that it is an intellectual or rational appetite. That the will is an appetite means it is intentional towards a good perceived as an end or a means to an end. That the will is rational means it requires the intellect to supply a concept of the good so that it can choose it.<sup>11</sup> This means that a necessary condition for any act of the will is that the good is 'shown' (*ostendatur*) to the will by cognitive power (reason or intellect).<sup>12</sup> The difference between willing simply (*velle*) and choosing (*eligere*) is that willing simply is about ends (e.g. willing to write a good article), while choosing is about means to achieve that end (e.g. reading primary sources carefully in order to write a

<sup>8</sup> I am of the opinion that 'facultative psychology' is a better term for medieval discussions regarding the soul than the contemporary field of studies known as philosophical psychology (or philosophy of psychology). This is primarily because the psychological framework of medieval philosophy was facultative. Cf. Dag Nikolaus Hasse, "The Soul's Faculties," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Robert Pasnau (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 305-320.

<sup>9</sup> "... facultas secundum communem usum loquendi significat potestatem qua aliquid habetur ad nutum, unde et possessiones facultates dicuntur, quia in dominio sunt possidentis (...)" (*In sent.* II, d. 24, q.1, a.1, *ad sec.*, 591).

<sup>10</sup> The importance of classifying the will and intellect as faculties rather than habits was a great step toward the unification of the concept of the soul, as is seen in the comparison with earlier thinkers, such as Phillip the Chancellor and Albert the Great. Cf. Jamie Anne Spiering, "An Innovative Approach to *Libere Arbitrium* in the Thirteenth Century," (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, 2010), 106-115.

<sup>11</sup> "Appetitus autem rationalis est qui consequitur apprehensionem rationis; et hic dicitur motus rationis, qui est actus voluntatis." (*In sent.* II, d.24, q.3, a.1, c., 617). Also, *ST I*, q. 82, a.5, c., 305.

<sup>12</sup> "Unde ad hoc quod velit bonum, non requiritur nisi quod ostendatur sibi per vim cognitivam." (*QDV*, q.24, a.4, *ad non.*, 692).

good article).<sup>13 14</sup> Every act of the will is ordered under the guise of the good (*sub ratione boni*), because the good is the will's primary object. This means that the will can only do what the intellect perceives as a good. However, this perception of the good does not have to reflect the nature of the thing itself. In other words, just because the will has to will something that is perceived as good, does not mean that the object of willing is objectively good, but only that it is perceived as such.<sup>15</sup>

Intellect and reason are used interchangeably by Thomas Aquinas. This is because they signify the same faculty (the cognizing faculty or *facultas cognitiva*) whose principal act is to think or cognize.<sup>16</sup> The conceptual difference between reason and intellect is that the intellect is non-discursive and includes a "sudden apprehension of a thing", while reason is a discursive process from one thing to another (e.g. inferring from premises to the conclusion).<sup>17</sup> Because of their ontological sameness, they are taken interchangeably.<sup>18</sup> Taken broadly, reason also includes the will. This is because, as was said before, the will is a rational or intellectual appetite.<sup>19</sup>

There is also a difference between speculative and practical intellect. The speculative intellect is the intellect insofar as it is purely apprehensive, whereas the practical intellect is the intellect insofar as it is motive and ends in counsel, which is the conclusion of a practical judgment.<sup>20</sup> Free decision (*liberum arbitrium*) is a faculty of will and reason.<sup>21</sup> Choice (*electio*) is the proper act of *liberum arbitrium*, which combines both an appetitive (*desiderium*) and intellective (*discretionem*) element.<sup>22</sup> The ontological grounding of the act of

<sup>13</sup> These examples are mine. They serve to more precisely elaborate on the philosophical distinction in the source.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *ST I*, q.82, a.2, *ad ter.*, 293.

<sup>15</sup> "... quamvis omnis voluntas bonum appetat, non tamen appetit semper quod est vere sibi bonum, sed id quod est apparens bonum; et quamvis omnis homo beatitudinem appetat, non tamen quaerit eam in eo ubi est vera beatitudo, sed ubi non est. (...)" (*In sent.* II, d.38, q.1, a.5, c., 979). Also, *In sent.* II, d.40, q.1, a.5, *ad qui.*, 1027., and *ST Ia* q.82, a.2, *ad pr.*, 296.

<sup>16</sup> "... ipsum actum intellectus qui est intelligere." (*ST I*, q.79, a.10, c., 277).

<sup>17</sup> "... intellectus non est idem quod ratio. Ratio enim importat quemdam discursum unius in aliud; intellectus autem importat subitam apprehensionem alicujus rei." (*In sent.* II, d.24, q.3, a.3, *ad sec.*, 624).

<sup>18</sup> "Ratio ergo et intellectus et mens sunt una potentia." (*ST I*, q.79, a. 8, s.c., 274).

<sup>19</sup> "Ad primum ergo dicendum, quod ratio accipitur ibi a philosopho pro parte intellectiva, quae voluntatem et rationem complectitur, quia cuilibet apprehensioni suus appetitus respondet: quod patet ex hoc quod rationabile per participationem vocat irascibile et concupiscibile, quae sunt potentiae appetitivae." (*In sent.* II, d.41, q.2, a.2, *ad pr.*, 1043).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *ST I*, q.79, a.11, c., 278.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *QDV*, q.24, a.3, c., 688. In *Quaestiones Disputate de Malo*, instead of *liberum arbitrium*, Thomas uses *liberum electionem*, but with the same meaning.

<sup>22</sup> "Eligere enim, quod actus ejus [liberum arbitrium] ponitur, importat discretionem et desiderium; unde eligere est alterum alteri praeoptare. Haec autem duo sine virtute voluntatis et rationis perfici non possunt. Unde patet quod liberum arbitrium virtutem voluntatis et rationis colligit, propter quod facultas utriusque dicitur." (*In sent.* II, d.24, q.1, a.2, c., 593).



choice is that it is created *ex nihilo* by God.<sup>23</sup> For choice to exist, it is necessary that there exist different options to choose from.<sup>24</sup> Reason's counsel (conclusion of a practical syllogism) precedes every act of choice.<sup>25</sup> If there were no *liberum arbitrium*, there would not be any reason for merit or demerit, neither for just punishments and awards.<sup>26</sup> According to Thomas Aquinas (and against, e.g. Albert the Great), *liberum arbitrium* is not a faculty distinct from will and reason. Rather, it is principally the power of the rational appetite (the will) in which there is also a rational element.<sup>27</sup> In this way, *liberum arbitrium*, as part of the appetitive faculty, is analogous to reason in the cognitive faculty. Just as the discursive act of the cognitive faculty (i.e. reason) follows the non-discursive act of simple cognition (i.e. intellect), so too does the choice of means (i.e. the act of *liberum arbitrium*) follow from the willing of an end (i.e. the act of the will simply).<sup>28</sup> This is because the choice is about a means to an end, while willing simply is about the end itself.<sup>29</sup>

There are different types of freedom that Thomas Aquinas inherits from the earlier philosophical tradition, principally from Bernard of Clairvaux. *Libertas a peccato* (freedom from sin) comes about because the habits are well-formed and the bad natural dispositions are avoided. *Libertas a miseria* (freedom from misery) is a freedom from shortcomings of the body. This is, for instance, the freedom to see for those who have eyes. *Libertas a necessitate* (freedom from necessity) is a freedom from being necessitated into an action

<sup>23</sup> "... omne quod est ex nihilo, ut Damascenus dicit, vertibile est in nihil, vel quantum ad esse, vel quantum ad electionem." (*In sent.* II, d.39, q.1, a.1, s.c., 985). Cf also, QDV, q.24, a.8, *ad qua.*, 701.

<sup>24</sup> "Liberum autem arbitrium ad electionis actum se habet ut quo talis actus efficitur quandoque bene, quandoque quidem male et indifferenter; unde non videtur habitum aliquem designare, si habitus proprie accipiatur; sed illam potentiam cujus proprie actus est eligere; quia liberum arbitrium est quo eligitur bonum vel malum, ut Augustinus dicit." (*In sent.* II, d. 24, q.1, a.1, c., 591).

<sup>25</sup> *In sent.* II, d.24, Q.1 A.3, 597; *ST* I-II, q.13, a.3, c., 101.

<sup>26</sup> "... absque omni dubitatione hominem arbitrio liberum ponere oportet. Ad hoc enim fides astringit, cum sine libero arbitrio non possit esse meritum vel demeritum, iusta poena vel praemium." (QDV, q.24, a.1, c., 680). Cf. also, *ST* I, q.83, a.1, c., 307.

<sup>27</sup> "... quia philosophi qui potentias animae subtiliter scrutati sunt, nullam potentiam in intellectiva parte praeter voluntatem et rationem, sive intellectum posuerunt: et ideo non videtur quod liberum arbitrium sit alia potentia a voluntate et ratione; quod etiam ex suo actu patet. Dicit enim Philosophus, quod electio vel est intellectus appetitivus, vel appetitus intellectivus: et hoc magis videntur sua verba sonare, quod electio sit actus appetitus voluntatis, secundum tamen quod manet in ea virtus rationis et intellectus. (...)" (*In sent.* II, d.24, q.1, a.3, c., 597).

<sup>28</sup> "Unde manifestum est quod sicut se habet intellectus ad rationem, ita se habet voluntas ad vim electivam, idest ad liberum arbitrium. Ostensum est autem supra quod eiusdem potentiae est intelligere et ratiocinari, sicut eiusdem virtutis est quiescere et moveri. Unde etiam eiusdem potentiae est velle et eligere. Et propter hoc voluntas et liberum arbitrium non sunt duae potentiae, sed una." (*ST* I, q.83, a.4, c., 311).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *ST* I, q.82, a.2, *ad ter.*, 293.

by another. It is a necessary condition for the existence of any other type of freedom.<sup>30</sup> There is a difference between freedom simply and *liberum arbitrium*. For freedom simply, only the lack of coercion is needed. Coercion is the condition under which the source of an act is not from the agent, but from outside of the agent and which makes the agent unable to act otherwise.<sup>31</sup> For *liberum arbitrium*, alongside coercion, multiple options to choose from are needed. This is why animals are also said to have voluntary motions (i.e. freedom simply), but not *liberum arbitrium*.<sup>32</sup> In Thomas Aquinas' words:

“Hence since the violent is that whose principle lies without, the voluntary will be that whose principle lies within. And so it is that animals that move themselves are said to have voluntary motions, though they do not have choice or will, as the Philosopher shows in the same place. Hence neither do they have free decision.”<sup>33</sup>

After a brief overview of some of the main concepts and ideas that Thomas Aquinas uses in his facultative psychology, in the following subchapter, I will analyze three different themes related to the freedom of the will. Firstly, I will elaborate on Thomas Aquinas' intricate view of the primacy of the intellect over the will within the soul. Following this, I will give his opinion on the general relationship between the intellect and the will. Lastly, I will give my interpretation of Aquinas' action theory. That is his opinion on how the act of choice in humans works.

### 2.1 *Is the Will or the Intellect a Higher Faculty of the Soul?*

At first glance, Thomas Aquinas seems to have changed his mind as regards to the primacy of the faculty of intellect or will in the soul. In his earlier work (written in the early 1250-s), the *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, he seems to be leaning toward the opinion that the will is the higher faculty than the intellect since the whole of freedom is found within the will. However, he balances this by saying that the intellect is higher by reason of order, since every act of the will presupposes an act of the reason or intellect. That is, every act of the will presupposes either the cognition of first principles or deliberation ending with counsel. The will, on the other hand, can be said to be higher because it

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *In sent.* II, d.25, q.1, a.5, c., 656.

<sup>31</sup> “Ex agente autem hoc alicui convenit, sicut cum aliquis cogitur ab aliquo agente, ita quod non possit contrarium agere. Et haec vocatur necessitas coactionis.” (*ST* I, q.82, a.1, c., 293). Also, *ST* I-II, q.6, a.4, s.c., 59 and *QDM*, q.6, c., 147.

<sup>32</sup> A great analysis of the difference between freedom simply and free choice, using contemporary analytic terminology, but staying close to the primary source, is Tobias Hoffmann and Cyrille Michon, “Aquinas on Free Will and Intellectual Determinism,” *Philosophers' Imprint* 17 (2017): esp. 5-6.

<sup>33</sup> “... unde cum violentum sit cujus principium est extra, voluntarium erit cujus principium est intra; et inde est quod animalia quae moventur ex seipsis, motus voluntarios habere dicuntur, nec tamen electionem habent aut voluntatem, sicut philosophus ibidem ostendit; unde nec liberum arbitrium.” (*In sent.* II, d.25, q.1, a.1, *ad sex.*, 647).



has command over all the soul's powers, including those of the intellect. Because of this efficient preeminence and the fact that it acts on all other faculties of the soul, the highest freedom (*summum libertatis*) is said to be found in the will.<sup>34</sup> Three articles later, in article number five of the same work, Thomas Aquinas reiterates his view by calling the will the end of all freedom.<sup>35</sup>

What is interesting to note is that in this work Thomas Aquinas uses an argument that we will see Henry of Ghent use to defend the will's primacy in the soul. Namely, he states the principle according to which the will wills things as they are in themselves, while the intellect cognizes them only as they are conceptualized in the soul. Unlike Henry, he does not directly conclude from this that the will is a higher power *simpliciter*. However, it seems to be stated as a positive factor on the part of the faculty of the will, as opposed to the intellect.<sup>36</sup> Be that as it may, I do not think that these sparse citations from the *Sentences* show that Thomas Aquinas has changed his mind on the primacy of the will or the intellect in the course of his writing. At most, they can prove that he has changed his focus or altered his terminology. In fact, I think the following analysis will show his theory of the primacy of intellect to have stayed the same, only more elaborated and specified in his later works. In his *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, written only a couple of years after the *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, Thomas Aquinas explains the principle in more detail, affirming the view that the intellect is a higher faculty than the will. Here he gives a comparison of the perfection and dignity of the intellect and the will by their respective objects. Although the intellect's object is perceived by the intellect as a concept, the intellect's perfection and dignity consist in the form of the understood thing being in the intellect itself. That is to say, the concept of the object is drawn to the soul as a concept of the intellect. On the other hand, the will's act is said to be inferior since the will is ordered to another thing according to the being of that thing. Since it is better to possess the dignity of another thing rather than to be ordered to another thing existing outside oneself, "the will and intellect, if they are considered absolutely, not comparing them to this or that thing, have an order such that the intellect is simply more eminent than the will."<sup>37</sup> In the same work, Thomas Aquinas says

<sup>34</sup> "... quamvis intellectus sit superior virtus quam voluntas ratione ordinis, quia prior est et a voluntate praesupponitur; tamen voluntas etiam quodammodo superior est, secundum quod imperium habet super omnes animae vires, propter hoc quod ejus objectum est finis; unde convenientissime in ipsa summum libertatis invenitur. (...) (In sent. II, d.25, q.1, a.2, ad qua., 650.).

<sup>35</sup> "... voluntas, ut prius dictum est, totius libertatis finis est." (In sent. II, d.25, q.1, a.5, e.t., 658.).

<sup>36</sup> "... sed voluntas, ut dictum est, fertur in suum objectum, secundum quod est in re: et ideo non oportet ut aliquam operationem habeat in rem ad hoc quod fiat sibi proportionata, vel expoliando eam a materia, vel aliquid hujusmodi, sicut intellectus facit; sed directe in rem apprehensam, secundum quod est, fertur (...)." (In sent. II, d.39, q.1, a.2, c., 988/989.).

<sup>37</sup> "Perfectio autem et dignitas intellectus in hoc consistit quod species rei intellectae in ipso intellectu consistit; cum secundum hoc intelligat actu, in quo eius

that the root of freedom is in reason. More precisely, since the *ratio libertatis* depends on cognition, the whole root of freedom is said to be in the cognizing power.<sup>38</sup> This is in fact the conclusion Thomas Aquinas arrives at in the *Summa theologiae*, where the intellect is once again said to be the greater faculty *simpliciter*.<sup>39</sup>

However, before arriving at this conclusion, Thomas Aquinas gives the most elaborate account of the primacy of the intellect over the will. He says that the superiority of one power in the soul to another can be considered in two ways – either simply (*simpliciter*) or accordingly (*secundum quid*). Thomas Aquinas elaborates that being greater simply means having a simpler and more abstract object. The object of the will is the good as conceptualized by the intellect. In other words, the very object of the good or any other such concept that the will has, first must be conceived by the intellect in order to be a proper object of any other faculty. Therefore, the object of the intellect is simpler and more abstract than that of the will. The primacy of a faculty is here directly linked to the idea that the object of the intellect encompasses in itself the object of the will. This also makes the intellect itself a more noble faculty than the will. On the other hand, the will is higher than the intellect when the object of the will is of a higher perfection than the soul itself. That is why, when presented with any good that is not God, to know that good is better than to will it or love it. On the other hand, only when the object is God, to love Him is better than to simply know Him. The intellect is still the higher faculty simply, and higher accordingly in all cases, except the one exception just mentioned.<sup>40</sup> Although the intellect is higher *simpliciter*, in one way the will is said to be higher than the intellect. This is if one considers the true, which is the object of the intellect, as a certain good itself. Precisely because the true is a good, the will can move the intellect to deliberate about it.<sup>41</sup>

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dignitas tota consideratur. Nobilitas autem voluntatis et actus eius consistit ex hoc quod anima ordinatur ad rem aliquam nobilem, secundum esse quod res illa habet in seipsa. Perfectius autem est, simpliciter et absolute loquendo, habere in se nobilitatem alterius rei, quam ad rem nobilem comparari extra se existentem. Unde voluntas et intellectus, si absolute considerentur, non comparando ad hanc vel illam rem, hunc ordinem habent, quod intellectus simpliciter eminentior est voluntate.” (QDV, q.22, a.11, c., 639.)

<sup>38</sup> “... tota ratio libertatis ex modo cognitionis dependet. Appetitus enim cognitionem sequitur, cum appetitus non

<sup>39</sup> “Simpliciter tamen intellectus est nobilior quam voluntas.” (ST I, q.82, a.3, c., 299.).

<sup>40</sup> “Unde melior est amor Dei quam cognitio: e contrario autem melior est cognitio rerum corporalium quam amor. Simpliciter tamen intellectus est nobilior quam voluntas.” (ST I, q.82, a.2, c., 299.).

<sup>41</sup> “Si vero consideretur voluntas secundum communem rationem sui obiecti, quod est bonum, intellectus autem secundum quod est quaedam res et potentia specialis; sic sub communi ratione boni continetur, velut quoddam speciale, et intellectus ipse, et ipsum intelligere, et obiectum eius, quod est verum, quorum quodlibet est quoddam speciale bonum. Et secundum hoc voluntas est altior intellectu, et potest ipsum movere.” (ST I Q82 A4, ad pr. 303).

In the second part of the first part of *ST* (the *Prima Secundae*), Thomas Aquinas states that a human act is one proceeding from a deliberating will. This equally includes both the reason and the will's role.<sup>42</sup> Although free decision and the act of choice is dealt with in subchapter 2.3, it seems important to mention them briefly here. This is because I believe that Thomas Aquinas also carefully shows reason's preeminence in his analysis of the act of choice (*electio*), which is principally an act of free decision (*liberum arbitrium*).

This is how Thomas Aquinas spells out this argument:

“In the actions of the soul, it is important to note that an act, which fundamentally belongs to one faculty or habit, takes the form and species from a higher faculty or habit, in accordance with how the lower is directed by the higher (...) Moreover, it is evident that reason, in a way, precedes the will and guides its actions, insofar as the will tends towards its object according to the order of reason, given that the apprehensive faculty presents its object to the appetitive faculty.”<sup>43</sup>

In the act of choice, the intellect is the formal cause of the will's act, while the will is the material cause. In other words, the will acquires the form (the 'whatness') of its choice from the intellect. Because that which receives a form or species is inferior to that from which it is received, and because the will receives this form from the intellect, Thomas Aquinas says that the intellect is a higher faculty than the will. Although this view is not spelt out as straightforwardly as I portrayed it, it affirms Thomas Aquinas' advocacy of the primacy of the intellect over the will in the soul. Thomas Aquinas does this by using an argument that pertains to the act of choice. In other words, it may be said that Thomas Aquinas saw the primacy of the intellect over the will, both in themselves and in their respective relations to their objects, as shown in the first part of this subchapter, and in the act of choice (*electio*), as shown in the second part.

In this chapter, I tried to summarize Thomas Aquinas' views on the primacy of the intellect over the will. There are two general impressions that this short analysis has given. Namely, (1) Thomas Aquinas focuses on different aspects of this question, from the *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum* to the *Summa theologiae*. In the first work, he wants to show the importance of the will in the soul, without highlighting its absolute superiority. In the others, now using a more nuanced philosophical vocabulary – as seen in the way he

<sup>42</sup> “Dictum est autem supra quod actus dicuntur humani, inquantum procedunt a voluntate deliberata.” (*ST* I-II, q.1, a.3, c., 10). Reiterated somewhat differently, but with the same meaning, *ST* I-II, q.6, a.3, *ad ter.*, 59.

<sup>43</sup> “Est autem considerandum in actibus animae, quod actus qui est essentialiter unius potentiae vel habitus, recipit formam et speciem a superiori potentia vel habitu, secundum quod ordinatur inferius a superiori (...). Manifestum est autem quod ratio quodammodo voluntatem praecedit, et ordinat actum eius, inquantum scilicet voluntas in suum obiectum tendit secundum ordinem rationis, eo quod vis apprehensiva appetitivae suum obiectum repraesentat.” (*ST* I-II, q.13, a.1, c., 98).

calls the will the material, and the intellect the formal cause of freedom, which is lacking from the *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum* – he elaborates on how the intellect is a greater faculty *simpliciter*. From this, it seems to me that it does not follow that he changed his mind on the subject. This is also because, (2) even at the more mature phase of his thought, he does not single out the intellect as greater, without also considering the importance of the will, and the way in which the will can be said to be a higher faculty in a certain way (*secundum quid*). This is also seen from the comparison of the primacy of these two faculties as regards the beatific vision or the way in which the will can move the intellect, when the object of the intellect is considered a certain good.

## 2.2. The Relationship Between the Will and the Intellect

In this subchapter, I will analyze the relationship between the intellect and the will in Thomas Aquinas' thought. Firstly, how Thomas Aquinas explains the will's act on the intellect and vice versa. Secondly, I will touch upon what I call the intermingling of the acts of the will and the intellect, which I believe have their root in the convertibility of the transcendentals. Thirdly, I will briefly explain the exercise-specification distinction that Thomas Aquinas uses. More specifically, it is the special way in which the will and the intellect interact in the act of choice. Although the act of choice itself will be dealt with in the next chapter (2.3.), I will be sketching this distinction since it shows the intricate relationship between the two faculties.

Reason (or intellect) acts on the will and the will on reason. The will moves reason by commanding its act, and reason moves the will by proposing to it its object. More precisely, the good, as perceived by the intellect, moves the will to its act.<sup>44</sup> Thus, each power can be said to be informed to some extent by the other. The object having been proposed or shown to the will by reason does not make the will act. The will itself retains its autonomy in desiring the end as it is proposed by the reason. This is why Thomas Aquinas states that "each power can be informed by the other in some way."<sup>45</sup> Alongside this act of showing the object to the will as an end, the intellect also deliberates and then acts on the will by giving counsels. Thus, the intellect moves the will in two ways. Firstly, it moves the will in two ways generally with regard to the formal principles of universal being and truth which presuppose every kind of appetite. This means presenting the object to the will. Secondly, the intellect moves the will in two ways specifically with regards to counsel which necessarily precedes every act of choice.<sup>46</sup> Thomas Aquinas states that reason, although a cognitive faculty, directs the will. He gives a theological example to prove

<sup>44</sup> "Et hoc modo intellectus est prior voluntate, sicut motivum mobili, et activum passivo, bonum enim intellectum movet voluntatem." (*ST I*, q.82, a.3, c., 299).

<sup>45</sup> "... voluntas quodammodo movet rationem imperando actum eius, et ratio movet voluntatem proponendo ei obiectum suum, quod est finis, et inde est quod utraque potentia potest aequaliter per aliam informari." (*QDV. Q.24. A.6, ad qui.*, 696).

<sup>46</sup> "Sed obiectum movet, determinando actum, ad modum principii formalis, a quo in rebus naturalibus actio specificatur, sicut calefactio a calore. Primum

this. Namely, every sin needs first to be in reason in order to subsequently be in the will.<sup>47</sup> The reason's directing (or ordering) of the will is parallel to the two kinds of willing in the will – willing the ends or intending (*intentio*) and willing the means or choosing (*electio*). The reason shows the object as an end and deliberates about means to achieve that end. This is how Thomas Aquinas elaborates on these two acts of the intellect toward the will:

“But reason can order the act of the will in two ways: either insofar as the will concerns the end, and then the act of the will in an order to reason is intention, or else insofar as it concerns what is directed to the end, and in this case the act of the will in an order to reason is choice.”<sup>48</sup>

Thomas Aquinas gives two reasons why the intellect's moving the will does not necessitate it. Firstly, the will is not necessitated by the intellect's conception of an object as an end because for something to be moved by another, the power of the mover needs to be above the power of the moved, which is not the case with the will whose object is the universal good.<sup>49</sup> Secondly, what the intellect does to the will is not violent because it is not contrary to the will as a rational appetite.<sup>50</sup> While the intellect directs the will, the will moves all the other powers of the soul.<sup>51</sup> This also includes the intellect whereby the will moves the intellect to start deliberating.<sup>52</sup> However, since the will cannot act without some rational input, there needs to be a deliberation ending in a counsel preceding this act of the will. That deliberation and counsel, in turn, also presuppose an act of the will as a beginning point of the process. This chain of actions cannot go *ad infinitum* but needs God who is the First Mover of the act done by the will.<sup>53</sup> How exactly God does this without infringing on the freedom of the will is beyond the scope of this paper.<sup>54</sup> In any case, some other

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autem principium formale est ens et verum universale, quod est obiectum intellectus. Et ideo isto modo motionis intellectus movet voluntatem, sicut praesentans ei obiectum suum.” (ST I-II, q. 9, a.1, c., 74).

<sup>47</sup> “Ad primum ergo dicendum, quod ratio quamvis sit cognitiva potentia, tamen est directiva voluntatis; unde non potest esse peccatum in voluntate nisi sit aliquo modo in ratione, praecipue cum voluntas non sit nisi boni, vel apparentis boni; unde malam voluntatem aliquo modo praecedat falsa aestimatio.” (*In sent.* II, d.24, q.3, a.3, *ad pr.*, 624).

<sup>48</sup> “Sed ratio potest ordinare actum voluntatis dupliciter: vel secundum quod voluntas est de fine, et sic actus voluntatis in ordine ad rationem est intentio: vel secundum quod est de his quae sunt ad finem; et sic actus voluntatis in ordine ad rationem est electio.” (*In sent.* II, d.38, q.1, a.3, *ad qui.*, 975).

<sup>49</sup> Cf. ST I, q.82, a.2, c., 296/297.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. ST I-II, q.9, a.5, *ad sec.*, 79.

<sup>51</sup> “Unde manifestum est quod uti primo et principaliter est voluntatis, tanquam primi moventis; rationis autem tanquam dirigentis.” (ST I-II, q.16, a.1, c., 114).

<sup>52</sup> Cf. *In sent.* II, d.39, q.1, a.1, c., 986.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. QDM, q.6, c., 149. Also, ST I-II, q.9, a.4, c., 78.

<sup>54</sup> A good summary of Thomas' answer to this question is John F. Wippel, “Divine Knowledge, Divine Power, and Human Freedom in Thomas Aquinas and Henry of Ghent,” in *Divine Omniscience and Omnipotence in Medieval Philosophy* (Synthese Historical Library: Springer, 1985), esp. 221-226.

medieval thinkers, like Henry of Ghent, solve this possible infinite regress by making the will a self-mover, rather than by invoking God as the Primary Mover.<sup>55</sup> Other than acting on other powers, the will also acts on itself. It does this by moving itself from willing an end (e.g. health) to willing a means (e.g. to eat an apple) by choosing among different proposed counsels that the intellect gives.<sup>56</sup> There seems to be an interesting intermingling between the act(s) of the will and the act(s) of the intellect in Thomas Aquinas' theory. This makes, in a way, every act of the intellect a voluntary act, and every act of the will an intellectual act. Thomas Aquinas puts it thusly:

“Hence even good itself, inasmuch as it is an apprehensible form, is contained under the truth as a particular truth, and truth itself, inasmuch as it is the end of the intellectual operation, is contained under the good as a particular good.”<sup>57</sup>

I think that this idea of Thomas Aquinas has to do with the idea that the transcendentals are convertible. In other words, the teaching that whenever there is one of the transcendentals present, there are all of them present. This also includes truth and goodness, which is why wherever there is a true thing, there is also a good thing, and vice versa. This is also why Thomas Aquinas can say that every act that is oriented toward the true is oriented toward the good and oppositely.<sup>58</sup>

There is another way in which the will and the intellect interact for Thomas Aquinas, and that is in the act of choice. In the act of choice, which is principally an act of the will, both the will acts on the intellect and the intellect on the will.<sup>59</sup> The acting of the will on the intellect is called exercise (*exercitium*) of the act, while the acting of the intellect on the will is called specification (*specificatio*) or determination (*determinatio*) of the act.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>55</sup> “...voluntas faciens se de potentia volente actu volentem, prius erat volens virtualiter, scilicet habendo unde potuit se facere in actu volendi, licet non formaliter, qualem se facit illa virtute.” (*Quodlibet* X, q. 9, *ad sec.*, 230). Also, *Quodlibet* X, q. 9, *ad qui.*, 238.

<sup>56</sup> “... ita per hoc quod homo aliquid vult in actu, movet se ad volendum aliquid aliud in actu; sicut per hoc quod vult sanitatem, movet se ad volendum sumere potionem; ex hoc quod vult sanitatem, incipit consiliari de his quae conferunt ad sanitatem; et tandem determinato consilio vult accipere potionem. Sic ergo voluntatem accipiendi potionem praecedit consilium, quod quidem procedit ex voluntate volentis consiliari.” (*QDM*, q.6, c., 149).

<sup>57</sup> “Unde et ipsum bonum, in quantum est quaedam forma apprehensibilis, continetur sub vero quasi quoddam verum; et ipsum verum, in quantum est finis intellectualis operationis, continetur sub bono ut quoddam particulare bonum.” (*QDM* q.6, c., 149).

<sup>58</sup> “... verum et bonum se invicem includunt, nam verum est quoddam bonum, alioquin non esset appetibile; et bonum est quoddam verum, alioquin non esset intelligibile.” (*ST* I, q.79, a.11, *ad sec.*, 279).

<sup>59</sup> “... voluntas movet intellectum quantum ad exercitium actus (...) Sed quantum ad determinationem actus, quae est ex parte obiecti, intellectus movet voluntatem, quia et ipsum bonum apprehenditur secundum quandam specialem rationem comprehensam sub universali ratione veri.” (...) (*ST* I-II q. 9 a.1, *ad ter.*, 75).

<sup>60</sup> *ST* I-II q. 9 a.1, c., 74. Also, *ST* I-II, q.10, a.2, c., 86, *QDM* q.6, c., 148.



Both of these acts are necessary for the act of choice to exist. On the one hand, exercise signifies the will's moving toward one option that the intellect suggests. On the other, specification signifies the intellect's proposing the possible options to choose from. On the part of the determination or specification made by the intellect, the will is moved by necessity only regarding that which is good in all aspects (happiness in this life and God in the next). It is also in most cases moved from habits which are innate to human nature, such as to be, to live, and to know. I would call these necessitations connatural, but not necessary, since people do not always will to live, such as those in great pain, etc.<sup>61</sup> The will's exercise is only necessitated by happiness itself (God) and not by other goods because all other goods lack complete goodness, and so reason can propose to the will different conceptions of them. It can propose one good as more desirable than another.<sup>62</sup> Thus, for Thomas Aquinas, there is no *liberum arbitrium*, but there is freedom simply in Heaven. This is akin to the intellect being of necessity moved only by that which is true necessarily, and not by probable truths.<sup>63</sup> The first principle of the act of choice can be considered both the will insofar as it exercises the motion and the intellect insofar as it specifies (or determines) it.<sup>64</sup> I think that the relationship between the will and the intellect in the act of choice illustrates succinctly the intermingling of the will and the intellect that was explained earlier in the chapter. This intermingling is also against the notion of some authors who suggest the complete subordination of the will to the intellect in Thomas Aquinas' theory.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>61</sup> QDM, q.6, c., 149/150.

<sup>62</sup> "Unde si proponatur aliquod obiectum voluntati quod sit universaliter bonum et secundum omnem considerationem, ex necessitate voluntas in illud tendet, si aliquid velit, non enim poterit velle oppositum. Si autem proponatur sibi aliquod obiectum quod non secundum quamlibet considerationem sit bonum, non ex necessitate voluntas feretur in illud. Et quia defectus cuiuscumque boni habet rationem non boni, ideo illud solum bonum quod est perfectum et cui nihil deficit, est tale bonum quod voluntas non potest non velle, quod est beatitudo. Alia autem quaelibet particularia bona, inquantum deficiunt ab aliquo bono, possunt accipi ut non bona, et secundum hanc considerationem, possunt repudiari vel approbari a voluntate, quae potest in idem ferri secundum diversas considerationes." (ST I-II, q.10, a.2, c., 86).

<sup>63</sup> Such as being necessarily moved to consent to the truth of a conclusion from the acceptance of premises, in a syllogism. Cf. "... intellectus ex necessitate movetur a tali obiecto quod est semper et ex necessitate verum, non autem ab eo quod potest esse verum et falsum, scilicet a contingenti, sicut et de bono dictum est." (ST I-II, q.10, a.2, *ad sec.*, 86).

<sup>64</sup> QDM, q.6, c., 148.

<sup>65</sup> Most of those historians of philosophy who see Thomas as a compatibilist or even a determinist think this way. Cf. e.g. Jeffrey Hause, "Thomas Aquinas and the Voluntarists," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 6 (1997): esp. 180-181.

### 2.3. Free choice

This subchapter will deal with the theory of free choice (*liberum arbitrium*)<sup>66</sup> in Thomas Aquinas' work. In the last subchapter, I explained the mechanism of free choice through the acts made by the will and the intellect. Those are the will's exercise and the intellect's specification of the act.<sup>67</sup>

In this subchapter, I will focus on another issue. Namely, Thomas Aquinas' view on the intellectual basis of free choice. In other words, his idea that, although both the intellect and the will are necessary conditions for the existence of free choice, the intellect is the more important of the two. More precisely, the so-called indeterminacy of reason's counsels is what makes reason the root of *liberum arbitrium*. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, *liberum arbitrium* is an act of the will insofar as it chooses.<sup>68</sup> This makes the faculty of the will a material cause for the act of choice. While Thomas Aquinas calls the will the material cause, he calls the intellect the formal cause of free choice (*electio*).<sup>69</sup> As I said, necessary and sufficient conditions of choice are both reason's counsel and will's accepting of that counsel. However, although the act of the will is a necessary component of free choice, the role of the will is somewhat passive on Thomas Aquinas' account. Namely, it accepts what has previously been judged (*diiudicatur*) by the intellect as better, while the intellect actively proposes counsels to the will.<sup>70</sup> This also opens up questions as to the extent to which the will can choose against the best possible option given by reason's counsels.<sup>71</sup> However, I will not deal with this question presently. In any case, for choice to exist, it is necessary that there exist different options to

<sup>66</sup> More precisely, choice (*electio*) is the proper act of free judgment (*liberum arbitrium*), as explained earlier.

<sup>67</sup> There are also other parts the mechanism of decision, which are not important for us presently (such as use, enjoyment, consent, etc.). Although Donagan wrongly identifies use (*usus*) with choice (*electio*), his scheme of the human act according to Thomas is visually helpful. Cf. Alan Donagan, "Thomas Aquinas on Human Action," in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 653.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. QDV, q.24, a.6, c., *ad pr.*, 695.

<sup>69</sup> "... materialiter quidem est voluntatis, formaliter autem rationis." (ST I-II, q.13, a.1, c., 98).

<sup>70</sup> "Ad electionem autem concurrit aliquid ex parte cognitivae virtutis, et aliquid ex parte appetitivae, ex parte quidem cognitivae, requiritur consilium, per quod diiudicatur quid sit alteri praeferendum; ex parte autem appetitivae, requiritur quod appetendo acceptetur id quod per consilium diiudicatur" (ST I, q.83, a.3, c., 310). For the will's consent of reason's judgment, cf. also ST I-II, q.15, a.3, c., 111.

<sup>71</sup> According to some authors, on the basis of this problem, Thomas advocates freedom as the lack of outside coercion, but not excluding intellectual determination. Cf. Thomas Williams, "Will and Intellect," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Ethics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), esp. 249., and Thomas Williams, "Human Freedom and Agency," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 206.

choose from.<sup>72</sup> And this is made available by the various proposed counsels that reason gives. In fact, the intellect's ability to propose different counsels to the will is what separates free human action from necessitated animal acts. The root of free choice is therefore reason's judgment and its ability to go in different ways. This is unlike animals which act on natural instincts. Because the very essence of *liberum arbitrium* is to be able to go different ways, and because reason's judgements are the ones that enable it, reason is the root of *liberum arbitrium*:

“Reason in contingent matters may follow opposite courses, as we see in dialectic syllogisms and rhetorical arguments. Now particular operations are contingent, and therefore in such matters the judgment of reason may follow opposite courses, and is not determinate to one. And therefore it is necessary that man be of free will, from the very fact that he is rational.”<sup>73</sup>

A comparison of human action with actions of inanimate objects and actions of irrational animals serves to more clearly elucidate the crucial role of reason in the act of choice. Some medieval authors linked human free choice to the “self-movement” of a heavy object by its own form of heaviness or the self-movement of animals toward an object of sensation. However, Thomas Aquinas does not accept this. He says that heavy things do not properly have self-movement, since they only move “in themselves”, but not “by themselves”. In other words, the action that they do is not from themselves, but from another (e.g. from a human pushing a heavy thing downwards or from an outside object of sensations for animals). When it comes to animals, they do have the source of their action within themselves. However, they do not have free choice since they cannot propose to themselves different paths of action to take. In other words, animals necessarily move following the judgment implanted in them not by themselves, but by another – God. They necessarily follow their nature that was given to them by God. That is why, for instance, birds cannot choose not to make nests, nor the sheep not to flee the wolf once it is near, etc.<sup>74</sup> On the other hand, for humans it can be said that they are self-moving agents.<sup>75</sup> Thomas Aquinas thinks that both the will and the intellect are nece-

<sup>72</sup> “... cum electio sit praeacceptio unius respectu alterius, necesse est quod electio sit respectu plurium quae eligi possunt. Et ideo in his quae sunt penitus determinata ad unum, electio locum non habet.” (ST I-II, q.13, a.2, c., 99).

<sup>73</sup> “Ratio enim circa contingentia habet viam ad opposita; ut patet in dialecticis syllogismis, et rhetoricis persuasionibus. Particularia autem operabilia sunt quaedam contingentia, et ideo circa ea iudicium rationis ad diversa se habet, et non est determinatum ad unum. Et pro tanto necesse est quod homo sit liberi arbitrii, ex hoc ipso quod rationalis est.” (ST I, q.83, a.1, c., 307).

<sup>74</sup> Cf. QDV, q.24, a.1, c., 680.

<sup>75</sup> Spiering gives a twofold analysis of self-movement in Thomas. Namely, that humans move both “of themselves” and “by themselves”. In other words, human acts can properly be said to be both efficient and final. Cf. Jamie Anne Spiering, “‘Liber Est Causa Sui’: Thomas Aquinas and the Maxim ‘The Free is the Cause of Itself,’” *The Review of Metaphysics* 65 (2011): esp. 364-365.

ssary conditions for the free choice. On the one hand, the will is necessary as a subject of action (that which wills), while on the other reason is most properly the cause of such action, since it allows the will to choose among different proposed goods. Such a carefully crafted distinction deserves another quotation from the Angelic Doctor:

“The root of liberty is the will as the subject thereof; but it is the reason as its cause. For the will can tend freely towards various objects, precisely because the reason can have various perceptions of good. Hence philosophers define the free-will as being a free judgment arising from reason, implying that reason is the root of liberty.”<sup>76</sup>

The principle invoked here as the basis of choice is often referred to in the secondary literature as the reason’s indeterminacy or the indeterminacy of reason. In another work, Thomas Aquinas uses the analogy of the builder and the building to illustrate how this indeterminacy works. Namely, the builder, before building a particular house, has a universal form of house in mind. Then, he can act on this universal form which is in his intellect, to build a particular house. The reason why the builder can build a house in different shapes and with different colors is that there is no determination on the particular form of a house from the universal form of a house in the mind.<sup>77</sup> In other words, the builder can act on the universal form of a house that he has in different ways because of the indeterminacy of the reason’s conception. The universality<sup>78</sup> does not bind him to make the house square or circular, white or yellow, etc.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>76</sup> “... radix libertatis est voluntas sicut subiectum, sed sicut causa, est ratio. Ex hoc enim voluntas libere potest ad diversa ferri, quia ratio potest habere diversas conceptiones boni. Et ideo philosophi definiunt liberum arbitrium quod est liberum de ratione iudicium, quasi ratio sit causa libertatis.” *ST I-II*, q.17, a.1, c., 118.

<sup>77</sup> MacDonald thinks that the root source of rational indeterminacy is meta-judgment. There are two problems with his analysis. Firstly, the term is a term of contemporary analytic philosophy, and thus not present in Thomas’ thought. Secondly, the idea that reason is able to be reflexive upon its own acts does not explain the fact that reason is indeterminate. In other words, it is not clear how the meta-judgments of reason lead to the ability of the will to choose otherwise. Cf. Scott Macdonald, “Aquinas’s Libertarian Account of Free Choice,” *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 52 (1998): 328.

<sup>78</sup> Precisely this universality of the intellect’s form as opposed to the particularity of the choice of the will is elaborated on in-detail by Stephen Wang. Cf. Stephen Wang, “The Indetermination of Reason and the Role of the Will in Aquinas’s Account of Human Freedom,” *New Blackfriars* 90 (2009): 119.

<sup>79</sup> “... forma intellecta est universalis sub qua multa possunt comprehendi; unde cum actus sint in singularibus, in quibus nullum est quod adaequet potentiam universalis, remanet inclinatio voluntatis indeterminate se habens ad multa: sicut si artifex concipiat formam domus in universali sub qua comprehenduntur diversae figurae domus, potest voluntas eius inclinari ad hoc quod faciat domum quadratam vel rotundam, vel alterius figurae.” (*QDM*, q.6, c., 148).

This short analysis has shown that within a carefully crafted theory of free choice, reason's indeterminacy plays the most important role for St. Thomas Aquinas.

### 3. Conclusion

This analysis was an examination of Thomas Aquinas' perspective on freedom of the will in three distinct, but overlapping parts. Here I will point out three humble findings this analysis has brought forward. Firstly, the evolution of Aquinas' thought regarding the primacy of either the will or the intellect. Initially leaning towards the supremacy of the will, Aquinas later emphasizes the intellect's greater role, particularly in guiding the will through reason's presentation of options and counsel. Secondly, the intricate intermingling of the acts of will and reason. Aquinas elucidates the dynamic relationship between these faculties, highlighting how each influences the other. While the will moves the intellect by commanding its acts, the intellect guides the will by proposing options and offering counsel. Reason's presentation of the good to the will does not compel action but informs the will's autonomy in desiring the proposed end. This relationship was termed intermingling, and was exemplified in the distinction between exercise of the will and specification of the reason in the act of choice. Thirdly, the importance of reason in free choice, which culminates in reason's indeterminacy as the root of free choice. This indeterminacy allows for various judgments and subsequent acts of the will, emphasizing reason's pivotal role in human agency. While the will serves as the subject of action, reason acts as the primary cause by enabling the will to choose among perceived goods. Thus, Aquinas' theory is shown to underscore reason's capacity to conceive different possibilities as the cornerstone of human agency and the exercise of free will.

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### Sažetak:

Ovaj je rad tročlana analiza teorije slobodne volje Tome Akvinskog (1225/1226. – 1274.). Analiza je temeljena na četirima djelima u kojima Akvinac obrađuje tematiku slobodne volje – *Komentaru Sentencija Petra Lombardskog*, *Raspravljenim pitanjima o istini*, *Teološkoj sumi* i *Raspravljenim pitanjima o zlu*. U prvom dijelu analizira se prvenstvo intelekta nad voljom u duši. U ovom je poglavlju utvrđena Akvinčeva promjena fokusa od ranijih do kasnijih djela u pogledu primarnosti intelekta ili volje za ljudsku slobodu. U drugom dijelu analizira se odnos volje i intelekta, koji je opisan kao odnos isprepletenosti. Primjer takvog odnosa daje se u analizi distinkcije *exercitio* (izvršavanje) i *specificatio* (specifikacija) u aktu ljudskog izbora. U trećem je dijelu objašnjena Akvinčeva teorija ukorijenjenosti slobode ljudskog izbora u neodređenosti prosudbi razuma.

**Ključne riječi:** povijest filozofije, srednjovjekovna filozofija, sv. Toma Akvinski, slobodna volja, filozofija akcije, fakultativna psihologija

# Pro Tempore

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