

October 2020

Cultivating Virtue: A Thomistic Perspective on the Relationship Between Moral Motivation and Skill

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Cultivating Virtue: A Thomistic Perspective on the Relationship Between Moral
Motivation and Skill

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
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Date of Approval:
Sept. 4th, 2020

Keywords: Aquinas, Psychological Skill, Moral Psychology, Developing Virtue

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Acknowledgements

There are a number of people without whom I could not have accomplished this task. First and foremost, I'd like to thank my husband, Garrett, whose never-failing confidence in me and loving support enabled me to reach my lofty goals of completing a dissertation and a graduate degree in psychology at the same time. I also owe an immense amount of gratitude to my friend, Lily. She never failed to lift me up through numerous trials, laugh with me through many existential crises, remind me of what is worth fighting for, and encourage me to love God above all else. Our friendship is one of my most treasured life possessions. In addition, I owe USF's Philosophy department a huge token of gratitude for not only giving me the opportunity to complete two degrees at once, but, most of all, for introducing me to my husband and best friend who were in my philosophy cohort. I met both Garrett and Lily on my very first day at USF. I knew from then on that we were going to be life-long friends. Our journey together through this program allowed us to form a bond that continues to unite us intellectually and spiritually.

In addition, I would like to thank my chair, Thomas Williams, for his guidance throughout the entire program and dissertation. Thomas always welcomed and encouraged my interdisciplinary interests and my desire to use Aquinas's work to inform contemporary discourses. I am also thankful for the hours he spent pouring over many drafts of my dissertation. His eye for detail is a true gift and I am a better writer thanks to his support.

I'd also like to thank my co-chair, Dr. Michael DeJonge, for being a wonderful intellectual mentor. I am a much better conceptual thinker and writer because of our conversations. He always had a way of helping me believe in my own ideas. I am very thankful for his encouragement throughout this process. In addition, I'd like to thank my committee members, Colin Heydt and Brook Sadler, for their consistent willingness to talk to me about philosophy of emotion and education.

I also owe a great deal of gratitude to the intellectual communities beyond USF's Philosophy department for their support. First, I'd like to thank the Society of Christian Philosophers for awarding me with the Graduate Student Cross-Training Fellowship. This fellowship was a tremendous blessing that allowed me to complete two graduate degrees, participate in interdisciplinary research and conferences across the country, and have access to a number of intellectual communities that continue to inspire and propel my work forward. Second, I'd like to thank the Aquinas lectures at the Witherspoon Institute for helping me think through Aquinas's views on skill, practical reasoning, and virtue. A special thanks to Anselm Mueller for his kindness, encouragement, and willingness to converse with me about practical rationality, skill, and virtue during and after our time together at Princeton. I'd also like to thank the Thomistic Institute's seminars for reinvigorating my love for Thomas and Catholic spirituality. Additionally, I must thank Dr. Amanda Depippo and Dr. Ryan Henry in USF's Mental Health Counseling department. They both encouraged my interdisciplinary efforts from the beginning, while helping me to become a trained clinician that can put my knowledge into practice. I'd also very much like

to thank my counseling psychology mentors, Dr. Don Davis and Dr. Blaine Fowers. Both Dr. Davis and Dr. Fowers share my passion for combining moral philosophy and counseling psychology. Their interdisciplinary scholarship continues to inspire me. I am very grateful for the generosity, humility, and kindness they have shown me.

Last, but most definitely not least, I'd like to thank my family. Despite their confusion over my love for philosophy, they never failed to support and love me throughout my graduate training. I am grateful for their continued support and unconditional love.

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1	10
I. Virtue and Skill	10
II. The Proponents of the Moral Motivation Objection	16
Concluding Thoughts on the Proponents.....	29
III. An Opponent of the Moral Motivation Objection	30
Stichter’s Reply to Zagzebski and Watson	31
Conluding Thoughts on Stichter	37
IV. The Task Behind and Ahead.....	38
Chapter 2	40
I. Why turn to Aquinas on Moral Motivation?.....	40
II. Chapter Overview and Aims	43
III. Moral Motivation: An Overview	45
IV. Contemporary Debates About Moral Motivation: An Overview	46
V. Historical Accounts of Moral Motivation	51
VI. Aristotle on Moral Motivation.....	53
VII. Aquinas on Moral Motivation.....	58
Aquinas on Teleological and Efficient-Causal Motivation.....	61
a. Teleological.....	61
b. Efficient-Causal Motivation	68
VIII. Aquinas on Efficient Cause	72
IX. Efficient-Causal Motivation: A Developmental Model.....	81
Concluding Thoughts on Aquinas on Moral Motivation	93
X. Possible Objections	94
Objection 1: Where’s Charity in all of this?.....	94
Objection 2: Using Human Agency as a Guage	99
Chapter 3.....	104
I. Introduction.....	104
II. Aquinas on Skill	106
III. Aquinas on Emotion and Emotion Regulation	109
IV. Passions and Moral Motivation: An Intimate Connection.....	114
V. Aquinas on Cognitive Control of the Passions.....	124

VI. Aquinas’s Regulation Strategies and Their Contemporary Parallel	128
a. The First Step to Change: Understanding the Problem.....	129
b. Strategies for Modifying Emotions	134
Skills Concluded	145
VII. Returning to the Moral Motivation Objection	147
VIII. Aquinas, Stichter, and Virtue as Skill	159
A Final Response	162
Conclusion	164
I. Attending to Psychological Resources	164
II. Where to Go from Here.....	166
Bibliography	170

Abstract

Over the past twenty years, virtue ethics has seen a resurgence of interest in understanding how virtues are cultivated. Philosophers are now teaming up with psychologists to better understand how psychological research on skills can inform us about the relevant kinds of skills that aid in cultivating virtue. However, this promising line of research rests on a heavily-debated philosophical foundation. To what extent are the moral virtues like and/or cultivated by certain kinds of skills? One group of scholars, whom I refer to as the “proponents of the moral motivation objection,” argue that the moral virtues are motivational dispositions that skills not only lack but also cannot cultivate. This objection challenges the idea that skills are a helpful way to understand virtue and its development. In working through this objection, I argue that the discourse around this objection lacks clarity about what moral motivation is and how it relates to different kinds of psychological skills. As a result, the discourse faces an impasse in understanding the viability of skills.

This project aims to remove the impasse in the contemporary literature by providing a detailed account of moral motivation and its relation to psychological skills. I find that Aquinas’s moral psychology provides ample resources for understanding moral motivation, its development, and the relevant kinds of psychological skills that are useful in cultivating virtue. In this way, I find that Aquinas’s perspective enables us to reimagine the relationship between skills and virtue, while providing new insights into the kinds of skills

that aid in cultivating virtue. I conclude that Aquinas's work helps to sharpen the contemporary literature and inform the philosophical foundation on which it is based.

Introduction

Over the past twenty years, contemporary virtue ethics has experienced a resurgence of interest in answering how virtue is cultivated. There are two primary reasons for the renewed interest in this perennially puzzling question. First, explaining how virtue is cultivated is a crucial part of the effort to substantiate virtue ethics as a viable ethical theory. Second, now more than ever before, contemporary scholars see themselves as able to come to new insights into this question thanks to the collaboration of behavioral, personality, social, and developmental psychologists. More specifically, given the parallels between virtue and skill, philosophers and psychologists see new potential for psychological models of skill and skill development to inform philosophical discussions of virtue and its cultivation. In what follows, I explore both reasons for the resurgence of interest and how they lead to the current focus on skill.

Up until about forty-five years ago (arguably shortly after G.E.M. Anscombe wrote her famous paper “Modern Moral Philosophy” in 1958), normative ethics was dominated by two theories: duty ethics, or deontology, inspired by Immanuel Kant, and utilitarianism, derived from eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century philosophers Jeremy Bentham and J.S. Mill. At that time, virtue ethics was regarded not as an ethical theory in its own right, but as an approach that emphasizes motives and character that utilitarians and

deontologists could usefully incorporate into their own theories.¹ However, as Hursthouse articulates, many philosophers “grew dissatisfied with duty ethics and utilitarianism” because, when compared to virtue ethics, these theories seemed to “sideline” issues many believed should take center stage: motives, moral character, moral education, moral wisdom, the role of the emotions in our moral life, meaning, and how one should live.² For this reason, several philosophers found cause to develop virtue ethics into a substantive theory of its own.³ Scholars such as Anscombe, Foot, Murdoch, Hursthouse, MacIntyre, Williams, McDowell, Nussbaum, Slote, Christian B. Miller, Nancy Snow and many others work to put virtue ethics “back on the map” as a viable theory in its own right, and not merely as an approach that emphasizes motives and character.

Within this pursuit, there is a recognized need to develop answers to the practical yet central question: how does one cultivate virtue? Julia Annas writes, “We cannot understand what virtue is without understanding how we acquire it.”⁴ Like Annas, Nancy Snow recognizes the need to develop answers to this question: “Despite the rising interest in virtue, however, little attention has been paid to the question of how virtue is developed.”⁵ Christian B. Miller takes up this charge and began a robust research program

¹ Rosalind Hursthouse. *On virtue ethics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 2.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Julia Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) 21.

⁵ Ibid.

devoted to answering how we, as modern people, can cultivate moral and intellectual virtues. Since the early 2000s, there have been dozens of publications addressing how virtue is cultivated and the issue remains central to contemporary controversies in virtue ethics. Much of the research developed around this question is interdisciplinary in nature, welcoming philosophy, theology, and psychology. Furthermore, from the philosophical side, the dominant approach among contemporary philosophers in addressing this question is grounded in a return to the writings of Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas. Many contemporary virtue ethicists work to retrieve from these primary texts a solid groundwork for defining what virtue is and how it is cultivated.

In addition to the effort to substantiate virtue ethics by addressing the virtue-cultivation question, the second reason for the resurgence of interest in cultivating virtue is the promise of new insights on this question thanks to the collaboration of behavioral, personality, and developmental psychologists. Teaming up with psychologists, philosophers challenge the possibility of virtue as a stable character trait and provide new resources for understanding how to cultivate virtue in light of psychological research on behavior. Owen Flanagan (1991), Gilbert Harman (in a series of papers dating back to 1999), and John Doris, for example, lead the way in calling for moral philosophers to take seriously psychological research on human behavior.⁶ Doris and Harman proclaim that

⁶ Furthermore, this group of scholars “question the extent to which human lives displayed enough internal coherence and temporal consistency to justify the attribution of character traits.” Dan P., McAdams, "Psychological science and the Nicomachean Ethics: virtuous actors, agents, and authors." In *Cultivating virtue: Perspectives from philosophy, theology, and psychology* ed. by Nancy Snow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 307. See also, Christian B. Miller, "Empirical Approaches to Moral

behavior is driven primarily by environmental (situational) factors or contingencies rather than stable characteristics of the person.⁷ Their findings have galvanized work from philosophers and psychologists alike. In response to what is now called “the situationist debate,” several contemporary virtue ethicists are using the tools of psychology to better understand human behavior, virtue as a character trait, and the ways in which virtue can be cultivated.

One of the most important developments from this debate is the call for moral philosophers to change their approach. Moral philosopher, Matthew Stichter, writes that “recommendations for moral development cannot be done merely from the philosophical armchair anymore, as theorists need to be aware of the psychological mechanisms that affect how people actually behave.”⁸ Stichter’s point is inspired by Flanagan’s “Principle of Minimal Psychological Realism,” which states that “any prescription of a moral ideal should involve only those processes or behaviors that we have reason to believe are

Character”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter 2017, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL=<<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/moral-character-empirical/>>.

⁷ See: Walter Mischel. *Personality and Assessment*. (New York: Psychology Press, 2013). Also see John M. Doris. *Lack of character: Personality and moral behavior*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2002. In his new book, Doris draws on an array of social scientific research, especially experimental social psychology, to argue that people often grossly overestimate the behavioral impact of character and grossly underestimate the behavioral impact of situations. Circumstance, Doris concludes, often has extraordinary influence on what people do, whatever sort of character they may appear to have. He then considers the implications of this observation for a range of issues in ethics, arguing that with more realistic picture effect, cognition, and motivation, moral psychology can support more compelling ethical theories and more humane ethical practices.

⁸ Matthew Stichter, *The Skillfulness of Virtue : Improving Our Moral and Epistemic Lives*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018) 7.

possible for humans.”⁹ Flanagan’s principle, along with the situationist debate, continue to galvanize research by moral philosophers, particularly those interested in moral development, to come up with ways to develop virtue using psychological models that provide a possible path for moral development.

To this end, the study of psychological skills and expertise takes center stage. Darcia Narvaez and Daniel Lapsley, for example, are two prominent developmental psychologists who argue that the development of virtue is parallel to the development of an expertise. By studying the psychological development and skillset of experts across domains we can better understand how virtue is cultivated.¹⁰ Furthermore, Daniel Russell, Christian Miller, and Matthew Stichter, collaborate with psychologists to identify psychological skills, such as self-regulation and social-cognitive skills, which they argue have great potential to help us understand and develop the kinds of capacities, intelligence, and acumen that virtues require. Their research, and the interdisciplinary movement on which it is based, builds upon the long-held claim that possessing a virtue is highly analogous to possessing a skill or acquired competency. Dating as far back as Aristotle (and before), philosophers look to skill as a way to understand how virtue is cultivated and what virtue is. Moreover, philosophers continue to debate about the extent to which virtue resembles a skill. Today, however, in light of the potential for psychological skills to contribute to the discourse,

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ To name a few scholars working in this area that have yet to be named: Jonathan Weber, Alan Wilson, William Fleeson, Daniel Russell, Ernest Sosa, and others.

there is added pressure for moral philosophers to figure out the extent to which skills are analogous to virtue and, more generally, how psychological skills generally relate to moral virtue. Despite this contemporary interdisciplinary movement and added pressure, relatively little work has been done to work out the relationship between moral virtue and psychological skills. Furthermore, many moral philosophers remain pessimistic about the ability for skills to teach us about moral virtue and its development. For others, though they generally accept the virtue-skill analogy, the question still remains regarding the extent to which virtue is cultivated by psychological skills.¹¹

One group of contemporary virtue-ethicists, whom I refer to as the “proponents of the moral motivation objection,” are often cited for offering compelling reasons to question the extent to which we can look to skills to understand virtue and its development.¹² Adhering to an Aristotelean-inspired account of moral virtue, these scholars argue that moral virtues are primarily concerned with moral motivation, or motivational dispositions, and that skills not only lack the kind of moral motivation constitutive of virtue, but because they lack such components, they cannot help us understand how to cultivate virtue.¹³ If these respected scholars are right, the trajectory of current research that looks to skills as resources for cultivating virtue is fraught with limitations from the outset.

¹¹ Annas holds such a view. See Julia Annas. *Intelligent Virtue*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

¹² This set of scholars include Linda Zagzebski, Anselm Mueller, Gary Watson, and James D. Wallace. Chapter 1 explores their work in detail.

¹³ The virtue under discussion is only moral virtues (i.e., temperance, courage, justice, and prudence) not the intellectual virtues.

In an attempt to build upon and contribute to the discourse on cultivating virtue, my goal is to explore the relationship between moral motivation and skills in an attempt to develop answers to the question “can psychological skills help to cultivate moral virtue?” To this end, I build off of two points from the current literature. First, I take seriously the objection posed against skills. If moral virtue is primarily a motivational disposition, which we have good reason to believe it is according to a traditional Aristotelean account of virtue, then how do skills help us to cultivate moral virtue? To answer this, I argue that we need a robust account of moral motivation that develops Aristotle’s view while also exploring the relationship moral motivation has to psychological skills. I find that Aquinas’s moral psychology provides this resource.

Second, given the need to do moral philosophy in a way that engages with psychological research on skills and behavior, I aim to address this question by exploring skills of a psychological nature that aid in cultivating moral motivation itself. I argue that Aquinas supplies us with these skills. In addressing the moral motivation objection head-on, I hope to contribute to the currently underdeveloped discourse on the relationship between psychological skill, moral motivation, and moral virtue. Furthermore, given that the relationship between skill and virtue is central to the current discourse, I find that this research strengthens and informs the conceptual foreground on which much of the contemporary discourse on cultivating virtue is based.

To this end, in chapter one, I begin by outlining the current discourse on virtue’s relationship to skill. I articulate two sides of the discourse: those who propose the “moral

motivation objection,” and those who attempt to overcome the “moral motivation objection.” I argue that the current discourse is at an impasse because neither side is clear about what moral motivation means and continue to posit limited conceptions of skill. I propose that, if we are to understand how skills can cultivate virtue, more work needs to be done to clarify what moral motivation is and how psychological skills relate to and cultivate moral motivation.

In chapter two, I set out to construct an account of moral motivation. Instead of building out an Aristotelean account of moral motivation, I turn to Thomas Aquinas who offers a robust moral psychology that closely resembles an Aristotelean account of moral motivation. Like Aristotle, Aquinas thinks moral motivation has both teleological and efficient-causal aspects. In addition, Aquinas offers a developmental account of moral motivation that enables us to see both the psychological mechanisms at work in moral motivation and the way in which such mechanisms develop over time. In light of his developmental perspective, I argue that Aquinas also displays the relationship psychological skills have to moral motivation and the cultivation of virtue.

In the third and final chapter, after having laid out an in-depth account of moral motivation, I explore Aquinas’s account of skill and argue that Aquinas not only has an account of psychological skill that parallels the psychological skills offered by psychologists today, but his account also highlights the relevant kinds of skills that can be used to cultivate moral motivation. I call these “emotion-regulation” skills. Furthermore, and most importantly, I find that, contrary to the moral motivation objection, Aquinas helps us

understand how psychological skills of emotion-regulation can aid in the cultivation of virtue and moral motivation.¹⁴ After articulating Aquinas's account of moral motivation, psychological skill, and their relationship, I conclude by returning to the authors discussed in the first chapter. I find that Aquinas's account of moral motivation and skill help to remove the impasse that plagues the contemporary discourse. He adds nuance to their discussion of moral motivation and provides compelling answers to the way in which virtue is cultivated with the aid of psychological skills.

¹⁴ In chapter three, I address how Aquinas methods for regulating the emotions parallel contemporary emotion-regulation skills. I find that Aquinas offers his own emotion-regulation skills which, I argue, can be called "psychological skills of emotion-regulation."

Chapter 1: Virtue, Skills, and the Moral Motivative Objection

I. Virtue and Skill

Building on the long-standing tradition in virtue ethics that relies on the analogy between virtue and skill, several contemporary scholars propose that skills are a promising way to think about virtue and its development.¹⁵ As Aristotle famously notes, there are important similarities between virtue and skill: “what we need to learn to do, we learn by doing; for example, we become builders by building, and lyre-players by playing the lyre. So too we become just by doing just actions, temperate by doing temperate actions and courageous by courageous actions.”¹⁶ This ancient analogy between virtue and craft (or *techne*) continues to take center stage for many moral philosophers concerned with the development of virtue. Julia Annas, for example, argues that the moral knowledge required for virtue is analogous to the practical knowledge involved in acquiring a skill. The process of learning a virtue involves gaining the knowledge of how to act well in various situations, which is largely a kind of practical knowledge, much like the knowledge of how to do something, such as building a house or making shoes.¹⁷ In her recent book, *Intelligent Virtue*, Annas argues that

¹⁵ For example, Julia Annas, Christian Miller, Daniel Russell, and other I list throughout.

¹⁶ NE II 1103b

¹⁷ Ibid.

an understanding of how we acquire skills is necessary for learning about how we acquire virtues.¹⁸ Annas notes,

This is an important analogy, because ethical development displays something that we can see more clearly in these more limited contexts: there is a progress from the mechanical rule- or model-following of the learner to the greater understanding of the expert, whose responses are sensitive to the particularities of situations as well as expressing learning and general reflection.¹⁹

Annas emphasizes the possibility within this analogy to forge a path for understanding ethical development from the novice to the expert. Similar to Annas, Paul Bloomfield states that the skill analogy can yield “a viable epistemology in which moral knowledge is shown to be a species of a general kind of knowledge that is not philosophically suspect.”²⁰ Other philosophers such as Howard Curzer, Christian B. Miller, Robert C. Roberts, Matthew Stichter, Nancy Snow, and Daniel Russell all agree that skill provides a promising path forward in understanding how virtue is developed. Each of these scholars is both committed to a primarily Aristotelian account of virtue and confident that skills, including the study of experts, provide insight into how we can acquire virtue.

Not only do several philosophers agree that virtue resembles skills in ways that provide a promising pathway learn how virtue is cultivated, but also, thanks to this

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Julia Annas, “Virtue Ethics,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory* ed. by David Copp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 518.

²⁰ Paul Bloomfield, “Virtue Epistemology and the Epistemology of Virtue,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 60 no.1 (2000): 23.

analogy, they welcome psychologically advanced conceptions of skill and expertise to contribute to the moral development discussion. Daniel Russell, for example, focuses on social cognitive theory's ability to understand the network of mediating processes by which people interpret their surroundings and adjust their behavior in order to support the view that virtue is a skill, one that can be understood in terms of such mediating processes.²¹ Matthew Stichter, as I will go on to discuss in depth, agrees that the social cognitive model offered by social and developmental psychologists is the most promising path to understanding the skills that comprise virtuous activity. Narvez and Lapsley also argue that moral behavior (including virtuous behavior) should be understood as the multi-faceted skills displayed by experts that, when practiced, change the agent "to be the kind of person who fully embodies the skill, consciously and intuitively... modifying one's perceptions, attention, desires, and intuitions."²² Daniel Russell, Christian B. Miller, Nancy Snow, Darcia Narvaez, Daniel Lapsley, Matthew Stichter, and several others continue to

²¹ Russell writes, "My proposal is that both the virtues and skill could be understood in terms of such mediating processes. Why focus on social-cognitive theory? Even though social-cognitive theory is generally regarded as an empirically plausible approach to personality, I advert to it here only as a representative illustration of how a single personality theory might account for both virtue and skill...What is distinctive of the social-cognitive approach to personality is the idea that personality is an organized suite of reciprocal mediating processes by which people both (1) interpret or construe the situations in which they find themselves and imbue those situations with meaning, and (2) adjust their behaviors to those situations so interpreted. Psychologist Nancy Cantor gave a nice summary of these mediating processes in her 1990 paper, "From Thought to Behavior: 'Having' and 'Doing' in the Study of Personality and Cognition." Daniel Russell, "From Personality to Character to Virtue" in *Current Controversies in Virtue Theory* ed. By Mark Alfano (New York: Routledge, 2015). 93.

²² Darcia Narvaez and Daniel K. Lapsley. "The psychological foundations of everyday morality and moral expertise." in *Character psychology and character education*. (University of Notre Dame Press, 2005).

develop theories that build upon what they think to be a strong relationship between acquiring certain skills and cultivating virtue.²³

Though most scholars in virtue ethics agree that virtue is analogous to skill in some way, there is still a large amount of disagreement on the extent to which virtue is analogous to skill and therefore helpful in understanding how virtue is developed. For example, Annas argues that, for Aristotle, moral virtues are not skills but merely share the intellectual structure of a practical skill.²⁴ She writes that, for Aristotle,

Skill involves a mere capacity, for knowledge can be used in ways opposed to the right ones, whereas a virtue cannot be used equally well for opposed ends (NE 1129a11-16); virtue cannot be forgotten, whereas skills, being mere intellectual states, can (NE 1140b28-30) ; with a skill the person who deliberately makes mistakes is preferable to the person who makes them without intending to, whereas the reverse is true with virtue (NE1140b22-8); virtue is more accurate than skill (1106b14-17) ... Aristotle [also] makes the claim (NE1105a25-b5, 16-17, 1b-4, 6-7) that with skills all that matters is the product be good, whereas with virtue actions cannot be appropriately judged without bringing in the agent's intentions.²⁵

Skills involve a mere capacity, can be forgotten, and are less precise than virtue is for Aristotle. Furthermore, unlike skills, the agent's intentions must be part of our assessment.

²³ It is important to note that many of these scholars (i.e. Russell, Narvaez, Stichter, Miller) are motivated by or at least sympathetic to Flanagan's principle which calls scholars to reassess virtue and moral development in light of what we know to be psychological feasible (aka what humans can do/are capable of). One implication of this principle is a suggested change in the division of labor between philosophers and psychologists on moral development. Many current philosophers believe psychologists should take the lead to ensure that the moral ideal is construed in terms of what we know people are capable of achieving rather than a philosophical ideal. As a result, these philosophers seek to construe virtue as a kind of psychological skill that psychologists help to define.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

Annas also notes that, despite this list of differences, this list is not decisive because the modern thesis that virtue is a skill is only to say that virtue is one kind of skill (e.g., a psychological skill). Like Aristotle who emphasizes the difference between skill and virtue largely on the basis of motivational elements present in virtue but not in skill, several other scholars also emphasize motivational differences between virtue and skill. What I call the “motivation objection” relies on an Aristotelian understanding of moral virtue and states that moral virtues are primarily motivational dispositions of a certain sort that are not present in skills. Skills, therefore, are not helpful, or only very limitedly helpful, in understanding virtue and its development.²⁶ If this objection is correct, the trajectory of current research that looks to psychological skills and the psychological study of experts to answer how virtue is cultivated is fraught with limitations. If virtue is primarily a certain motivational disposition that skills not only lack but do not cultivate, then this line of research can never fully teach us about how virtue is cultivated.

Given that this objection threatens the viability of an otherwise promising line of research, it is worth taking a closer look at the proponents of the moral motivation objection. In what follows, I identify and analyze two sides of this discourse. The first side is composed of a group of philosophers who propose the motivation objection and the second side is composed of a philosopher who responds to the motivation objection. The first side is made up of Linda Zagzebski, Anselm Mueller, Gary Wallace, and James Watson

²⁶ The virtue under discussion is only moral virtues (i.e., temperance, courage, justice, and prudence) not the intellectual virtues.

each of whom identifies specific motivational differences between virtues and skills and thereby challenges the view that skills help can contribute to our understanding of how moral virtue is developed. The second side is made up of Matthew Stichter, along with the help of developmental psychologists Darcia Narvaez and Daniel Lapsley. Stichter argues that certain psychological skills of self-regulation *do* in fact account for the motivation required of moral virtue.

Starting with the first side, or what I call the “proponents of the moral motivation objection,” in what follows, I analyze this side’s objections to display three points. First, I find that each of their objections to the virtue-skill analogy crystalize around specific motivational differences they identify between virtue and skill. Second, I argue that each philosopher leaves both the notion of moral motivation ambiguous and the notion of skill too restricted. Third, though their work points to the significance of moral motivation for virtue, their focus on the disanalogy between skill and virtue ultimately leaves unanswered the question for which the analogy between skill and virtue was originally posed: how could skills (of various sorts) help us understand how virtue is cultivated? Next, turning to the second side, or an opponent of the moral motivation objection. I find that though Stichter’s work focuses on psychological skills, he fails to capture what moral motivation is and how psychological skills relate to the motivational components required for moral virtue. In sum, my analysis of both sides points to the need to first gain clarity on what moral motivation is if we are to understand how skills can help us to cultivate virtue.

II. The Proponents of the Moral Motivation Objection

Linda Zagzebski, James D. Wallace, Gary Watson, and Anselm Mueller all take issue with the skill analogy due to important motivational differences they each specify between skill and virtue. Zagzebski is perhaps the most explicit of the group in defining her position on the difference between virtue and skill. In her book, *Virtues of the Mind*, she emphasizes that virtues are defined by, what she calls, their “motivational components” which are psychically prior to action. Skills, on the other hand, are essentially aimed at helping us become “effective in action” and have very little to do with motivational components. More specifically, Zagzebski argues “virtues and skills have numerous connections, but ... the motivational component of virtue defines it more than external effectiveness does, whereas it is the reverse in the case of skills.”²⁷ Her emphasis on the motivational components of virtue derives from the following passage from Aristotle’s NE. Aristotle writes:

Again the case of the arts and that of the virtues are not similar; for the products of the arts have their goodness in themselves, so that it is enough that they should have a certain character, but if the acts that are in accordance with the virtues have themselves a certain character it does not follow that they are done justly or temperately. The agent also must be in a certain condition when he does them; in the first place he must have knowledge, secondly he must choose the acts, and choose them for their own sakes, and thirdly his action must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character. These are not reckoned as conditions of the possession of the arts, except the bare knowledge; but as a condition of the possession of the virtues knowledge has little or no weight, while the other conditions count not for a little but for everything, i.e., the very conditions that result from often doing just and temperate acts (II.4.1105a22-35).²⁸

²⁷ Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 115.

²⁸ Zagzebski, 111. Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* II.4.1105a22-35.

Aristotle emphasizes that there are three conditions required for virtue that are not required for skill (*techne*). Zagzebski calls these conditions the “motivational components” of virtue. Though she does not expand upon what these conditions are, nor does she attempt an analysis of Aristotle’s well-known yet notoriously difficult passage, she does emphasize that the conditions Aristotle outlines are motivational in that they highlight the importance of an interior choice made in accordance with certain reasons (i.e., to do the act for its own sake), a choice that precedes action. These components are distinctive of virtue but not necessarily of skill, according to Zagzebski. Skill is concerned with effectiveness in action itself and not the interior choices that motivate such an action. Zagzebski emphasizes that the motivational components are “psychically prior” to skill because the motivational component spurs the acquisition of skills that then allow the agent to be effective in action. She writes, “to the extent that a virtuous person is motivated to produce external consequences desirable from the point of view of the virtue, he would also be motivated to acquire the skills that are associated with such effectiveness in action.”²⁹ For example, she continues, “a courageous person in certain roles would be motivated to acquire the skills of effective combat. [Similarly] a fair person who is a teacher would be motivated to learn procedures for fair grading.”³⁰ Though Zagzebski thinks that “many moral virtues have

²⁹ Zagzebski, 115.

³⁰ Ibid.

many skills associated with them," these skills always come after first having the moral motivation required to spur their acquisition.³¹ Zagzebski emphasizes the differences between virtues and skills by identifying virtues as primarily motivational, or defined by motivational components. Skills, on the other hand, are primarily about being effective in action, a task one takes up only after motivation is in place. Thus, on her account, the analogy between skill and virtue breaks down principally because of motivational components that are a central part of moral virtue but not of skill.

Similarly, James D. Wallace argues in *Virtues and Vices* that virtue essentially involves a "change of heart" or "motivational components" that are not found in skill. Wallace writes that skills essentially involve "know-how" required for gaining the capacity to overcome a "technical difficulty" inherent in an action. He writes,

The sort of difficulty that a skill is the capacity to overcome--[a] technical difficulty--is not some contrary inclination that opposes the action. Rather the difficulty is inherent in the doing of the action itself. In some cases, the technical difficulty is due to the complexity of the action, as in cooking or theorizing. There is much one must know in order to do these things. In other cases, such as hitting a baseball or performing eye surgery, the action is hard because of the coordination required.³²

According to Wallace, a skill is a capacity to overcome a technical difficulty that requires obtaining "know-how" or technique in order to perform or master an action. However, this technical difficulty is limited to certain kinds of difficulty that do not include overcoming

³¹ Zagzebski, 113.

³² James D. Wallace, *Virtues and Vices* (London: Cornell University Press, 1978), 45.

some contrary inclinations or “having a change of heart” in coming to care about something. Overcoming a contrary inclination (i.e., overcoming the desire to lie instead and instead tell the truth), what he calls having a change of heart, Wallace thinks, is strictly within the realm of motivational components of virtue. In addition to having a change of heart, virtue is centrally about caring. He writes, “Honesty, for example, is a matter of taking certain things seriously--a matter of caring about certain things. To cease to be honest would be a matter of coming to care less or ceasing to care--a change of heart rather than a loss of information or the loss of a skill through forgetting how to do something.”³³ The key contrast Wallace describes is that virtue is about caring, or having a change of heart, and/or overcoming contrary inclinations. Skill, on the other hand, is about knowing or acquiring “know-how” in order to gain the capacity to overcome technical difficulties. Once again, like Zagzebski, virtue is not analogous to skill because virtue requires a kind of interior motivational state that skills do not require.

Gary Watson also points to motivational components definitive of virtue that skills do not seem to incorporate. Watson writes,

The appraisal of skills or talents is importantly different from aretaic evaluation in a way identified by Aristotle. Knowledge of an agent's ends, intentions, and efforts has a different effect on aretaic appraisals than on the others. Indifference in a performance doesn't count against one's skill, whereas a less than wholehearted effort to save someone's life does impugn my moral character. Talent and skill are fully displayed only in wholehearted performances, whereas the aretaic perspective is also concerned with the "will," that is, with one's purposes, ends, choices,

³³ Wallace, 47.

concerns, cares, attachments, and commitments. Not trying can be a failure of virtue but not of skill.³⁴

As I see it, Watson's main point is that wholeheartedness, according to an Aristotelian perspective of virtue, requires that the agent's performances are expressions of the agent's deeply held notions of purpose, concerns, cares, desires, etc. otherwise described as "the will" in ancient conceptions of virtue. Skills do not require this kind of wholeheartedness. Indifference in a performance does not count against a performance, you need not be wholehearted in performance for it to be excellent. However, the reverse is not the case with virtue. Central to Watson's claim is the idea that virtuous actions have motivations that are connected to and an expression of agent's cares, concerns, purposes, intentions, etc. or that which makes up an agent's will. In the case of skills, there need not be such motivational components at play because a performance (e.g., playing tennis) can be excellent without expressing overarching cares, concerns, intentions, etc. Lacking wholeheartedness does not count against one's having a skill; it does, however, count against one's having a virtue.

A final philosopher in the first group who also makes sharp distinctions between skill and moral motivation is Anselm Mueller. Thus far, Zagzebski, Watson, and Wallace all reject the analogy because virtue has motivational components that skill lacks. Mueller rejects the analogy for a different reason: because virtues and skills are acquired in quite

³⁴ Gary Watson. "Two faces of responsibility." *Philosophical Topics* 24, no. 2 (1996): 244. "Aretaic" refers to aretaic ethics /,æɹə'teɪ.ɪk/, from Greek ἀρετή (arete)) otherwise known as traditionally accounts of virtue ethics.

different ways. Mueller argues that the habituation involved in acquiring virtue is so unlike that involved in acquiring a skill that the acquisition of skills is not at all a helpful model for the acquisition of virtues. He holds this view largely because he, like Watson, Zagzebski, and Wallace, thinks virtue and its habituation is primarily about having a moral motivation. According to Mueller, virtue is centrally a qualification of the will wherein the will is disposed to respond to certain ends as good. Put in other words, this qualification of the will is moral motivation or a firm motivational pattern in the will wherein the will is disposed to respond to certain ends as good. The kinds of practices that institute or cultivate this habitual disposition are ones that engage in/cultivate a responsiveness to certain kinds of reasons. Mueller argues that the habituation involved in gaining this responsiveness to reason, this moral motivation, is quite different from the habituation involved in acquiring a skill.

Following Aristotle, Mueller emphasizes that virtue centrally requires a firm motivational pattern. He writes, "There is no virtue without a virtuous pattern of motivation."³⁵ Additionally, he states that "a virtue is the firm attachment of the will to a motivational pattern constitutive of acting well – what Aristotle calls a good *hexis prohairetikê*, i.e. a disposition unconditionally to choose the right way of behaving for the right kind of reason."³⁶ By contrast, he states, "A skill is a capacity to produce a certain type

³⁵ Anselm Mueller, "Virtue as a Habit," In the author's possession, 45.

³⁶ Anselm Mueller, "Virtue as a Habit," 27.

of result in accordance with specific procedures.”³⁷ According to Mueller, a skill (e.g., the computer engineer’s skill at fixing computers), is chiefly a capacity to act in accordance with knowledge, rules and procedures (e.g., about how computers work). The virtuous person, unlike the merely skilled person, must gain the motivational disposition unconditionally to choose the right way of behaving for the right kind of reason which is active in all areas of his/her life. This requires a responsiveness to “teleological concerns” or certain reasons that are beyond merely a responsiveness to rules and procedures within a certain domain, as is the case with skills.³⁸ One way he conveys this difference between skill and virtue is by articulating the way in which virtue, unlike skill, treats certain reasons as imperative. The skilled person is motivated by the exercise of the activity of the skill itself, including the knowledge and reasoning involved in the employment of the skill. A virtuous person, by contrast, is motivated by a “why” that points beyond the activity itself. Mueller writes, in the case of the virtue of charity, “one’s *x-ing* does not manifest charity unless one would answer an Anscombian Why? by pointing to another’s need or wish, or the like.”³⁹

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ “This habit (hexis) [required for virtue] is a quality of the will: a firm disposition, roughly, to treat, or not treat, certain patterns of motivation as imperative. No such disposition is characteristic of experts: their skills amount to a readiness whose object, or content, is only conditional: a readiness to be guided effectively by relevant rules and reasons if and when they have a will to pursue the respective (poietic) aims that can supply them with reasons on which to act. And it is evident that the will in question need not actualize any firm motivational disposition. And it certainly does not actualize a disposition constitutive of any skill.” Anselm Mueller, “Virtue as a Habit,” 27.

³⁹ Anselm Mueller, “Virtue as a Habit,” 9. Similarly, in the case of justice, Mueller writes, “...the just person’s ultimate and motivating reason for, say, *x-ing*, when they have promised to, is nevertheless the promise, not the point of justice or, more particularly, of promise-keeping.”

Mueller distinguishes two kinds of reasoning to explain the difference between the kinds of reasons that take place in the practice of a skill versus the kinds of reasons that take place in the practice of/habituation of virtue. Virtue is cultivated by practicing a responsiveness to “occasioning reasoning” and skills are cultivated by practicing “telic reasoning.” Telic reasoning involves “knowledge of what is to be produced by its exercise (including knowledge of the product’s characteristic use)” such as the knowledge a carpenter uses to produce a table (what a table is, how it can be used, the purpose it serves). Occasioning reasoning, by contrast, requires some knowledge of the point of its practice or the ultimate reason *why* you took up an activity (i.e., the “Anscombian Why?”).⁴⁰ Mueller illustrates the difference in the following passage,

But as we compare the reasons that guide the practice of a skill as such with the reasons that guide the practice of a virtue as such, we find telic rationality in the first case, and occasioning rationality in the second. If you have promised to fix a bicycle, your purpose – the bicycle’s functioning – does indeed supply you with a telic reason to make use of suitable means and ways (such as getting the tools). But qua act of justice, or fidelity, what you do is nonetheless motivated by an occasioning reason, viz. your promise. Its poietic telos – viz., the bicycle fixed – is not the ultimate reason on which you act.

What we learn in the practice of skill is merely a responsiveness to telic reasons (i.e. the means of making the bicycle) and not a responsiveness to occasioning reasons (i.e., considerations of why it is good to fix the bicycle, why one would take up this activity).

⁴⁰ It is a reason supplied “not by a purpose that x-ing would serve to achieve [a telic reason], but rather by something the agent takes to be the case and to make x-ing the right thing to do in response.” For example, in the case of practicing justice, “one has to have some idea, however nebulous, of what ideal gives point to the practice of justice” under conditions of pervasive nepotism, or under a tyrant. Ibid.

Virtue, on the other hand, requires qualifying the will which involves being motivated in the right ways, or responsive to the right reasons, what Mueller calls “occasioning reasons.” Only in practicing a reflection on and responsiveness to the right sorts of reasons does this firm motivational pattern or disposition in the will come about. This difference, particularly in learning to attend to the right sorts of reasons, is the biggest difference between virtue and any skill according to Mueller.⁴¹ The habituation process involved in acquiring a skill, therefore, does not display a helpful analogy to the kind of habituation process that cultivates virtue. Though Mueller emphasizes a unique way in which skill and virtue differ, like Watson, Wallace, and Zagzebski, Mueller agrees that a key difference between skill and virtue is based on motivation. Virtue is primarily about qualifying the will to be responsive to certain kinds of reasons which requires a certain kind of habituation process that skills lack. All four author’s arguments crystalize around moral motivation as the key differentiator between skill and virtue.

Despite this first side’s emphasis on the importance of moral motivation in an account of virtue, these scholars are not clear about what moral motivation is. Zagzebski

⁴¹ Mueller, 10. Mueller writes, “There is another side to the cognitive constitution of virtue that does not find a parallel in any skill, however reasoned. This is the disposition to be aware of the presence and relevance of relevant reasons – a qualification not included in the enduring disposition to treat as a relevant reason a certain type of situation once its relevance is recognized.... A particular carpenter, X, may or may not intend to, say, make a table. In either case, X has qua carpenter no further reason, beyond that purpose, to fasten legs to a table top. Hence the question of “awareness of the presence and relevance of reasons” cannot arise for X qua carpenter with respect to any such further reason. If, then, X does intend to make a table, there can be no such thing as his being unaware of a relevant reason, except by way of failing to think of and attend to it at the right time. But such forgetting is not a deficiency in carpentry, as forgetting about a promise is deficiency in the virtues of justice, fidelity, and reliability.”

defines moral motivation as “motivational components” and loosely points to Aristotle’s passage indicating three conditions or interior choices that make up moral motivation. Moreover, she claims that moral motivation is always “psychically prior” to skill. Wallace vaguely describes moral motivation as a “change of heart” or “caring about something,” both of which are distinct from the capacity to overcome “technical difficulty.” Watson describes moral motivation as “concerned with the “will,” or an array of “one’s purposes, ends, choices, concerns, cares, attachments, and commitments.” What Watson means by these terms is again loosely connected to an Aristotelean conception of will and intention which he, like the other proponents of the moral motivation objection, does not clarify. Finally, though Mueller does the best job of the group in identifying moral motivation as a quality of the will by taking from Aristotle’s notion of *prohairesis*, or a disposition unconditionally to choose the right way of behaving for the right kind of reason, he too leaves this unexplained and points to Aristotle (who, to Mueller’s credit, also does not do a great job of explaining this).

Not only do their definitions vary greatly and, if charitably interpreted, only loosely hang together, but they also offer different views about the role moral motivation plays in moral virtue. For Zagzebski, moral motivation as something that operates upfront and is “psychically prior” to action. For Wallace and Watson, it is unclear whether moral motivation is psychically prior to action or something that shows up during an action (e.g., a concern expressed in an act). Also left unexplained is whether moral motivation is a quality ascribed to certain actions once they display an expression of certain interior cares,

concerns, intentions, etc. or are whether moral motivation is something that grows and develops over time and is not just a quality ascribed to certain fully morally motivated actions. For Mueller, moral motivation is clearly something that must be developed and habituated if it is to guide our actions. On his account, motivation is not just an upfront choice but something that grows over time through certain habitual practices.

The ambiguity in each scholar's conception of moral motivation presented thus far is perhaps explained in part by their primary interest in the task of pointing out the disanalogy between virtue and skill. They define moral motivation only insofar as to distinguish it from their conception of skill. Yet, in so doing, they leave behind unclear views about what moral motivation is, views that are propped up by contrasting views of skill that, when challenged, pose further questions about what moral motivation really is and how it actually relates to skills.

Similar to the ambiguity found in their notion of moral motivation, so too is the notion of skill left undefined and narrowly construed. Zagzebski, Watson, Wallace, and Mueller all conceive of skills as comparable to various crafts or "how to" methods, which they take to be representative of skills generally. Beginning with Zagzebski, she uses the following examples to describe the kinds of skills she has in mind. She writes,

Examples of skills that a person with each of these virtues might have are as follows:
Compassion skills: knowing what to say to the bereaved. Moral wisdom skills: being able to talk a young person into staying in school or getting out of a street gang.
Fairness skills: knowing how to fairly evaluate student papers or papers submitted

to a professional journal...Skills of courage: knowing how to stand up to a tormentor.⁴²

Each of the examples highlight a kind of how-to knowledge required to be effective in action that comes after first having the “psychically prior” motivational components. In analyzing her account, the kinds of skills Zagzebski has in mind, though perhaps involving psychological aptitude at some level (i.e. displaying compassion), are narrow in scope in that they are supposed to be representative of skills generally but do not account for important cases of other kinds of skills, say, psychological skills. As Stichter, the lead proponent of the second side, states, the more advanced psychological skills found in experts require multi-step skills of self-regulation towards a chosen goal.

In addition, some kinds of psychological skills go beyond how-to knowledge and deal directly with the kinds of things moral motivation is about. As I will go on to discuss in chapter three, emotion regulation skills entail psychological techniques that, when adopted, enable the modulation and discernment of emotions in light of a target emotion or emotional goal.⁴³ Returning to the example of virtue, if the goal is to choose to do an act for its own sake, which is what Zagzebski says is a motivational component definitive of virtue, then it is important to regulate our emotions such that the choice is made for the right reasons and not, for example, because our anger tells us it is the thing to do. In this case, skills of emotion regulation seem to align closely with the kinds of things moral

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Emotion-Focused Therapy offer examples of such skillsets.

motivation is about. It enters directly into the act of discerning and choosing certain ends, which is the kind of interior act that Zagzebski thinks is constitutive of moral motivation, at least according to her loose definition of moral motivation. If this is so, skills of this kind are not separate from moral motivation but could impact its formation quite directly. Zagzebski neither acknowledges the existence of such psychological skills in her view of skills, nor does her account of moral motivation provide enough depth to exclude this possibility. As a result, the case of psychological skills challenge Zagzebski's basis for distinguishing skills from virtue and puts added pressure on the need to get clear about what moral motivation is and how it relates to skills.

In a similar vein, Watson, Wallace and Mueller also offer narrow conceptions of skills. Watson and Wallace have in mind technical skills such as "cooking," fixing a "bicycle", or becoming an expert "tennis player."⁴⁴ The kinds of skills Mueller thinks are representative of skills generally are skills of carpentry, bicycle repair, gardening, and those of a computer technician.⁴⁵ While all are examples of skills to be sure, they are quite removed from psychological skills whose content are the thoughts, feelings, and actions that make up much of the moral life.⁴⁶ Take for example social-cognitive model of

⁴⁴ Mueller, "Virtue as a Habit," 9. Watson, "Two faces of responsibility," 244.

⁴⁵ Mueller, "Virtue as a Habit," 1-9.

⁴⁶ For example, Mueller's examples of skills clearly do not involve a responsiveness to occasioning or the "Anscombian why?" sorts of reasons which, to him, are a testament to the reason skills differ from virtue. However, some psychological skills involve reflection on ends and fine-tuning one's responsiveness to reasons.

personality and the discriminatory skills put forth by Daniel Russell.⁴⁷ Russell indicates that certain skills cultivate a kind of responsiveness to reasons concerning deep-standing goals. Such skills are far more promising examples of virtue-relevant skills than the skills of carpentry and gardening that Mueller and others took as representative of skills generally. More needs to be said about what skills are and how psychological skills (e.g., emotion regulation skills, social-cognitive skills, self-regulation skills, etc.) are not just analogous to virtue but could actually facilitate the kinds of things moral motivation is about. However, answering how skills could facilitate or cultivate a moral motivation again requires getting clearer about what moral motivation is and how it relates to skills.

Concluding Thoughts on the Proponents

In analyzing the proponents of the moral motivation objection, I hope to have made clear how their arguments against the virtue-skill analogy crystalize around the issue of moral motivation. They each stand behind the view that moral virtue is rooted in Aristotle's conception of virtue that emphasizes the centrality of moral motivation in moral virtue. Moreover, they think that skills do not account for the motivational components required for virtue. Though these philosophers aim to stay true to Aristotle's account of virtue and

⁴⁷ Russell writes, "Roughly, to have a virtue would be to have certain deep, standing goals that account for the activation of schemas for interpreting the social landscape, as well as discriminatory skills for defining determinate goal-relevant tasks and strategies for adjusting behavior so as to realize those goals." Russell, Daniel, "From Personality to Character to Virtue" in *Current Controversies in Virtue Theory* edited by Mark Alfano (New York: Routledge, 2015) 95.

emphasize the importance of moral motivation, their accounts fail to clarify what moral motivation is.

Furthermore, I find their narrow conceptions of skill and moral motivation keep them from exploring how skills relate to and contribute to moral motivation. In other words, their focus on drawing distinctions between virtue and skill prevents them working out answers to the more nuanced and interesting question for which the analogy between skill and virtue was originally posed: how could skills (of various sorts) help us understand how virtue is cultivated? If our goal is not merely to point out the disanalogy between virtue and skill, but to better understand how virtue is cultivated (especially that which is most important to virtue, moral motivation), it is important to work out what moral motivation is and what resources skills have to offer towards this end.

III. An Opponent of the Moral Motivation Objection

Matthew Stichter responds to the motivation objection by arguing that psychological skills do in fact account for moral motivation and therefore do cultivate moral virtue. Stichter sees his work in large part as a reply to the “long-held objection to understanding virtues as practical skills,” that focuses on motivational differences between virtues and skills. Stichter engages directly with the proponents of the moral motivation objection. He argues that the separation of motivation and skill are mistaken largely due to the antiquated conception of skill presupposed by the authors who wage such objections. When virtue is seen as a psychological skill of self-regulation, Stichter argues, the motivational differences between

virtue and skill are resolved and thereby allow skill (of a certain kind) to be an effective way to cultivate virtue.

In what follows, I recount Stichter attempt to use his view of skill to reply to motivation objections offered by Zagzebski and Watson. Though Stichter is optimistic about the potential for psychological skills of self-regulation to account for all motivational differences identified by the proponents, I argue that Stichter's account fails to account for the kind of Aristotelean-inspired view of moral motivation that Zagzebski and Watson take seriously. As a result, his account fails to overcome the motivation objection but points to an important gap in the discourse. His work highlights the need to gain clarity about what moral motivation is if we are to understand how it relates to psychological skills in the development of virtue.

Stichter's Reply to Zagzebski and Watson

Zagzebski makes two claims about the motivational differences between virtue and skill.

Zagzebski thinks that what is distinctive about virtue is that it has motivational components that are "psychically prior to the acquisition of skill" that allows one to be "effective in action" or produce "external consequences." Second, she claims that the motivational component of virtue "defines it more" than in the case of skills.⁴⁸ Despite Stichter's claim

⁴⁸ Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 115. She writes, "virtues and skills have numerous connections, but virtues are psychically prior to skills. I propose that this is because the motivational component of virtue defines it more than external effectiveness does, whereas it is the reverse in the case of skills."

that his view of skill addresses both claims, I find that his view misinterprets what moral motivation is for Zagzebski.

In reply to Zagzebski's first claim, Stichter pushes back against the idea that skills and virtues can be separated on the basis of virtue having a motivational component that is "psychically prior." In other words, Stichter challenges the idea that motivation is something that only happens upfront and not during the skill itself. In the case of psychological skill of self-regulation, Stichter argues, motivation entails both "goal-setting" and "goal-striving" or a commitment to a set goal. Both are required throughout the process of self-regulation towards a goal. Goals are required upfront in goal-setting, but commitment to a goal is also required throughout the process of achieving expertise, or a high level of self-regulation. Stichter writes,

One of the most important factors for determining whether someone can attain and maintain expertise is motivation. Nobody can acquire expertise by accident, and only those who dedicate themselves to excellence in performance can reach that level of skill development. Insofar as deliberate practice requires setting up challenges to overcome, it requires being strongly motivated to perform well, and a high level of motivation is required to maintain that level of performance. Like our expectations for acquiring virtue, achieving expertise requires being consistently motivated to achieve high standards that one sets for oneself.⁴⁹

Both goal-setting and commitment to a goal or goal-striving, Stichter argues, is essential to successful self-regulation, which entails overcoming many obstacles over time. In this way, Stichter challenges Zagzebski's idea that skills and virtues can be separated on the basis of

⁴⁹ Matthew Stichter, "The Role of Motivation," 206.

virtue having a motivational component that is “psychically prior” to skill. Though Stichter displays how psychological skills do not require “motivational components” upfront, but rather throughout the process of exercising the skill, he defines moral motivation as “goal setting” and “goal striving.” Yet this is not clearly what Zagzebski had in mind, as we see in her second claim.

Turning to Zagzebski’s second claim that the motivational component in virtue “defines it more” than in the case of skills, Stichter’s reply struggles to capture what she means by this claim. He writes,

What then of Zagzebski’s claim that the difference between virtues and skills lies in the motivational component defining virtue more than success, in contrast to skills? Perhaps it is the case for virtue, but not similarly for expertise, that the motivation to act well must always be present in order to possess the virtue.Heather Battaly provides [another] possible explanation when she distinguishes conceptions of virtue by whether virtue requires good motives, good effects, or both.⁵⁰

Stichter guesses at what Zagzebski might mean and proceeds to display how the motivational components described in each possible interpretation are also found in skilled experts. For example, in reply to the possible claim that the “motivation to act well” must always be present in the case of virtues but not in skills, he posits that if virtue is typically understood as a matter of degree, then “someone could possess a virtue even with some lapses in motivation.” He concludes that this consideration “puts virtue back on a par with expertise, since expertise also admits of degrees.”⁵¹

⁵⁰ Stichter, *The Skillfulness of Virtue*, 99.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

These interpretations might hold if they did not ignore the explanation Zagzebski herself gives by reference to Aristotle's passage at NE II.4.1105a22-35. She writes that there are "several arguments for distinguishing virtues and skills that I find persuasive. I will mention several from Aristotle..." Following this, she cites Aristotle's passage where he identifies three characteristics that define virtue (i.e., virtuous actions are chosen for their own sake, etc.). According to Zagzebski's reading of Aristotle, these three conditions pick out the "motivational components" that "define" virtue but not skill.⁵² Read in light of this quote, Zagzebski's second claim that the motivational components "define it more" than skill is not such a mystery (or is no more mysterious than is Aristotle's view). Yet, because Stichter ignores the heart of Zagzebski's claim, he fails to address how self-regulation skills accounts for or contribute to the motivational components that, according to Aristotle, define virtue but not skill. Though Stichter's account fails to display how psychological skills account for the kind of moral motivation Zagzebski has in mind, his confusion about moral motivation highlights an important need for the discourse to get clear about what moral motivation is if we are to understand the way in which various psychological skills relate to moral motivation.

Turning to Watson, Stichter again fails to capture what Watson means by moral motivation and how it differs from skill. Watson writes,

The appraisal of skills or talents is importantly different from aretaic evaluation in a way identified by Aristotle. Knowledge of an agent's ends, intentions, and efforts

⁵² Zagzebski, *Virtues and Vices*, 111.

has a different effect on aretaic appraisals than on the others. Indifference in a performance doesn't count against one's skill, whereas a less than wholehearted effort to save someone's life does impugn my moral character. Talent and skill are fully displayed only in wholehearted performances, whereas the aretaic perspective is also concerned with the "will," that is, with one's purposes, ends, choices, concerns, cares, attachments, and commitments. Not trying can be a failure of virtue but not of skill.⁵³

As I see it, Watson is making two connected points. His first point is that wholeheartedness, according to an Aristotelian perspective of virtue, requires that the agent's performances are expressions of the agent's deeply held notions of purpose, concerns, cares, desires, etc. otherwise described as "the will" in aretaic conceptions of virtue. Skills do not require this kind of wholeheartedness in order to be considered a great performance. Second, Watson emphasizes that expertise in a skill allows for an agent to be indifferent or half-hearted about her performance without it counting against the agent's skill where the reverse is not the case with virtue (largely because virtue has a different standard for wholeheartedness, as described by the first point).

In reply to Watson's objection, Stichter only addresses Watson's second point, ignoring the first point's Aristotelian-inspired view of moral motivation. Stichter argues that, contrary to Watson's critique that skills allow for indifference in a performance, the study of expertise (or people who have highly developed self-regulation skills) indicates that experts must be continuously committed to the ends of their practice. Stichter argues that the expert can be assessed as a performer who, rather than being indifferent, must be

⁵³ Watson, "Two faces of responsibility," 244.

committed to an end goal and continuously respond to the demands of his practice (e.g., becoming a doctor requires being committed and responsive to the demands of medicine).⁵⁴ Stichter concludes, “we do not need to look beyond the acquisition of skills and expertise to incorporate a concern for the motivational commitments of the performer.”⁵⁵

Stichter’s reply to Watson does not address the core of Watson’s view found in his first point. Watson claims that skills, like virtue, require an expression of an agent’s ultimate cares, concerns, etc. As Watson explicitly notes, he draws from “an aretaic evaluation” of moral motivation “in a way identified by Aristotle” that describes the wholehearted action of the virtuous person as one that is an expression of the agent’s “will,” or “one’s purposes, ends, choices, concerns, cares, attachments, and commitments.”⁵⁶ Virtues are different from skills, according to Watson, because virtues express these kinds of motivational components. Instead of engaging this point, Stichter interprets motivation merely as a “commitment to being an expert” which entails a “responsiveness to the demands of a practice.” Yet this does not amount to or require the kind of wholeheartedness Watson picks out. For example, in the case of the expert doctor, it could be that the doctor is

⁵⁴ Stichter writes, “He argues that, “the expert can also be assessed in aretaic terms, where a failure of motivation does count against one being a good performer.” He continues, “To return to the example of less than wholehearted performances, [as] Watson suggests....We would likely regard a doctor who gives half-hearted attempts at surgery as a bad doctor, even if she can wholeheartedly perform surgery with expertise. Likewise, for a doctor in an emergency room who does not treat a patient simply because she does not feel like it. There doctors are not being responsive to the distinctive demands of medicine, and so we would criticize them for their lack of commitment like we would if someone acted half-heartedly with respect to a virtue like kindness.” Stichter, *The Skillfulness of Virtue*, 105-106.

⁵⁵ Stichter, “Role of Motivation,” 208.

⁵⁶ Watson, “Two faces of responsibility,” 244.

“responsive to the demands of her practice” but such responsiveness and expertise never requires her actions as a doctor to express her cares or concerns beyond the domain of the practice. Such an expression requires reflecting on one’s ultimate cares, concerns, and/or life purposes. As Watson and Zagzebski’s Aristotelian-inspired accounts suggest, moral motivation concerns a choice about ends and therefore must consider ends, concerns, and cares that go beyond any one domain.

That said, Stichter’s failed attempts point, once again, to a larger issue within the discourse. If we wish to take seriously an Aristotelean account of moral motivation, we must get clear about what this means. Watson Zagzebski, and Stichter all use a number of different, underdetermined definitions of moral motivation. In so doing, they complicate any attempt to display how skills relate to moral motivation.

Concluding Thoughts on Stichter

Stichter’s account represents a side of the discourse that takes seriously psychological skills and the moral motivation objection but, in attempting to show how skills themselves account for moral motivation, he ends up highlighting the need for the discourse as a whole to clarify what moral motivation is. Furthermore, we see that pinning down an account of moral motivation is necessary for understanding how psychological skills relate to moral motivation.

As a final point, Stichter’s view leaves us with further questions concerning the relationship skills have to moral virtue. Due to his preoccupation with arguing for the thesis

that virtues *are* certain kinds of psychological skills, his work stops short of exploring answers to more interesting and helpful questions. For example, how psychological skills help us to develop virtue? I propose that instead of arguing for ways that psychological skills capture moral motivation and overcome the moral motivation objection, we take a humbler stance. We first work out what moral motivation is, taking seriously the view of moral motivation Aristotle had in mind, and explore how certain kinds of psychological skills could be useful in cultivating moral motivation and, by extension, moral virtue. In taking this stance, we open up the dialogue to explore the many ways psychological skills can help to develop the different kinds of intelligence and acumen virtues and moral motivation involve.

IV. The Task Behind and Ahead

After having laid out the landscape of literature on virtue and skill, pinpointing two sides of the moral motivation objection, my aim has been to highlight a need or a gap within the current literature. At present, the discourse is at an impasse. Neither side is clear about what moral motivation is and, as a result, they fail to articulate how skills relate to and/or could aid in the cultivation of moral virtue. Furthermore, more work needs to be done to understand the psychological skills that relate most to moral motivation.

Going forward, to address the impasse in the current literature I take up the task of building out a moral psychology of moral motivation. I do this with two ideas mind. First, I take it that it is important to stay true to an account of moral motivation that builds upon

Aristotle's conception of moral motivation. Moreover, I hold that moral motivation is a disposition that can be cultivated over time through habit. By way of exploring a robust account of moral motivation that highlights both of these features, rather than turning to Aristotle, I propose Aquinas's account fulfills this task best thanks to his well-recognized and detailed moral psychology that builds on Aristotle's framework. I find that Aquinas's work not only explains how moral motivation is developed but also points us to the kinds of skills and practices that cultivate it. Second, I seek to address how skills help us to cultivate moral virtue, understood as primarily a motivational disposition. In light of this goal, rather than arguing that psychological skills themselves have motivational components comparable to virtue (as Stichter does), my goal is to explore how certain kinds of psychological skills could be useful in cultivating moral motivation and, by extension, moral virtue.

Chapter Two: Aquinas on Moral Motivation

I. Why Turn to Aquinas on Moral Motivation?

Why turn to Aquinas when he never uses such terms as “moral motivation,” and it seems that the current discourse is really only concerned with Aristotle’s view of moral motivation? To the first point, though Aquinas, like Aristotle, does not use the specific modern term “moral motivation,” as I will go on to display, he has an account of moral motivation that heavily relies and builds on Aristotle’s ethics. Furthermore, Aquinas offers a more developed moral psychology than Aristotle that, in turn, provides helpful insights into how moral motivation works and develops.

Perhaps even more important than his close ties with Aristotle, Aquinas is a fitting philosopher in his own right to consider in this contemporary discourse. Watson, Zagzebski, and Mueller argue that moral motivation is primarily founded upon an Aristotelian tradition that notably includes Aquinas. Watson’s description of moral motivation, for example, refers to conceptions of the “will” or the agent’s cares, concerns, or intentions. Such conceptions emerge from medieval moral psychology and are developed and defined by Aquinas. Furthermore, as an Aquinas scholar and student of G.E.M. Anslem, Mueller also aims to capture moral motivation and practical rationality in terms consistent with both Aristotle and Aquinas. Exploring Aquinas’s moral psychology and his

account of moral motivation is not only consistent with the aims of the scholars we have discussed thus far but also, as I hope to illustrate, a resource for developing these views.

Aquinas is also a trusted resource within contemporary literature on virtue cultivation. His moral psychology and account of virtue is one of the few historical accounts that contemporary philosophers return to for insight into what virtue is and how it is acquired. For example, John Hacker-Wright, in a recent publication by Nancy Snow titled *Cultivating Virtue: Perspectives from Philosophy, Theology, and Psychology*, wrote a chapter devoted to Aquinas's view of moral growth and his account of habit in cultivating virtue. Moreover, as Julia Annas argues and has amply illustrated by her own work, the classical accounts of virtue constitute our "best entry-point" into any discussion about virtue.⁵⁷ Along with Annas, Christian B. Miller and Daniel Russell also aim to align their conception of virtue with that of Aristotle and Aquinas.⁵⁸ Though these scholars continue to invite Aquinas into the discussion to help lay the foundation for what virtue is and how it develops, very little work has been done to develop Aquinas's view on virtue cultivation and moral motivation as it relates to the current discourse. This chapter serves to help fill this gap.

⁵⁷ Julia Annas, "Virtue Ethics," in *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory*, ed. David Copp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 515.

⁵⁸ Miller writes, "responsiveness to good reasons is absolutely central to acquiring the virtues, at least on the picture of virtue that Russell and I (not to mention Aristotle and Aquinas) take seriously." Christian B. Miller, "Russell on Acquiring Virtue," in *Moral Psychology Volume 5: Character and Virtue*, ed. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong and Christian B. Miller (Boston: MIT Press, 2015), 106.

As a final answer to why it is worthwhile to turn to Aquinas and to develop his account of moral motivation, in addition to contributing to contemporary discourses, this project is one that also contributes to Aquinas scholarship which, to date, says very little about Aquinas's views on moral motivation. Thomistic scholarship, generally speaking, lacks a detailed account of Aquinas's views on moral motivation. This is especially true when it comes to an account that builds upon Aristotle's requirements for virtuous action and that focuses on the moral virtues. Aquinas scholars who explicitly discuss "moral motivation" as it applies to Aquinas are, as Michael Sherwin calls them, the "theologians of moral motivation." These theologians argue that Aquinas's account of moral motivation lies in Aquinas's account of charity.⁵⁹ For example, James Keenan, a well-known contributor to this group, argues that "'moral motivation,' best expresses the charitable person who loves self and neighbor formally out of union with God."⁶⁰ Though Keenan explicitly employs the term moral motivation as it applies to Aquinas's ethics, this account speaks neither to the moral virtues nor to the psychological mechanisms at play in moral motivation for the acquired virtues.⁶¹ Yet moral motivation, as I will go on to illustrate, is a contemporary term

⁵⁹ Michael Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love*, (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University Press, 2005), xix.

⁶⁰ James Keenan, *Goodness and Rightness in Thomas Aquinas's summa theologiae* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1992), 142.

⁶¹ I should note that of course it is the case that many Aquinas scholars discuss at great length questions such as "what makes an act virtuous?" As I will argue, these questions and discussions fall under the heading of what moral motivation is primarily about for Aristotle and Aquinas. Nonetheless, these scholars do not systematically use the term 'moral motivation,' nor do they work to demonstrate how Aquinas's answer to such questions compare to a contemporary understanding of "moral motivation."

that focuses on the natural functioning of our human psychology, not the supernaturally infused virtue of charity. If an account of moral motivation is to relate to the contemporary use of the term, it needs to appeal to the plethora of resources available in Aquinas's moral psychology of intellect and will. My account will do just that.

Other explanations of Aquinas's view of moral motivation treat his account in a general fashion. They focus on Aquinas insofar as he broadly represents a medieval way of thinking about moral motivation. Johnathan Jacobs offers such an account in "Moral Motivation in Christian and Jewish Medieval Philosophy" in the anthology *Moral Motivation: A History*.⁶² Though broadly informative, this account again does not explain in detail what exactly Aquinas thinks moral motivation is. In light of the fact that little work has been done to explain moral motivation, especially in the ways I intend, turning to focus on Aquinas's account of moral motivation is not only fitting for the task at hand but also beneficial for the Aquinas literature at large.

II. Chapter Overview and Aims

Given that the authors discussed in the first chapter (Zagzebski, Wallace, Mueller, and Watson) did not have a clear understanding of moral motivation and that they thought of all skills as something separate from and ultimately unhelpful to cultivating a moral

This is what this project adds to the discourse.

⁶² Jonathan Jacobs. "Moral Motivation in Christian and Jewish Medieval Philosophy." in *Moral Motivation: A History*, edited by Iakovos Vasiliou. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016) 94-119.

motivation, in this chapter I aim to clarify what moral motivation is using Aquinas's moral psychology. I find that Aquinas offers an account of moral motivation that applies to the moral virtues and that builds on Aristotle's view of moral motivation. I argue that Aquinas's account provides a developmental perspective to moral motivation that relies on directing our powers, over time through habituation, to become responsive to the good, otherwise known as happiness. After laying out his account, in the next chapter, I next build out his account of skill and return to the authors in the first chapter to indicate how Aquinas's account of moral motivation allows ample room for skills of a certain sort (to which he explicitly directs us) to aid in the development of moral motivation and moral virtue.

To this end, I begin my argument with an overview of moral motivation and the common contemporary understanding of moral motivation. Following this, I explore how different questions come into focus in developing accounts of moral motivation for ancient and medieval philosophers. Next, I take up the task of discussing Aristotle's account of moral motivation as it is presented by Susan Meyer. Meyer clearly articulates two necessary conditions of moral motivation: teleological motivation, or end-directed motivation, and efficient-causal motivation, or that which primarily concern the psychological mechanisms that move an agent to act. I find that Meyer's account is a helpful framework for understanding Aquinas's account. For this reason, I apply Meyer's two conditions to develop Aquinas's account of moral motivation as both teleological and efficient-causal. In displaying Aquinas's account according to these two conditions, I find the efficient-causal

features of moral motivation provide space for thinking of moral motivation developmentally. It does this because this aspect of motivation parallels the development of moral virtue that is achieved through a long process of habituation in order to gain a responsiveness to reason in the appetites. In turn, in the next chapter, I go on to argue that Aquinas's developmental model of moral motivation leaves ample room for skills to play a helpful role in cultivating moral motivation.

III. Moral Motivation: An Overview

It is important to first say a word about how I attempt to study moral motivation. Despite the fact that "moral motivation" is a contemporary term, I find that it often marks a set of questions that have been posited, developed, and addressed in a myriad of ways throughout the history of philosophy: What does it mean to be morally motivated? How does one become morally motivated? What is it to take a virtuous act? What does it mean to act in a moral way? As I will explain in the next section, contemporary philosophical discussions of moral motivation have narrowed their focus primarily on moral beliefs, judgments, and action. Unlike Aristotle who focused on the ethical human life, telos, and virtue more broadly in addressing questions concerning motivation, for contemporary philosophers, as Iakovos Vasiliou writes, "the issue of moral motivation concerns how, why, and whether moral judgments (i.e., judgments that some action is right or moral or

ethical or virtuous) motivate agents to act.”⁶³ In outlining a contemporary account of moral motivation and comparing it with a more historical view, specifically Aristotle’s and Aquinas’s view, my goal is neither to track moral motivation as a stable philosophical concept nor to act as if the same question about moral motivation gets answered differently over the course of history. Christia Mercer rightly warns, one ought to be suspicious of the idea that “an unchanging philosophical question simply gets answered differently over history without the answers themselves contributing to a transformation of the question.”⁶⁴

In an attempt to acknowledge the complexity of the concept, my aim is to track the shifting questions that undergird the concept of moral motivation for contemporary, ancient, and medieval philosophers. In addition, I aim to highlight the broad and complex array of positions, questions, and responses that arise from these questions. Let us begin with the way contemporary philosophers view moral motivation.

IV. Contemporary Debates About Moral Motivation: An Overview

The contemporary view of moral motivation focuses on how or whether moral judgments motivate us to act. As Robert Audi summarizes, moral motivation concerns “how, if at all,

⁶³ Iakovos Vasiliou, “Introduction” in *Moral Motivation: A History*, edited by Iakovos Vasiliou. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016) 4.

⁶⁴ Christia Mercer, “Forward” in *Moral Motivation: A History*, edited by Iakovos Vasiliou. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). Oxford Scholarship Online, 2016. doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199316564.003.0001

the behavioral will must respond to the moral intellect.”⁶⁵ This focus turns out to be rather technical in nature and has given rise to a series of debates concerning which cognitive or conative features of the mind enable moral judgments to motivate action. Given that these debates make up most of the contemporary discussion on moral motivation, it is worthwhile to summarize what these debates are before turning to compare the contemporary view with its historical counterpart.

The first widely recognized debate concerns various forms of internalism versus externalism about whether moral judgments motivate necessarily (internalism) or only contingently (externalism). Connie S. Rosati writes, “The main division of opinion regarding the nature of the connection between moral judgment and motivation is between those philosophers who accept and those who reject a thesis known as motivational judgment internalism.”⁶⁶ Traditionally, judgment internalism (henceforth internalism) claims that moral judgment is internal to motivation and itself motivates without need of an accompanying desire (“strong internalism”). Conversely, weak internalism states that there is a necessary connection between moral judgment and motivation. As Christine Korsgaard says, internalists believe “moral considerations necessarily have some power to motivate

⁶⁵ Robert Audi, “Moral Judgment and Reasons for Action,” in *Ethics and Practical Reason*, edited by Garrett Cullity and Berys Gaut (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 125. Audi sees the problems around moral motivation as inspired particularly by Hume.

⁶⁶ Connie S. Rosati, “Moral Motivation,” *Moral Motivation* (Stanford University, July 7, 2016), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/moral-motivation/>.

us.”⁶⁷ So motivational internalism holds that necessarily if one sincerely judges an action right, then one is motivated to some extent to act in accordance with that judgment. Externalists, on the other hand, hold that “any connection that exists between moral judgment and motivation is purely contingent, though it may turn out to rest on deep features of human nature. Moral motivation occurs when a moral judgment combines with a desire, and the content of the judgment is related to the content of the desire so as to rationalize the action.”⁶⁸

A related question, also under debate, concerns how a moral judgment motivates, via desire or belief? Few deny that desires motivate, but some hold that beliefs can also be motivationally efficacious states. This is often characterized as a Humean debate because the Humean (if not Hume himself) would deny that beliefs by themselves can motivate.⁶⁹ On the other hand, an anti-Humean posits that beliefs can be conative states that motivate. The ongoing set of responses regarding how moral judgments motivate divide up the discussion based on which psychological phenomena is most responsible for motivation. Based on these divisions, Timothy Schroeder nicely outlines four distinct camps or theories of moral motivation: the sentimentalist, instrumentalist, cognitivist, and personalist. Each

⁶⁷ Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 81. In a slightly more formal variation, she writes: “A normative reason for me to *phi* must be a consideration my awareness of which would motivate me to *phi* if I were thinking about it fully rationally and with full knowledge.”

⁶⁸ Rosati, “Moral Motivation.”

⁶⁹ Vasiliou, Introduction, 6.

outline is in actuality an ideal type of the theory, nonetheless, collectively they provide a helpful framework of the contemporary views on offer.

As the name suggests, what is most significant about moral motivation according to the sentimentalist is emotion. The sentimentalist claims that emotions play a key causal role in motivating moral behavior. The strongest formulation of this view maintains that an action cannot count as being morally motivated unless it is driven by certain moral emotions (e.g., compassion, etc.).⁷⁰ Each sentimentalist has his or her own view about what counts as moral emotions. Nonetheless, they agree that moral emotions are the primary necessary factor in creating a morally motivated action. The instrumentalists, by contrast, claim that people are motivated when they form beliefs about how to satisfy pre-existing desires. Schroeder et. al write, "Motivation, says the instrumentalist, begins with intrinsic desires. And desires are intrinsic just in the sense that what is desired is desired for its own sake, and neither merely as a realizer of what was antecedently desired, nor merely as a means to what was antecedently desired."⁷¹

For the instrumentalist, intrinsic desire is the key necessary element in moral motivation. For the cognitivist, moral motivation is not primarily about emotions or intrinsic desires but begins with belief. Schroeder et. al write, "The cognitivist holds the

⁷⁰ Timothy Schroeder, Adina L. Roskies, and Shaun Nichols. "Moral Motivation." In *The Moral Psychology Handbook*, by Doris, John M., and The Moral Psychology Research Group. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). Oxford Scholarship Online, 2010. doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199582143.003.0004. 77.

⁷¹ Schroeder et. al, "Moral Motivation," 75.

view that moral motivation begins with occurrent belief. In particular, it begins with beliefs about what actions would be right." He continues, "The cognitivist holds that, at least in cases of morally worthy action, such beliefs lead to motivation to perform those actions, quite independently of any antecedent desires."⁷²

Finally, there is the personalist account. Unlike the previous three views, which highlighted certain mental states as the key element required for moral motivation, the personalist takes a character-centered view. The personalist thinks that morally good or morally motivated actions stem from an agent's good character. Schroeder et al. summarize this kind of character in the following way,

Good character involves knowledge of the good, wanting what is good for its own sake, long-standing emotional dispositions that favor good action, and long-standing habits of responding to one's knowledge, desires, and emotions with good actions... Such a character involves long-standing conative dispositions, emotional dispositions, and behavioral dispositions (i.e., habits), with these complexes of dispositions generally being named "virtues."⁷³

What matters most for moral motivation, in this view, is that an action is performed by the person in a certain way, a way that displays certain complexes of dispositions consistent with the virtues. For example, Schroeder et. al write, "if action A is one that requires facing a significant threat of harm for a good cause, then the cognitive emotional and behavioral dispositions required to perform A in a praiseworthy manner will be that complex known

⁷² Ibid, 76.

⁷³ Ibid, 77.

as ‘courage.’”⁷⁴ What is unique about this view is that moral motivation is neither primarily emotional nor about beliefs alone nor about intrinsic desires. It is about a complex of emotional dispositions and habits that make up good character none of which can be reduced to long-standing intrinsic desires or beliefs or emotions. Because of this focus on states of character, the personalist view of moral motivation is particularly well-suited to virtue ethics.

V. Historical Accounts of Moral Motivation

The contemporary view of moral motivation leads to a number of subsequent debates that depend on nuanced distinctions between the cognitive, conative, and affective interior states. It is no surprise that ancient and medieval philosophers (actually, all philosophers prior to Hume) did not distinguish sharply between the powers of will and cognition in the way that contemporary philosophers do. As Vasiliou writes, “Both Plato and Aristotle...explicitly posit a species of desire that is itself rational—*boulēsis*, sometimes translated as ‘rational wish.’ Aristotle’s central ethical concept of decision (*prohairesis*) is described as either a ‘desiring understanding’ (*orektikos nous*) or a ‘thinking desire’ (*orexis dianoētikē*) (*Nicomachean Ethics* 6.2, 1139b4–5).”⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Vasiliou, Introduction, 8.

Susan Meyer rightly warns against forcing Aristotle to engage with contemporary philosophers on the issue of moral motivation in her article titled "Aristotle and Moral Motivation." Summarizing Meyer, Vasiliou states,

Plato and Aristotle do not explicitly address the dispute about motivational judgment internalism or about Humeanism... to force them to come down on one side or the other is to misunderstand the way they are considering the matter, since they do not understand the distinction between the cognitive and the conative as mutually exclusive, which is an assumption important for generating the philosophical problem, at least in many typical formulations of it.

Meyer makes clear that Plato and Aristotle did not concern themselves with the same distinctions that give rise to the problems with which most contemporary philosophers are primarily concerned. The answer then is not to force Aristotle, Aquinas, or others to "come down on one side or the other" of the internalism, externalism, Humean, Anti-Humean debates. These concerns do not capture the primary concerns Aristotle and Aquinas had regarding moral motivation. Rather, we must understand their unique approach and focal questions.

Both Aristotle and Aquinas offer a broader conception of motivation than contemporary philosophers. Vasiliou reminds us that in order to understand moral motivation in ancient and medieval philosophers, we must consider "the context of eudaimonism."⁷⁶ Given that their primary interest in ethics is to discern what constitutes a flourishing, virtuous human life, their answer to moral motivation focuses primarily on the

⁷⁶ Ibid, 11.

central question that leads to such a life: What is the human good? What makes an act virtuous? In other words, in light of the fact that virtue is key to a good life, they were concerned with a virtuous assessment of an action in terms of what actions, done in what way, towards which ends or telos, are required for a virtuous action?⁷⁷

In exploring what Aristotle and Aquinas have to say about moral motivation, I turn to focus on Meyer's analysis of Aristotle's account of moral motivation. Her account focuses on two primary conditions for an act to be virtuous: it must be directed at the right ends (teleological motivation) and involve certain psychological capacities to carry out the end in action (efficient-causal motivation). Using Meyer's framework, I then turn to Aquinas to develop his view of moral motivation.

VI. Aristotle on Moral Motivation

The scholars discussed in the first chapter made clear that historically-minded contemporary scholars, especially virtue ethicists, continue to turn to Aristotle for insight on what it means to be morally motivated. In particular, the passage they frequently cite for his position lists the three conditions required for a person to take a virtuous action.

Though the passage itself does not clearly relay a theory of moral motivation, Meyer offers a helpful interpretation of Aristotle's passage that brings to light his account of moral motivation based on two essential motivations required for a virtuous agency (to perform

⁷⁷ Ibid, 8.

virtuous actions): teleological motivation (the reason or goals for which one acts) and efficient-causal motivation (the psychological apparatus that moves one to act).

Aristotle emphasizes that being virtuous is not a matter of what one does but the way in which one does it (*ean ... pôs echôn Prattêi*—1105a30–31; see 1144a18). His focus is on the condition of the agent who does the action. She must first act with knowledge. Second, she must act on decision [*prohairoumenos*] and decide on them because of themselves [*prohairoumenos di' auta*]. Third, she must act from a firm and unchangeable disposition. (1105a28–33; see 1144a13–20).⁷⁸ In other words, an agent must act from knowledge that this particular act is the right or noble act to do rather than accidentally doing and act without such knowledge. She must be motivated to act for the sake of the good (i.e., because it is good/*kalon*), and not because of some other reason (e.g., to get a good reputation). And the act must not be a random (one-off) kind of event but rather expresses a characterological feature of the agent who seeks to have virtuous dispositions and motivations.⁷⁹ Of the three conditions Aristotle offers for virtuous action at NE 1105a29, the second condition explains what most take to be his views about motivation. Meyer, like many other scholars, writes

⁷⁸ Susan Meyer. "Aristotle on Moral Motivation" in *Moral Motivation: A History*, edited by Iakovos Vasiliou. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016) 4. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2016. doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199316564.003.0001. 46.

⁷⁹ This interpretation of these three conditions is taken from Tamar Gendler's lecture on Aristotle's Requirements for Virtue. Tamar Gendler, "Virtue and Habit II," Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, mp3, 44:37. <https://oyc.yale.edu/philosophy/phil-181/lecture-10>

that “the second of these three conditions concerns the agent’s motivation in performing the action.”⁸⁰

According to Meyer, the second condition emphasizes *prohairesis*, which is a decision or choice that issues in a desire that prompts action. As such there are two essential types of motivation taking place within this condition: teleological and efficient-causal. Both are required for virtuous agency (acting virtuously). She writes,

The second condition invokes the notion of *prohairesis*. Translators often render this term as “decision,” “choice,” or “preferential choice.” As Aristotle defines and deploys the notion, it counts as a motivation in both the teleological and efficient-causal senses ...*Prohairesis*, as Aristotle defines it, is a desire (*orexis*) that is due to deliberation (1113a2–12; see 1139a23, 32–34, b4–5), and deliberation, he explains, is reasoning in the light of (pros) a goal (telos) (1112b11–34). The salient feature of an action done on *prohairesis* is that it issues from the agent’s understanding of the action as being “for the sake of” that goal. When an action issues from your *prohairesis*, the goal for the sake of which you act is your teleological motivation, while the desire that results from deliberating pros that goal (and that actually moves you to act), will be your efficient-causal motivation.

According to Meyer, Aristotle emphasizes that a virtuous agent must “act on decision [*prohairoumenos*]” and “decide because of themselves [*prohairoumenos di’ auta*]” or for its own sake.⁸¹ This statement highlights two aspects of *prohairesis* that make up the two necessary conditions of moral motivation. To act virtuously one must have a goal (sought for its own sake), which is a teleological motivation, and one must have the desire that is

⁸⁰ Meyer, “Aristotle on Moral Motivation,” 46.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

elicited from deliberation about this goal that subsequently moves one to act on this end, or an efficient-causal motivation. Meyer bases both motivations on Aristotle's notion of *prohairesis*. She writes that "Aristotle often uses the term *prohairesis* in the efficient-causal sense (e.g. '*prohairesis* is the origin [*archê*] of the action, the source of the motion, not that for the sake of which,' 1139a31–32). But he clearly takes the goal that figures in the relevant deliberation (the teleological motivation) to be an integral feature of the *prohairesis*."⁸² She continues, "In saying that the virtuous agent acts on decision (*prohairoumenos*), Aristotle is telling us something about the efficient-causal motivation characteristic of virtue: the virtuous agent is moved to act by a desire that is informed by his understanding that this action realizes or promotes a particular goal."⁸³

Why is it that Meyer emphasizes both the teleological and efficient-causal motivations? Several scholars, including Zagzebski and Watson from the first chapter, interpret Aristotle as emphasizing merely a choice about an end done for its own sake which, according to Meyer's breakdown, is only the teleological motivation. Why include the efficient-causal aspect of motivation? First, Meyer aims to capture a full picture of what Aristotle meant by *prohairesis* as a desire that results from deliberation. In doing so, she highlights the psychological mechanism that follows deliberation which helps to explain what moves one to act on the decided goal. To this end, her explanation addresses a central

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

aspect of moral motivation according to contemporary philosophers concerned not merely with right ends but with how, psychologically speaking, we are wired in such a way as to carry out those motives in action. As Robert Audi writes, moral motivation focuses on “how the behavioral will respond to the intellect.” Meyer’s efficient-causal motivation expresses Aristotle’s answer to this central question regarding moral motivation.

Last, Meyer explains that the efficient-causal features of motivation are significant in their own right. She writes, “These psychological states (efficient-causal motivation) are significant because they reflect and determine one’s reasons for acting (teleological motivation).”⁸⁴ Without the subsequent psychological desire or inclination (or causal apparatus) that moves one to action, deliberation about the goal would not take shape and solidify the end by putting it into action. As Aristotle repeatedly states, “it is by doing just acts that the just man is produced, and by doing temperate acts the temperate man; without doing these no one would have even a prospect of becoming good.”⁸⁵ It is acting on the good, not just thinking or deliberating about it, that makes one good. Aristotle reminds us that those who take refuge in philosophy without carrying out the knowledge of the right end into actions are “like patients who listen attentively to their doctors, but do none of the

⁸⁴ Ibid, 44.

⁸⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Leslie Brown (New York: Oxford University Press: 2009) 1105b7-20.

things they are ordered to do.”⁸⁶ Both the end and that which puts in motion the action solidify and reinforce the choice made in deliberation.

Like Aristotle, Aquinas also provides an answer to moral motivation through an explanation of what it means to be virtuous and perform virtuous actions. Yet, unlike Aristotle, Aquinas has a robust moral psychology that explores in more detail the relation between will and intellect in performing virtuous actions. In what follows, I explore how the teleological and efficient-causal motivations provide a helpful framework for Aquinas’s views on moral motivation.

VII. Aquinas on Moral Motivation

An account of Aquinas’s view on moral motivation would fall short if it omitted a discussion of the unique way in which medieval philosophers approached questions of moral motivation. Therefore, let us first discuss the uniquely medieval approach. Like most medieval philosophers, Aquinas did not systematically use some particular term such as “motive” or “motivation” as it is used in contemporary ethics or even in modern English. As Jonathan Jacobs states, “Medieval philosophers tended to be mainly concerned with the psychology of virtuous action and with the will. Neither of those concerns is quite the same as a concern with motivation, though they have important points of contact and overlap.”⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Jacobs, “Moral Motivation,” 94.

For medieval philosophers, whether or not an act is morally good depends on whether or not an act is done in a certain way, from a certain character or set of dispositions and towards a certain end. Contrasting medieval views from contemporary, Visiliou writes

Overall the concern of Augustine, Anselm, Maimonides, Bahya ibn Pakuda, Aquinas and Scotus is not so much with whether it is belief or desire that motivates the agent or with whether or not moral judgment necessarily motivates, but with acting from the right efficient-causal motivations for the right ends. Inevitably in this period both the efficient-causal motivation and the ends aimed at stem ultimately from God.⁸⁸

Many medieval philosophers were not concerned with the narrow discussion of conative and cognitive states that give rise to motivation. Rather, their concerns centered on what it means to perform virtuous actions, acting for the right ends and with the right efficient-causal mechanisms.

In addition to their difference in focus, another distinctive feature of medieval accounts is the idea that human activity overall is to be understood as a response to God or a normatively authoritative reality.⁸⁹ Contrary to contemporary philosophers who are often reluctant to put forth normative claims about reality, and even ancient philosophers who were not as forthcoming about God's role in human life, medieval philosophers couch all of their conceptions of ethics, human action, and human agency within a wider context of

⁸⁸ Vasiliou, Introduction.

⁸⁹ Jacobs writes that this wider normative world within which all human activity takes place is "one of the chief differences between medieval philosophy concerning moral motivation and a great deal of contemporary philosophy." Jacobs, "Moral Motivation," 119.

normatively significant relations between nature, will, reason, and God. Aquinas, for example, makes clear that humans were made in the image of God. God instilled in us an appetite for the good such that our desires are not fulfilled until we are united with God. In other words, we are subject to both eternal and natural laws and are built to see and know the good, which is God. Our wills naturally (with the help of grace) incline us to seek unity with God. The goal of the ethical life for Aquinas ultimately is allowing one's will and intellect to align and to become responsive to the good, which is God. Jacobs writes, "In general, it is fair to say that medieval philosophers understood action, volition, and motivation as responsive— responsive (or not) to the good, and the good ultimately responsive to God."⁹⁰ Though each medieval philosopher has his own idea of how human action achieves this perfection in and responsiveness to the good or God, generally speaking, a morally motivated person on a medieval view is one who has knowledge of the good and whose will and intellect, or character, is responsive to the good. In no small way, understanding Aquinas's view on any one moral matter (e.g. moral motivation) requires acknowledging this framework of normative relations and metaphysical presuppositions.⁹¹ Furthermore, as I will go on to clarify, his account of moral motivation centers on a "responsiveness" to the good.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ For example, Jacobson writes, "The medievals generally distinguished between motives exhibiting righteousness, piety, or well-ordered love and those exhibiting engagement to lesser goods or selfish distraction from true good." Ibid, 119.

Aquinas on Teleological and Efficient-Causal Motivation

a. Teleological Motivation

With this background in mind, let us now proceed to discuss in more detail how Meyer's two features of moral motivation map onto Aquinas's moral philosophy and conception of moral motivation. Once again, similar to Aristotle, Aquinas's account of moral motivation lies within his analysis of what it means to be virtuous. This includes both taking actions directed at the right ends and employing the right efficient-causal mechanisms.

The teleological motivation, according to Meyer's reading of Aristotle, is the "goal for the sake of which you act."⁹² For virtuous agency (an act to be virtuous), one must have a goal or *telos* for which one acts and it must be chosen "for its own sake." Aquinas agrees with Aristotle on this point. According to Aristotle, Meyer writes that virtuous agents who decide on virtuous actions "'for their own sake,' choose them because they are *kalon* [i.e., fine, admirable, noble] ... Aristotle's view is thus that the virtuous person performs acts that are *kalon* and decides to perform them because they are *kalon* rather than for some other reason."⁹³

⁹² Meyer, 48.

⁹³ Ibid, 52.

Aquinas offers a similar interpretation to Meyer's concerning Aristotle's second condition for virtuous action. In his *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, Aquinas writes,

He [Aristotle] says, therefore, in order that actions be justly and temperately performed, it is not enough that the things done be good but the agent must work in a proper manner. Regarding this, he says we must pay attention to three things...The second is taken on the part of the appetitive power. Here two things are noted. One is that the action be not done out of passion, as happens when a person performs a virtuous deed because of fear. But the action should be done by a choice that is not made for the sake of something else, as happens when a person performs a good action for money or vainglory. The actions should be done for the sake of the virtuous work itself which, as something agreeable, is inherently pleasing to him who has the habit of virtue.⁹⁴

Aquinas emphasizes that the action should be done by a choice for the sake of the virtuous work itself rather than some other end (e.g., money or vainglory). Like Aristotle, he emphasizes that a virtuous action must be done for the right ends in the right way or "for its own sake."

A further testament to the seriousness with which Aquinas considered and adopted Aristotle's conditions for virtue, Aquinas references Aristotle's three conditions for virtue

⁹⁴ SLE II-III. xiii. Translation taken from: Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. C.J. Litzinger, O.P. (Notre Dame: Henry Regnery Company, 1964), 97. *Sententia Libri Ethicorum a Libro II Ad Librum III Lectionem XIII, (Et ideo dicit, quod ad hoc quod aliqua fiant iuste vel temperate, non sufficit, quod opera quae fiunt bene se habeant; sed requiritur, quod operans debito modo operetur. In quo quidem modo tria dicit esse attendenda. Quorum primum pertinet ad intellectum sive ad rationem, ut scilicet ille qui facit opus virtutis non operetur ex ignorantia vel a casu, sed sciat quid faciat. Secundum accipitur ex parte virtutis appetitivae. In quo duo attenduntur. Quorum unum est, ut non operetur ex passione, puta cum quis facit ex timore aliquod opus virtutis, sed operetur ex electione; aliud autem est ut electio operis virtuosi non sit propter aliquid aliud, sicut cum quis operatur opus virtutis propter lucrum, vel propter inanem gloriam, sed sit propter hoc, id est propter ipsum opus virtutis, quod secundum se placet ei qui habet habitum virtutis, tamquam ei conveniens.)*

thirteen times throughout his ethics.⁹⁵ Tobias Hoffman writes that “Aquinas makes Aristotle’s solution his own, at times repeating Aristotle’s formula of acting knowingly, willingly, and firmly(I-II 100.9c), at other times phrasing the conditions as acting promptly and with pleasure (e.g., I-II 107.4c; II-II 32.1 ad 1).”⁹⁶ At ST I-II 100.9, Aquinas reiterates his claim made in the commentary by emphasizing all three of Aristotle’s requirements. He writes,

Now according to the Philosopher in Ethics 2, the mode of virtue consists of three elements: The first is that the agent acts knowingly (*sciens*)... For what someone does in ignorance, he does per *accidens*... The second is that the agent acts willingly (*volens*), i.e., ‘by choosing [the act] and choosing it for its own sake.’ ... The third element is that the agent has, and acts from, a firm and unchangeable character (*ut firme et immobiliter habeat et operetur*). This firmness properly involves a habit, so that he is acting from a rooted habit (*ex habitu radicato*).⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Michael Pakaluk, “Structure and Method in Aquinas’s Appropriation of Aristotelian Ethical Theory” in *Aquinas and the Nicomachean Ethics* ed. Tobias Hoffmann, Jörn Müller, Roger Crisp, and Matthias Perkams (Cambridge University Press, 2013) 49. Pakaluk writes, “Some passages are cited with remarkable frequency, such that four of these make up about one-third of all references to Book 2: the three conditions of virtue (2.4.1105a31–3) are referred to 13 times (e.g., ST 1–2.56.2 arg. 2); that virtue makes that which has it good and renders its work good (2.6.1106a15–16) is referred to 14 times (e.g., ST 1–2.20.3 arg. 2); the definition of moral virtue (2.6.1106b36–1107a2) is referred to 14 times (e.g., ST 1–2.58.1 arg. 2); and the claim that virtue concerns what is difficult and good (2.6.1106b28–33) is referred to 11 times (e.g., ST 1.95.4 arg. 2).”

⁹⁶ Tobias Hoffmann, “Aquinas on Moral Progress,” in *Aquinas’s Summa Theologiae A Critical Guide*, ed. by Jeffrey Hause (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 134.

⁹⁷ ST. I-II Q.100.9. Translations from the Summa are taken from Alfred Freddoso’s translation of Aquinas’s *Summa Theologiae*. (*Modus autem virtutis in tribus consistit, secundum philosophum, in II Ethic...Quod enim aliquis facit ignorans, per accidens facit. Unde secundum ignorantiam aliqua diiudicantur ad poenam vel ad veniam, tam secundum legem humanam quam secundum legem divinam. Secundum autem est ut aliquis operetur volens, vel eligens et propter hoc eligens; in quo importatur duplex motus interior, scilicet voluntatis et intentionis, de quibus supra dictum est... Tertium autem est ut firme et immobiliter habeat et operetur. Et ista firmitas proprie pertinet ad habitum, ut scilicet aliquis ex habitu radicato operetur. Et quantum ad hoc, modus virtutis non cadit sub praecepto neque legis divinae neque legis humanae, neque enim ab homine neque a Deo punitur tanquam praecepti transgressor, qui debitum honorem impendit parentibus, quamvis non habeat habitum pietatis.*)

Aquinas clearly adopts Aristotle's three conditions for virtuous action and, in so doing, also emphasizes the importance of choosing the end "for its own sake."

However, unlike Aristotle, Aquinas does not emphasize that an action done for its own sake is one that is chosen because it is *kalon* (because it is fine, noble).⁹⁸ Aquinas offers his own understanding of "the goal" that is chosen "for its own sake." More generally, Aquinas's interpretation of doing an act for its own sake, means doing an action for the good, or the good for humans, which is happiness. Aquinas's notion of the good is always couched in terms of the kind of being that a thing is. The highest, most perfect good for us is happiness. Aquinas writes,

That is absolutely perfect which is desirable in itself and never for another. But happiness appears to be of this nature, for we never seek it for something else but always for itself. We do choose honor, pleasure, knowledge, and virtue for themselves...In fact, we choose them for happiness precisely because we think we will be happy in having them...We conclude then that happiness is the most perfect good, and consequently the ultimate and best end.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Pakaluk, "Structure and Method," 36-37. As a note on Aquinas's interpretation of Aristotle, Pakaluk writes, "Aquinas constructs the theory entirely out of ideas and distinctions in Aristotle; nonetheless, in the SLE he does not attribute this theory to Aristotle: rather, at best, the commentary interprets Aristotle's ethics in such a way that it is consistent with and, as it were, can naturally take the form of his own theory."

⁹⁹ *Sententia Ethic., lib. 1 l. 9 n. 8. (Videntur autem esse plures gradus finium, quorum quosdam eligimus solum propter aliud, sicut divitias, quae non appetuntur nisi in quantum sunt utiles ad vitam hominis, et fistulas quibus canitur, et universaliter omnia organa, quae non quaeruntur nisi propter usum eorum. Unde manifestum est, quod omnes isti fines sunt imperfecti. Optimus autem finis, qui est ultimus, oportet quod sit perfectus. Unde si unum solum sit tale, oportet hoc esse ultimum finem quem quaerimus. Si autem sint multi perfecti fines, oportet quod perfectissimus horum sit optimus et ultimus. Manifestum est autem, quod sicut id quod est secundum se appetibile, est magis perfectum eo quod est appetibile propter alterum, ita illud quod nunquam appetitur propter aliud, est*

Though not Aquinas's most convincing argument for the highest good as happiness, this passage gets across what he has in mind in doing a virtuous action for its own sake.

Choosing to do an action for its own sake means doing an action for the perfect human good, which is happiness.¹⁰⁰ He reiterates this idea throughout his *Treatise on Human Happiness*. Aquinas writes, "Indeed, the real reward for virtue is beatitude itself, and it is for the sake of beatitude that virtuous men act."¹⁰¹ Also in his *Treatise on Virtues*, he writes, "The end of the moral virtues is the human good...the good of the human soul is to live according to reason."¹⁰² Aquinas is insistent throughout his ethics and his commentary on Aristotle's ethics that happiness is the end or goal of virtuous action and it is the reason such actions are taken.¹⁰³

perfectius his quae, etsi secundum se appetantur, tamen appetuntur propter aliud.)

¹⁰⁰ Aquinas takes it that "the ultimate end of operative virtue is happiness, a perfect good." See Litzinger, *Commentary on Aristotle's Ethics*, 181.

¹⁰¹ ST. I-II Q.2.2 ad.1 (*Verum autem praemium virtutis est ipsa beatitudo, propter quam virtuosi operantur.*)

¹⁰² ST 2-2 Q. 47.6 (*Respondeo dicendum quod finis virtutum moralium est bonum humanum...Unde necesse est quod fines moralium virtutum praeexistant in ratione.*)

¹⁰³ Often it is objected that such an end for human action is egoistic. Meyer's works to explain how Aristotle avoids this critique with his notion of *kalon*. She writes that Aristotle seeks "to identify happiness with virtuous activity, not to claim the latter is instrumental to the former. The virtuous agent who acts for the sake of the *kalon*—that is, one who decides on *kalon* actions because they are *kalon*..." Aquinas, however, seems to directly link virtuous activity as instrumental to happiness and thus propose an egoist ethic. Scott McDonald and Christopher Toner argue that he is not an egoist but he is a perfectionist. See: Christopher, Toner. "Was Aquinas an Egoist?" *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 71, no. 4 (2007): 577-608. Scott MacDonald. "Egoistic Rationalism: Aquinas's Basis for Christian Morality." (1990).

A still further testament to Aquinas's emphasis on the need for a teleological motivation in order to have virtuous action is his view that moral virtue is essentially a habit that is perfected only when it aligns with the end/telos. More specifically, moral virtue is attained only when we habituate our appetites to align with right reason, or correct knowledge about what happiness consists in for humans. Aquinas presents this idea through his moral psychology of moral virtue as perfection of a power that happens through many actions that are directed at their proper end. In a question titled "The Essence of Virtue," Aquinas writes,

Virtue denominates a certain perfection of power. Now the perfection of any given thing is mainly thought of in relation to its end. But the end is the actualization of a power or potentiality (*potentiae actus*)." Hence, a power is said to be perfect to the extent that it is determined to its act.... rational powers, which are proper to a man, are not determined to a single act, but are related in an indeterminate way to many acts. But as is clear from what was said above (q. 49, a. 4), they are determined to their acts by habits. And so the human virtues are habits.¹⁰⁴

Unpacking this quote a bit, at its most basic form, Aquinas explains that moral virtue is the perfection of our powers (i.e., the will (rational appetite), the passions (sensitive appetite), and the practical intellect).¹⁰⁵ These rational powers are only perfected in us by taking many

¹⁰⁴ ST. I-II Q. 55.1. (*Respondeo dicendum quod virtus nominat quandam potentiae perfectionem. Uniuscuiusque autem perfectio praecipue consideratur in ordine ad suum finem. Finis autem potentiae actus est. Unde potentia dicitur esse perfecta, secundum quod determinatur ad suum actum. Sunt autem quaedam potentiae quae secundum seipsas sunt determinatae ad suos actus; sicut potentiae naturales activae. Et ideo huiusmodi potentiae naturales secundum seipsas dicuntur virtutes. Potentiae autem rationales, quae sunt propriae hominis, non sunt determinatae ad unum, sed se habent indeterminate ad multa, determinantur autem ad actus per habitus, sicut ex supradictis patet. Et ideo virtutes humanae habitus sunt.*)

¹⁰⁵ Pakaluk, 38. "(a) the power that is the locus of sense desire (*ἐπιθυμία*, *appetitus concupiscibilis*); (b) the power that is the locus of strivings to prevail against obstacles (*θυμός*, *appetitus irascibilis*); and (c) the power of rational desire (*βούλησις*, *voluntas*)."

actions that are in accord with “right reason” or reason directed at the end (i.e., happiness). As Tobias Hoffmann summarizes, it is reason’s job, according to Aquinas, to “correctly assess the end Aquinas calls the ‘due end’ (*finis debitus*). Reason judges correctly about that which promotes this end (*ea quae sunt ad finem*).”¹⁰⁶ In other words, it makes a “correct judgment about what happiness consists in” and can order our actions to this end.¹⁰⁷ When many such ordered acts are taken over time, Aquinas says that a certain quality is generated in the powers that he calls a habit or disposition that is moral virtue. In ST I-II Question 51 titled “The Cause of Habits,” Aquinas writes, “from repeated acts, a certain quality is generated in the power that is passive and moved, and this quality is called a habit. For instance, habits of the moral virtues are caused in the appetitive powers insofar as those powers are moved by reason.”¹⁰⁸ As an example, the moral virtue of temperance is formed by continually realigning one’s appetite away from acting on an impulse (e.g., to eat an overabundance of food) and instead to only act (or eat as much food) as is conducive to one’s health and flourishing (i.e., correct judgment about what is and is not conducive to

¹⁰⁶ Tobias Hoffmann “Prudence and Practical Principles.” in *Aquinas and the Nicomachean Ethics* ed. by Tobias Hoffmann, Jörn Müller, Roger Crisp, and Matthias Perkams, eds. (Cambridge University Press: 2013) 171.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ ST. I-II Q. 51.2 (*Nam omne quod patitur et movetur ab alio, disponitur per actum agentis, unde ex multiplicatis actibus generatur quaedam qualitas in potentia passiva et mota, quae nominatur habitus. Sicut habitus virtutum moralium causantur in appetitivis potentiis, secundum quod moventur a ratione, et habitus scientiarum causantur in intellectu, secundum quod movetur a primis propositionibus.*)

happiness).¹⁰⁹ Temperance, like all moral virtues, requires aligning one's appetites to reason which itself is aligned to happiness. Based on Aquinas's view of moral virtue as a habit that is developed through many actions directed at the right ends, it is no stretch to say that Aquinas finds what we are calling the teleological motivation essential to moral virtue.

b. Efficient-Causal Motivation

Meyer argues that the efficient-causal motivation accounts for the psychological apparatus that moves an agent to act (i.e., a desire to act) after deliberation about the end. Based on Aristotle's notion of *prohairesis*, she argues that *prohairesis* is a decision or choice that issues in a desire. This desire is the psychological causal mechanism that moves one to act on the telos.¹¹⁰ Aquinas follows Aristotle in his emphasis on a desire that results from deliberation. At ST I-II question 14.1 titled "Deliberating or Taking Counsel, Which Precedes Choosing," he writes,

As has been explained (q. 13, aa. 1 and 3), an act of choosing follows upon reason's judgment (*iudicium rationis*) concerning things to be done... there must be an inquiry on reason's part before any judgment about things to be chosen, and this inquiry is called 'deliberating' or 'taking counsel' (*haec inquisitio consilium vocatur*). This is why, in Ethics 3, the Philosopher says that the act of choosing is 'the desire for what has

¹⁰⁹ Temperance, Aquinas writes, "withdraws man from things which seduce the appetite from obeying reason." ST II-II Q. 141. 2

¹¹⁰ Meyer writes, "'Aristotle often uses the term *prohairesis* in the efficient-causal sense (e.g. '*prohairesis* is the origin [*archê*] of the action, the source of the motion, not that for the sake of which,' 1139a31-32)." Meyer, "Aristotle on Moral Motivation," 48.

been deliberated about beforehand' (*appetitus praeconsiliati*).¹¹¹

Aquinas explains that deliberation precedes choice, which is the desire for that which has been deliberated about (i.e., the end or *telos*). He uses the language of choice (*electio*) and emphasizes that choice belongs to the faculty of the will. Moreover, he thinks that reason (specifically, the apprehensive power found in the intellect) precedes and orders the will to its object, but choosing that object remains a free act of the will. Aquinas writes,

Now it is clear that reason in some sense precedes the will and orders its act, viz., insofar as the will tends toward its object in accord with the order prescribed by reason (*secundum ordinem rationis*), given that the apprehensive power presents the appetitive power with its object... an act of choosing is in substance (*substantialiter*) an act of the will and not of reason. For an act of choosing is brought to completion in a movement of the soul toward the good that is being chosen. Hence, it is clear that it is an act of the appetitive power.¹¹²

Aquinas makes clear that choice is primarily an act of the will, preceded by an act of the intellect, that is primarily a desire for the end (i.e., the good).¹¹³

Matthias Perkams further connects Aquinas's view with Aristotle's. Perkams argues that "Like many of his contemporaries, Aquinas used *electio* (choice), the Latin word translating *prohairesis*, to describe the acts produced by man's faculty of free agency, called

¹¹¹ ST I-II Q. 14.1

¹¹² ST I-II Q. 13.1

¹¹³ Matthias Perkams, "Aquinas on Choice, Will, and Voluntary Action" in *Aquinas and the Nicomachean Ethics* ed. Tobias Hoffmann, Jörn Müller, Roger Crisp, and Matthias Perkams. (Cambridge University Press: 2013) 77. Furthermore, Thomas Williams comments that though Aristotle leaves it open whether *prohairesis* is primarily appetitive or primarily cognitive, but Aquinas is firm that *electio* is primarily appetitive.

liberum arbitrium.”¹¹⁴ Furthermore, Aquinas “ascribes to the faculty called will not only Aristotle’s *boulesis*, but also his *prohairesis*, i.e., choice.”¹¹⁵ Perkams continues,

While not denying that in one respect ‘choice is essentially an act of the intellect, insofar as the intellect orders the appetite’ (SLE 6.2 lines 209–10), [Aquinas] displays a clear preference for ascribing choice primarily to the will...In this way Aquinas explains at some length Aristotle’s short remark that it is ‘choosing that makes us people of a certain quality’ (3.2.1112a1–3).¹¹⁶

As Perkams argues, Aquinas adopts Aristotle’s *prohairesis* or desire resulting from deliberation but ascribes it to the power of the will. More specifically, choice is an interior act performed by the faculty or power that is the will, or rational appetite.¹¹⁷

In order to spell out Aquinas’s full account of efficient-causal motivation, it is important to dive into the psychological mechanisms that make up the faculty of the will that allow the will to perform an interior act of choosing, and that enable an agent to carry out an action. In laying out Aquinas’s account of efficient causal motivation, I find it fruitful to turn Aquinas’s own language of efficient cause to learn what it means for an agent to be

¹¹⁴ Perkams, 89.

¹¹⁵ Matthias Perkams, 77. Perkams relies on SLE 3.5 lines 147–54 where Aquinas writes, “both [will and choice] belong to the same power, i.e., to the rational appetite, which is called will. But will [βούλησις] refers to the act of this power by which it tends to the good unconditionally [absolute], whereas choice refers to the act of that same power which is related to the good insofar as it pertains to human action, in which we are directed towards a particular good.”

¹¹⁶ Perkams, 77.

¹¹⁷ ST. I-II Q. 8.2 “I respond: Sometimes it is the very power by which we will that is called ‘will’ (*voluntas*), and sometimes it is the will’s act itself that is called ‘will’ (*voluntas*).”

an “efficient cause” of an action. On his account of efficient-cause as it applies to the case of human action, he offers an explanation of the psychological mechanisms that enable an agent to act by highlighting the agent’s powers and inclinations. He argues that it is on account of an agent’s powers and inclinations that an agent has the capacity to act, both interior acts (e.g., choice) as well as exterior actions (e.g., helping someone in need). Once his view of the psychological mechanisms at play in action is laid out, I turn to apply his view to the case of moral virtue to understand what it means for an agent to perform good acts, ones that carry out the *telos* or end (i.e., teleological motivation). It is here that I highlight what makes Aquinas’s account of moral motivation, on the efficient-causal side, distinct from views of moral motivation discussed in the first chapter. Aquinas emphasizes that in order to have the psychological mechanisms that enable the will to be inclined toward and thereby choose the right ends, the powers of will and intellect must be directed, uprooting their wayward or contrary inclinations, so as to know and desire the right ends. This only happens over time through a careful process of habituation. In this way, contrary to the views of moral motivation that treat it as a fixed choice about certain ends, Aquinas offers a developmental picture that underscores the psychological mechanisms underlying an agent’s choice that can and must be developed over time if they are to know, want, and, in turn, choose the right ends (or carry out the teleological motivation). As I will go on to argue in the following chapter, Aquinas’s developmental picture leaves ample room for certain kinds of skills to aid in the development of moral motivation and, in turn, cultivate moral virtue.

VIII. Aquinas on Efficient Cause

A promising approach to understanding Aquinas's account of efficient-causal motivation is to turn to Aquinas's own usage of the term efficient cause as it applies to agents who are the efficient cause of their action. Aquinas himself has a robust discussion of what it means for an agent to be an efficient cause of an action. This discussion is helpful to our discussion of efficient-causal motivation. To begin, Aquinas uses the concepts of efficient cause quite broadly. He applies this notion to items from many different ontological categories. For this reason, there is an abundance of scholarship on the role of efficient cause in Thomistic metaphysics.¹¹⁸ Of these scholars, Michael Rota provides an especially concise explanation of efficient cause as it relates to action. In his work titled, "Causation," Rota writes that "Aquinas applies the notion of an efficient cause to substances, to powers,¹¹⁹ to acts of will (and thus to inclinations),¹²⁰ and to processes or activities."¹²¹ Aquinas introduces the notion

¹¹⁸ See Freddoso's extensive discussion in Francisco Suárez, *On Efficient Causality: Metaphysical Disputations 17, 18, and 19*, trans. Alfred J. Freddoso (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994); and Edward Feser, *Scholastic Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* (Heusenstamm: Editiones Scholasticae, 2014). Also see Stefaan E. Cuypers, "Thomistic Agent-Causalism," in *Mind, Metaphysics, and Value in the Thomistic and Analytic Traditions*, ed. John Haldane (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 90–108. And Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature: A Philosophical Study of Summa Theologiae 1a* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 201.

¹¹⁹ See ST I Q. 82.4, In Meta VII.6, DPN 5.26.

¹²⁰ See QDV Q. 28.8 ad 7: "Consent is the efficient cause of marriage".

¹²¹ See Meta V.2.771 where Aquinas asserts that the (ancient medical) processes of reducing and purging can be called causes from which motion comes, i.e., efficient causes. Michael Rota, "Causation" in *The Oxford Handbook of Thomas Aquinas*, eds. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). 13.

of efficient cause in *On the Principles of Nature* in an attempt to explain change.¹²² Aquinas writes,

But these [three factors: formal, material, and final causes] are not sufficient for generation. For what is in potency is not able to reduce itself to actuality; just as bronze, which is potentially a statue, does not make itself [into] a statue. But there needs to be something operating, which draws forth the form of a statue from potency to actuality. ...Therefore, it must be that, besides matter and form, there is some principle which acts, and this is said to be the maker [*efficiens*], or the mover, or the agent, or that from which the beginning of motion comes.¹²³

In this passage, the sculptor is an efficient cause of the statue. The sculptor is the agent (agens, “the thing acting”) and the patient is the substance, or aggregate of substances (i.e., the bronze) upon which the agent acts. The change or motion produced by the agent is what Aquinas calls the “passion.”

Given that the agent produces this change in the patient, how does the agent do this?

Aquinas thinks that it is the sculptor’s powers that enable the sculptor to act. For example,

¹²² Michael Rota writes, “Apart from his brief, early work *On the Principles of Nature* and some relatively short sections of his commentaries on Aristotle’s *Physics* and *Metaphysics*, Aquinas wrote nothing that could be considered a systematic treatise on causation. His understanding of causation must therefore be gleaned from comments scattered throughout his works. When those scattered comments are brought together and analyzed, we find a complex and multifaceted theory. A good place to begin is with a paradigm instance of ordinary efficient causation: the production of a statue.” *Ibid*, 104.

¹²³ DPN 3.15. Here by “generation” Aquinas intends to include both generation simpliciter (substantial change) and generation secundum quid (accidental change). See DPN 1.4, and *In Meta* I.12.199. (*Ad hoc ergo quod sit generatio, tria requiruntur: scilicet ens potentia, quod est materia; et non esse actu, quod est privatio; et id per quod fit actu, scilicet forma. Sicut quando ex cupro fit idolum, cuprum quod est potentia ad formam idoli, est materia; hoc autem quod est infiguratum sive indispositum, dicitur privatio; figura autem a qua dicitur idolum, est forma, non autem substantialis quia cuprum ante adventum formae seu figurae habet esse in actu, et eius esse non dependet ab illa figura; sed est forma accidentalis. Omnes enim formae artificiales sunt accidentales. Ars enim non operatur nisi supra id quod iam constitutum est in esse perfecto a natura.*)

the sculptor utilizes the power to move his hands and to form objects by moving them into shapes. An agent might have many powers or features but only some of those are called on to perform the action. Rota explains that “Aquinas generalizes this way of thinking, and holds that any action of any agent occurs through the use of some particular power: ‘In any action there are two things to consider, namely the suppositum acting, and the power by which it acts, just as fire heats by heat.’”¹²⁴ Aquinas thinks that in an action there is both the substance or agent which acts and the powers that enable the agent to act.¹²⁵ There are two sorts of powers, active and passive. An active power is a feature of an agent that accounts for an agent’s ability to act in certain ways, and a passive power accounts for a thing’s capability of being acted upon (i.e., capable of undergoing a certain change or passion).¹²⁶ For human beings, our distinctive powers are the powers of intellect (reason) and will (rational appetite).

Interestingly, Aquinas identifies the power of the will as the agent or efficient cause that is responsible for the exercise or movement into action. He writes,

There are two ways in which something is said to effect movement. The first way is in the manner of an end, in the sense in which an end is said to move an agent. It is

¹²⁴ Rota, 4. See ST I Q. 36.3 ad 1. Here, the term ‘suppositum’ refers to the substance which acts.

¹²⁵ Ibid. Rota writes, “Why posit the existence of powers? Perhaps the idea is just this: If a thing performs some sort of action, then it is reasonable, at least in many cases, to think that there must be some real, positive feature of the thing which enables it to perform that sort of action. If a species of bird appears to use the earth’s magnetic field to navigate, for example, then it is reasonable to think that members of that species have some sort of faculty for detecting magnetic fields.”

¹²⁶ For active powers see ST I Q. 25. 1, QDP 7.9c and SCG IV.77. And for passive powers see In Meta V.14.963.

in this way that the intellect moves the will, since the will's object is a good as intellectually understood, and it moves the will as an end. The second way in which something is said to effect movement is in the manner of an agent [i.e., agent or efficient cause]—in the way in which the thing that effects an alteration moves the thing that is altered, and in the way in which the thing that gives an impulse moves the thing that is impelled. This is the way in which the will moves the intellect and all the powers of the soul, as Anselm explains in *De Similitudinibus*.¹²⁷

Aquinas thinks that the will effects movement in the second way which is in the manner of the agent, by which he means the will is the agent cause. Aquinas often uses agent and efficient cause terminology interchangeably. Moreover, the actions that the will effects are both interior acts, such as choice, as well as exterior acts, such as moving my hands to sculpt the bronze. At ST I-II Q.13.5 reply 1 Aquinas writes,

Will is the intermediary between the intellect and external action: intellect presents the will with its object, and the will itself causes an external action. So the principle of the will's movement is found in the intellect, which apprehends something as good in general, but the termination or completion of the will's act is identified with reference to its ordering toward action.¹²⁸

Aquinas argues that the will causes action and is directed at external action. A complete action of the will includes the internal acts that lead to external action. Williams writes, "a full-blown act of will-- a 'complete' act ... extends all the way from the intellect's presentation of a good [e.g., attending a talk] to some external action by which that good is to be attained [e.g., driving]."¹²⁹ Even if the action is not taken (e.g., someone tied you up so

¹²⁷ ST I Q. 82.4

¹²⁸ ST. I-II Q. 13.5 ad.1 (William's Translation)

¹²⁹ Thomas Williams, "Commentary on the Treatise on Human Acts," in *The Treatise on Human Happiness The Treatise on Human Acts*, eds. Thomas Williams and Christina Van Dyke (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2016), 360.

you cannot drive to the talk), Williams writes, “the choice itself [to attend the talk] completes the will’s act, because in that choice the will is directed to external action, whether or not any action actually takes place.” As Aquinas argues and Williams clarifies, the will as a power extends to both interior and exterior actions.¹³⁰

Given that an agent’s powers or capacities, especially the power that is the will, ground facts about how they are able to act, what then makes the sculptor get up in the morning and want to sculpt? For this we must make reference to the sculptor’s inclinations or tendencies (*inclinationes*) as that which moves an agent to perform an act of will.¹³¹ What it means to have an inclination for Aquinas is best described by examining ends. At *Summa Theologiae* I-II, Q. 1. 2, Aquinas argues that every agent acts for an end out of an inclination

¹³⁰ For a discussion on “How to will is moved?” see Williams’s commentary on ST I-II Q. 9.3. Williams writes, “The will is in potentiality... (1) with respect to acting and not acting, which Aquinas calls the exercise of the act; and (2) with respect to doing this or that, which Aquinas calls the *specification* or *determination* of the act....In terms of exercise, the will is not moved by the intellect [Rather, it moves itself in exercise]]. Quite the contrary, the intellect is moved by the will. In terms of specification, however, the intellect moves the will. The intellect is what presents the object--remember the crucial point that the will is *intellectual* [rational] appetite, and so we will things as *apprehended* - and the object is what ‘specifies’ the act.” In particular, we will things as apprehended as good because “the will’s object is the good in general.” Furthermore, in ST I-II Q. 9.3, Aquinas addresses the question “Does the will move itself?,” Aquinas replies, “The will is in control of its own act, both willing and not willing are up to the will.” The will has the power to move itself. Williams writes, “...by actually willing an end, it [the will] brings itself from potentially willing things that are for the end to actually willing them. How exactly this self-motion works ...is not further explained here. It will turn out to involve important contributions from the intellect, particularly in the form of deliberation and judgment.” *Ibid*, 325.

¹³¹ Inclinations are formed through desires, choices, and acts of will. By “act of will”, Rota writes, “I mean to translate Aquinas’s ‘*actus voluntatis*.’ This is a generic term that encompasses at least six different acts wherein the will is the subject: enjoyment (*fruitio*), intention (*intentio*), volition (*voluntas*), choice (*electio*), consent (*consensus*), and use (*usus*).” Rota, 5. See ST I-II, Q. 11-16.

(i.e., an intention) for an end. A close look at his argument in the second article of question one reveals a single line where Aquinas sheds light on what he takes an inclination to be. He writes “An agent effects movement only because of its tendency toward an end (*non nisi ex intentione finis*). For if an agent were not fixed on some effect, then it would not do this rather than that.”¹³² Inclinations then are the things that move us to certain ends. More specifically, they move us through our rational appetite (*per rationalem appetitum*) to will (*velle*) one end rather than another.¹³³ Rota interprets Aquinas’s explanation of inclination by reference to the behavior of an electron. He writes,

Consider that electrons regularly repel other negatively charged particles when in close proximity to them. To state the matter in terms of actions, an electron regularly performs one sort of action (repelling negatively charged particles) and not another (attracting negatively charged particles). That is, an electron does this more than that. Faced with this fact about the behavior of electrons, it is natural to seek an explanation. It would be absurd to think that the consistent behavior of electrons is merely a coincidence. So it is reasonable to think that the regular behavior in question (that electrons regularly repel other negatively charged particles) has an explanation. A quite natural explanation is provided by positing a feature about the electron itself, by supposing that it itself possesses some feature which leads it to repel negatively charged particles. Call that feature an inclination. The inclination in question here would be the electron’s negative charge, conceived of as a property of the electron that makes it regularly repel negatively charged particles.¹³⁴

¹³² ST I-II, Q. 1.2. (*Agens autem non movet nisi ex intentione finis. Si enim agens non esset determinatum ad aliquem effectum, non magis ageret hoc quam illud, ad hoc ergo quod determinatum effectum producat, necesse est quod determinetur ad aliquid certum, quod habet rationem finis.*)

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Rota, 6. As another example, a stone that is located anywhere but at the center of the Earth always has an inclination to fall. This is an always-present feature of the stone.

According to Rota, Aquinas's account of inclination is best explained by reference to the way inclinations work in behavior. In the case of rational and non-rational agents, inclinations are that which determine or move us to one way of behaving over another. For rational (and nonrational) agents, inclinations explain purposeful behavior and therefore are at the core of what means for us to act. At ST I Q. 87.4, Aquinas writes that "An act of the will is nothing other than a certain inclination following upon an understood form."¹³⁵ Rota explains, "On Aquinas's way of thinking, the best available explanation of the regular behavior of agents involves the positing of inclinations, where an inclination is conceived of as an intrinsic feature of an agent which leads it (inclines it, disposes it) to engage in some action."¹³⁶ Returning to the case of the sculptor as an efficient cause, it is on account of the sculptor's inclinations and through the use of various powers that the sculptor is able and willing to act.¹³⁷ In summary, the explanation of efficient cause as it applies to action captures a large part of the psychological apparatus that makes up efficient-causal motivation. On Aquinas's account, it is the agent's powers (i.e., rational appetite/will) and inclinations that allow the agent to act on an end and carry out the teleological motivation.

¹³⁵ ST I Q. 87.4. (*actus voluntatis nihil aliud est quam inclinatio quaedam consequens formam intellectam, sicut appetitus naturalis est inclinatio consequens formam naturalem.*)

¹³⁶ Rota, 6.

¹³⁷ Rota concludes, "In considering the sculptor and the bronze, we should keep in mind Aquinas's fuller story: the sculptor brings about a change in the bronze, via his powers and inclinations (and various tools too, no doubt), and by so doing produces a statue and a new accidental form." Rota, 9.

The will, in particular, for Aquinas is the source of movement for actions, both interior and exterior. Furthermore, it is on account of the will's inclinations that it acts. This idea is reiterated and developed in Aquinas's explanation of the will's inclination in his *Treatise on Human Acts*. Aquinas makes clear that a core feature of the will is its inclination for the good that moves it to certain ends.¹³⁸ In ST I-II Q.8.1 he writes,

Will is a rational appetite. Now there is no appetite for anything but the good. The reason for this is that an appetite is nothing other than an inclination of that which has the appetite toward something, and nothing is inclined toward anything but what is similar to it and fitting for it...every inclination is toward what is good....Now it is important to note that since every inclination is consequent upon some form...intellectual or rational appetite--which is called will--follows an apprehended form...So for the will to tend toward something, it is not required that the thing be good in actual fact, but that it be apprehended as good.¹³⁹

The will is by nature an inclination for the good. It is naturally hard-wired to move us to the good, or what the intellect apprehends as good or "fitting for it."¹⁴⁰ The object of the will or

¹³⁸ In the commentary on Aquinas' *Treatise on Human Acts*, Williams comments, "the will is not a neutral steering wheel but an inclination toward what is good." Williams, "Commentary on the *Treatise on Human Acts*," 332.

¹³⁹ ST I-II Q. 8.1. (*voluntas est appetitus quidam rationalis. Omnis autem appetitus non est nisi boni. Cuius ratio est quia appetitus nihil aliud est quam inclinatio appetentis in aliquid. Nihil autem inclinatur nisi in aliquid simile et conveniens. Cum igitur omnis res, in quantum est ens et substantia, sit quoddam bonum, necesse est ut omnis inclinatio sit in bonum. Et inde est quod philosophus dicit, in I Ethic., quod bonum est quod omnia appetunt. Sed considerandum est quod, cum omnis inclinatio consequatur aliquam formam, appetitus naturalis consequitur formam in natura existentem, appetitus autem sensitivus, vel etiam intellectivus seu rationalis, qui dicitur voluntas, sequitur formam apprehensam. Sicut igitur id in quod tendit appetitus naturalis, est bonum existens in re; ita id in quod tendit appetitus animalis vel voluntarius, est bonum apprehensum. Ad hoc igitur quod voluntas in aliquid tendat, non requiritur quod sit bonum in rei veritate, sed quod apprehendatur in ratione boni. Et propter hoc philosophus dicit, in II Physic., quod finis est bonum, vel apparens bonum.)*

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 317. Williams's commentary on this passage is a helpful contextual reminder "Remember that we are in an Aristotelian universe here, and an Aristotelian universe is purposive...It is aimed at some definite purpose or 'end,' as Aquinas calls it. In particular, a thing is directed to 'what is similar to it and

that to which the will naturally inclines is the “good in general” and ultimately the “universal good.”¹⁴¹ In question 10.1 titled “Is the will moved toward anything naturally?”

Aquinas states that the will is inclined to what is suitable to its nature. Williams writes,

Aquinas reminds us that objects such as life, health, and truth move our wills naturally, that is, in accordance with the characteristic inclination that makes the will the kind of thing (nature) it is; but by mentioning the ultimate end and the good in general, he emphasizes that the ultimate source of this variety of motions is in fact a single object, the good in general, which is fully realized in the ultimate end, which in turn serves as the source of the motive power of all other ends.¹⁴²

Importantly for Aquinas, it is God who gave us all this inclination to the good, without which we could not will anything at all.¹⁴³ To be sure, Aquinas thinks that God gives us all this inclination in our rational appetite to will the good in general, but leaves it up to us to freely determine whether we will this or that and whether or not we realize the ultimate end which is unity with God.¹⁴⁴ Even though the will has a nature that inclines it in certain ways, it nonetheless is in control of its own act.¹⁴⁵ As I will go on to argue, developing a

fitting for it.”

¹⁴¹ ST. I-II Q. 2.8 by universal good he means God. Nothing but the universal good can satisfy the human will.

¹⁴² Williams, 333.

¹⁴³ Ibid. See Williams’s commentary on ST I-II Q. 9.6 ad 3.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. Williams and Van Dyke write, “God moves the human will as the universal mover...But we determine ourselves to will this or that through reason, and our reason can be mistaken about what is good. That is how the will’s God-given inclination to the universal good is consistent with particular instances of bad-willing.”

¹⁴⁵ If the will has a natural inclination for the good, then how does it “in control of its own act”? Williams nicely summarize Aquinas’s point, “Nature’s distinctive mode of causation is determined to a single outcome, whereas will’s distinctive mode of causation is not so determined; rather, when the will causes

rational appetite for the right ends, that acts or chooses the right or virtuous ends, requires aligning our natural inclinations, over time through habituation, with those ends.

IX. Efficient-Causal Motivation: A Developmental Model

Based on this assessment of will and inclination, it is safe to say that we have identified the efficient-causal mechanisms at play in action. However, all of this discussion of efficient-causal motivation thus far is an explanation of what, psychologically speaking, causes or enables an agent to act. It is not yet an explanation that accounts for moral virtue. Meyer argues that efficient-causal motivation is not just about the psychological mechanisms that move one to act, but also how these mechanisms carry out the telos or teleological motivation. She writes, in “the efficient-causal motivation characteristic of virtue...the virtuous agent is moved to act by a desire that is informed by his understanding that this action realizes or promotes a particular goal.”¹⁴⁶ The psychological mechanisms must be informed by the end and directed at the end if they are to cause virtuous action. In order to understand what it looks like for the efficient-causal motivation to promote the right or virtuous ends we need to turn to Aquinas’s view concerning the way the inclinations and

in its distinctive way, it is in control of its act. But the will does not always cause in its distinctive way because the will is rooted in a nature and therefore also shares (‘participates’) in nature’s way of causing. First the will *is* a certain kind of thing; only then, and as a result of that inclination, can it be in control of the way it acts on that inclination. Though the will has a nature that inclines it toward certain ends, it is nonetheless able to be in control of its act.” (Williams and Van Dyke, 333). See ST. I-II Q. 10.1.

¹⁴⁶ Meyer, “Aristotle on Moral Motivation,” 48.

powers are directed at and responsive to the telos (happiness) in the case of the virtuous person. To this end, I aim to highlight the way in which his conception of efficient-causal motivation is distinctively developmental in focus. Aquinas emphasizes that in order to have the psychological mechanisms that enable the will to be inclined towards and thereby act on or choose the right ends, the powers of will and intellect must be developed. They must be redirected, uprooting their natural inclinations, so as to know and desire the right ends. This only happens over time through a careful process of habituation. Underlying the will's ability to choose the right ends is a developmental story about the way our natural inclinations are redirected over time to come to both know and desire what is good.

How do we begin to will the right ends? The morally virtuous person, according to Aquinas, is someone who has moved from merely operating out of natural inclinations and appetites that are variously disposed to acting out of inclinations and appetites that are responsive to right reason which itself is ordered to the good, or that in which human happiness consists. In his *Disputed Questions on Virtue*, Aquinas explains how this development works. He writes,

A man is inclined by natural appetite to seek his proper good, but since this varies in many ways and because man's good consists of many things, there could not be a natural appetite for this determinate good given all the conditions needed if it is to be good for him, since this varies widely according to the condition of persons, times, and places and the like. For the same reason the natural judgment, which is uniform, does not suffice for the pursuit of a good of this kind. So it is that a man must by reason, which compares different things, discover and discern his proper

good, determined with respect to all its conditions insofar as it sought here and now.¹⁴⁷

Here Aquinas acknowledges not only that man's natural appetite to seek the good is varied in many ways and seeks the good in many things (e.g., a life of sailing, teaching, etc.), but also that factors such as time, place, and community are at play in someone's coming to seek what is determinately good (i.e., that in which happiness ultimately consists). For this reason, man must reason through, comparing ends and ways of life, discover and discern that in which happiness consists. Put in a different way, Williams writes, "God moves the human will as the universal mover...but we determine ourselves to will this or that through reason, and our reason can be mistaken about what is good."¹⁴⁸ It is our job then to direct our powers and inclinations to the right ends. Thankfully, powers and inclinations are the kinds of things that Aquinas thinks can and should be developed and directed so as to incline us to what is actually good. In fact, he thinks that this is a task we all must take up.

¹⁴⁷ Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Virtutibus*, Q.1.6. Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on the Virtues*, trans. Ralph McInerny (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 1999). (*Per naturalem siquidem appetitum homo inclinatur ad appetendum proprium bonum; sed cum hoc multipliciter varietur, et in multis bonum hominis consistat; non potuit homini inesse naturalis appetitus huius boni determinati, secundum conditiones omnes quae requiruntur ad hoc quod sit ei bonum; cum hoc multipliciter varietur secundum diversas conditiones personarum et temporum et locorum, et huiusmodi. Et eadem ratione naturale iudicium; quod est uniforme, et ad huiusmodi bonum quaerendum non sufficit; unde oportuit in homine per rationem, cuius est inter diversa conferre, invenire et diiudicare proprium bonum, secundum omnes conditiones determinatum, prout est nunc et hic quaerendum.*)

¹⁴⁸ Williams, 331. ST I-II Q 9.6 reply obj.3 Williams writes, "God moves the human will as the universal mover...But we determine ourselves to will this or that through reason, and our reason can be mistaken about what is good. That is how the will's God-given inclination to the universal good is consistent with particular instances of bad-willing." Also, see ST. I-II Q 10.4 where Aquinas writes, "God does not determine it [the will] necessarily to one outcome; instead, the will's movement remains contingent and not necessary, except in the things towards which it is moved naturally."

How then does this development work? It is important to first remember that the morally virtuous person is one whose reason directs their appetitive powers to form an inclination that aligns with right reason. As quoted earlier, Aquinas thinks “Virtue denominates a certain perfection of power” and that a power is perfected to the extent it is inclined or “in relation to its end.”¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, moral virtues are also habits in that a habit is the stable inclination in our appetitive powers (i.e., will and sensory appetite) to be directed to or responsive to right reason.¹⁵⁰ Having the habit/moral virtue of courage, for example, means that you have the stable quality in your sensory appetite of overcoming fear (a passion located in the sensory appetite) to act on right reason (which prudentially tells us that acting courageously in a given situation is the virtuous thing to do). This

¹⁴⁹ ST I-II 55.1. Aquinas says “Virtue’ denominates a certain perfection of power. Now the perfection of any given thing is mainly thought of in relation to its end. But the end is the actualization of a power or potentiality (potentiae actus). Hence, a power is said to be perfect to the extent that it is determined to its act.... rational powers, which are proper to a man, are not determined to a single act, but are related in an indeterminate way to many acts. But as is clear from what was said above (q. 49, a. 4), they are determined to their acts by habits. And so the human virtues are habits.” (*virtus nominat quandam potentiae perfectionem. Uniuscuiusque autem perfectio praecipue consideratur in ordine ad suum finem. Finis autem potentiae actus est. Unde potentia dicitur esse perfecta, secundum quod determinatur ad suum actum. Sunt autem quaedam potentiae quae secundum seipsas sunt determinatae ad suos actus; sicut potentiae naturales activae. Et ideo huiusmodi potentiae naturales secundum seipsas dicuntur virtutes. Potentiae autem rationales, quae sunt propriae hominis, non sunt determinatae ad unum, sed se habent indeterminate ad multa, determinantur autem ad actus per habitus, sicut ex supradictis patet. Et ideo virtutes humanae habitus sunt.*)

¹⁵⁰ Jared Brandt summarizes Aquinas’s position on the lastingness of habit. Brandt writes, “Aquinas states, ‘From this it is clear that the word ‘habit’ implies a certain lastingness: while the word ‘disposition’ does not’ (ad 3). Habits and dispositions are similar in that they are both accidental forms through which subjects exist in determinate ways with reference to their nature. They are distinct in that habits are lasting, while dispositions are fleeting or easily lost.” Brandt, Jared. “Growth in Infused Virtue in the Work of Thomas Aquinas.” (Doctoral dissertation, Baylor University, 2018) 29. Brandt cites Aquinas’s quote taken from Simplicius, *On Aristotle’s Categories 7-8*, trans. Barrie Fleet (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 2002). Also see ST I-II. Q. 50.1 where Aquinas suggests that the causes of a disposition need to be naturally lasting in order to have the nature of a habit.

quality or habit is one that Aquinas reiterates is only achieved by taking many actions over time.

Given that our inclinations and powers are variously directed, it is only in taking many acts wherein we align our appetites with reason that we are able to overcome inclinations in our appetites that are contrary to reason.¹⁵¹ In ST. I-II Q. 51.2, “Can a habit be caused by an act?” Aquinas writes, “...from repeated acts (*ex multiplicatis actibus*) a certain quality is generated in the power ...this quality is called a habit.”¹⁵² Not only are repeated acts necessary, but they are necessary for a particular reason: to uproot contrary dispositions. In article 51.3, “Can a habit be generated by a single act?” Aquinas writes,

Now it is clear that the active principle which is reason cannot totally overcome an appetitive power in a single act. For an appetitive power is related in diverse ways to many things, whereas through reason one judges in a single act that something is to be desired with respect to determinate characteristics and circumstances. Hence, the appetitive power is not totally overcome by this judgment in such a way as to be borne toward the same thing in most cases in the manner of a nature (*ut in pluribus per modum naturae*)—which is what belongs to the habit of a virtue. And so the habit of a virtue cannot be caused by just a single act, but is instead caused by many

¹⁵¹ Aquinas writes in his *Commentary on Aristotle's Ethics*, “Men, therefore, first perform just and temperate actions--not in the same way as the just and temperate do--and such actions in their turn produce the habit... If it should be asked how this is possible, since nothing can move itself from potency to act, we must answer that the perfection of moral virtue, which we are treating, consists in reason's control of the appetite.” Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. C.J. Litzinger (O.P. Notre Dame: Henry Regnery Company, 1964), 98.

¹⁵² ST. I-II Q. 51.2 (*Nam omne quod patitur et movetur ab alio, disponitur per actum agentis, unde ex multiplicatis actibus generatur quaedam qualitas in potentia passiva et mota, quae nominatur habitus. Sicut habitus virtutum moralium causantur in appetitivis potentiis, secundum quod moventur a ratione, et habitus scientiarum causantur in intellectu, secundum quod movetur a primis propositionibus.*)

acts.¹⁵³

Not only are our appetites inclined to diverse ends (all under the aspect of the good, of course), but our lower appetites, otherwise known as the sensory appetite that houses passion, are particularly inclined to do as they please. He writes, “the lower appetite has an inclination of its own following on its nature and does not automatically obey the higher appetite.”¹⁵⁴ For example, Aquinas notes that it is often the case that passions (e.g., anger) “overwhelm our judgment.” For this reason, Aquinas claims, “as regards the lower apprehensive powers, it is necessary for the same acts to be repeated many times in order to imprint something firmly.”¹⁵⁵ Unvaryingly, Aquinas states that a single act will not overcome the diverse ways that our appetites are variously inclined.

To bring his point home, Aquinas compares the process of habituation to the way a fire burns.¹⁵⁶ He writes,

¹⁵³ ST. I-II. Q. 51.3 (*Manifestum est autem quod principium activum quod est ratio, non totaliter potest supervincere appetitivam potentiam in uno actu, eo quod appetitiva potentia se habet diversimode et ad multa; iudicatur autem per rationem, in uno actu, aliquid appetendum secundum determinatas rationes et circumstantias. Unde ex hoc non totaliter vincitur appetitiva potentia, ut feratur in idem ut in pluribus, per modum naturae, quod pertinet ad habitum virtutis. Et ideo habitus virtutis non potest causari per unum actum, sed per multos.*)

¹⁵⁴ *DQVirt*, article 1.4.

¹⁵⁵ ST. I-II Q. 51.3

¹⁵⁶ *DQVirt*, article 9. Here Aquinas elaborates “things that can go in either direction [i.e., things that are not determined by nature to one thing] do not possess the kind of form that makes them incline in one determinate direction. Rather, it is their own motivating force that directs them in one determinate direction. But the very fact that they are directed towards this, in some way also disposes them towards this. Then, when they repeatedly incline and are directed in the same direction by their own motivating force, then their inclination in that direction becomes determinate and reinforced. In this way, they acquire a [disposition] towards it, like a sort of form, similar to a natural one, which tends in a single direction. Because of this, we speak of habit as ‘second nature.’” (*Sed ea quae sunt ad utrumlibet, non habent aliquam formam ex qua declinent ad unum determinate; sed a proprio movente determinantur ad aliquid unum; et*

Hence, we see that because a given fire cannot immediately overcome something combustible, it does not immediately make it burst into flame; instead, it drives the contrary dispositions away little by little, so that by totally overcoming the combustible thing in this way, it impresses its likeness on it.¹⁵⁷

Jared Brandt provides a helpful explanation of this passage as it relates to moral virtue.

Brandt writes,

In the example, the combustible material is in potency with respect to being on fire, and the existing fire is striving to actualize that potential. As Aquinas argues, this cannot be done instantaneously; the fire must first expel contrary dispositions until it has overcome the combustible material. Only then can it actualize the material's potency for being on fire. The process is analogous in the generation of habits. Take a habit of moral virtue, for example. The active principle—reason—seeks to actualize the potential of an appetitive power to be inclined to act in accord with reason. It cannot do this all at once because the appetitive power is directed toward many different acts, and because there might be dispositions in the appetitive power that are contrary to reason. Therefore, reason needs to act on the appetitive power in many different situations and in a way capable of removing contrary dispositions. Only then does reason entirely overcome the appetitive power 'so as to be inclined like nature to the same thing, in the majority of cases, which inclination belongs to the habit of virtue' (51.3). This is the process that generates most of the habits of virtue.¹⁵⁸

Brandt's explanation highlights how important multiple actions over a longer period of time are in gaining the inclinations that perfect the appetites, which are otherwise variously inclined. This process is central to the development of powers that are inclined to the end of

hoc ipso quod determinantur ad ipsum, quodammodo disponuntur in idem; et cum multoties inclinantur, determinantur ad idem a proprio movente, et firmatur in eis inclinatio determinata in illud, ita quod ista dispositio superinducta, est quasi quaedam forma per modum naturae tendens in unum. Et propter hoc dicitur, quod consuetudo est altera natura.)

¹⁵⁷ ST. I-II Q. 51.3

¹⁵⁸ Brandt, 44.

virtue, responsive to reason, and ready to carry out the teleological end through a firm motivational habit.

For Aquinas, the goal of this habituation process is to create in the will a firm motivational disposition wherein we learn to desire and choose the right ends and to do so “firmly, promptly, and with pleasure.”¹⁵⁹ Aquinas thinks that a sign of the person with moral virtue is that she chooses the moral acts with firmness, promptness, and even takes pleasure in them. Aquinas also reminds us that achieving this way of choosing only happens through habituating our appetites and minds over time. In his *Disputed Questions on Virtue in General*, Aquinas addresses an objection that claims that acts of virtue do not need anything facilitating them because they are primarily about choice and will and not about habits. Aquinas replies to this objection by emphasizing the need for virtuous habits in choice.¹⁶⁰ He writes, “It should be said that what is a matter of choice alone can easily come about in one way or another, but it is no easy matter for it to come about as it should, that is, expeditiously, firmly, pleasantly. For that we need the habits of the virtues.”¹⁶¹ Aquinas argues just the opposite of the objection. Choice is “no easy matter” when the goal is to make virtuous choices, which for the virtuous person, are made promptly, firmly, and

¹⁵⁹ See ST I-II Q. 100.9c and ST I-II Q.107.4; ST II-II Q. 32.1 ad 1.

¹⁶⁰ DQVirt A.1 obj.13 “Habits are in powers that they might have ease of action. But we do not need something facilitating the acts of virtues, as is clear. For they consist chiefly in choice and will. But nothing easier than what is constituted in the will. Therefore, virtues are not habits.”

¹⁶¹ DQVirt A.1 ad.13

with pleasure. Aquinas here underscores an important aspect of what it means to make a morally motivated choice. A morally motivated choice is not a one-off kind of thing or something that any agent can take. Rather, such a choice requires development through the habituation of our powers and inclinations so as to not only align them with what is truly good but to also enable us to come to desire and promptly choose what is good.

Thus far we have explored how the will and its inclinations must develop in order for us to choose virtuously, however the story of efficient-causal motivation is missing one last component: practical reason's perfection. As Hoffman rightly points out,

Aquinas does not think that the acquisition of the virtues is a matter of mere willpower, as if we could be consistently motivated to act rightly under every existential circumstance. Nor does he think that moral progress depends on the intellect alone, as if knowing what is right were sufficient for willing and doing what is right. Yet he values the cognitive side of moral progress very highly: The main obstacle to moral progress is not the failure to act according to one's own resolve, but rather the failure to realize which ends are worth pursuing.¹⁶²

As Hoffman rightly points out, Aquinas recognizes that one of the biggest challenges to moral progress is not (merely) the failure to will what is good but the lack of understanding about which ends are worth pursuing. For this reason, he emphasizes the importance of cultivating our ability to practically reason through the virtue of prudence. It is only when "reason repeatedly inclines the appetitive power to some one thing" that "a disposition is

¹⁶² Hoffmann, "Aquinas on Moral Progress," 148.

implanted in it by which it is inclined to the thing to which it has become accustomed.”¹⁶³

Aquinas continues,

Rightly considered, therefore, the virtue of the appetitive part is nothing other than a disposition or form which is sealed and impressed on it by reason. Because of this, no matter how strong a disposition to something there may be in the appetitive power, it will only be a virtue if it is the result of reason. That is why reason is put into the definition of virtue. Aristotle says in *Ethics* 2 virtue is a habit of choice in the mind determined in the way that the wise man would determine it.¹⁶⁴

Aquinas reminds us that reason is at the core of what it means to choose virtuously, and that virtue is a habit of choice that relies on reasoning wisely about virtuous ends. For this, we must have prudence. Aquinas writes,

In *Ethics* 6 the Philosopher says, ‘It belongs to the prudent individual to be able to deliberate well.’ And deliberation concerns things that we must do in relation to some end. But reason with respect to what is to be done for the sake of an end is practical reason. Hence, it is clear that prudence consists only in practical reason.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ DQVirt A. 9

¹⁶⁴ Ibid (*Cum igitur ratio multoties inclinet virtutem appetitivam in aliquid unum, fit quaedam dispositio firmata in vi appetitiva, per quam inclinatur in unum quod consuevit; et ista dispositio sic firmata est habitus virtutis. Unde, si recte consideretur, virtus appetitivae partis nihil est aliud quam quaedam dispositio, sive forma, sigillata et impressa in vi appetitiva a ratione. Et propter hoc, quantumcumque sit fortis dispositio in vi appetitiva ad aliquid, non potest habere rationem virtutis, nisi sit ibi id quod est rationis. Unde et in definitione virtutis ponitur ratio: dicit enim philosophus, II Ethicorum, quod virtus est habitus electivus in mente consistens determinata specie, prout sapiens determinabit.*)

¹⁶⁵ ST II-II, Q. 47.2 (*Et hunc finem intendit prudentia, dicit enim philosophus, in VI Ethic., quod sicut ille qui ratiocinatur bene ad aliquem finem particularem, puta ad victoriam, dicitur esse prudens non simpliciter, sed in hoc genere, scilicet in rebus bellicis; ita ille qui bene ratiocinatur ad totum bene vivere dicitur prudens simpliciter. Unde manifestum est quod prudentia est sapientia in rebus humanis, non autem sapientia simpliciter, quia non est circa causam altissimam simpliciter; est enim circa bonum humanum, homo autem non est optimum eorum quae sunt. Et ideo signanter dicitur quod prudentia est sapientia viro, non autem sapientia simpliciter.*) Also see, Q.47.6 “And so it belongs to prudence not to set the end for the moral virtues but only to determine the means to the end.” (*Et ideo ad prudentiam non pertinet praestituere finem virtutibus moralibus, sed solum disponere de his quae sunt ad finem.*)

Prudence is the virtue that helps us deliberate well about what promotes the end. Williams concisely states, “Prudence is what makes someone good at choosing things that are for the end.”¹⁶⁶ In other words, prudence is the moral virtue that perfects practical reason and by which we become habituated to deliberate well and to make correct judgments about what the good is and how it can be realized in particular circumstances. For this reason, Aquinas thinks prudence is necessary for moral virtue. He writes, “The other [i.e., acquired] moral virtues cannot exist without prudence, and that prudence cannot exist without the moral virtues, since the moral virtues bring it about that one is related in the right way to certain ends from which prudence’s reasoning proceeds.”¹⁶⁷ Prudence is essential to the moral virtues because it provides the practical knowledge that “perfect(s) the moral virtues in the appetitive part ...inclining the appetite to some type of human good.”¹⁶⁸ For these reasons, Aquinas reiterates that prudence is essential to the moral virtues and to living well.¹⁶⁹

Just as our non-rational and rational appetites need to be habituated to direct our natural inclinations toward their final end, so too is prudence and practical reason perfected

¹⁶⁶ Williams, “Commentary on the Treatise on Human Acts,” 357.

¹⁶⁷ ST. I-II Q.65.2 (*Dictum est enim supra quod aliae virtutes morales non possunt esse sine prudentia; prudentia autem non potest esse sine virtutibus moralibus, in quantum virtutes morales faciunt bene se habere ad quosdam fines, ex quibus procedit ratio prudentiae.*)

¹⁶⁸ DQVirt A.6. Aquinas writes, “This virtue is called prudence...is perfective of the moral virtues in the appetitive part, all of which incline appetite to some type of human good.” (*Et haec virtus dicitur prudentia, cuius subiectum est ratio practica; et est perfectiva omnium virtutum moralium quae sunt in parte appetitiva, quarum unaquaeque facit inclinationem appetitus in aliquod genus humani boni*)

¹⁶⁹ ST. I-II Q.57.5 Aquinas writes, “Hence, prudence is a virtue necessary for living well.”

by habit.¹⁷⁰ Aquinas emphasizes that our ability to deliberate about means develops as we practice virtuous actions and learn what things do and do not promote happiness. Aquinas writes, over time we “might rightly judge the human good with respect to all the things that must be done.”¹⁷¹ To illustrate what Aquinas has in mind take the example of temperance. Practicing the moral virtue of temperance requires practically thinking through which acts, in which circumstances, toward which objects, etc. promote or fail to promote temperance. As we deliberate, choose, and perform these actions we gain information about, for example, sensory information about the kind and amount of pleasure and pain felt toward which objects and in which circumstances. As we practice virtuous actions, we learn to perfect practical reason over time to make correct judgements about the courses of action that best promote what is good or virtuous. A crucial part of prudence or coming to choose the right means, for Aquinas, requires recognizing its intimate connection with the moral virtues. As Sherwin succinctly summarizes, “In order for prudence to incline practical reason to judge correctly about human actions, practical reason must be moved toward a proper end by a will rightly inclined by the moral virtues.”¹⁷² Likewise, “in order

¹⁷⁰ DQVirt A.6 Aquinas writes, “Thus it is that speculative reason needs to be perfected by the habit of science in order to judge the objects pertaining to that science; so too practical reason is perfected by a habit in order that it might rightly judge the human good with respect to all the things that must be done.” (*Et ad hoc faciendum ratio absque habitu perficiente hoc modo se habet sicut et in speculativo se habet ratio absque habitu scientiae ad diiudicandum de aliqua conclusione alicuius scientiae; quod quidem non potest nisi imperfecte et cum difficultate agere. Sicut igitur oportet rationem speculativam habitu scientiae perfici ad hoc quod recte diiudicet de scibilibus ad scientiam aliquam pertinentibus; ita oportet quod ratio practica perficiatur aliquo habitu ad hoc quod recte diiudicet de bono humano secundum singula agenda.*)

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love*, 116.

for the moral virtues to incline us toward actions we freely choose, they must be ordered and specified by the right reason supplied by prudence.”¹⁷³

Concluding Thoughts on Aquinas on Moral Motivation

After discussing both the perfection of the rational appetite and practical reason, at this point, our discussion of efficient-causal and teleological motivation is complete. As I have argued, Aristotle’s teleological and efficient-causal aspects of moral motivation map nicely onto Aquinas’s moral psychology and provide a helpful framework for developing his views of moral motivation. In working out in detail Aquinas’s account of efficient-causal motivation, it is my hope to display how Aquinas’s account of moral motivation is developmental in focus. He provides a compelling account of the way that our natural inclinations, appetites, and reason develop over time through a long process of habituation to come to desire, know, and choose the right ends in the right way. As I will go on to argue, this developmental account of efficient-causal motivation is distinct, helpful, and provides ample space for certain psychological skills, to which he directs us in his *Treatise on the Passions*, to facilitate the development of moral motivation.

Now that Aquinas’s teleological and efficient-causal account of moral motivation is laid out, the payoff is to explore the implications of this account in the discussion of moral motivation and skill that took place in the first chapter. However, before diving straight

¹⁷³ Ibid. If this seems circular see Tobias Hoffmann’s treatment of prudence in “Prudence and Practical Principles” where he explores and, to a large extent, resolves this issue.

into this discussion, it is important to take a bit of space to see how the account I have laid out matches up to what others have said about Aquinas on moral motivation. As I said in the beginning of this chapter, there is very little research that explores Aquinas's account of moral motivation. Nonetheless, there are two possible objections that speak generally to the kind of thing moral motivation concerns in Aquinas's work. Both stand to challenge the account I offer. The first speaks to the role of charity and the second speaks to moral motivation's connection with human agency.

X. Possible Objections

Objection 1: Where's Charity in all of this?

A group of scholars that are commonly referred to as the "theologians of moral motivation" argue that what it is to be morally motivated for Aquinas is centrally about charity.¹⁷⁴ As James Keenan states, "In a word, the contemporary phrase, 'moral motivation,' best expresses the charitable person who loves self and neighbor formally out of union with God."¹⁷⁵ Charity is a divinely infused virtue that allows us to love the ultimate good, God, for His own sake, and to love our neighbors. Moreover, charity is essential to Aquinas's picture of human beatitude wherein we are united to God in love. Given how central

¹⁷⁴ Sherwin creates the designation "the theologians of moral motivation" which includes theologians such as Josef Fuchs and James Keenan. Sherwin argues that the theologians of moral motivation "describe charity's act as the will's motivation--distinguishing it from the will's intentions or choices" (Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love*, 6).

¹⁷⁵ James Keenan, *Goodness and Rightness*, 142.

charity is to growing to love the good and to will it for its own sake, it seems that an account of moral motivation must incorporate charity in some substantial way. Yet the account I have presented does not say anything about charity, nor does it tell a story about how we come to love the good. This seems to be a substantial problem for my account.

This topic could take a large number of pages to address in full. In an attempt to be brief, I think this objection can be addressed in large part by considering two points. First, it is important to situate my discussion of moral motivation within Aquinas's theology on charity. Second, the account of moral motivation I have described accounts for developing a love of the good.

To the first, the account of moral motivation I have given is based on the moral virtues, which are distinct from theological virtues (faith, hope, and love/charity) according to their objects. Nonetheless, the two kinds of virtues are connected insofar as the moral virtues need the theological virtue of charity to direct them to the ultimate good, which is unity with God. Aquinas claims that moral virtues have as their proper object the things that human reason and appetite can comprehend, while theological virtues have as their object ultimate ends, God himself, which "exceeds human reason."¹⁷⁶ He writes, "The

¹⁷⁶ ST. I-II Q. 62. 2. Aquinas writes, "As was explained above (q. 54, a. 2), habits are distinct in species according to the formal differences among their objects. But the object of the theological virtues is the ultimate end of things, God Himself, insofar as He exceeds our reason's cognition. By contrast, the object of the intellectual and moral virtues is something that can be comprehended by human reason. Hence, the theological virtues are distinct in species from the moral and intellectual virtues." (*Respondeo dicendum quod, sicut supra dictum est, habitus specie distinguuntur secundum formalem differentiam obiectorum. Obiectum autem theologiarum virtutum est ipse Deus, qui est ultimus rerum finis, prout nostrae rationis cognitionem*

intellectual and moral virtues perfect man's intellect and appetite in a way proportioned to human nature, whereas the theological virtues perfect them supernaturally."¹⁷⁷ Though distinct kinds of virtue, Aquinas calls charity the "form of the virtues" in that it directs the will and reason beyond its natural inclinations to the good that is conducive to our happiness, union with God. In other words, charity is a virtue infused in us that helps to direct us to what the good really is, beyond what our natural abilities are able to do on their own.¹⁷⁸

That said, I am offering an account of moral motivation at the natural level. My account of moral motivation focuses on the extent to which we can do something freely to

excedit. Obiectum autem virtutum intellectualium et moralium est aliquid quod humana ratione comprehendi potest. Unde virtutes theologicae specie distinguuntur a moralibus et intellectualibus.)

¹⁷⁷ ST. I-II Q. 62.2 ad 1. (*Ad primum ergo dicendum quod virtutes intellectuales et morales perficiunt intellectum et appetitum hominis secundum proportionem naturae humanae, sed theologicae supernaturaliter.*)

¹⁷⁸ At ST. I-II Q. 13.1, Aquinas gives the example of charity as it directs the virtue of courage, "Now in the acts of the soul, it is important to note that an act that belongs essentially to one power or disposition receives its form and species from a higher power or disposition insofar as the lower power is directed by the higher. For example, if someone performs an act of courage out of love for God, the act is materially an act of courage but formally an act of charity. Now it is clear that reason precedes the will in a certain way and directs its act, insofar as the will tends toward its object in accordance with reason's direction, since the apprehensive power is what presents the appetitive power with its object. Thus, the act in which the will tends toward something that is proposed to it as something good is materially an act of will but formally an act of reason, because it is reason that directs the act toward an end." (Williams and Van Dyke, 121). See also Ibid, 191. (*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, si enim aliquis actum fortitudinis exerceat propter Dei amorem, actus quidem ille materialiter est fortitudinis, formaliter vero caritatis. Manifestum est autem quod ratio quodammodo voluntatem praecedat, et ordinat actum eius, in quantum scilicet voluntas in suum obiectum tendit secundum ordinem rationis, eo quod vis apprehensiva appetitivae suum obiectum repraesentat. Sic igitur ille actus quo voluntas tendit in aliquid quod proponitur ut bonum, ex eo quod per rationem est ordinatum ad finem, materialiter quidem est voluntatis, formaliter.*)

self-actualize through developing moral/acquired virtue. The supernatural motivation of charity does not supersede natural motivation; nor does possession of the acquired virtues presuppose possession of any supernatural virtue. Aquinas accepts the medieval maxim that “grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it” (*gratia non tollit naturam, sed perficit*). Charity takes us beyond what natural reason by itself can apprehend, according to Thomas, but it never overrides or contradicts what we know by way of natural reason. Moreover, Aquinas clearly states that the natural virtues can exist without the aid of charity. He writes, “As has been explained (q. 63, a. 2), insofar as the moral virtues do what is good in relation to an end that does not exceed a man’s natural power, they can be acquired through human actions. And in this sense they can exist without charity, as they did in many Gentiles.”¹⁷⁹ If, however, the moral virtues are to be truly perfect, they need the infused virtue of charity to direct them to their supernatural end. Aquinas continues,

However, insofar as the moral virtues do what is good in relation to our supernatural end, then in this sense they have the character of virtue perfectly and truly, and they are infused by God and cannot be acquired by human acts. And moral virtues of this sort cannot exist without charity. Thus, it is clear from what has been said that only the infused virtues are perfect virtues, and only the infused virtues should be called virtues absolutely speaking, since they order a man in the right way, absolutely speaking, toward his ultimate end. The other virtues, i.e., the acquired virtues, are virtues in a certain respect and not virtues absolutely speaking, since they order a man in the right way with respect to the ultimate end in a certain genus, but not with respect to the ultimate end absolutely speaking.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ ST. I-II Q. 65.2 (*Respondeo dicendum quod, sicut supra dictum est, virtutes morales prout sunt operativae boni in ordine ad finem qui non excedit facultatem naturalem hominis, possunt per opera humana acquiri.*)

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

Moral virtues are only perfect when directed to their supernatural end. For this we need charity to uplift our natural faculties, specifically our will, to love God as the end to which all actions should be directed. On the natural level wherein my account falls, once again, charity is not required.

As for the second aspect of this objection, coming to know and love the good happens as a result of habituating our appetites in moral virtue. My account lays this out through the development of virtuous habits. Nonetheless, it is also worth highlighting that Aquinas uses the language of love to describe the will's inclination to the good. He writes,

Thus, first of all, the good causes in the appetitive power a certain inclination toward, or aptitude for, or connaturality with the good (*causat quandam inclinationem seu aptitudinem seu connaturalitatem ad bonum*). This pertains to the passion of love (*amor*)...Second, if the good has not yet been attained, it gives the appetitive power a movement toward acquiring the good that is loved, and this pertains to the passion of desire (*desiderium*) or sentient desire (*concupiscentia*).¹⁸¹

By nature, as our appetite is inclined toward the good through reason, it develops a love and desire for the good. Thus, even on a natural level, there is a story about the will's coming to love the good. But, once again, if the will is to come to love the supernatural good (i.e., God) charity must be infused in the will to create this kind of love.

¹⁸¹ ST I-II 23.4 (*Bonum ergo primo quidem in potentia appetitiva causat quandam inclinationem, seu aptitudinem, seu connaturalitatem ad bonum, quod pertinet ad passionem amoris. Cui per contrarium respondet odium, ex parte mali. Secundo, si bonum sit nondum habitum, dat ei motum ad assequendum bonum amatum, et hoc pertinet ad passionem desiderii vel concupiscentiae.*)

Objection 2: Using Human Agency as a Gauge

Many virtue ethicists and contemporary philosophers think that moral motivation is intimately linked to human agency. In general terms, 'agency' denotes the exercise or manifestation of an agent's capacity to act.¹⁸² A human agent is a being of a certain sort with the capacity to act in a distinctively human way. Moral motivation is often thought to be central to that which allows a human to act in a distinctively human way. Harry Frankfurt, for example, famously argues that the difference between persons and other agents consists in the structure of their will. Only persons have motivations in the form of cares that they can reflect on and care about.¹⁸³ If we think that agency, or acting in a distinctively human way, is intimately linked with the way we are morally motivated, then it seems that a test or gauge of whether or not I have gotten Aquinas's account of moral motivation right is if it aligns with his account of agency. Since my account thus far has not yet been linked to Aquinas's account of human agency, the question remains as to how my rendering of Aquinas's account relates to his concept of human agency.

This is again a question that deserves much more space and time than the scope of this project permits. Nonetheless, I want to briefly point out that there is reason to believe that Aquinas's account of agency does quite nicely cohere with his account of moral

¹⁸² Markus Schlosser, "Agency," (Stanford University, October 28, 2019), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/agency/>.

¹⁸³ Ibid. See also Harry G. Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person", *Journal of Philosophy*, 68, no1. (1971): 5–20. doi:10.2307/2024717.

motivation as both teleological and efficient-causal. For example, Stefaan E. Cuypers develops a view of Aquinas's account of agency that corresponds with my account of moral motivation. Cuypers argues that Aquinas's account of agency is both "teleological" and "agent-causal."¹⁸⁴ In his article titled "Thomistic Agent-Causality," Cuypers argues that the agent-causal side of causation accounts for the will's natural inclination to the good that enables it to act on that which the intellect presents.¹⁸⁵ The teleological aspect accounts for the context in which the will operates. He argues that the will only wills in light of "a context of ends" that the will and intellect determine are good (i.e., conducive to happiness).¹⁸⁶ With just this much, Cuypers offers a view human agency that aligns nicely with my rendering of Aquinas's account of moral motivations as both teleological and efficient-causal.¹⁸⁷ More work would need to be done to draw out the parallels between the accounts if we are to say that they truly align. Nonetheless, the striking similarity between the accounts leads me to believe that my rendering of Aquinas's view on moral motivation is, at the very least, not far off from respected renderings of Aquinas's account of human agency.

¹⁸⁴ Cuypers, 100.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 103. Cuypers even calls this agent-causal side the efficient-cause of action. He states, "will is the efficient cause of other faculties and acts"

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 100.

¹⁸⁷ Nick Austin, *Aquinas on Virtue A Causal Reading*, (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2017) 100. Austin also agrees with Cuypers account of Aquinas's view of agency.

It is also worth noting that if human agency is supposed to capture that which makes us able to act in a distinctively human way, a benefit of Aquinas's account of human agency and moral motivation is that they address this better than popular contemporary accounts. For example, the dominant theory of agency is what is termed the "causal" theory. This theory analyzes intentional action in terms of the efficient causality of internal psychological states (i.e., desires, intentions, beliefs). Donald Davidson is perhaps the best-known proponent of this view. He writes that "an action is performed with a certain intention if it is caused in the right way by attitudes and beliefs that rationalize it."¹⁸⁸ Moral theologians today rightly critique this view of agency for "focusing exclusively on acts in an atomistic way—that is, divorced from a broader context of a person's orientation to the overall goal of human life."¹⁸⁹ Nick Austin writes,

Aquinas avoids the trap of the atomistic approach precisely because of his teleological vision of agency. The moral manuals invariably begin with a treatment of human action and omit the *Treatise on Beatitude*, whereas Aquinas situates his definition of human action within a consideration of the overall end of human life (I.II 1–5). His account of human agency is teleological from the beginning, in seeing that human action is the motor of the journey of the dynamic *imago Dei* toward God. For him, truly human moral agency flows from deliberation about ends, as well as how best to realize those ends. Ethics must therefore begin not with the question of what to do but with the deeper Final-causal question of what ends are worth pursuing in the first place.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ Donald Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 87.

¹⁸⁹ Austin, 100. Austin refers to John Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology: A Study of the Roman Catholic Tradition*, Martin D'Arcy Memorial Lectures, 1981–82 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987).

¹⁹⁰ Austin, 102.

Austin picks out an important advantage to Aquinas's account compared to contemporary accounts of agency. Contemporary accounts tend to reduce intentional agency to the efficient causality of psychological states and, in turn, lose sight of the agent and the context in which and ends for which the agent acts. Compared to Aquinas's view, the contemporary viewpoint has lost sight of what it means to act in a definitively human way. Aquinas provides an answer not only to what makes us able to act (efficient-causal motivation), but also what makes an action definitively human.

Austin's critique applies to the case of moral motivation as it is talked about by contemporary scholars. Contemporary philosophers focus on the cognitive and conative states that enable a judgment to motivate action. Moreover, many scholars (some of whom we discussed in the first chapter) define moral motivation atomistically as a psychological event or act (i.e., choice or intention) directed toward certain ends. For Aquinas, the focus is not on acts but the person who performs these acts, or, to be more accurate, "the person who is becoming more, or less, himself in an through his actions."¹⁹¹ As John Mahoney interprets Aquinas, human acts are not so much steps as "stages of personal growth, more like rings in a tree."¹⁹² Aquinas addresses the complex development of our psychology underlying moral motivation. This is just one advantage of many that Aquinas's account

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² John Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology: A Study of the Roman Catholic Tradition*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987) 220.

offers. Without further delay, let us turn to discuss how Aquinas's account of moral motivation compares to the authors discussed in the first chapter.

Chapter Three: Correcting the Contemporary Discourse: Aquinas on the Relationship Between Skill and Moral Motivation

I. Introduction

Now that we have laid out an in-depth account of moral motivation, we can now return to the original question posed in chapter one: how do skills help us to cultivate moral virtue, understood as primarily a motivational disposition? In the first chapter we focused on the “motivation objection,” which challenged the idea that skills can be used to cultivate moral virtue. Zagzebski, Wallace, Watson, and Mueller argue that moral virtue is primarily about moral motivation and that skills do not aid in the development of moral virtue as a motivational disposition. Based on their assessment, the trajectory of current research on cultivating moral virtue using skills is bleak. As I argued in chapter one, the proponents of this objection face two sizable problems. First, there is a serious lack of clarity around what moral motivation is within this discourse. Moral motivation is described in multiple ways and all with loose relation to Aristotle’s passage at *NE* II.4.1105a22-35 indicating three conditions that make up moral motivation.¹⁹³ Second, they continue to think of skills as

¹⁹³ For example, Zagzebski defines moral motivation as “motivational components” and loosely points to Aristotle’s famous passage at *NE* II.4.1105a22-35 indicating three conditions or interior choices that make up moral motivation. Wallace describes moral motivation as a “change of heart” or “caring about something.” Watson describes moral motivation as concerned with the ‘will,’ or a nice array of “one’s purposes, ends, choices, concerns, cares, attachments, and commitments.” Mueller defines moral motivation as a motivational disposition of the will that develops over time. And Stichter defines it as a commitment to an end.

crafts and ignore contemporary kinds of psychological skills whose content are the thoughts, feelings, and actions that make up much of the moral life.¹⁹⁴ We need an adequate understanding of moral motivation, a robust understanding of skill, and a discussion of how the two relate if we are to move past the impasse in contemporary discourse. In an attempt to fill in the missing pieces, now that we have a clear account of moral motivation thanks to Aquinas's moral psychology, we are in a position to make headway in understanding how moral motivation relates to skill. Furthermore, we are ready to address the larger question regarding whether or not psychological skills are useful for cultivating moral motivation. To this end, contrary to the "moral motivation objection," I argue that psychological skills are exactly the kinds of things that can be used to cultivate moral motivation. I find that Aquinas offers a new way to see the relationship between moral motivation and skill, one where certain psychological skills play an instrumental role in facilitating the development of moral motivation. More specifically, psychological skills can contribute to the habitation of our inclinations and powers and therefore aid in cultivating our ability to choose *in the way* the virtuous person does. Aquinas's moral psychology not only provide clarity on the development of moral motivation but also insight into the kinds

¹⁹⁴ For example, Watson and Wallace have in mind technical skills such as cooking, fixing a bicycle, or becoming an expert tennis player. The kinds of skills Mueller thinks are representative of skills generally are skills of carpentry, bicycle repair, gardening, and those of a computer technician. For Zagzebski, skills are always about "exterior action" and effectiveness. All of these skills are quite removed from psychological skills whose content are the thoughts, feelings, and actions that make up much of the moral life.

of psychological skills that can aid in the cultivation of moral motivation and, in turn, moral virtue.

By way of arguing for this new relationship between skill and moral motivation that Aquinas offers, I begin by first clarifying Aquinas's view of skill. I argue that we must look beyond his semantic use of craft (*ars*) (which is frequently translated as "skill") and instead look to his *Treatise on the Passions*, wherein he employs the use of psychological skills, specifically skills of emotion regulation. In outlining Aquinas's emotion-regulation skills, I emphasize the importance Aquinas places on regulating emotions and the impact emotions have on our ability to make virtuous choices. In this way, I aim to display the instrumental role emotion regulation skills play in cultivating moral motivation (on the efficient-causal side). This instrumental relationship between moral motivation and skill, I go on to argue, informs the contemporary discourse by adding much-needed nuance to the discussion and by reimagining the possibility for skills to aid in the cultivation of moral virtue.

II. Aquinas on Skill

Similar to Aristotle, Aquinas does not use the English term "skill" but what he means by skill is primarily taken from his concept of craft (*ars*) or the act of making something.

Aquinas writes that a craft (*ars*),

...is nothing other than right (practical) reason with respect to things to be made (*ratio recta aliquorum operum faciendorum*). Yet the good of those works consists not in the human appetite being disposed in a certain way, but rather in the work that is made being itself good in its own right. For what is relevant to a craftsman's praiseworthiness insofar as he is a craftsman is not the sort of act of willing by which

he makes his work (*non qua voluntate opus faciat*), but the quality of the work which he makes (*quale sit opus quod facit*).¹⁹⁵

Aquinas, like Aristotle, makes clear that crafts of this sort are quite different from virtue.

One primary difference that Aquinas emphasizes repeatedly is that the good of a craft, unlike virtue, is not dependent on “human appetite being disposed in the right way.”

Instead, good craftsmanship is based on the quality of the work found in the product.

Aquinas continually refers to craft as that which is concerned with exterior action. He writes “craft’s matter is things we can make, which are outside us.”¹⁹⁶ Given his view of

craft, at this point Aquinas seems to side with the proponents of the moral motivation

objection. Seen merely as a craft, skill does not hold much promise as a resource for

cultivating moral virtue which, as we have seen, is primarily a motivational disposition in the will to choose the right ends.

On contemporary accounts of skill, however, skills take on a much larger semantic range, one that includes psychological skills (e.g., skills of self-regulation, cognitive habits, emotion regulation, etc.). These skills target interior psychological states. It is these kinds of

¹⁹⁵ ST. I-II Q.57.3 (*Respondeo dicendum quod ars nihil aliud est quam ratio recta aliquorum operum faciendorum. Quorum tamen bonum non consistit in eo quod appetitus humanus aliquo modo se habet, sed in eo quod ipsum opus quod fit, in se bonum est. Non enim pertinet ad laudem artificis, in quantum artifex est, qua voluntate opus faciat; sed quale sit opus quod facit. Sic igitur ars, proprie loquendo, habitus operativus est. Et tamen in aliquo convenit cum habitibus speculativis, quia etiam ad ipsos habitus speculativos pertinet qualiter se habeat res quam considerant, non autem qualiter se habeat appetitus humanus ad illas.*)

¹⁹⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on the Virtues*, trans. Jeffrey Hause and Claudia Eisen Murphy in *Thomas Aquinas Basic works* eds. Robert Pasnau and Jeffrey Hause (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2014) 568 (Response 17).

skills that scholars like Narvez, Stichter, and Russell think are promising aids in cultivating virtue.¹⁹⁷ If these psychological skills are what is most useful for cultivating virtue what then does Aquinas's account have to contribute to this discourse? Given that Aquinas's account of craft is too narrow in scope to account for psychological skills, I argue that we need to look not where Aquinas uses the term craft (*ars*) but instead where he describes what we would now call psychological skills. In his *Treatise on the Passions*, Aquinas offers several psychological techniques for modifying adverse emotions. These techniques show significant parallels with emotion regulation skills found in contemporary clinical psychology wherein certain techniques are used to modify emotions in light of a target emotional goal.¹⁹⁸ What makes these techniques count as "skills" is that individuals can learn to practice these techniques over time and gain the capacity to regulate their emotions in line with an emotional goal.¹⁹⁹ Techniques such as cognitive reframing, cognitive reappraisal, and many more, are learned skills that all serve to regulate emotions in line

¹⁹⁷ Stichter, as we have seen, argues that social cognitive skills of self-regulation are the relevant kinds of skills to cultivate virtue.

¹⁹⁸ Emotion regulation is defined as the ability of an individual to modulate an emotion or set of emotions using techniques that alter and manage emotion in light of a target emotion or emotional goal. An example of a technique used in emotion regulation is teaching an individual to consciously monitor their emotional responses (i.e. feelings of anger) so as to begin understanding and altering the schemas, or organizing perceptual frameworks, that give rise to that emotion. Emotion regulation techniques typically include various cognitive techniques for modulating an emotion in light of one's desired or target emotion. See, "Emotion Regulation." (American Psychological Association Dictionary of Psychology. February 2019).

¹⁹⁹ For example, if my goal is to have more positive emotions (e.g., love) towards my husband, emotion regulation skills offer a way to practice, for example, cognitively reframing my way of thinking about my spouse and thereby work towards achieving my emotional goal.

with a target emotional goal or state. I find that Aquinas offers such skills and it is here that we find his most interesting, advanced, and virtue-relevant kinds of skills.

III. Aquinas on Emotion and Emotion Regulation

Before jumping into the exact emotion regulation skills that Aquinas offers, first, it is important to note why Aquinas thinks emotions are so important for moral virtue and why regulating the emotions in line with reason is key to cultivating moral motivation and, in turn, moral virtue. Answering this will help to explain why Aquinas is so keen on emotion and emotion regulation skills. To this end, a proper place to begin is Aquinas's moral psychology of virtue as the perfection of an agent's powers (i.e., powers of the intellect and appetites). Aquinas thinks that one power that requires perfection for moral virtue is the sensitive appetite wherein he locates the emotions, or passions as he calls them.²⁰⁰ Aquinas specifies that passions are the proper acts of the sensitive appetite.²⁰¹ Just as all powers are perfected by partaking in perfected acts, or actions that are aligned with right reason, so too is the sensitive appetite perfected when the passions are aligned or regulated by right reason. Robert Miner summarizes this point nicely:

²⁰⁰ For a provocative genealogy that explains how passion became the modern day "emotion" see Thomas Dixon *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

²⁰¹ Scholars debate about Aquinas's exact definition of passion and question whether he gives an explicit definition. Nonetheless, Aquinas often refers to the following definition of passion offered by Damascene at ST I-II Q.22.3. Aquinas writes, "A passion is a motion of the power of the sensitive appetite regarding the imagination of good or evil. To say this differently: a passion is a motion of the irrational soul occurring through a suspicion of good or evil." (22.3.sc; cf. Damascene 1857–66, cols. 940–2).

The sensitive appetite is perfected when the passions accept the politic rule of reason – that is, when they acknowledge the right of reason to command, while contributing something of their own that follows upon reason...passions are the acts whose regular, prompt occurrence according to the judgment of reason constitutes the perfection of the power from which they proceed. Without the passions, there is no prospect of perfecting the powers, since to perfect the powers of the sensitive appetite simply means to ensure that the right acts characteristically flow from those powers.²⁰²

According to Aquinas's logic, for example, in aligning the passion that is fear with reason's command (e.g., not letting fear withdraw us from difficult acts), we perfect the sensitive appetite, and over time the passions begin to flow characteristically from this power (e.g., creating, in the case of fear, the virtue of courage).

Two virtues in particular Aquinas thinks are entirely about the passions and their regulation: courage and temperance.²⁰³ The virtues of courage and temperance are "seated" in the sensitive appetite and their perfection consists in regulating emotion toward the right ends.²⁰⁴ Courage, Aquinas posits, is the regulation of fear so as not to allow fear to

²⁰² Robert C. Miner. *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions: A Study of Summa Theologiae, 1a2ae* 22–48. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 289.

²⁰³ Aquinas thinks that virtues that are about actions (i.e., justice) can exist without the passions (though not as perfectly as they could with the passions).

²⁰⁴ ST. I-II Q. 59.5. Aquinas states, "On the other hand, if what are calling 'passions' are all the movements of the sentient appetite, then it is plain that those moral virtues that have to do with the passions as their proper matter cannot exist without the passions....On the other hand, those moral virtues that have to do with actions and not with the passions can exist without the passions (and justice is a virtue of this type), since through these virtues it is the will that is applied to its proper act, which is not a passion." (*Unde sicut virtus membra corporis ordinat ad actus exteriores debitos, ita appetitum sensitivum ad motus proprios ordinatos. Virtutes vero morales quae non sunt circa passiones, sed circa operationes, possunt esse sine passionibus (et huiusmodi virtus est iustitia), quia per eas applicatur voluntas ad proprium actum, qui non est passio. Sed tamen ad actum iustitiae sequitur gaudium, ad minus in voluntate, quod non est passio. Et si hoc gaudium multiplicetur per iustitiae perfectionem, fiet gaudii redundantia usque ad appetitum sensitivum; secundum quod vires inferiores sequuntur motum superiorum, ut supra dictum est. Et sic per redundantiam huiusmodi, quanto virtus fuerit perfectior, tanto magis passionem causat*).

withdraw us from following reason in the face of difficulty.²⁰⁵ Similarly, just as courage regulates fear by inciting us to do what reason demands, temperance regulates the passions by preventing the passion from “withdrawing” us “from things that seduce [our] appetite from obeying reason.”²⁰⁶ Miner writes, “At every stage, temperance regulates the... passions, ensuring that its possessor experiences love and hate, desire and aversion,

²⁰⁵ ST. II-II, Q.123.3. Aquinas writes, “On the contrary, The Philosopher says (Ethic. ii, 7; iii, 9) that fortitude is about fear and daring. I answer that, As stated above (Article 1), it belongs to the virtue of fortitude to remove any obstacle that withdraws the will from following the reason. Now to be withdrawn from something difficult belongs to the notion of fear, which denotes withdrawal from an evil that entails difficulty, as stated above (I-II:42:3; I-II:42:5) in the treatise on passions. Hence fortitude is chiefly about fear of difficult things, which can withdraw the will from following the reason.” (*Sed contra est quod philosophus dicit, in II et in III Ethic., quod fortitudo est circa timorem et audaciam. Respondeo dicendum quod, sicut dictum est, ad virtutem fortitudinis pertinet remove impedimentum quo retrahitur voluntas a sequela rationis. Quod autem aliquis retrahatur ab aliquo difficili, pertinet ad rationem timoris, qui importat recessum quendam a malo difficultatem habente, ut supra habitum est, cum de passionibus ageretur. Et ideo fortitudo principaliter est circa timores rerum difficilium, quae retrahere possunt voluntatem a sequela rationis. Oportet autem huiusmodi rerum difficilium impulsum non solum firmiter tolerare cohibendo timorem, sed etiam moderate aggredi, quando scilicet oportet ea exterminare, ad securitatem in posterum habendam. Quod videtur pertinere ad rationem audaciae. Et ideo fortitudo est circa timores et audacias, quasi cohibitiva timorum, et moderativa audaciarum*). Miner writes, “without a field of objects that have the potency for activating the passions of fear and daring, the virtue of fortitude would have nothing to be about – *no materia circa quam* – and would therefore not exist.... these virtues directly require the passions, since to speak of the perfection of these powers without their acts is meaningless.” (Minor, .290).

²⁰⁶ ST II-II Q. 141.2. Aquinas writes, “temperance is not a special but a general virtue, because the word ‘temperance’ signifies a certain temperateness or moderation, which reason appoints to human operations and passions: and this is common to every moral virtue. Yet there is a logical difference between temperance and fortitude, even if we take them both as general virtues: since temperance withdraws man from things which seduce the appetite from obeying reason, while fortitude incites him to endure or withstand those things on account of which he forsakes the good of reason.” (*Et sic temperantia non est virtus specialis, sed generalis, quia nomen temperantiae significat quandam temperiem, idest moderationem, quam ratio ponit in humanis operationibus et passionibus; quod est commune in omni virtute morali. Differt tamen ratione temperantia a fortitudine etiam secundum quod utraque sumitur ut virtus communis. Nam temperantia retrahit ab his quae contra rationem appetitum alliciunt, fortitudo autem impellit ad ea sustinenda vel aggredienda propter quae homo refugit bonum rationis. Si vero consideretur antonomastice temperantia, secundum quod refrenat appetitum ab his quae maxime alliciunt hominem, sic est specialis virtus, utpote habens specialem materiam, sicut et fortitudo*).

pleasure and sorrow according to the rational mean.”²⁰⁷ Given that the primary work of temperance and courage is to moderate the passions, and that the passions can come up in any domain of human action, Aquinas thinks that all of the virtues rely on the work of temperance and courage to order the passions to follow right reason. Being a good friend, a prudent reasoner, a loving father, a generous donor, for example, all rely on being able to moderate passions in line with what is good in each case. In this way, Miner writes, all virtues are connected to the passions. Miner concludes, “if temperance and fortitude require the appropriate cultivation of the passions, and the other moral virtues require temperance and fortitude, it follows that possession of the moral virtues as such requires the passions.”²⁰⁸ More specifically, all virtues require the regulation of the passions, which is the work of the virtues of temperance and courage.

In addition to the fact that all moral virtues rely on the work of these two virtues, Aquinas also thinks that all of the virtues require the passions because the presence of a passion indicates the flourishing of that virtue. One reason the passions add to the

²⁰⁷ Miner, *Aquinas on the Passions*, 291. Miner refers here specifically to the “concupiscible passions” or those passions in the sensitive appetite that arise when an agent relates to an object as pleasant. Miner writes, “Sensitive appetite is inclined in one way toward something apprehended as pleasant, and in quite another way toward something estimated as useful. Therefore, it must be subdivided into two powers [namely, the concupiscible and irascible powers], unlike the rational appetite (which admits of no subdivision) ... The concupiscible power seeks pleasure here and now. The irascible power inclines the sensitive appetite to resistance and defense, even when this appears difficult and unpleasant.” Miner, *Aquinas on the Passions*, 48-49.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 295.

flourishing of the virtues is that they add to the goodness of the act. He emphasizes this point at ST. I-II Q.24.3,

It is part of the perfection of the moral or human good that the passions of the soul should likewise be regulated by reason. Therefore, just as it is better that a man should both will the good and do it by an exterior act, so too it is part of the perfection of the moral good that a man should be moved not only by his will but also by his sentient appetite—this according to Psalm 85:3 (“My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God”) where by ‘heart’ we understand the intellectual appetite and by ‘flesh’ we understand the sentient appetite.²⁰⁹

Being moved not just by reason but also by our sensitive appetite is an important part of the goodness and perfection of a virtuous act. It is better to not just serve the Lord because we know it is right but to feel in “heart and flesh” joy and love in doing so. Similarly, Aquinas emphasizes that “every virtuous individual delights in the act of a virtue and is pained by a contrary act.”²¹⁰ Feeling pleasure in doing virtuous acts and pain in the contrary act is part

²⁰⁹ Ibid. (*Unde nullus dubitat quin ad perfectionem moralis boni pertineat quod actus exteriorum membrorum per rationis regulam dirigantur. Unde, cum appetitus sensitivus possit obedire rationi, ut supra dictum est, ad perfectionem moralis sive humani boni pertinet quod etiam ipsae passiones animae sint regulatae per rationem. Sicut igitur melius est quod homo et velit bonum, et faciat exteriori actu; ita etiam ad perfectionem boni moralis pertinet quod homo ad bonum moveatur non solum secundum voluntatem, sed etiam secundum appetitum sensitivum; secundum illud quod in Psalmo LXXXIII, dicitur, cor meum et caro mea exultaverunt in Deum vivum, ut cor accipiamus pro appetitu intellectivo, carnem autem pro appetitu sensitivo.*)

²¹⁰ St. I-II Q. 59.4 In his reply to objection 1, Aquinas writes: “Not every moral virtue has to do with pleasures and pains as its proper matter, but instead every virtue has to do with them as something that follows upon its proper act. For every virtuous individual delights in the act of a virtue and is pained by a contrary act. Hence, after the quoted passage, the Philosopher adds, “... if the virtues have to do with actions and passions; but every action or passion is followed by pleasure or pain, and because of this virtue will have to do with pleasures and pains,” viz., as something that follows upon virtue.” (*Ad primum ergo dicendum quod non omnis virtus moralis est circa delectationes et tristitias sicut circa propriam materiam, sed sicut circa aliquid consequens proprium actum. Omnis enim virtuosus delectatur in actu virtutis, et tristatur in contrario. Unde philosophus post praemissa verba subdit quod, si virtutes sunt circa actus et passiones; omni autem passioni et omni actui sequitur delectatio et tristitia; propter hoc virtus erit circa delectationes et tristitias, scilicet sicut circa aliquid consequens.*)

of what it means to have and experience the good that is virtue. Notice also that Aquinas himself uses the language of regulation by emphasizing that the goodness of passions consists in their being “regulated by reason.” The regulation of the passions, Aquinas tells us again and again, is essential to our flourishing and to the goodness of virtuous acts.

IV. Passions and Moral Motivation: An Intimate Connection

An even more central way that Aquinas emphasizes the importance of the passions and their regulation is through their connection to the will’s act of choosing the right ends and, by extension, to moral motivation. As discussed in the last chapter, a large part of moral motivation depends on the will habitually choosing ends that are morally good (i.e., conducive to our ultimate happiness (*summum bonum*)).²¹¹ Aquinas thinks that the passions can affect our ability to choose virtuous ends in two ways. First, unregulated passions can incline the will to choose ends that are not actually good. Second, regulated passions, on the other hand, both facilitate our ability to choose as the virtuous person would (i.e., with promptness, ease, and pleasure) and enable us to make correct judgments.

²¹¹ Miner, *Aquinas on the passions*, 47-48. Miner writes, “Aquinas holds (§1.1) that appetite seeks the good under the “formal aspects” (*rationes*) of the befitting good (*bonum honestum*), the pleasant(*delectable*), and the useful (*utile*). The threefold division of good corresponds neatly to the single formal object of rational appetite and the two formally distinct objects of sensitive appetite (§1.3). The will formally tends toward the *bonum honestum*, even if what is willed is materially unsuited to human flourishing.... The will chooses pleasant and useful things in the same way, ‘according to the common notion of goodness,’ that is, the *bonum honestum*(1.59.4.co).”

As for the first way that passions affect the will's choice, when they are left unregulated by reason, Aquinas thinks they can easily derail the task of choosing the right ends. How does this happen? Recall that the will makes choices about objects based on its being drawn to the good or "fitting" quality of the object when presented by the intellect. The passions have a way of affecting our judgment and our construal of objects as fitting or good. In turn, this judgment draws the will toward or away from these objects. At ST I-II Q. 9.2 "Can the will be moved by sensitive appetite?" Aquinas states,

Now it is clear that a man is altered in his disposition by the passions of the sentient appetite. Hence, to the extent that a man is subject to some passion (*est in passione*), something will seem fitting to him that would not seem fitting to someone who was not subject to that passion; for instance, something will seem good to an angry man that would not seem good to a calm man. It is in this way, on the part of the object, that the sentient appetite moves the will.²¹²

When experiencing a passion, such as anger, we perceive certain objects and ideas as good and worthy of choosing. The idea of getting retribution seems like the only right choice when under the influence of anger, for example. Aquinas thinks that passions, particularly unregulated or unruly passions, can influence the will to choose the wrong ends by perceiving them to be good when they are not.

At St. I-II Q. 77, Aquinas specifies how it is that the passions can negatively impact the will. Here he emphasizes that the passions affect the will by affecting the way the

²¹² ST I-II Q.9.2. (*Manifestum est autem quod secundum passionem appetitus sensitivi, immutatur homo ad aliquam dispositionem. Unde secundum quod homo est in passione aliqua, videtur sibi aliquid conveniens, quod non videtur extra passionem existenti, sicut irato videtur bonum, quod non videtur quieto. Et per hunc modum, ex parte obiecti, appetitus sensitivus movet voluntatem.*)

intellect apprehends the object. The will's act of choosing an end depends on the intellect's apprehending an object as good and then presenting it to the will as good. The intellect's apprehension of the object as good (i.e., consistent with or conducive to our happiness), in turn, depends in many cases on other things going right, specifically our imagination and sensitive powers. Aquinas writes, "The use of reason requires the appropriate use of the imagination and other sentient powers."²¹³ Simply stated, we use our sensory facilities and imagination to help us reason and apprehend objects we come across. Given that sensory faculties include the passions, the passions too can influence reason and the will, including its choices. In ST. I-II Q 77. 1 titled "Is the will moved by a passion of the sentient appetite?"

Aquinas writes,

A passion of the sentient appetite cannot directly draw or move the will, but it can do this indirectly – and this in two ways...The second way is on the part of the will's object, i.e., the good that is apprehended by reason. For as is clear in those who have lost their minds, reason's judgment and apprehension, along with the estimative power's judgment, are impeded by vehement and disorderly apprehensions on the part of the imagination. But it is clear that the imagination's apprehension, along with the estimative power's judgment, follow the passions of the sentient appetite, just as the judgment of the sense of taste follows the tongue's disposition. Hence, we see that men who are in a passion do not easily turn away from the things by which

²¹³ ST. I-II Q. 33.3. ad.3. Aquinas writes, "The use of reason requires the appropriate use of the imagination and other sentient powers, which employ a corporeal organ. And so the use of reason is impeded by a corporeal change when the acts of the imaginative power and of the other sentient powers are impeded." (*Ad tertium dicendum quod usus rationis requirit debitum usum imaginationis et aliarum virium sensitivarum, quae utuntur organo corporali. Et ideo ex transmutatione corporali usus rationis impeditur, impedito actu virtutis imaginativae et aliarum sensitivarum.*) Cates describes the connection as follows, "Motions of the intellectual appetite are dependent on acts of intellectual apprehension, for one tends toward what one apprehends as good; acts of intellectual apprehension go hand in hand with acts of sensory apprehension, for one abstracts the intelligible goodness from a phantasm; and apprehensions of an object in respect of its sensible goodness often elicit motions of the sensory appetite." Diana Fritz Cates. *Aquinas on the Emotions: A Religious-Ethical Inquiry*. Moral Traditions Series. (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 219.

they are being affected. Hence, as a result, reason's judgment very often follows a passion of the sentient appetite. And as a result of this, so does the movement of the will, which is apt to follow reason's judgment.²¹⁴

Two powers on which reason relies to do its job, the imagination and estimative/cogitative power, are regularly influenced by passion and can impede reason's apprehension and judgment and thereby indirectly influence that to which the will tends. One common way passions do this, Aquinas notes, is by "concentrating the mind," making it difficult for "men to turn away." A prime example of this is pleasure. Aquinas writes, "if [a] bodily pleasure be great, either it entirely hinders the use of reason, by concentrating the mind's attention on itself; or else it hinders it considerably."²¹⁵ Aquinas thinks this disturbance to reason occurs most often with pleasing sensory appetitive motions that have a strong material component, for "we attend much to that which pleases us."²¹⁶ In addition, Aquinas thinks emotions have the capacity to influence us in a number of ways. He writes, emotions

²¹⁴ ST. I-II Q. 77.1. (*Respondeo dicendum quod passio appetitus sensitivi non potest directe trahere aut movere voluntatem, sed indirecte potest. Et hoc dupliciter.... Et secundum hunc modum, per quandam distractionem, quando motus appetitus sensitivi fortificatur secundum quamcumque passionem, necesse est quod remittatur, vel totaliter impediatur motus proprius appetitus rationalis, qui est voluntas. Alio modo, ex parte obiecti voluntatis, quod est bonum ratione apprehensum. Impeditur enim iudicium et apprehensio rationis propter vehementem et inordinatam apprehensionem imaginationis, et iudicium virtutis aestimativae, ut patet in amentibus. Manifestum est autem quod passionem appetitus sensitivi sequitur imaginationis apprehensio, et iudicium aestimativae, sicut etiam dispositionem linguae sequitur iudicium gustus. Unde videmus quod homines in aliqua passione existentes, non facile imaginationem avertunt ab his circa quae afficiuntur. Unde per consequens iudicium rationis plerumque sequitur passionem appetitus sensitivi; et per consequens motus voluntatis, qui natus est sequi iudicium rationis).*

²¹⁵ ST. I-II Q. 33.3. (*Tertio modo, secundum quandam ligationem, inquantum scilicet ad delectationem corporalem sequitur quaedam transmutatio corporalis, maior etiam quam in aliis passionibus, quanto vehementius afficitur appetitus ad rem praesentem quam ad rem absentem. Huiusmodi autem corporales perturbationes impediunt usum rationis, sicut patet in vinolentis, qui habent usum rationis ligatum vel impeditum).*

²¹⁶ Ibid.

can “overly concentrate the mind,” cause our reason to err by “distracting our attention,” “overwhelm reason entirely” through “intense bodily changes” (as in the case of intense anger, love, or insanity), and incline us toward what is contrary to reason (i.e., when fear tells us to shy away from a difficult task).²¹⁷ Unregulated passions color perceptual objects so as to appear more attractive, repulsive, threatening, or valuable than they actually are, all things considered (i.e., in light of what human happiness consists in).²¹⁸

Just as unregulated passions can be powerful obstacles to choosing rightly, so can regulated passions play a powerful role in facilitating our ability to choose good ends and to choose them as the virtuous person would, with promptness, ease, and pleasure. Practice at regulating the passions in accord with reason over time, Aquinas thinks, allows us to develop the right sensory responses to the right objects. We learn to take pleasure in things that are actually good for us, such as eating healthy foods, doing arduous favors for friends, acting justly, prudently, and temperately. As Diana Cates writes, “well-ordered emotion” for Aquinas “alter[s] the way one apprehends a sensible object... in a way that supports,

²¹⁷ See ST. I-II Q. 77.2.

²¹⁸ Cates, Aquinas on Emotion, 231. “Generally speaking, a problem arises when an object appears (on a sensory level) to be highly attractive, repulsive, or threatening, and one tends with vehemence in relation to the object. In such a situation, the intensity of one’s reaction can further focus and reinforce one’s sensory impressions of the object’s high value or disvalue, or its immense significance for one’s wellbeing, which can ramp up one’s emotional response to the object in a way that escapes the judgment of reason. What happens, in effect, is that one fails to ask the question of whether this emotion is appropriate to the circumstance; one fails to ask whether the object of one’s emotion is really as significant as it seems. One takes the powerful sensible attractiveness or repulsiveness of the object to constitute, in itself, a sufficient reason for tending toward or away from the object on an intellectual level.”

rather than undermines, the exercise of virtue.”²¹⁹ By ordering our emotions, we learn to apprehend or construe sensible objects in a way that aligns with reason and in turn enables reason to apprehend the (sensible) good in the object and choose it with promptness and pleasure.

Aquinas even goes so far as to say that regulated passions create a disposition in the sensitive appetite that is *crucial* to our ability to make correct judgments about ends. At ST. I-II 56.4 he writes, “the act of choosing involves [or arises from] an upright intending of the end [that] stems from the good disposition of the irascible and concupiscible powers [i.e., the sensitive appetite].”²²⁰ One way of articulating Aquinas’s point here is by pointing out that part of what enables the will to choose or be attracted toward the right ends is having a sensitive appetite that disposes it towards certain ends and away from others. Aquinas thinks that the sensitive appetite has “has considerable power to condition people in such a

²¹⁹ Ibid. Cates gives the following example, “In turn this supports virtuous choice rather than takes away from it. Emotion help us to apprehend sensible objects as good, pleasurable, or painful sensory judgments that cause the emotion of love can, on occasion, assume a prominent place in one’s awareness, and one can be moved accordingly. Pleased by the way this movement feels, and by the way one’s emotion seems to highlight the attractive qualities of the object of one’s emotion, the object can appear even more attractive, on a sensory level, than it did before one was moved. Consider the way a parent’s love for a child can cause the child to appear especially beautiful and wonderful, and it can make it easier for the parent to do the daily work of caring for that child.”

²²⁰ ST I-II Q. 56.4 ad.4. (*Ad quartum dicendum quod in electione duo sunt, scilicet intentio finis, quae pertinet ad virtutem moralem; et praeceptio eius quod est ad finem, quod pertinet ad prudentiam; ut dicitur in VI Ethic. Quod autem habeat rectam intentionem finis circa passiones animae, hoc contingit ex bona dispositione irascibilis et concupiscibilis. Et ideo virtutes morales circa passiones, sunt in irascibili et concupiscibili, sed prudentia est in ratione*). Freddoso interprets this statement as follows “The fact that one has a correct intending of the end with regard to the passions of the soul arises from the good disposition of the irascible and concupiscible parts.” Alfred Freddoso. *Treatise on the Virtues*, Q.56.4 ad 4. (Notre Dame: Online Resource, 2018).

way that things appear this way or that way, with respect to singulars.”²²¹ When the sensitive appetite is perfected so as to be drawn to (e.g., find pleasure in) and repulsed by (e.g., feel pained by) certain ends, it causes us to tend toward the right ends and thereby facilitates choosing the right ends. Again, at II-II Q.51.3 ad.1, Aquinas emphasizes that good judgment and deliberation require habits of the moral virtues. He writes,

Correct judgment consists in the cognitive power’s apprehending a thing as it is in itself (*apprehendat rem aliquam secundum quod in se est*). This stems from a correct disposition on the part of the apprehensive power. In the same way, the forms of corporeal things are impressed on a mirror in the way that they are when the mirror is well disposed, whereas if the mirror is badly disposed, then what appear are images which are distorted and badly constituted.²²²

Correctly apprehending something, Aquinas reiterates, requires having correct dispositions, which includes regulated passions. He gives the example of a mirror to

²²¹ ST I-II Q. 9.2 ad 2. (Thomas Williams’s translation) (*Ad secundum dicendum quod actus et electiones hominum sunt circa singularia. Unde ex hoc ipso quod appetitus sensitivus est virtus particularis, habet magnam virtutem ad hoc quod per ipsum sic disponatur homo, ut ei aliquid videatur sic vel aliter, circa singularia.*)

²²² ST II-II Q. 51.3 ad1. (*Ad primum ergo dicendum quod rectum iudicium in hoc consistit quod vis cognoscitiva apprehendat rem aliquam secundum quod in se est. Quod quidem provenit ex recta dispositione virtutis apprehensivae, sicut in speculo, si fuerit bene dispositum, imprimuntur formae corporum secundum quod sunt; si vero fuerit speculum male dispositum, apparent ibi imagines distortae et prave se habentes. Quod autem virtus cognoscitiva sit bene disposita ad recipiendum res secundum quod sunt, contingit quidem radicaliter ex natura, consummative autem ex exercitio vel ex munere gratiae*). Aquinas continues, “Now a cognitive power’s being well disposed for receiving things as they are stems in its origins from nature and in its completion from exercise or from a gift of grace—and this in two ways...In the second way, indirectly, from the good disposition of the appetitive power, from which it follows that a man judges well concerning things that are desirable. And it is in this way that the good judgment that belongs to a virtue follows upon the habits of the moral virtues; but this sort of good judgment has to do with the ends, whereas synesis has to do rather with the means to the end.” (*Et hoc dupliciter. Uno modo, directe ex parte ipsius cognoscitivae virtutis, puta quia non est imbuta pravis conceptionibus, sed veris et rectis, et hoc pertinet ad synesim secundum quod est specialis virtus. Alio modo, indirecte, ex bona dispositione appetitivae virtutis, ex qua sequitur quod homo bene iudicet de appetibilibus. Et sic bonum virtutis iudicium consequitur habitus virtutum moralium, sed circa fines, synesis autem est magis circa ea quae sunt ad finem.*)

display how correct judgments rely on the rectitude of the appetites, obtained through temperance and courage regulating the passions. Our correct appetitive dispositions serve as a kind of mirror that construes objects correctly, so we can see them for what they are. If our mirror is distorted, we construe objects as more pleasant or desirable or good for us than they actually are which then distorts our judgment and, in turn, our ability to choose what is good for us.²²³

Robert C. Roberts illustrates the kind of emotional development that Aquinas has in mind when we learn to regulate our emotions and how such a development facilitates our ability to choose virtuously. Much like Aquinas who believes unregulated passions easily lead us astray, Roberts also thinks that our natural emotional responses resemble emotional immaturity. He illustrates this immaturity through what he calls “the emotional type.” Roberts writes, “The ‘emotional type’ is not quite in possession of himself; he is rather chaotically subject to vicissitudes, whether of his environment or hormones (or both).”²²⁴

Roberts continues,

The concerns his emotions go back to are themselves momentary, primitive, immature, or badly ordered. He lacks personal integration and depth, not because he feels strongly, but because his feelings are erratic and chaotic, or because he feels

²²³ Freddoso gives the analogy of the knife, he writes, “Think of the passions as instruments of reason and will, and think of the virtues of temperance and fortitude as rendering the sentient appetite fit to play this role of instrument in the way that sharpening a knife makes it fit to carry out the command of reason.” Alfred Freddoso. *Treatise on the Virtues*, Q.56.4 ad 4.(Notre Dame: Online Resource, 2018).

²²⁴ Robert C. Roberts, *Spiritual Emotions a psychology of Christian Virtues*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007) 186. “He is weak, immature, shallow... ‘not together.’ Trivial successes and modest beauties, which would distract a more mature person only momentarily are to him a gale of ‘ecstasy’ that blow him away. He gets upset easily, on occasions that would count as a crisis only by a stretch of melodramatic imagination.”

strongly about the wrong things, or because he lacks something that ought to be present in addition to his strong feelings, something we might call presence of mind, self-possession, or self control...[guided by] stable and worthy master concerns, such as the concern for integrity...²²⁵

Roberts here describes where our emotional lives often begin. Moreover, he indicates many of the missing elements required for emotional maturity. The path of moving from the “emotional person” to a mature person requires allowing our ultimate concerns, cares, and/or reasons to guide the vicissitudes of emotion and ultimately penetrate them over time so that the emotions begin to habitually align with our values and themselves reflect our characteristic, long-term, concerns and cares. For example, objects that once elicited feelings of boredom, through emotional habituation and maturity, can be seen a lovable and conducive to our central most cares and concerns. Likewise, to use Aquinas’s terminology, the emotionally mature virtuous person is one who learns to perceive and tend toward sensible objects in the right way (e.g., as pleasurable, lovable, painful, fearful, all guided by virtue), and thus have sensory responses to those objects in a way that is consistent with and reflects her cares and concerns for virtue. In this way, the passions not only align with reason (i.e., ultimate cares and concerns) but are drawn to certain objects and ends in a way facilitates our choosing the right ends. Roberts, like Aquinas, believes that the mark of a virtuous person is that her passions not only characteristically reflect her values, but also naturally lead her to be drawn to and take joy in virtuous activity. As Miner

²²⁵ Ibid, 216.

right concludes, “Lacking the cooperation of the passions, it is impossible for the will habitually to choose what is good.”²²⁶

What is striking about Aquinas’s emphasis on regulating the passions, for our purposes, is that in connecting the passions so closely with choice he also indicates their role in developing moral motivation. Given that moral motivation, on the efficient-causal side, involves developing our psychological powers and inclinations in order to choose virtuous ends in the virtuous way, and carry out the *telos* (specifically, the teleological motivation), and that regulated emotions are an intimate part of developing this capacity to choose, we can see now how emotional development is instrumental to developing efficient-causal motivation. Similarly, emotion regulation skills promote this development. As I will go on to argue, Aquinas offers an account of moral motivation and its relationship to skill that allows certain kinds of skills to enter into the very thing moral motivation is about: our ability to habitually choose virtuous ends as the virtuous person does. This instrumental relationship directly opposes the “moral motivation objection,” provides insight into where this objection went wrong, and charts a path forward by pointing to the kinds of psychological skills that aid in cultivating moral virtue.

²²⁶ Miner, *Aquinas on Passions*, 296. Miner also highlights that by regulating our passions we are better prepared to battle incontinence which is marked by the struggle to align our lower and higher appetites. He writes, “Lacking the cooperation of the passions, it is impossible for the will habitually to choose what is good. Aquinas acknowledges that a person may in some cases choose the good in spite of his passions. This is precisely the situation of the person who is continent rather than virtuous. Aquinas does not regard continence, characterized by a struggle of the lower appetite against the higher appetite, as a stable condition. In order to choose the good easily and promptly, the active cooperation of the passions is required. Without this cooperation, a person will simply be divided against herself, dominated by the unproductive state of soul that Plato calls stasis (see Republic 252a and 440b).”

V. Aquinas on Cognitive Control of the Passions

Now that we see the importance Aquinas places on regulating emotions, as well as his emphasis on their notoriously unruly nature, it should come as no surprise that he spends a great deal of time offering strategies for regulating the emotions. Furthermore, it should come as no surprise that he thinks reason can control the passions. In fact, Aquinas's strategies for regulating emotion, especially the strategies that parallel modern psychological skills of emotion regulation, often focus on regulating emotion by modifying thoughts or cognitions in various ways. But first, why does Aquinas think that the passions can be controlled by reason? And to what degree can reason control the passions if the passions can "disobey reason" and are often "contrary to reason"?

Aquinas thinks reason can control the passions. A large reason why he thinks this is due to the kind of thing a passion is. Peter King writes,

Aquinas is a cognitivist about emotion, since cognitive acts are not only causal preconditions of emotion, but contribute their formal causes as well. The emotion is not the feeling alone: it literally would not be the emotion it is without the formal object it has, and there would be no emotion in absence of the formal object.²²⁷

Emotions, for Aquinas, require first having a cognitive act whereby we see or perceive an object. The common example used to describe this process is the sheep's cognitive act of "seeing" the wolf, which is the object of cognition. In the case of humans, the cognitive act could be sensing, perceiving, imagining, or recalling the object. Next, King writes, "Aquinas

²²⁷ Peter King, "Emotions" in the *Oxford Handbook of Aquinas* ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) 219.

holds that the sensitive appetite ‘inherits’ its intentional character from cognition.”²²⁸ After the cognitive act, we perceive the object under some intention of good or evil (i.e. “the sheep perceives the wolf as a natural enemy, the bird perceives the straw as useful in the construction of a nest”).²²⁹ Only when the intention is formed does the sensitive appetite move in response.²³⁰ King writes, “the resulting act of the sensitive appetite is the emotion of *fear* when it is caused by the formal object *the wolf as a hard to avoid imminent evil*, with the appropriate associated somatic responses.”²³¹ With just this much, we can see that emotions are “objectual” in that they are responses that arise from our cognitive perceptions of objects, including our cognitive estimations of the goodness or badness of those objects. For this reason, Aquinas is considered a cognitivist about emotion.

In addition to thinking emotions are highly dependent on and linked to cognition, Aquinas also thinks emotions can be controlled by reason or are “cognitively penetrable,” despite the fact that they can disobey reason.²³² Aquinas often is translated as using the

²²⁸ Ibid, 215.

²²⁹ Ibid, 216.

²³⁰ Aquinas writes, “the lower appetitive power does not naturally tend to anything until after that thing has been presented to it under the aspect of its proper object” (*On Truth*. Q. 25 a. 4 ad 4). (*Ad quartum dicendum, quod appetitio inferior non naturaliter tendit in rem aliam, nisi postquam proponitur sibi sub ratione proprii obiecti...*).

²³¹ King, “Emotions,” 217. I am offering a simplified version of Aquinas’s rather complex description of emotions and their formation. See Peter King’s article for a fuller account.

²³² King, *Emotions*, 219.

language of control when speaking about passion's relation to reason. In ST I-II Q. 24.3 "On the Good and Evil in the Passions of the Soul," he writes,

If we give the name of passions to all the movements of the sensitive appetite, then it belongs to the perfection of man's good that his passions be moderated by reason... Hence, since the sensitive appetite can obey reason, as stated above (I-II:17:7), it belongs to the perfection of moral or human good, that the passions themselves also should be controlled by reason.²³³

Aquinas holds that passions can and ought to obey reason in attaining the "perfection of [the] moral good."

The language of control is strong in this passage and has led many scholars to believe that reason's role is to command or control the passions into submission and order. Anthony Kenny writes, "what else is virtue but the control of the passions?"²³⁴ However, interpreting Aquinas's use of "*regulatae per rationem*" as "control" rather than "*regulate*" belies the more nuanced interpretation he gives in his favorite metaphor, borrowed from an evocative sketch of Aristotle's *Politics*. In this metaphor, Aquinas describes how reason takes on a political/constitutional rather than despotic form of control over emotion. In ST I. 81.3 on whether "the irascible and concupiscible powers obey reason?" Aquinas writes,

²³³ For context, see the passage (ST I-II Q.24.3) in its entirety: (*Sed si passiones simpliciter nominemus omnes motus appetitus sensitivi, sic ad perfectionem humani boni pertinet quod etiam ipsae passiones sint moderatae per rationem. Cum enim bonum hominis consistat in ratione sicut in radice, tanto istud bonum erit perfectius, quanto ad plura quae homini conveniunt, derivari potest. Unde nullus dubitat quin ad perfectionem moralis boni pertineat quod actus exteriorum membrorum per rationis regulam dirigantur. Unde, cum appetitus sensitivus possit obedire rationi, ut supra dictum est, ad perfectionem moralis sive humani boni pertinet quod etiam ipsae passiones animae sint regulatae per rationem*).

²³⁴ Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae*, Vol.22 trans. and ed. Anthony Kenny (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964) xxxiv.

As the Philosopher says in Politics 1, 'One finds in the animal both despotic rule (*despoticus principatus*) and constitutional rule (*politicus principatus*). For the soul rules the body with a despotic rule, whereas the intellect rules the appetite with a constitutional and royal rule.' Despotic rule is that by which someone rules slaves, who do not have the ability to resist the ruler in any of his commands, since they have nothing of their own (*quia nihil sui habent*). By contrast, political and royal rule is that by which someone rules free men, who, even if they are subject to the rule of the leader, nonetheless have something of their own (*habent aliquid proprium*) by which they are able to resist the leader's command.²³⁵

The relationship between reason and emotion, Aquinas makes clear, is one of constitutional/ political rule. Rather than ruling the passions despotically, as slaves without the ability to resist their ruler, if reason is to rule the passions it must do so constitutionally. Reason governs emotions as free subjects who have an ability to resist the leader's command. Implied in this passage is the idea that passions are able to operate independently of reason, resisting reason's rule, and offering something of their own.²³⁶ Despite their ability to operate on their own terms and resist reason's rule, Aquinas remains optimistic about our ability to regulate the passions. Aquinas not only thinks that we can

²³⁵ ST I Q. 81.3 ad. 2. (*Ad secundum dicendum quod, sicut philosophus dicit in I politicorum, est quidem in animali contemplari et despoticum principatum, et politicum, anima quidem enim corpori dominatur despotico principatu; intellectus autem appetitui, politico et regali. Dicitur enim despoticus principatus, quo aliquis principatur servis, qui non habent facultatem in aliquo resistendi imperio praecipientis, quia nihil sui habent. Principatus autem politicus et regalis dicitur, quo aliquis principatur liberis, qui, etsi subdantur regimini praesidentis, tamen habent aliquid proprium, ex quo possunt reniti praecipientis imperio*).

²³⁶ Nicholas Lombardo states that "the metaphor implies that the inclinations of the passions are basically legitimate, just in need of some guidance. Despite the possibility of internal conflict, Aquinas trusts the fundamental orientation of the passions, as well as their capacity to be guided by reason. On this point he departs from his contemporaries." Nicholas E Lombardo. *The Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion*. (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012) 100. Also, see Eileen C. Sweeny. "Restructuring desire: Aquinas, Hobbes, and Descartes on the passions." In *Meeting of the Minds. The Relations between Medieval and Classical Modern European Philosophy: Acts of the International Colloquium held at Boston College, June 14-16, 1996, organized by the Société Internationale pour l'Etude de la Philosophie médiévale*, pp. 218.

change our emotions but that we should do so if we want to cultivate virtue.²³⁷ What then are the strategies Aquinas offers in regulating the emotions?

VI. Aquinas's Regulation Strategies and Their Contemporary Parallel

Throughout his ethics, Aquinas offers a variety of strategies for mitigating emotions. He devotes a whole question to "Remedies for Pain and Sadness" wherein he recommends weeping, talking to others, and the consolation of a friend as remedies to lessen sadness.²³⁸ He also prescribes remedies such as making jokes, taking part in a feast, and partaking in non-shameful pleasures as a way to lessen anger.²³⁹ In addition, Aquinas explains how the will can influence an unwanted emotion through deliberate distraction. By investing one's energy in some other object and thereby "willing" oneself to think about or otherwise occupy oneself with something else, one can sometimes avoid dwelling on unwanted

²³⁷ Barad (1991) is illuminating here. She suggests that for Aquinas "failing to modify a negative emotional response when one is able to do so is just as morally culpable as voluntarily intensifying it." Both failure to moderate and voluntary intensification would count as instances of "choosing to be affected by a passion." Judith Barad. "Aquinas on the Role of Emotion in Moral Judgment and Activity." *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 55, no. 3 (1991), 404. But how are we responsible for our passions? Are there some circumstances under which we are responsible, and others under which we are not? Though Aquinas does not raise these questions directly, he suggests answers to them. Claudia Murphy argues that Aquinas can accommodate two apparently conflicting intuitions on the matter. Murphy attributes two views to Aquinas. First, that passions are directly voluntary, because they are directly responsive to our reason and will. Second, that we are indirectly responsible for our passions just in case we could have controlled them if we had tried. (Murphy, p.166) Claudia Murphy. "Aquinas on our responsibility for our emotions." *Medieval Philosophy & Theology* 8, no. 2 (1999): 166.

²³⁸ See ST I-II Q.38.2-3.

²³⁹ See ST. I-II Q. 47.

sensory experiences that give rise to an emotion.²⁴⁰ The will can also choose to not consent to an emotion when one judges, for example, that feeling the emotion as one currently feels it is contrary to one's proper functioning.²⁴¹

Though there are many strategies Aquinas offers to modify emotions, he thinks that strategies concerning reason offer some of the most powerful ways to modify emotion. He offers three reason-focused strategies that all have strong parallels with contemporary emotion regulation skills. In order to display how each strategy is a psychological skill by today's standards, in what follows, I outline each strategy along with its contemporary parallel. Aquinas's first strategy emphasizes knowledge of emotion. His second strategy emphasizes emotional change through the imagination. In his third and final strategy, Aquinas outlines emotion modification through the contemplation of universal truths.

a. The First Step to Change: Understanding the Problem

An important step to having influence over our emotions is first gaining an awareness of what they are. Much like psychologists today, Aquinas thinks it is important to become aware of the multiple ways our affective faculties are influenced by both internal and external phenomena.²⁴² For this reason, he devotes more than one quarter of *ST Ia IIae* to an extended treatment of the passions. One reason for this, Robert Miner states, is that

²⁴⁰ See ST I-II Q. 77.1.

²⁴¹ See ST I-II Q. 10.3 ad 1.

²⁴² Miner, *Aquinas on the Passions*, 298.

“Aquinas takes seriously the notion that it is possible for a person to acquire insight into the multiple ways in which she is acted upon, and even (with the help of divine grace) change those ways, should they lead her away from beatitude.”²⁴³ Evidence of Aquinas’s investigation of this sort can be found in his detailed discussion of the passions of fear, love, anger, pleasure, sorrow, hope, despair, and courage. In each discussion, he offers a fine-grained analysis of the emotional phenomena that constitute and give rise to each passion. Aquinas seeks a wide knowledge of emotion but consistently focuses on two aspects of each emotion: 1) its cause(s) and 2) the possible risks of undergoing the emotion. In this way, Aquinas is similar to psychologists today who think that psychoeducation about emotion must involve, as Berking et. al describe, an “illustration of the biological and psychological origins of an emotion, functions, mechanisms, and possible risks and benefits of emotional reactions.”²⁴⁴ In the case of fear, for example, Aquinas spends multiple articles identifying fear’s causes, which he argues can be captured by fear’s formal object: “a perceived evil.” In addition to identifying its causes, Aquinas specifies the various physiological effects fear can have on the body and our ability to reason. In ST. I- II Q.44, Aquinas notes how fear “makes one eager to seek counsel” but also “debilitates man’s deliberative function,” and thus “those under its influence do not themselves make wise counselors.” In the same article, Aquinas writes, “To a man affected according to some

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ M. Berking et al. “Emotion Regulation Skills as Treatment Target in Psychotherapy.” *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 46 (2008) 1233.

passion, a thing seems greater or smaller than it is according to the truth of the thing – as what is loved seems better to a person in love, and what is feared seems more terrifying to the person who is afraid.” The risks passions pose are almost always in regard to their effect on our ability to reason well while under their influence.

By having knowledge of emotion in these various ways, we prepare ourselves for the task of influencing our emotional reactions. For example, the brave man’s task of “curbing fear” in the face of difficulty requires first acknowledging and understanding what fear is, its physiological effects, and the risks fear poses to reason. Curbing or decreasing fear, Aquinas notes, requires first understanding fear’s cause as “a perceived evil” or more specifically our judgment that the object is evil, which is the efficient cause of fear.²⁴⁵ Miner provides a helpful example of how the knowledge of fear is crucial to regulating fear in line with reason:

If a person is sufficiently aware of her fears, and senses that something is wrong, she may be led to pose a question of the form: “How do I become the kind of person who is not dominated by fear and anxiety?” For her to achieve understanding of why she fears in the manner she does, she must know what fear is, what it comes

²⁴⁵ ST I-II Q. 42.5. Aquinas writes, “The object of fear is evil. Consequently, whatever tends to increase evil, conduces to the increase of fear.” (*Ergo etiam facit ad augmentum timoris in malis*). In ST I-II Q 42.6, Aquinas writes, “The remedy for an evil is twofold. One, by which a future evil is warded off from coming. If such a remedy be removed, there is an end to hope and consequently to fear; wherefore we do not speak now of remedies of that kind. The other remedy is one by which an already present evil is removed.” (*Ad primum ergo dicendum quod remedium mali est duplex. Unum, per quod impeditur futurum malum, ne adveniat. Et tali remedio sublato, aufertur spes, et per consequens timor. Unde de tali remedio nunc non loquimur. Aliud remedium mali est, quo malum iam praesens removetur. Et de tali remedio nunc loquimur*). Peter King writes, “Aquinas argues in several cases that the formal object of a given passion, such as loathing, must also be the cause of loathing (ST I-II Q.26)...But, strictly speaking, Aquinas admits that the efficient cause of Jones’s loathing is his perception or cognition of the sheep as an evil.” Peter King, “Aquinas on the Passions” in *Thomas Aquinas: Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives*. Ed. Brian Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 358.

from, and what it does to her...The first step for her is to recognize that she characteristically apprehends certain things under the formal object of fear, even if they do not actually possess those features.²⁴⁶

Miner's example indicates how knowledge or awareness about the objects that give rise to fear enables a person to begin figuring out how exactly to mitigate the adverse emotion (i.e., Is it the object itself that is especially fear-invoking or is it our judgment about the object that's gone wrong?).²⁴⁷ This cognitive awareness of fear begins the process of regulating our emotions and influencing them so as to not dominate our minds and bodies. Miner rightly concludes that, for Aquinas, "Right reason is required to perfect the acts of the sensitive appetite. One implication is that reason must know the passions, in order to direct them, just as those who govern must understand the nature of the governed."²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ Miner, *Aquinas on the Passions*, 298.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, 295. Miner writes, "If temperance and fortitude require the appropriate cultivation of the passions, and the other moral virtues require temperance and fortitude, it follows that possession of the moral virtues as such requires the passions...Is there a more direct way to connect knowledge of the passions with the attainment of happiness? There is, if one reflects that each of the eleven basic passions, including those that moralists of a certain stripe have been quick to reject, has something vital to contribute to human flourishing. When experienced in the appropriate manner, hatred, sorrow, fear, and anger are useful. Even the passion of despair (as distinguished from the sin) has its proper role to play. A sense of the fundamental naturalness of the passions emerges from a close reading of the texts. Thomas devotes such a large portion of the 1a2ae to the acts of the sensitive appetite because he thinks that without an adequate grasp of the passions, we can neither know what happiness is nor attain it."

²⁴⁸ Ibid, 296-298. Miner concludes, "Thomas devotes such a large portion of the 1a2ae to the acts of the sensitive appetite because he thinks that without an adequate grasp of the passions, we can neither know what happiness is nor attain it." One further reason Miner gives towards the importance of knowing the passions is via reference to Pinckaers point. Miner writes, "What makes knowledge of the passions necessary for beatitude? Pinckaers proposes that for Aquinas the passions enable our first glimpse of spiritual happiness: 'Sensibility supplies man with a first image and a fundamental vocabulary for the expression of spiritual realities' (1990,p.382). Sensitive love and pleasure function as images of their spiritual originals. Without the experience of delectatio, it would be difficult to have any grasp of what Aquinas means by gaudium and fruitio, associated with the last end. As composites of form and matter, the passions lie at the boundary of the sensible and the spiritual."

However, similar to psychologists today, Aquinas knew well that psychoeducation or knowledge about the passions is often not sufficient on its own to modify or regulate the passions. Aquinas knew that insight alone does not always suffice to correct an emotion.²⁴⁹ Similarly, psychologists who study emotion, such as Leslie Greenberg, Sue Johnson, and Jon Rottenberg, find that gaining insight into the reason behind the emotion is important to affective change, but insight must be followed up by other emotion regulation strategies, habits, and practices if change is to be obtained.²⁵⁰ Furthermore, in a recent study, Berking et al. compare the effectiveness of various emotion regulation strategies. They found that psychoeducation strategies that emphasize knowledge of emotion (i.e., the ability to identify, sense, and understand an emotion, including “clarity” and awareness of emotion-related sensations) “showed the lowest correlations with other outcome measures...whereas modification, acceptance, and resilience showed the highest correlations.”²⁵¹ Once again, based on their findings, we find that successfully regulating

²⁴⁹ ST. I-II Q. 44.2 ad2. Aquinas writes, “the stronger a given passion is, the more the man affected by it.” (*quod quanto aliqua passio est fortior, tanto magis homo secundum ipsam affectus, impeditur*).

²⁵⁰ See Adele M. Hayes, Greg C. Feldman, and Marvin R. Goldfried. “The Change and Growth Experiences Scale: A Measure of Insight and Emotional Processing.” in *Insight in psychotherapy* ed. Castonguay, Louis G., and Clara Ed Hill. 231-253. (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2007).

²⁵¹ M. Berking et al. “Emotion Regulation,” 1233. Berking continues “exploratory analyses demonstrated that within the CBT condition the subscale modification demonstrated the greatest gain.” This study describes modification as a change in the quality and/or quantity of an emotional reaction with the help of a five-step emotion modification plan, which is based on the general problem solving model. “Modification includes: (1) setting a specific and realistic goal of how one wants to feel; (2) brainstorming possible ways of changing the antecedents of the emotion; (3) choosing a strategy; (4) making a specific plan; and (5) evaluating progress, including reinforcement of successful efforts or change of plan/goal if necessary.

emotion with reason requires going beyond psychoeducation and exploring methods for modifying emotions. What then does Aquinas offer by way of strategies for modifying emotions?

b. Strategies for Modifying Emotions

Aquinas mentions two ways that human emotion is capable of being affected by changes in belief or thought.²⁵² First, we can imaginatively present things in different lights and thereby trigger different emotional responses. King gives the example of “the divorced spouse [who] can think of the former partner with love or hatred, depending on which past situations and events are recalled or imagined.” In a similar way, the imagination can be used to provoke emotional responses. Aquinas states,

From the apprehension of something by the intellect there can follow a passion in the lower appetite ...in so far as that which is understood by the intellect in a universal way is represented in the imagination in particular, thus moving the lower appetite. When, for example, the intellect of a believer assents intellectually to future punishment and forms phantasms of the pains, imagining the fire burning and worm gnawing and the like, the passion of fear follows in the sensitive appetite.²⁵³

²⁵² King, *Emotions*, 220. Peter King writes, “Aquinas mentions two ways in which human emotion is cognitively penetrable, that is capable of being consciously affected by changes in belief or thought after the quasi-instinctual initial response of the sensitive appetite. For although an emotional response ‘is not completely in our power since it precedes the judgement of reason, it is in our power to some extent’” (On Truth, Q.25.5)

²⁵³ *On Truth*, Q.26.3 ad 13. Another way the intellect moves passion, Aquinas writes, is “In so far as the higher appetite is moved by the intellectual apprehension, with the result that the lower appetite also is stirred up by the higher through a kind of overflow or through a command.” (*Ergo huiusmodi non possunt esse in parte appetitiva sensitiva; et sic relinquitur quod sint in parte appetitiva rationali, scilicet in voluntate*).

Aquinas offers the example of a believer who reflects on punishment in the afterlife to indicate how deliberate imagination of this sort is in the agent's conscious control and can provoke emotions to align with reason. When would someone need to engage in such a strategy? Cates's explanation is illuminating. She writes,

The idea/image of hell functions in much the same way as the idea/image of other negative consequences for one's actions, such as punishment by human law, which one might picture as being arrested and thrown in jail, or rejection by others, which one might picture as a look of disgust in a loved one's face. An object whose attainment appears to carry painful penalties is less attractive for most humans than an object that promises simple and resounding pleasure. But sometimes in order to appreciate negative consequences, one must represent those consequences in tangible ways, in the form of fearful images, for the tendency in a state of sensory pleasure (or its anticipation) is to focus on what is most colorful and delightful in the object of one's pleasure, and to neglect its troublesome features.²⁵⁴

When faced with desires that are contrary to reason, Aquinas thinks that we can call on our imagination to produce images that viscerally remind us of the negative consequences associated with that desire, thereby lessening the attractiveness of the object in question.

²⁵⁴ Cates, *Aquinas on Emotions*, 217. Cates gives an example of how using the imagination in this way helps to curtail contrary emotions and desires: Suppose one believes in hell. One wishes, generally, to avoid wrongdoing partly in order to avoid going to hell. Yet one is driven, periodically, by a strong desire to do something that one finds pleasing but knows to be wrong. At least, one has been taught that the action is wrong, and there appear to be good reasons for believing it to be wrong. Thus enters an element of doubt, which can be a sign of intelligence but can also be born of self deception: Maybe what I have thought to be wrong is not so bad after all; what could it really hurt if I did it just this once? In a quieter moment, after the impetuous desire is spent, and the reasons for judging one's behavior wrong appear more compelling, one might direct one's imagination to form image after image of the horrors of hell in order to get at the source of one's motivation, namely, the desire to enjoy a particular pleasure. When one imagines something terrible that will happen if one indulges this desire, one causes the object of one's desire to appear less attractive. The object now appears as something that is pleasing in some respects but also threatening and ultimately painful to unite with..."

Cates calls this strategy a form of “persuasion.” This persuasive method can be used to both down-regulate negative emotions and upregulate positive emotions.²⁵⁵ Just as visual negative images can keep certain pleasures at bay, so too can good images direct us. Images of Christ and imagining Christ’s life, for example, as a form of religious worship, can lead us to love of Christ.²⁵⁶ Images of a virtuous person, the saints, Christ, or objects that resemble what is good can cause motions in the sensory appetite and suggest related actions that are consistent with one’s well-being and are also quite pleasing.²⁵⁷

How does Aquinas’s strategy resemble contemporary methods of emotion regulation skills? Emotion regulation, as it is psychologically understood today, “refers to attempts individuals make to influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how these emotions are experienced and expressed.”²⁵⁸ One emotion regulation

²⁵⁵ Ibid, 216. Cates writes, “Recognizing that one has a similar propensity, when tired or frustrated, to say things one does not really mean, one might choose to bring a sense of humor to the situation, or to focus with compassion on how the friend is struggling. In effect, reason persuades the sensory appetite to let go of anger or move beyond anger, but it does so by directing the interior senses to present or represent sensible particulars in ways that are likely to cause a shift in one’s appetitive motion.”

²⁵⁶ See ST II-II Q.81.3.

²⁵⁷ King, *Emotions*, 11. King concludes, ““It is clear that some emotions are indirectly subject to the control of reason — though it is a bit like controlling digestion by being able to pick and choose what one eats.” Interestingly, Claudia Murphy calls this technique “the conscious project of forming a certain passion.” Murphy writes, “Aquinas argues that the passions are subject to the will’s command, and he seems to think they are subject to both conscious and unconscious command. When the devout person wills to elicit in herself religiously appropriate passions about hell, she acts on her imagination with the conscious project of forming a certain passion. And so her passion (if it indeed occurs, and is caused by her willing in the right way) is voluntary because it is caused by an act of will with this passion as its object—it is voluntary as an act consciously commanded by the will.” Murphy, “Aquinas on our responsibility for our emotions.”, 185.

²⁵⁸ Jonathan Rottenberg and James J. Gross. "Emotion and emotion regulation: A map for psychotherapy researchers." *Clinical psychology: science and practice* 14, no. 4 (2007): 325. Rottenberg and Gross write,

strategy that parallels Aquinas's is what psychologists call "mental simulation." Taylor and Schneider define mental simulation as follows:

Mental simulation is the imitative representation of some event or series of events. It may involve the replay of events that have already happened, such as running back through an argument one had with a colleague to figure out where the conversation went wrong. It may involve the cognitive construction of hypothetical scenarios, such as deciding how to confront a procrastinating graduate student. It can involve fantasies, such as the imagined sexual exploits that often lull people to sleep, and it can involve mixtures of real and hypothetical events, such as replaying an argument and inserting what you should have said into the dialogue (Taylor & Schneider, 1989). Mental simulation can be useful for envisioning the future because it addresses the two fundamental tasks of self-regulation and coping, namely the management of affect or emotional states and the ability to plan and solve problems. Specifically, there are certain intrinsic characteristics of mental simulations that make them useful for envisioning the future and for engaging the problem-solving and emotional regulation skills so vital to effective self regulation.²⁵⁹

Mental simulation is an emotion regulation technique that works by imaginatively representing events and "make the events seem real," thereby allowing us to engage our emotions. Similar to Aquinas's emphasis on imagination's ability to provoke emotions, one of the characteristics of mental simulations is its ability to provoke both positive and negative emotions. Taylor et al. write,

A major consequence of mental simulation is the evocation of emotional states and their potential control. Imagining a scenario does not produce a dry cognitive

"Emotion regulation is only one of several forms of affect regulation, each of which may be of potential interest in the context of psychotherapy. More specifically, emotion regulation may be profitably distinguished from three other forms of affect regulation: coping, mood regulation, and psychological defense (for a more detailed exposition of these differences, see Gross, 1998b)...[Currently, psychologists recognize] five families of emotion regulation processes: situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, cognitive change, and response modulation."

²⁵⁹ S. E. Taylor and Schneider, S. K. "Coping and the simulation of events." *Social Cognition*, 7, (1989) 174-194. (1989). And S. E. Taylor and L. B. Pham, I. D. Rivkin, and D. A. Armor. "Harnessing the Imagination: Mental Simulation, Self-Regulation, and Coping." *American Psychologist*, 53, no. 4 (1998): 429.

representation but rather evokes emotions, often strong ones. Researchers who manipulate positive and negative affect, for example, have made extensive use of mental simulations as one of the most effective manipulations of affective states (e.g., Larsen & Ketelaar, 1991; Morrow & Nolen-Hoeksema, 1990; Strack, Schwarz, & Gschneidinger, 1985; Wright & Mischel, 1982). By leading people to mentally replay one of the saddest or, alternatively, one of the happiest events of their lives, researchers can reliably evoke positive or negative emotional states.

Research supports Aquinas's idea that our imaginations do in fact have the capacity to provoke emotions of all kinds. Furthermore, by provoking these emotions, we are better able to direct and manage our emotions. An important goal of mental simulation is being able to use such simulations to problem-solve, plan, and better manage our emotions and behavior. Furthermore, studies show that mental simulation can be engaged in a way that reduces negative emotions and increases positive emotions.

For example, Pham and Taylor (1997) conducted a study of nervous undergraduates preparing for an exam. Students who were asked to practice each day for 5 minutes to visualize themselves studying for the exam in a way that would lead them to obtain a grade of A performed significantly better on the exam and reported much lower levels of anxiety and higher levels of confidence than those who did not engage in such simulations.²⁶⁰ In this way, Taylor et. al think that mental simulations serve to "engage emotional responses that help people muster the motivation to achieve their goals."²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ Pham, L. B., & Taylor, S. E. The effects of mental simulation on exam performance. Unpublished manuscript (1997). See also, Taylor, Shelley E., and Lien B. Pham. "The effect of mental simulation on goal-directed performance." *Imagination, cognition and personality* 18, no. 4 (1999): 253-268.

²⁶¹ Taylor et al, "Harnessing the Imagination," 432.

Similarly, research from cognitive-behavioral therapy also indicates the importance of mental simulations for modifying emotions and behaviors. For example, an addict in recovery can better manage his desire for alcohol by imagining the last horrible hangover he had and the people he hurt while intoxicated.²⁶² The visceral imagery provokes an emotional response that helps the addict direct his actions toward sobriety. In addition, Decety and Grezes find that mental simulations are a powerful tool for cultivating empathy, particularly when used to imagine the pain and suffering of others, and it is therefore a representational tool to cultivate our social relations to others. Given this strategy's use of imagination to provoke emotion, manage emotions, plan, and direct our behavior, it shows very strong parallels to the kind of strategy Aquinas has in mind. Not only that, but Aquinas himself describes using this strategy as a way of directing one's emotions and planning behavior (i.e., engaging in visions of hell in order to lessen the desire to sin, imagining images of Christ in order to cultivate one's love for Christ). For these reasons, I think it is safe to say that Aquinas's strategy is a kind of psychological skill of emotion regulation comparable to what is used today under a different name.

Once more, for emphasis, Aquinas has an account of psychological skills of emotion regulation that parallel contemporary emotion-regulation strategies. This point marks an important step in my attempt to unearth the psychological strategies that Aquinas himself uses and thinks aid in the development of virtue. By indicating their parallels with modern

²⁶² See G.A. Marlatt and J.R Gordon. *Relapse prevention: Maintenance strategies in the treatment of addictive behaviors* (New York: Guilford Press, 2005).

psychological strategies, I hope to indicate how his strategies *are* psychological strategies that today take on more sophisticated forms. As an important note, not only do these strategies today go by a different name, but we also have a much more developed understanding of the effectiveness of this strategy than Aquinas was able to provide. Thanks to the work of clinical psychologists, we understand the kinds of problems, populations, and situational factors for which this strategy works best. Such knowledge, as I will go on to discuss, is a boon to practical wisdom.

A second strategy Aquinas offers for modifying emotions is through what he calls appealing to “universal considerations.” Aquinas writes, “it is clear that universal reason gives commands to (*imperat*) the sentient appetite, which is divided into the concupiscible and irascible, and that this appetite obeys it...Anyone can experience for himself that by applying some universal considerations, anger or fear or the like can then be mitigated or even stirred up.”²⁶³ Reminding oneself of general truths can mitigate our emotions in a given situation. King gives several examples of Aquinas’s point:

Grief over the death of a friend can be mitigated by thinking of the general truth that we all die; confidence can increase by the thought that only the brave deserve the fair...there are all sorts of ways in which intellectual cognition can (attempt to) influence one’s emotions: thinking about the stringent air-safety regulations in place in order to curb one’s fear of flying, for example, or thinking about how even lesser lights have been awarded the Nobel Prize in order to boost one’s hopes. The factor

²⁶³ ST I Q.81.3. (*Et ideo patet quod ratio universalis imperat appetitui sensitivo, qui distinguitur per concupiscibilem et irascibilem, et hic appetitus ei obedit. Et quia deducere universalia principia in conclusiones singulares, non est opus simplicis intellectus, sed rationis; ideo irascibilis et concupiscibilis magis dicuntur obedire rationi, quam intellectui. Hoc etiam quilibet experiri potest in seipso, applicando enim aliquas universales considerationes, mitigatur ira aut timor aut aliquid huiusmodi, vel etiam instigator*).

in common in all of these cases is that the emotional responses seem to follow (when they follow at all) merely upon having the thoughts.²⁶⁴

Simply stated, Aquinas believes that a promising strategy for influencing an emotion is to reassess the thoughts that give rise to the emotion in light of more general truths and considerations. By aligning thoughts with what is true about the world, we subsequently modify emotions.

Miner provides a helpful example of how this change works for Aquinas by using the example of Dorothy, a woman who struggles with dysfunctional fear. Miner writes, “When Dorothy sees a man who reminds her of her abusive uncle, her first reaction is fear.” As a result, she is stricken with fear regularly when this memory of her uncle comes over her. To resolve this fear, Dorothy needs “new estimations that are more adequate to reality.”²⁶⁵ He continues, “If she has good evidence that someone genuinely loves and cares about her, she will be in a position to take the first step toward replacing fear with intimacy.”²⁶⁶ In other words, “her universal reason must possess knowledge (or at least true opinion) that is adequate to reality.” Furthermore, Miner writes, “Dorothy must somehow acquire the habit of applying this knowledge to particular situations, until the estimations she learned to make early in life are replaced with better estimations.”²⁶⁷ The process of

²⁶⁴ King, “Emotion,” 216-17.

²⁶⁵ Miner, *Aquinas on the Passions*, 80.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

changing emotion based on this strategy requires getting in touch with what is true and learning, over time, to allow that new belief to correct old errant beliefs that give rise to dysfunctional emotions.

Though a simple technique, it mirrors almost perfectly one of the leading cognitive-behavioral interventions to date: cognitive reappraisal. Cognitive reappraisal is defined as “a form of cognitive change involving the reevaluation of a potentially evocative situation in a way that alters its forthcoming emotional impact.”²⁶⁸ For example, when taking a major exam, whether or not you were to think of the exam as mental challenge or view it as a life-determining test seriously alters your forthcoming episode of anxiety about that exam.²⁶⁹ Similar to Aquinas, a popular way that Cognitive Behavioral Therapy uses cognitive reappraisal to modify emotions is to cognitively reappraise distorted thinking that results from overgeneralizations. Typically, emotions become generalized and we need to correct for this error so that we aren’t left thinking, for example, that all men who look like our abusive uncles are dangerous.

There are a few differences, however, between the way psychologists think about the effectiveness of cognitive reappraisal. First, unlike Aquinas, who thinks cognitive reappraisal can be used during an episode of anger or intense emotion to alter the emotion, psychologists often look at cognitive reappraisal as an antecedent-focused strategy. This

²⁶⁸ Denise M. Sloan and Ann M. Kring. "Measuring changes in emotion during psychotherapy: Conceptual and methodological issues." *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice* 14, no. 4 (2007): 315.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

means that cognitive reappraisal most efficiently alters the emotional response trajectory before the emotion unfolds.²⁷⁰ In other words, cognitive appraisal is an emotional plan-ahead strategy. Though Aquinas recognizes the differences between our ability to control passions before, during, and after we have them, and himself uses the antecedent vs. consequent passion distinction, his views differ slightly on the effective timing of this strategy. Aquinas offers this strategy largely as one that works during an episode of anger or unruly passion.

Another important difference between Aquinas's use of emotion regulation methods and those offered by Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is the stark difference in worldviews in which these strategies exist. Contrary to Aquinas, who is very clear about the end for which these strategies are to be employed (i.e., virtue, happiness), CBT remains not only neutral about any definitive end or goal for which these strategies are to be used, but decidedly functionalist (i.e., whatever makes you function best according to what is "healthy" and works best for you). CBT is a theory that strives to be explicitly value neutral, aligning with no particular vision of the good or proper functioning.²⁷¹ This underlying value system for

²⁷⁰ Sloan and Kringe, "Measuring changes," 315. They write, "Antecedent-focused strategies are those that occur before a person enters a situation in which he or she anticipates emotion regulation being necessary and before he or she feels a particular emotion (e.g., public speaking). In contrast, response-focused strategies are those that one employs when one is already feeling an emotion and engaged in a situation in which emotion regulation is deemed necessary."

²⁷¹ It is important to note that though CBT theorists claim to be "value neutral," it is blind to the instrumentalist values on which this theory is based. For an essay on how philosophically problematic the instrumentalist view is, see Blaine Fowers "Instrumentalism and Psychology: Beyond Using and Being Used." *Theory & Psychology* 20, no. 1 (February 2010): 102–24.

cognitive behavioral therapy means that it differs significantly from Aquinas's, but also that it could benefit from the structure Aquinas's moral philosophy provides.

One way this difference shows up is in the kinds of reasons that serve as good reasons or beliefs. For CBT, the truth or falsity of a belief is not as important as the use that can be made of it for emotional regulation. Though perhaps most helpful to choose a belief that is plausible or reality-based, whether or not the belief is actually true or good often takes second priority to its emotion-regulation benefits. For Aquinas, however, the reasons one chooses must pass several tests. First, it must align with correct judgment and with universal reason. Second, Aquinas makes clear that universal reason itself requires the support of the moral and infused virtues if it is to provide appropriate guidance. For example, Miner writes, "Dorothy may go from estimating certain men as dangerous to the universal judgment that 'all men are threatening.'" He continues, "Without virtue (both infused and acquired), universal reason stands a poor chance of being able to revise and reshape the historically established judgments of particular reason."²⁷² Universal reason alone stands a poor chance of correctly reshaping the mistakes of particular reason. *With* virtue, however, reason can be habituated towards the right ends. For example, correcting Dorothy's universal reason away from the judgment that "all men are threatening" may require understanding the proper amount of fear and how fear is properly directed (the virtue of courage), or that this universal claim is inconsistent with loving her neighbors (the virtue of charity). Virtues, including the infused virtues, are essential in cultivating and

²⁷² Minor, 81

directing reason towards its proper ends. Furthermore, without the infused virtue of charity, wherein man is directed towards his final end (love of God and of neighbor), Aquinas is pessimistic about our ability to successfully direct ourselves towards our final end. For Aquinas, universal reason, like all human faculties and operations, needs the support and direction of both the infused and acquired virtues. As a result, we can see that for Aquinas, unlike CBT, the successful employment of cognitive reappraisal skills requires a specific understanding of which reasons are good, an understanding that in turn requires the virtues. In understanding the strategies CBT offers and their promise as skills that could aid in cultivating virtue, Aquinas reminds us how important it is to always couch these strategies within a philosophical framework of virtue.

Skills Concluded

Ultimately, the emotion regulation skills Aquinas offers are interesting not because they are novel ways to regulate our emotions and habituate our inclinations. They are rather simple skills that many of us have most likely employed without knowing it. What makes these skills particularly interesting, however, is twofold. First, they indicate Aquinas's use of psychological skills that are themselves parallel to a wide array of emotion regulation skills offered by leading contemporary therapies. Aquinas's skills are inchoate phases of a whole gamut of emotion regulation strategies on offer today. Second, and most importantly, these skills indicate a certain relationship between moral motivation and skill. They bear an

instrumental relationship to moral motivation by facilitating the cultivation of moral motivation, on the efficient causal side. More specifically, they facilitate our ability to habitually choose the good as the virtuous person does and are instrumental to managing and aligning our emotions with our long-term cares and concerns. As practices or skills that enable us to perform virtuous actions, one could argue that they also fall under the domain of prudence in that these skills contribute to our ability to deliberate well about that which promotes virtue and its development. It belongs to the prudent person to know and employ those strategies and actions that facilitate the development of virtue.²⁷³ With this account of skill, moral motivation, and their relation to one another in mind, let us now return to the authors discussed in the first chapter and weigh in on the moral motivation objection.

²⁷³ For example, one could argue that emotion-regulation skills offered by psychologists today are the product of “counsel,” or the consultation of many people on contingent matters. Taking counsel before choosing an act is a *potential part* of prudence according to Aquinas. Aquinas writes as ST. I-II Q. 14.3, “Taking counsel’ (*consilium*) properly implies a consultation (*collatio*) that is made by several men... in the case of particular contingent matters, in order for something to be grasped with certitude, it is necessary to take into account many conditions or circumstances which are not easily thought of by just one individual, but are seen with more certainty by many; for what the one thinks of does not occur to another.” (*Quod et ipsum nomen designat, dicitur enim consilium quasi Considium, eo quod multi consident ad simul conferendum. Est autem considerandum quod in particularibus contingentibus, ad hoc quod aliquid certum cognoscatur, plures conditiones seu circumstantias considerare oportet, quas ab uno non facile est considerari, sed a pluribus certius percipiuntur, dum quod unus considerat, alii non occurrit, in necessariis autem et universalibus est absolutior et simplicior consideratio, ita quod magis ad huiusmodi considerationem unus per se sufficere potest. Et ideo inquisitio consilii proprie pertinet ad contingentia singularia. Cognitio autem veritatis in talibus non habet aliquid magnum, ut per se sit appetibilis, sicut cognitio universalium et necessariorum, sed appetitur secundum quod est utilis ad operationem, quia actiones sunt circa contingentia singularia. Et ideo dicendum est quod proprie consilium est circa ea quae aguntur a nobis*). Counsel concerns uncertain or contingent matters, or things that can be done in diverse ways (e.g., the emotions and their regulation). Using the example of temperance, I know I have to control my anger to be temperate but how do I deal with my anger? The end is known but there are diverse ways to achieve that end. Consulting psychologist or their research on emotion skills is a way to take counsel on contingent matters.

VII. Returning to the Moral Motivation Objection

By entering into the “moral motivation objection” discourse and outlining the two sides of the debate, my aim has not been to take sides but to take seriously the challenge that the motivation objection proposes concerning the ability for skills to cultivate virtue which, according to Aristotle (and Aquinas), is primarily a moral motivation or a motivational disposition. In returning to the discourse after having laid out Aquinas’s views on moral motivation and skill, I find that Aquinas would also not take sides but add important corrections to both sides of the argument.

To the proponents of the moral motivation objection, Aquinas’s view softens their harsh distinctions between skill and moral motivation by showing that certain kinds of skills are closely related to the kinds of interior acts about which moral motivation is primarily concerned. Moreover, once we see this instrumental relationship between skill and moral motivation, the fact that psychological skills lack “motivational components” is not a problem. Aquinas’s view indicates that skills themselves need not have “motivational components” in order to be useful to cultivating moral motivation and aiding in the development of moral virtue. As for the second side of the debate, Aquinas’s view clarifies the role of psychological skills of a certain kind in cultivating moral virtue. His view avoids the pitfalls of Stichter’s view by accounting for both moral motivation and practical wisdom in a way Stichter’s account fails to do. By way of displaying how Aquinas’s view corrects each side, let us first turn to consider each proponent of the moral motivation objection individually.

Zagzebski claims that skills are not the kinds of things that cultivate virtue for two reasons. First, she argues that virtues are “psychically prior” to skills, which are primarily about “effectiveness in action.” Second, skills lack “motivational components” required for cultivating virtue. To the first point, Zagzebski gives the example of a courageous person. She writes, “a courageous person in certain roles would be motivated to acquire the skills of effective combat. A fair person who is a teacher would be motivated to learn procedures for fair grading.”²⁷⁴ Zagzebski thinks that skills are concerned with “external effectiveness” which sequentially comes after first having moral motivation. Once in place, moral motivation then spurs the acquisition of such skills.²⁷⁵

In reply to this point, Aquinas’s view challenges Zagzebski’s neat divide between skills and moral motivation. On Aquinas’s view, moral motivation has both teleological and efficient causal sides that account for both having the correct end/telos and developing the requisite psychological habits that allow us to choose the right ends and carry out the telos. Furthermore, Aquinas offers certain kinds of skills that are closely related to the kinds of interior acts about which moral motivation is primarily concerned. Emotion regulation skills, as I’ve argued, enter into and facilitate the very kinds of interior acts, or choices, about which efficient-causal motivation is concerned. Skills are therefore not always about “effectiveness in action” and they are not always employed after first having moral motivation because they are part of the process of cultivating moral motivation. With

²⁷⁴ Zagzebski, *Virtues of Mind*, 115.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 113.

Aquinas's perspective in mind, returning to Zagzebski's example of the courageous person, becoming someone who habitually makes this courageous choice requires employing certain emotion regulation skills over time so as to learn to not be overcome by fear but to be able to act and deliberate in the face of fear. On this view, we see that skills are more instrumental and integrated with moral motivation than Zagzebski's view permits. In this way, Aquinas challenges both Zagzebski's sharp divide between skill and moral motivation and her emphasis on the sequential ordering of moral motivation and skill.²⁷⁶

Perhaps Zagzebski would reply by arguing that even on this two-sided view of moral motivation, her initial sequential ordering of moral motivation and skill still holds. She may reply that, even on Aquinas's view of moral motivation, it is still the case that teleological motivation comes before the employment of skills in the efficient-causal side of motivation. However, it is still not so clear that Aquinas would grant this distinction. If we think of efficient-causal motivation as primarily about the development and perfection of our rational and sensitive appetites and teleological motivation the knowledge of the correct end (telos), often Aquinas says that our ability to choose the right ends (telos) and know which ends are good requires the rectitude of the appetites. On this picture, a parallel development of teleological and efficient-causal motivation is more accurate than the

²⁷⁶ Often this developmental picture of moral motivation and the relevant skills are overlooked because Zagzebski only entertains examples of the fully virtuous, courageous person. But how can we learn about developing moral motivation if we only think about those who are already morally motivated? The relevance of skills and their effectiveness come to light on developmental picture of moral motivation, as Aquinas offers.

sequential picture Zagzebski posits. Recall at ST. I-II 56.4 where Aquinas writes, “the act of choosing involves [or arises from] an upright intending of the end stems from the good disposition of the irascible and concupiscible powers [i.e., the sensitive appetite].”²⁷⁷ If we have temperance and fortitude, our sensory appetite proposes ends that are genuinely pleasant, desirable, and in accord with reason. Furthermore, if we have the virtue of prudence, we will reason correctly from those good ends to what will genuinely promote or realize the end; our choice to act to attain the end will therefore be a good choice—its goodness being a joint product (so to speak) of the virtues of the sensory appetite in setting the right end and the virtue of the practical intellect in discerning how to attain it. Based on the joint effort on the part of the appetites and intellect in knowing and choosing the right ends, there is more of an integrated relationship between knowing the ends (teleological motivation) and having the right psychological mechanisms to carry out those ends (efficient causal motivation) than Zagzebski’s sequential ordering of ends suggests.

As for her second main claim, Zagzebski states that virtues are largely about having moral motivation and that skills lack such “motivational components.” She argues that “the motivational component of virtue defines it more than external effectiveness does, whereas the reverse is the case with skills.”²⁷⁸ Though Zagzebski does not work out these

²⁷⁷ ST. I-II Q. 56.4 ad.4. Freddoso interprets this statement as follows “The fact that one has a correct intending of the end with regard to the passions of the soul arises from the good disposition of the irascible and concupiscible parts.” (*Quod autem habeat rectam intentionem finis circa passiones animae, hoc contingit ex bona dispositione irascibilis et concupiscibilis. Et ideo virtutes morales circa passiones, sunt in irascibili et concupiscibili, sed prudentia est in ratione*).

²⁷⁸ Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 115.

“motivational components” in detail, pointing to Aristotle’s NE passage at II.4. 1105a, she emphasizes that virtue is principally about choosing the correct end in the virtuous way and that skills lack such “motivational components.”²⁷⁹ In reply to this point, now that we have seen that moral motivation is not just about choosing ends but about both teleological and efficient causal sides together, and that skills are not just about external effectiveness but also about interior acts that can be instrumental to the development of moral motivation, we can again challenge Zagzebski’s distinction between skills and moral motivation.

More specifically, Aquinas’s perspective challenges the very need to draw this kind of disanalogy between virtue and skill in the first place. On Aquinas’s view, emotion regulation skills do not need to have “motivational components” or to be about choosing the correct ends to be useful for cultivating virtue. Getting the end right for Aquinas belongs to the intellect and is the focus of the teleological side of motivation to set the goal or sake for which we act.²⁸⁰ Skills aid in the efficient-causal side of motivation. As a result, the fact that skills themselves lack “motivational components” in that they are not themselves choices about the right ends does not diminish the fact that they are useful to cultivating moral motivation and aiding in the development of moral virtue.

²⁷⁹ See Aristotle, NE II.4.1105a22-35.

²⁸⁰ As Tobias Hoffmann summarizes, it is reason’s job to “correctly assess the end Aquinas calls the ‘due end’ (*finis debitus*). Reason judges correctly about that which promotes this end (*ea quae sunt ad finem*).” Hoffmann, “Prudence and Practical Principles,” 171.

Once we gain a more complete view of moral motivation and a more robust understanding of skill, we can begin looking past particular motivational differences between virtue and skill and begin answering the central question underlying Aristotle's famous skill-virtue analogy: If we can "become builders by building, and ... just by doing just actions" what can skills contribute to our understanding of how virtue is developed?²⁸¹ If the goal is to answer this question, then articulating the differences between virtue and skill is not the best route. As Annas states, "the modern thesis that virtue is a skill is only to say that virtue is one kind of skill," which implies that "pointing out obvious differences between virtues and skills is ineffective."²⁸² A more promising avenue is to gain a nuanced understanding of what moral virtue and moral motivation are and the various kinds of skills on offer today that could aid in their development. Based on my rendering of Aquinas's account of moral motivation and of emotion regulation skills, there are certain skills that, though disanalogous to virtue in that they themselves lack "motivational components" present in virtue, are highly useful to the end of cultivating moral virtue.

Similar to Zagzebski, James D. Wallace picks out differences between virtue and skill based on motivational components present in virtue but not in skill. The key difference Wallace describes is that virtue is primarily about "caring," having a "change of heart," and

²⁸¹ Aristotle, NE II 1103b.

²⁸² Annas, "The structure of Virtue," 17. Annas writes, "We can reasonably ask how much such differences matter: the thesis that virtue is a skill is a claim that virtue is one kind of skill, and thus the idea of skill is central in helping us to understand what virtue is. Against this claim, pointing out obvious differences between virtues and skills is ineffective."

“overcoming contrary inclinations” (i.e., overcoming the desire to lie and instead telling the truth).²⁸³ Skill, on the other hand, is about “know-how” and overcoming “technical difficulties.”²⁸⁴ Wallace writes, “Honesty, for example, is a matter of taking certain things seriously--a matter of caring about certain things. To cease to be honest would be a matter of coming to care less or ceasing to care--a change of heart rather than a loss of information or the loss of a skill through forgetting how to do something.”²⁸⁵ In reply to Wallace’s distinction, given what we now know about moral motivation and psychological skills, it is clear that, contrary to Wallace’s point, certain skills are not just about “know how” and “overcoming technical difficulties” but also about overcoming contrary inclinations and caring. To again use the example of emotion regulation skills, such skills involve “know how” and could be said to involve overcoming a “technical difficulty,” yet they are also employed in order to help us do the very things he describes only virtue does: overcome contrary inclinations. Our inclination to feel fear and withdraw from difficulties, in the case of courage, is exactly the kind of thing emotion regulation skills help us to overcome and thereby gain in virtue (i.e., of courage). In a similar way, once we know what we care about (e.g., being a person of integrity, being a good friend, etc.) we can prudently employ emotion regulation skills to help us cultivate these cares. Mental simulation, for instance, is a skill used to both curb fear but also to increase empathy or care for others (e.g., by

²⁸³ Wallace, *Virtues and Vices*, 45.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

imagining the pain of another, the needs of another, etc.). Such skills both help us to both overcome contrary inclinations and to increase our care or concern. In this way, Aquinas's view challenges Wallace's distinction. Furthermore, as in Zagzebski's case, we must question the usefulness of picking out the differences between virtue and skill if a) the goal is to understand whether certain kinds of skills are helpful to cultivating virtue and b) skills need not have every "motivational component" that virtues have in order to be the kinds of things that develop virtue.

Gary Watson also points out differences between skills and virtue based on moral motivational elements present in virtue but not in skill. In the case of the virtuous person, Watson argues, their actions or performances are expressions of the agent's "will' ... one's purposes, ends, choices, concerns, cares, attachments, and commitments."²⁸⁶ Skills do not require this kind of "wholehearted" performance that virtues do. Watson writes, in the case of tennis playing, "Indifference in a [tennis] performance doesn't count against one's skill, whereas a less than wholehearted effort to save someone's life does impugn my moral character."²⁸⁷ In other words, Watson challenges the idea that skills are analogous to virtue and, by implication, the idea that skills are even helpful in cultivating moral virtue if skills do not manifest or express an agent's cares, concerns, ends, etc. Aquinas would most likely agree with Watson concerning the nature of skills. Skills themselves do not entail or require an expression of an agent's fundamental cares, concerns, commitments, or

²⁸⁶ Watson, "Two faces of responsibility," 244.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

“wholeheartedness” in the way that virtues do in order for the skill to be considered adequate. This is even true in the case of emotion regulation skills. Someone can be highly skilled at regulating their emotions but never really connect this skill with their long-term goals, commitments, concerns, etc. (e.g., a psychologist may be excellent at regulating his emotions in order to serve his volatile clients, but such skill may never be employed to help cultivate the virtue of temperance or courage). In order to be useful for virtuous activity, Aquinas emphasizes that emotion-regulation skills must be guided prudently such that they are used in the right ways and for virtuous ends. For instance, engaging in an act of mental simulation or cognitive reappraisal can be chosen or willed for the end of better loving or empathizing with a friend *in order to* cultivate one’s care for the friend or the virtue of friendship. When skills are prudently engaged, a skill can be used to express and even cultivate certain ends, cares, commitments, or an act of “will,” as Watson describes. This points to a further point Aquinas could make. In addition to emphasizing the need of practical wisdom, Aquinas could once again add that certain skills are central to the kinds of things that moral motivation is about. Unlike tennis skills, emotion-regulation skills are about the expression of cares and concerns and therefore are more clearly connected to “moral motivation components” than other kinds of skills. When they are exercised *in order to* become better and more reliable at attaining the virtuous end (rather than merely being more effective at X activity), emotion-regulation skills have an ability to not only express an agent’s cares or concerns but also to play an instrumental role in allowing us to more reliably choose and act on our cares, concerns, and ends. In this way, Aquinas’s account

allows us to align certain skills with the kinds of things moral motivation is about. In so doing, he reopens the possibility for skills to facilitate the development of moral motivation.

A final proponent of the moral motivation objection who also makes sharp distinctions between skill and moral motivation in a way that discounts skill's ability to cultivate virtue is Anselm Mueller. However, unlike Zagzebski, Watson, and Wallace who reject the analogy because virtue has motivational components that skill lacks, Mueller rejects the analogy for a different reason. He thinks virtues and skills are *acquired* in different ways. Virtues are firm motivational patterns in the will to respond to certain ends as good for certain reasons (i.e., because they are good). For example, Mueller writes, "If you have promised to fix a bicycle, your purpose – the bicycle's functioning – does indeed supply you with a telic reason to make use of suitable means and ways (such as getting the tools). But qua act of justice, or fidelity, what you do is nonetheless motivated by an occasioning reason, viz. your promise."²⁸⁸ Moral motivation requires a practiced responsiveness to the right kinds of reasons, or ends that extend beyond the practice itself, that answer to a "why?" (e.g., helping repair a friend's bike *because* of the promise you made to your friend). This is a practice of treating certain ends as imperative. Skills do not require the practice of such reasoning but rather require a responsiveness to the rules and procedures that govern the practice (e.g., the rules of bicycle repair). As a result, skills are not a helpful avenue for understanding the habituation process that forms a motivational

²⁸⁸ Mueller, "Virtue as a Habit," 9.

disposition required for moral virtue. Moreover, skills are not candidates for the kind of thing that helps us to cultivate moral motivation.

Anselm's claim here is perceptive and commendable on many fronts, not the least of which is his articulation of the kind of moral development and responsiveness to reason specific to acquiring virtue. Mueller also does the best job of the group in identifying moral motivation as it originates from Aristotle's notion of virtue as a *hexis prohairetikê*, which Mueller describes as "a disposition unconditionally to choose the right way of behaving for the right kind of reason."²⁸⁹ What is missing then is not so much his account of moral motivation, though Aquinas's view includes two sides of motivation. Most of all, Mueller needs a more robust understanding of psychological skills and how these kinds of skills cultivate the kind of responsiveness to reason relevant for virtue. The kinds of skills Mueller thinks are representative of skills generally are skills of carpentry, bicycle repair, gardening, and those of a computer technician.²⁹⁰ While all are examples of skills to be sure, they are quite removed from psychological skills whose content are the thoughts, feelings, and actions that make up much of the moral life. If we entertain psychological skills, particularly emotion regulation skills, we see a new possibility for skills to contribute to the kind of responsiveness to reasons required for moral virtue. Though emotion regulation skills themselves do not cultivate a responsiveness to the right kinds of reasons, they do cultivate a responsiveness to reason and, when they are guided by practical wisdom

²⁸⁹ Ibid, 27.

²⁹⁰ Ibid, 1-9.

wherein the right reasons are supplied, these skills can cultivate a responsiveness to the right kinds of reasons. For example, the skill of cognitive reappraisal can be used to help overcome feelings of anger at the injustice of a friend by reappraising such anger in terms consistent with the end of charity. Though I am upset, for example, that my best friend forgot it was my birthday, I can cognitively reappraise the situation to modify my anger in light of more prevailing reasons (e.g., I need to be understanding of my friend's lapse in judgment because it is good to be charitable to our friends). In this example, cognitive reappraisal works to modify anger so that it aligns with more prevailing sorts of "occasioning" or "Anscombian Why?" reasons, as Anselm calls them. As Anselm states, "one's x-ing does not manifest charity unless one would answer an Anscombian Why by pointing to another's need or wish, or the like."²⁹¹ Given that Aquinas's emotion regulation skills work to align our affections with reason, they are the kinds of things that, if guided by practical wisdom, are an example of a skill that helps to create the kind of responsiveness to reason that Anselm describes is central to habituating a moral disposition in the will. Aquinas also could argue that this is exactly why such a skill cultivates efficient-causal motivation; it facilitates our ability to more easily choose or respond to the right reasons over time, which is what the efficient-causal side of motivation is. By dividing up moral motivation as both teleological and efficient-causal, Aquinas's view accounts for the

²⁹¹ Ibid,10.

psychological development needed to create the appetitive responsiveness to choose in the way the virtuous person does.

Aquinas's view of both moral motivation and psychological skill help to correct each proponent of the moral motivation objection by both challenging the distinctions they draw between virtue and skill and reimagining the relationship between moral motivation and skill. Thanks to Aquinas's nuanced account, we can see where this skill-averse group of scholars went wrong. In addition, as we will see next, his account helps to correct the other side of the discourse that advocates for psychological skills.

VIII. Aquinas, Stichter, and Virtue as Skill

On the other side of the contemporary debate, we have Stichter, who claims to have resolved the moral motivation objection by arguing that psychological skills of self-regulation, contrary to the proponents of the moral motivation objection, do in fact account for all motivational components necessary for moral virtue.²⁹² As I argued in the first chapter, though Stichter claims his account of psychological skills of self-regulation captures motivational differences between skill and virtue and thus overcomes the motivation objection posed by Zagzebski and Watson, what he has really done is interpret their views of moral motivation as on-going commitment to an end goal, a responsiveness

²⁹² Stichter writes, "expertise does capture the motivational aspects of virtue that give rise to the putative disanalogy between virtues and skills in the case of halfhearted performances." Stichter, "Role of Motivation," 208.

to demands of a practice, and changes in perception that happen in the pursuit of becoming an expert.

Yet these interpretations do not address the fullness of what these authors meant by moral motivation. Both Zagzebski and Watson emphasize that the motivational components involved in a virtuous act differ from skill because skills are an expression of interior choices about the right ends (Zagzebski) and moral motivated acts are ones that express an agent's fundamental cares, concerns, commitments or "will" (Watson). Stichter's account of skill ignores these elements of moral motivation. In turn, it is not safe for Stichter to conclude that psychological skills of self-regulation and expertise "capture the motivational components of virtue."²⁹³ I argued that a central problem with Stichter's account is his lack of clarity about what moral motivation is.²⁹⁴ Stichter's reply to the motivation objection rests on accounts of moral motivation from the first group that themselves are ambiguous. Furthermore, even he admits that his argument struggles to account for "practical wisdom."²⁹⁵ Now that we have a full account of moral motivation and

²⁹³ Stichter, "Role of Motivation," 208.

²⁹⁴ Stichter, "Virtue as a Skill," 79. Stichter writes, "One area, though, where the 'virtue as skill' approach might not capture our views about virtues is with respect to practical wisdom. Virtues require being practically wise about what is good and bad for people, and how various practices fit into an overall conception of the good life. In contrast, skills do not require making these kinds of value judgments. The end to be pursued in any particular skill is essentially fixed, as in chess it's winning the game, and even being a committed expert in a skill does not require reflection on how the practice of that skill integrates into a well-lived life."

²⁹⁵ Stichter, "Role of Motivation," 221. He writes, "However, what is missing from expertise is the need for practical wisdom, understood as involving the evaluation of the ends one is pursuing with respect to living well. Thus virtue, on the skill model, amounts to skillful behavior guided by practical wisdom."

its relation to psychological skills, we can see how Aquinas's view provides a corrective to Stichter.

Unlike Stichter, Aquinas's view of both teleological and efficient causal elements of motivation account for the motivational components proposed by Zagzebski and Watson. For Aquinas, an agent is morally motivated when his or her intellect discerns something as fitting for an agent's happiness and presents it to the will, and the will, recognizing this goodness, chooses that end in the distinctively virtuous way (i.e., with pleasure and promptness). For Aquinas, psychological skills play an instrumental role in developing our ability to choose ends in the distinctly virtuous way. Contrary to Stichter's view, this means that skills cannot themselves account for all of the motivational components. Though emotion-regulation skills facilitate choice, if they are to play a role in cultivating virtue, once again, psychological skills must be directed by the intellect and practical wisdom. As discussed above in response to Watson, skills themselves do not entail or require an expression of an agent's fundamental cares, concerns, commitments, or "wholeheartedness" in the way that virtues do in order for the skill to be considered adequate. Recalling the example of the psychologist described above, someone can be highly skilled at regulating their emotions but never really connect this skill with their long-term goals, commitments, concerns, etc. The question always remains, in light of what goal or reason or end are we regulating our emotions? In order to be useful for virtuous activity, this skill, like all skills, must be guided prudently so that it is used in the right ways and for virtuous ends. When skills are prudently engaged, a skill can be employed in ways expressive of those ends,

cares, commitments, or an act of “will,” as Watson describes. Unlike Stichter’s account, which struggles to account for practical wisdom or a reflection on which ends are worth pursuing, Aquinas’s view provides a nuanced account of moral motivation, skill, and their relationship all of which highlights rather than minimizes practical wisdom’s central role. As a result, Aquinas provides us with a more promising solution to the moral motivation objection and the role of psychological skills in cultivating moral virtue than Stichter’s account can offer.

A Final Response

As a final response to Stichter and the contemporary discourse on moral motivation-skill as a whole, it has been my hope to display how Aquinas’s moral psychology has the resources to weigh in and provide important corrections on both sides of the contemporary discourse. His robust understanding of moral motivation and skill contributes to this discourse by overcoming unhelpful distinctions between virtue and skill and by paving the way for a new relationship between psychological skills and moral motivation. Aquinas teaches us that certain kinds of psychological skills are closely related to the kinds of interior acts about which moral motivation is primarily concerned and, as a result, he keys us into the kinds of skills that are instrumental to facilitating our ability to choose the right ends as the virtuous person does. I find that Aquinas’s view of moral motivation and psychological skill helps to remove the “moral motivation” roadblock that faces the cultivating virtue

literature and gives his blessing, so to speak, to the trajectory of research that looks to psychological skills as the kinds of things that aid in the cultivation of moral virtue.

Conclusion

By way of a conclusion, in what follows, I discuss how Aquinas's work contributes to the research at large on "cultivating virtue" in a way that paves the way for philosophers to incorporate psychological research into their understanding of virtue and its cultivation. In addition, I offer several ways to further develop answers to the question "how to cultivate virtue?"

I. Attending to Psychological Resources

Psychologists and psychologically-minded moral philosophers often complain that philosophers need to attend more closely to psychological research on human behavior. For example, Stichter challenges moral philosophers to stop making "recommendations for moral development" merely from "the philosophical armchair." Instead, philosophers need to become more "aware of the psychological mechanisms that affect how people actually behave."²⁹⁶ In other words, moral philosophers need to engage with psychological research on human behavior and moral development because it will challenge and sharpen their claims. This critique picks out an important reality, especially for those philosophers

²⁹⁶ Stichter, *The Skillfulness of Virtue*, 7. Stichter's complaint stems from Flanagan's "Principle of Minimal Psychological Realism," which states that "any prescription of a moral ideal should involve only those processes or behaviors that we have reason to believe are possible for humans." Narvaez and Lapsley also challenge philosophers in this way. See Narvaez and Lapsley, *Psychological Foundations*, 141.

concerned primarily with an Aristotelean account of virtue. Many contemporary philosophers with this orientation do not engage with the psychological literature on moral development, psychological skill, or behavior. As evidenced by the authors discussed in the first chapter (i.e., Zagzebski, Wallace, etc.), their discussion of skill omitted any discussion of psychological research on skill and its development that is well-respected in the field of developmental psychology. However, as I argued, engaging with the psychological literature can add much-needed nuance to the way these philosophers think about skills and their relation to moral motivation. One reason for this general “failure to engage,” so to speak, is that combining research from two disciplines is difficult. It is challenging to work out how exactly psychological research contributes to an Aristotelian understanding of human nature, virtue, and/or moral development. As a result, even if moral philosophers are sympathetic to the complaint waged against them by psychologists, it is a difficult task to know how to address this worry.

Given my work on Aquinas is aimed at connecting Aquinas’s concept of emotion-regulation with contemporary psychological research, I find that my work serves to help contemporary moral philosophers respond to this sort of worry (albeit, if only in a way that concerns psychological skills and emotion). Aquinas builds out a space for psychological skills in his account of moral development. Furthermore, in virtue of finding a place for psychological skills, he indicates a place for psychological research on emotion and its regulation to help us learn how to train our emotions and become aware of factors that affect successful regulation. Aquinas’s account of the emotions indicates a way for

psychologists to enter the moral-development discussion in a way that facilitates the development of virtue. As a result, if contemporary moral philosophers take a cue from Aquinas, they can work toward attending to the criticisms waged by psychologists. Moreover, they can do so by using a historical resource that they already trust.

II. Where to Go from Here

There are a number of ways to further develop the discourse on cultivating virtue using skills. I'll mention just two. First, and perhaps most obviously, we need to know more about what kinds of psychological skills are relevant and helpful in cultivating virtue. In addition to studying emotion-regulation skills, what other kinds of psychological skills might help to develop one or more of the moral virtues? In order to answer this question, we need to push moral philosophers to make a shift. As I noted in chapter one, one reason why this question has not been explored at greater depth is that, currently, the research on skills and virtue stops short of addressing this question. On the one hand, there are those who are proponents of cultivating virtue using psychological skills and propose self-regulation type skills (e.g., Stichter) as the relevant kinds of skills. But this side, as I've argued, ignores important philosophical points about what virtue and moral motivation is and therefore falls short of offering compelling ways that certain psychological skills cultivate virtue. On the other hand, there are those who think that skills are merely helpful in some way to understanding how virtues are developed. However, this side is stuck picking out similarities between virtue and skill and stops short of actually thinking

through which skills are useful for cultivating virtue. For example, Annas famously advocates for the usefulness of skills in understanding how virtue is developed, but she remains focused on skill insofar as it is *like* or *analogous to* virtue. She writes, "We find the important similarity of virtue to skill in skills where two things are united: the need to learn and the drive to aspire...Virtue can most illuminatingly be seen as like this kind of skill; it shares the intellectual structure of a skill where we find not only the need to learn but the drive to aspire."²⁹⁷ While her account is helpful in articulating the characteristics of skill most similar to virtue, her account stops short of investigating actual skills on offer today that are useful for cultivating virtue. What we need then is to shift the focus from the way virtue is *like* a skill to the kinds of skills that actually help to cultivate virtue.

Beyond investigating psychological skills, I find that more work needs to be done to understand how moral motivation is developed. If moral motivation involves psychological development, as I've argued, more work needs to be done to understand how we change and develop our psychology so as to learn to habitually will an end/telos. For example, what kinds of things facilitate our ability to make a conscious choice? In order to do this research into moral development, I think we should keep two things in mind. First, we must focus not just on mature adults but on the processes by which we become mature, morally-motivated adults. All too often moral virtue and its development is done from the perspective of what should be or the ideal case. This approach fails to acknowledge our normal starting place. Most of us walk onto the moral scheme preloaded with emotional

²⁹⁷ Annas, *Intelligent Virtue*, 20.

baggage, poor cognitive habits, situational difficulties, and educational deficiencies that must be accounted for and addressed if we are to cultivate virtue. As Annas writes, "It is important here to start in the right place, which is not by examining a mature adult to find virtues of this kind. The crucial point about skill under discussion is a point about how it is taught and learnt, and so the context to examine is the analogous one for virtue, namely contexts of teaching and learning."²⁹⁸The starting place needs to be one that focuses on processes of change and learning, taking into account the struggles we commonly face.

Second, moral development research needs to take seriously the import of our emotions on our ability to change. There is an ever-growing body of research in neuroscience, cognitive science, and social psychology that supports the fact that we are, by nature, far more emotional than we are rational beings. Our moral judgments are often automated responses, preprogrammed by our emotional habits and intuitions.²⁹⁹ If we are to understand how to change, we must commit ourselves to learning about emotion. As Johnathan Haidt puts it, psychological change mirrors a rider, our conscious rational control, on top of an elephant, our emotions, feelings, and intuitions. The "elephant holds the reins" and "lasting change" requires appealing to and "retraining the elephant."³⁰⁰

²⁹⁸ Ibid, 21.

²⁹⁹ See Johnathan Haidt. "The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment." *Psychological Review* 108. no. 4 (2001): 814. Also see: Antoine, Bechara. Hanna Damasio, and Antonio R. Damasio. "Emotion, decision making and the orbitofrontal cortex." *Cerebral cortex* 10, no. 3 (2000): 295-307.

³⁰⁰ Jonathan Haidt. *The happiness hypothesis: Finding modern truth in ancient wisdom*. (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 21-27.

Seeing that change is a central part of understanding moral development, research into moral development must make the study of emotion a priority.

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