John Duns Scotus on the Role of the Moral Virtues

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the account of the role of moral virtue in human action put forward by John Duns Scotus (c. 1266-1308). Various issues related to Scotus’s account of moral virtue have received scholarly attention in recent years, notably the discussions in the late thirteenth century concerning the nature of human freedom and how it led to the view, adopted by Scotus, that moral virtues are habits (i.e. acquired dispositions) that pertain specifically to the faculty of free will, rather than to the human soul’s various powers of action, as some medieval philosophers maintained. The present work builds on such studies by examining how Scotus’s radical account of freedom drastically circumscribes the role that is possible for moral virtues. Scotus maintains that we are, as free rational beings, always able in principle to judge correctly what is the right action and to act freely according to that judgment; moreover, a free choice to follow right reason is sufficient for a human act to qualify as morally good, regardless of any habitual inclinations we might have or lack. Thus, while moral virtue inclines an agent to acts that would be morally good if accompanied by right reasoning, this inclination in itself has no moral character, nor does it cause the resulting act to be morally good. Scotus therefore denies that the moral virtues have an essential explanatory role in the account of how and why an action is morally good, and they do not play an essential role in his ethical theory.
Acknowledgments

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I would also like to thank family, friends, and colleagues who helped along the way. My sister Alison and my brother Andrew generally made life in Toronto better, and also gave useful practical advice at a critical stage. Informal reading groups over the years with fellow students in medieval philosophy were instructive and enjoyable; among others, I would like to mention in particular Peter Hartman and Rachel Bauder Lott. I also benefitted from discussions on broader points with other fellow students, notably John Bunner, Doil Kim, and Kathleen Gibbons. Magali Roques read an earlier version of chapters 4 and 5, and gave helpful advice on how to improve them. Finally, I wish especially to thank Simona Vucu. In our countless discussions (on many topics, including medieval philosophy), just about every single point in this dissertation became the subject of extensive debate; in addition, she read and commented on the whole dissertation in its penultimate form. In short, Simona has been an invaluable colleague, whose contributions to this work are too many to enumerate.
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Introduction

The following dissertation examines the account by the medieval philosopher and theologian John Duns Scotus (c. 1266-1308) of the role of the moral virtues in human action. I will argue that, largely as a consequence of his radical characterization of the freedom of the will, Scotus holds that the moral virtues as such have no central role in the explanation of how an agent is capable of acting in a morally good way. He thus goes against a long-standing tradition, rooted in Aristotle but much transformed in medieval moral psychology, according to which the moral virtues play an essential role in explaining how human action can be morally good. For Scotus, morally good action is due entirely to the free choice of an agent to act according to the dictate of right reason. Moral virtue therefore plays at most a facilitating role, but an agent does not need it to act in a morally good way.

Background

The normally central place of the moral virtues in medieval scholastic ethics can be attributed largely to the influence of Aristotle. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle argues that praiseworthy action proceeds from a stable disposition of the soul to act as a person of good judgment would choose to act, and that this disposition is acquired through education and practice; thus, moral virtue is a good habit of the soul inculcated by practice that inclines the agent to choosing in accordance with practical wisdom, or prudence.¹ One aspect of Aristotelian ethics on which medieval philosophers focused especially was the idea that moral virtues somehow perfect the action of the morally virtuous person; indeed, scholastic discussions of ethics often begin by citing Aristotle’s dictum that “virtue renders the agent and the act good.”²

The ways in which they interpret this dictum, however, diverge significantly from what Aristotle himself seems to have meant. This is due in part to the theological context into which they fit Aristotle’s ethics. Thomas Aquinas, for example, holds that the Aristotelian acquired virtues are necessarily imperfect because they orient the agent only to the incomplete and imperfect good of the agent’s own natural happiness, whereas only the supernaturally infused virtues orient us to the highest good (i.e. God).³ More significantly for the acquired virtues, scholastic philosophers

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¹ See especially *NE* II. The study of Aristotle’s ethical theory is a vast field in itself; a helpful general study is Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*.

² *NE* II.6, 1106a14-23. In the translation by W. D. Ross: “Every excellence both brings into good condition the thing of which it is the excellence and makes the work of that thing be done well.”

³ For a summary discussion of Aquinas’s theory of the virtues, see Kent, “Habits and Virtues.”
interpreted Aristotle’s ethics in terms of an elaborate framework of powers within the human soul.⁴ These include the powers of cognition and action that we share with brute animals: the five external senses and the internal senses such as the power of imagination, as well as the powers of action, such as the sense appetite, which itself was usually distinguished into the concupiscible appetite and the irascible appetite. Human beings also have the power of reason or intellect, and the associated power of rational appetite, identified in medieval philosophy with the free will. All of these powers are capable of being habituated, and can be disposed in better or worse ways. Since the moral virtues serve to incline the human agent as a whole to acting according to reason, some philosophers argue that they must be present in the various appetitive powers of the soul so that they are readily obedient to reason. According to Thomas Aquinas, for example, the virtue of temperance belongs to the concupiscible appetite, since its role is to moderate the pursuit of sensible pleasure which is the activity of that appetite, and courage is a habit of the irascible appetite, while justice is a habit of the will that inclines it to seek the good of others and not simply one’s own good.⁵ For Aquinas, moreover, the moral virtues not only moderate the appetites and their passions, but also make good practical deliberation possible. Since practical deliberation is only about the means to be sought for the sake of an end, it must presuppose the end as a principle; thus, by disposing the appetites so that the agent is oriented to the right ends, the moral virtues in the appetitive powers provide the right ends that serve as the principles for practical deliberation.⁶

As I will establish in this dissertation, Scotus has a very different view of the function of the moral virtues. For him, the most central aspect of the moral virtues is that they incline us to right acts of choice. He therefore argues that the moral virtues are not distributed among the various appetitive powers of the soul, but are habits only of the power by which we choose, namely, the will. However, when the moral virtues are treated strictly as habits of the will, important questions arise about how it is possible for them to continue to have a role in regulating human action. The central issue is Scotus’s conception of the will as a free power. According to Scotus, the will is distinguished from

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⁴ For a general discussion on medieval theories of the powers of the soul, see King, “The Inner Cathedral.”

⁵ See De Virt. in Com. art 4-5 (Marietti 716-721). Bonnie Kent has written several valuable articles discussing various aspects of Aquinas’s ethics and moral psychology; see Kent, “Dispositions and Moral Fallibility”; “Aquinas’s Ethics and Aristotelian Naturalism”; “Justice, Passion, and Another’s Good.”

⁶ In this sense, the moral virtues and the intellectual virtue of prudence (that is, the habit of judging rightly about what ought to be done) are mutually dependent: there cannot be moral virtue without prudence (since moral virtue is habit of acting according to right reason, and there cannot be a habit of so acting without a corresponding habit of reasoning rightly about how one ought to act), and there cannot be prudence without moral virtue to determine the right ends that serve the principles of good practical reasoning. See De Virt. Card. a. 2 (Marietti 818b-819a) and ST I-II 65.1. See also the discussion in Hause, “Aquinas on the Function of Moral Virtue,” 5–7.
all other powers in being self-determining. All powers other than the will are naturally determined towards their objects and necessarily act when presented with an object that is suitable to it; for example, the intellect and the senses necessarily have an act of cognition when a suitable cognizable object is present to them, and the sense appetite necessarily tends to a desirable object, unless prevented by a higher power. The will’s freedom of action, on the other hand, consists precisely in its capacity to determine itself: when a desirable object is present to it, and even if there is no reason not to desire it, the will nevertheless has the capacity to refrain from willing it. In other words, the will has mastery over itself and its own acts.

Scotus’s conception of the freedom of the will thus calls into question whether the moral virtues, as habits of the will, can play any role in moral action. Since the will is free with respect to ends just as much as to means, the determination of the end of action by the inclination of habits of moral virtue would represent a limitation of the will’s free self-determination. Likewise, to the extent that it is conceded that a moral virtue inclines the will to certain acts or even contributes to the way it acts, its freedom again seems to be compromised. A further problem with allowing moral virtues any role in rendering the acts of the will morally good is that it is only in being voluntary that an act can be morally good. However, if the moral goodness of an act is due to the inclination of habit, the act is to that extent not voluntary, but naturally determined; and if it is not voluntary, it cannot be morally good! The idea of moral virtue as part of the explanation of morally good action thus appears to be self-contradictory.

**Scholarly context**

In order to understand how Scotus addresses the role of the moral virtues, it is necessary to situate the problem in the context of his broader moral psychology. For the past several decades there has been a steady interest in this topic. Allan Wolter in particular can be credited with drawing attention to the importance of Scotus’s account of the freedom of the will for his ethical theory, especially with his influential anthology of texts (both in Latin and English translation) by Scotus on freedom and morality. 

On the specific question of the moral virtues, a highly influential work has been Bonnie Kent’s *Virtues of the Will*. In this study, Kent traces how the increasing concern in the late

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8 Kent, *Virtues of the Will.*
thirteenth century with the nature of human freedom influenced how philosophers thought about the moral virtues, leading to the view that the moral virtues are, as her title suggests, habits of the will alone. Kent’s book culminates and concludes with Scotus’s views on why moral virtues belong to the will.

The present dissertation continues where Kent leaves off, by examining the problems created by this conclusion. My discussion will be focused on the account of the role of the moral virtues in part one of distinction 17 of Scotus’s Ordinatio. An important aspect of his account is the way in which he approaches the issue, by first considering the moral virtues in terms of their general status as habits of the will, and whether they are active causes with respect to the acts of the power to which they belong. Only then does he examine the role of the moral virtues specifically as moral virtues, by posing the question whether moral virtues cause the moral goodness of an act. While several recent studies have discussed this text, few have fully considered the significance of the fact that Scotus divides the question in this way. A moral virtue might contribute to action in various ways because of the inclination that it gives to its subject; on Scotus’s account, however, this inclination is not intrinsically moral, but can be fully explained in terms of the more general character of the moral virtue as a habit. Thus, whatever inclination a moral virtue gives to its subject, it gives in the same merely natural way as any habit does, be it a virtue, a vice, or a morally indifferent disposition. In this way, Scotus shows that many of the conditions of action that were traditionally attributed to moral virtue – notably, that it is done with pleasure, as well as easily, readily, and promptly – can be explained in terms of a moral virtue’s general character as a habit; any specifically moral role for moral virtue will have to be explained differently.

Another significant aspect of Scotus’s account of the moral virtues in Ordinatio I distinction 17 is his detailed discussion of exactly how they can contribute to action under their general character as habits. According to one solution that he judges plausible, a habit is a partial active cause of action, but in such a way that it is necessarily subordinate to the power, which is the primary active cause of its own acts. Scotus also proposes an alternative account that denies that habits have any active role.

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9 Works that have discussed Scotus’s account of the role of habits and moral virtues in Ord. I d. 17 include Ingham, Ethics and Freedom, 147–177; Ingham, “Ea Quae Sunt Ad Finem”; Nickl, Ordnung der Gefühle, 55–77; Kent, “Rethinking Moral Dispositions.” In her studies, Ingham ignores the distinction that Scotus draws between the account of the role of habits and the account of the role of moral virtues as such, and treats them as alternative answers to the same question; her discussions are also marred by a misunderstanding about what Scotus means by “dictate of right reason.” Nickl recognizes that there is a distinction between the discussion of habits and the discussion of moral virtue, but seems not to appreciate its importance. Kent, on the other hand, explains clearly that what moral virtues can do as mere dispositions is not quite the same as making the act morally good, though her discussion is limited by the fact that the article is intended only as a general overview of the issue.
causality, but nonetheless incline their subject in a non-active way. Because Scotus himself seems elsewhere to prefer the active account, few of the recent discussions of moral virtue have given much attention to the alternative solution.\(^{10}\) However, in the text where the role of habits is the central question, he does not explicitly reject it, but instead concludes that it too is a plausible account, and refrains from deciding between it and the other that he considers plausible. I will argue that one reason he might have had for not rejecting it is that it gives a rigorous and detailed explanation of how habits can contribute to action that is grounded in his broader views on the nature of self-motion; moreover, as I will argue, it explains the role of habits in such a way that the will’s free self-determination remains unthreatened by the natural inclination of habit.

**Outline**

The following dissertation is divided into two parts, each consisting of three chapters. **Part I** is devoted to an exposition of the aspects of Scotus’s broader moral psychology that give rise to the question of the role of the moral virtues, but also determine the framework within which Scotus will develop his solution. **In Chapter 1,** I explain why Scotus holds that the moral virtues can belong to no other power than the will. It thus covers much of the same ground as Bonnie Kent’s *Virtues of the Will* in tracing how the increasing interest in the nature of voluntary action and its connection with morality led some philosophers to assign the moral virtues primarily or exclusively to the will, culminating in Scotus’s conclusion that, as habits of choice, the moral virtues properly speaking belong only to the will. This chapter thus serves to set up the basic dilemma about moral virtues that Scotus must address. On the one hand, only voluntary acts, which are ultimately traceable to the will, are subject to moral evaluation; thus, if moral virtues contribute to action at all, their contribution must be primarily to acts of the will. On the other hand, moral virtues are supposed to have some role in bringing about action that is morally good, yet any contribution that they do make will be merely natural and unfree; thus, to the extent that moral virtues contribute to the acts of the will, it appears that those acts are not up to the will but are naturally determined, and so unfree.

**Chapter 2** is devoted to explaining what Scotus means by his claim that only the will is a free power. I will focus on his account of the will as essentially free in virtue of its specific mode of action. Scotus argues that for the will to be free means not just that it moves itself to its action (rather than

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\(^{10}\) Among recent discussions, only Bonnie Kent’s takes seriously the fact that Scotus not only does not reject the fourth way in the text where it is under discussion, but even judges it “probable,” i.e. defensible; see Kent, “Rethinking Moral Dispositions,” 362–363. However, Kent gives only a brief summary of the issue in the context of a general overview of Scotus’s account of habits and moral virtues.
being moved to act by, for example, the willable object or the practical judgment of the intellect); what distinguishes the will from all other powers, which act in a naturally determined fashion, is that no external cause can ever sufficiently determine it to a certain act; rather, it freely determines itself, and this is simply its nature as the will. This explanation will serve not only to clarify exactly why it is difficult to explain how habits of moral virtue can have any causal role in the free acts of the will, but will also establish the framework within which the solution to the problem will have to be found, namely the account of the will as both the free active cause of its own acts and the passive subject that receives them.

**Chapter 3** will consist of an examination of the ontological status of habits and moral virtues. I will begin by considering whether habits are relations or somehow include a relation. Since the role of habits is to give their subject an inclination to a certain kind of action, and since the identity of any given habit can be specified only by specifying that towards which it inclines its subject, it might be tempting to conclude that habits are essentially relative beings. However, in order to make any real contribution to action, habits must have an ontological status that allows for this. They must therefore be absolute beings; more precisely, they are accidental beings in the genus of quality. I will therefore also examine Scotus’s discussion of whether habits constitute one of the highest species of in the genus of quality, and of what, if anything distinguishes them from other kinds of quality. Finally, I will consider briefly what distinguishes moral virtues from the broader class of habits; however, the full account of what moral virtues are will be postponed to the consideration in chapter 6 of their exact role.

**Part II** will consist of a detailed analysis and discussion of the account in *Ordinatio* I distinction 17 of how moral virtues contribute to action. Since moral virtues are habits, Scotus grounds his answer first in an account of how habits in general contribute. In the light of his account of the self-motion of powers of the soul, two possibilities emerge: either habits contribute to the power’s active eliciting of its own acts, or they incline the power to receiving certain acts more readily than others. **Chapter 4** examines the first option. I begin by summarizing the three ways that Scotus proposes for explaining habits as active causes, and why he concludes that only the third way is defensible, namely, that habits are partial active causes that contribute by intensifying the act of the power to which they belong, but are necessarily secondary to the power itself as the principal active cause of its own acts. I then explain the metaphysical framework of ordered causation to which Scotus appeals as support for this account. I conclude by raising doubts about the applicability of the
framework of ordered causation to habits of the will, and thus about whether the third way is a satisfactory solution.

**Chapter 5** examines the second option that Scotus presents with the fourth way in distinction 17 of *Ordinatio* I: that habits do not contribute actively to the acts of a power, but only incline the power to receiving certain acts. I begin by presenting the account, emphasizing that it has to be understood in terms of Scotus’s general account of self-motion, in particular of how a self-moving power passively receives its own acts (or operations) as accidental qualities. I then make a closer analysis of Scotus’s explanation of how a habit can incline a power insofar as it receives its own operations, and how this can explain the conditions of pleasure, ease, readiness, and promptness that are supposed to accompany an act done according to the inclination of habit. I conclude by arguing that between the two probable accounts of third and fourth ways, the latter is superior on Scotus’s own terms. Not only does it explain the contribution of habit (including the intensification of the act according to the third way) more precisely and in closer connection with his account of powers, but also it safeguards in a more unambiguous way the freedom of the will.

Finally, in **Chapter 6**, I turn to the role of moral virtues as such, which Scotus considers in the fifth way of distinction 17 of *Ordinatio* I, where the question is whether moral virtues cause the moral goodness of acts of the will. Since the answer will require an understanding of what moral goodness is, I begin by explaining what it is contrasted with, namely the natural goodness or natural perfection of an act, which includes its intensity and the accompanying conditions of pleasure, ease, readiness, and promptness. Thus, if a moral virtue contributes these conditions, it does not do so as a moral virtue, but under its general character as a habit. Secondly, I explain what moral goodness is, as something distinct from the natural perfection of an act. A morally good act is one that has the right object, and is done for the sake of the right end, at the right time and place, and in the right way, but these circumstances of volition still do not qualify the act as morally good in itself. The moral goodness of an act is due more precisely to the conformity of the act to the practical judgment of the intellect that rightly dictates the circumstance that the volition ought to have. Strictly speaking, therefore, moral goodness is not intrinsic to voluntary acts, but is a relation of conformity to right reason founded on the act. Thirdly, I consider the consequences of this view for the moral virtues. Since moral goodness is a relation, it is caused by nothing other than the two absolute things that it joins, which are the dictate of reason and the voluntary act; moral virtue therefore has no essential causal role with respect to moral goodness. Moreover, there is nothing intrinsic to a habit of the will that makes it a moral virtue; rather, this status is itself a kind of relation to prudence, analogous to
the relation of a morally good act to a dictate of right reason. Finally, I consider what role is left for the moral virtues and conclude that, while it is useful for us to have them, they no longer play an essential explanatory role in Scotus’s ethical theory.

Note on references to primary texts

In citations of passages from primary texts, the main reference will indicate the author and text, together with whatever standardized numeration exists, e.g., the question number, the distinction number (in Sentences commentaries), and any paragraph or section numbers that have been assigned by editors. The secondary reference in parentheses identifies the edition (by editor, publisher, place of publication, or series name), the volume number (if applicable), and the page, folium, column, page division, and/or line (depending on the edition). In the case of Scotus, the Ordinatio and Lectura will be cited from the critical edition of the Opera Omnia (usually referred to as the Vatican edition) edited by the Commissio Scotistica.\(^\text{11}\) The Questions on the Metaphysics and the Questions on the Categories are cited from Opera Philosophica published by the Franciscan Institute at St. Bonaventure University.\(^\text{12}\) All other texts of Scotus are cited from the 1639 Opera Omnia edited by Luke Wadding, with the exception of question 16 of Scotus’s Quodlibet, for which there is a critical edition by Timothy Noone and Francie Roberts, and Reportatio I-A, which has been edited and translated by Allen Wolter and Oleg Bychkov.\(^\text{13}\) Editions used for other authors are listed in the bibliography.

I use the following abbreviations in footnotes:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>art.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Badius</td>
<td>Henry of Ghent, Quodlibeta (Paris: Badius, 1518)(^\text{14})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cat.</td>
<td>Aristotle, Categories(^\text{15})</td>
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<td>Coll. Ox.</td>
<td>Duns Scotus, Collationes Oxonienses</td>
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<td>Coll. Par.</td>
<td>Duns Scotus, Collationes Parisienses</td>
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<td>De Malo</td>
<td>Thomas Aquinas, Quaestiones disputatae de malo(^\text{16})</td>
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\(^\text{11}\) John Duns Scotus, Opera omnia, 1950.
\(^\text{12}\) John Duns Scotus, Quaestiones in Librum Porphyrii Isagoge et Quaestiones Super Praecidamenta Aristotelis, Quaestiones Super Libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis, Libri I-V; Quaestiones Super Libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis, Libri VI-IX.
\(^\text{14}\) Henry of Ghent, Quodlibeta Magistri Henrici Goethals a Gandavo. I refer to this edition when a critical edition is not yet available in the Opera Omnia published by Leuven University Press.
\(^\text{16}\) Quoted texts are taken from the Leonine edition: Thomas Aquinas, Quaestiones Disputatae de Malo.
INTRODUCTION

De Virt. Card. Thomas Aquinas, Quaestiones super libris Metaphysicorum Aristotelis
De Virt. in Com. Thomas Aquinas, Quaestiones super libribus cardinalibus
fol. folium
In Met. Duns Scotus, Quaestiones super libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis
Lect. Duns Scotus, Lectura
Leuven Henry of Ghent, Opera Omnia (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1979-)
Met. Aristotle, Metaphysics
n., nn. paragraph number(s) (in critical editions of Scotus)
NE Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics
Ord. Duns Scotus, Ordinatio
PhB Les Philosophes Belges (text series that includes editions of Godfrey of Fontaines and Walter of Bruges)
Phys. Aristotle, Physics
q., qq. quaestio, quaestiones
Q. Disp., QQ. Disp. Quaestio(nes) Disputata(e)
Quodl. Quodlibet (of Duns Scotus, if no author is specified)
Rep. Duns Scotus, Reportatio
ST Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae
Super Praed. Duns Scotus, Quaestiones super Praedicamenta Aristotelis
Vat. Duns Scotus, Opera Omnia, (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis, 1950-)
Wadding Duns Scotus, Opera Omnia, edited by Lucas Wadding (Lyon: Durand, 1639)

17 For this and De Virt. in Com., I use the Marietti edition, Thomas Aquinas, Quaestiones Disputatae.
18 I have cited the following volumes in this dissertation: Henry of Ghent, Quodlibet I; Quodlibet IV; Quodlibet IX.
19 Citations use the standard divisions of the ST. Any quoted texts are from the Commissio Piana edition: Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae.
1. The Will as the Subject of the Moral Virtues

Duns Scotus’s account of the role of the moral virtues is set within a complex and highly articulated account of human action that involves a number of different questions in scholastic moral psychology. Thus, before examining his account of the role of moral virtues in human action, it will be necessary first to lay out in detail his account of how the moral virtues fit into Scotus’s account of the soul and its acts. The first among these is the question of what exactly is the subject of the moral virtues. In the text where he addresses this question, Scotus concludes that the moral virtues in the strict sense belong to the will alone. In this chapter I will examine why he holds this position and why he rejects the other position. First, after briefly discussing why there is a question at all about the subject of the moral virtues, I will explain Scotus’s argument for placing the moral virtues in the will alone. In arguing for this conclusion, Scotus is engaging in an ongoing debate in the late thirteenth century about exactly which power or powers of the soul are the proper seat of the moral virtues.¹ Secondly, therefore, I will consider how he responds to the arguments in favour of assigning the moral virtues not to the will alone but also to the sensitive appetites of the human soul. Finally, I will suggest that despite Scotus’s own response in the text where he discusses which power is the subject of the moral virtues, it remains to be explained more adequately how it is possible for the will, as a free power, to receive the inclinations of habit at all.

1.1 Why moral virtues belong to the will

In question 33 of Ordinatio III, where Scotus addresses the question of which power is the subject of the moral virtues, he concludes that they all pertain to the will, if not exclusively, then at least primarily. In this he enters into a debate in the late thirteenth century over whether the moral virtues belong only to the will as the rational appetite, or should be distributed among the various appetites of the soul, including the sensitive appetites. In order to situate his argument, I will explain why this debate is specifically about the appetites of the soul, rather than about powers in general. But first a more basic question needs to be answered: why would it be held that a virtue belongs to a particular power of a human agent, rather than to the soul or the human agent as a whole?

¹ The entire history of the medieval debate about the subject of the moral virtues is discussed in detail in Graf, De subiecto psychica gratiae et virtutum. The most informative and accessible recent account of this debate remains Kent, Virtues of the Will. The debate is helpfully summarized specifically in relation to Scotus in Kent, “Rethinking Moral Dispositions.” I will discuss some of the debate specifically as it relates to Scotus further on in this chapter.
1. The Will as the Subject of the Moral Virtues

1.1.1 Why moral virtues pertain to powers of the soul

On the face of it, the question of which power or powers the moral virtues ought to be assigned to might seem somewhat arcane, or even misguided. For to say that someone is endowed with moral virtue is just a way of saying that that person is a good person, and so it seems that we should say that the subject of moral virtue is simply the individual human being as a whole. But as we enter a little more deeply into the scholastic way of thinking, we might concede that a more precise answer can be given: if the whole human being is the composite of soul and body, it is not the composite that is the subject of moral virtue, but rather the soul alone, which is the principle of life and action. Yet here too it seems necessary to make even finer distinctions. For the only evidence we have that someone has virtue is in his or her actions: it is only when we see someone consistently acting in a courageous way, for example, that we can say that that person possesses the virtue of courage. It is also evident that we are capable of many different kinds of actions: we are capable of various different kinds of sensation, such as seeing and hearing and of different kinds of bodily action like running, eating, and so on; we are also capable of thinking, choosing, and willing. All of these kinds of act are really different from each other: to desire chocolate is not the same as thinking about chocolate, and to think about the taste of chocolate is not the same as tasting chocolate.

From the difference among the various kinds of acts that proceed from the soul, it was generally concluded that there must be a distinct principle in the soul for each kind of act. In other words, a certain kind of act is explained not simply by the individual as such or the soul as such, but by a certain power of the soul, which is in some way distinct from the soul itself. Thus, if a moral virtue perfects an agent with respect to a certain kind of act, it must be in virtue of the principle of those acts that it perfects the agent. Moral virtue therefore pertains not directly to the soul, but to a power of the soul.

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2 The most accessible and influential recent study on the medieval debate about the subject of the moral virtues is Kent, Virtues of the Will, esp. 199–245.

3 The idea that habits can be known only through their acts is a commonplace in scholastic psychology. A clear articulation of the point by Thomas Aquinas can be found at ST I 87.2 (Piana 542a): “Nihil cognoscitur nisi secundum quod est actu. Sic ergo inquantum habitus deficit ab actu perfecto, deficit ab hoc, ut non sit per seipsum cognoscibilis, sed nesse est quod per actum suum cognoscatur, sive dum aliquis percipit se habere habitum, per hoc quod percipit se producere actum proprium habitus; sive dum aliquis inquirit naturam et rationem habitus, ex consideratione actus.” The point is discussed in detail in Darge, Habitus per actu cognoscuntur.

4 For an extensive study on the powers of the soul up to Thomas Aquinas see Künzle, Das Verhältnis der Seele zu ihren Potenzen. On Aquinas’s arguments for why the powers of the soul must be distinct from the soul, see Wippel, The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas, 275–294. The later scholastic debate on the powers of the soul has attracted increased scholarly attention in recent years. See, among others, King, “The Inner Cathedral”; Wood, “The Faculties of the Soul and Some Medieval Mind-Body Problems”; Perler, “How Many Souls Do I Have?”; de Boer, The Science of the Soul, 209–299.
This was the generally held conclusion in the late thirteenth century, and in this respect Scotus does not differ from the consensus. He argues that if the moral virtues belonged to the whole person, there would be no way to explain how the virtue of courage, for example, perfects an agent differently from how the virtue of wisdom does. Scotus explains this point in terms of the way a virtue inclines the soul to acting well, but only with regard to a certain kind of act. He makes this point when he argues that grace – by which he means any of the infused virtues of faith, hope and love – pertains not to the soul directly, but to powers of the soul:

If the soul is undetermined to a plurality of acts that are suited to it with respect to a plurality of potencies, wisdom (or whatever other intellectual habit) does not perfect the soul insofar as it is undetermined, but precisely insofar as it is the intellect. The basis for this proposition is that if wisdom perfected the soul insofar as it is undetermined with respect to its active power, then it could just as well perfect it as it is ordered to any of its acts; similarly, if it perfects the soul precisely as it is ordered to a determinate act, then it would perfect it only if it were an active potency for that act and were not undetermined to a plurality of acts.5

Underlying the argument in this passage is the idea that for the soul to be capable of different kinds of acts it must have distinct powers, each of which is the principle of a certain kind of act, and not of any other kind of act. It is thus not the rational soul as such that is the principle of acts of understanding, but rather a power for acts of understanding which is contained in the soul, namely the intellect; likewise, the principle of acts of volition is not the soul as such but the power in the soul for such acts, namely the will. For if a virtue perfected the soul simply qua soul, Scotus argues, then there would be no way to explain why wisdom perfects the soul only insofar as it is able to understand, and not also insofar as it is able to will. Thus, if a virtue perfects the soul only with respect to a certain kind of act, or “the soul precisely as it is ordered to a determinate act,” and not other kinds, then it must pertain only to the power that is the principle of those acts, and not to the soul as such. The virtue of wisdom therefore perfects only the intellect, and not any other power of the soul, and can thus be said to belong to that power.

1.1.2 How moral virtues can belong to powers

So far, Scotus has given an argument for why the virtues must belong to powers of the soul rather than to the soul itself; he has not, however, explained how it is possible for them to belong to

5 Ord. II d. 26 n. 22 (Vat. 8:278-279): “Si anima est indeterminata ad plures actus convenientes sibi secundum plures potentias, sapientia (vel quicumque habitus intellectualis alius) non perficit animam in quantum indeterminata, sed praecise in quantum intellectus, (et ratio propositionis est ista, quia si perficeret eam in quantum indeterminata secundum virtutem activam, ergo acque posset eam perficere in ordine ad quaecumque actum suum; similiter, si perficit eam praecise in ordine ad determinatum actum, ita perficeret eam si tantum essent potentia activa ad istum actum et non indeterminata ad plures).”
powers at all. In his survey of the scholastic debate on the subject of the virtues, Thomas Graf observes that although philosophers frequently debated which power is the subject of which virtue, they almost never explicitly addressed the general question of whether a power can be the subject of a virtue at all. But this question seems well worth asking, for according to the Aristotelian division of finite beings adopted by scholastic philosophers, the virtues are habits; that is, they are beings in the genus of quality. As such, they are accidental beings that subsist not in themselves but in something else, which is to say they require a subject. Since a given virtue perfects the principle of a certain kind of act and not the principle of other kinds of act, it seems natural enough to say that the subject of a moral virtue is not the soul as such, but rather that principle, which is a certain power of the soul.

But this conclusion gives rise to various problems. As I will discuss in greater detail in chapter 3, a moral virtue is a certain kind of habit, and habits are generally agreed to be accidental qualities; as such, the moral virtues must inhere in some subject that serves as their ontological support. Moreover, it is generally assumed that the subject of a quality must be a substance, for if the ontological support of an accident were itself an accident, the latter would in turn require its own support, and as Scotus notes, this opens the way to an infinite regress. The subject of an accident must therefore be something that exists not through another but through itself, i.e. a substance. However, according to Aristotle in the *Categories*, a power is not a substance, but is also a mere accidental quality. It seems then that the subject of a virtue cannot be a power, but must be the substance to which the power belongs.

There were different ways of handling this objection. Thomas Aquinas discusses the question in various texts, and generally maintains that the soul is the ultimate subject of a habit, but that its inherence in the soul is mediated by a power; this power is thus the immediate subject of a habit, despite also being an accident that is something distinct from the soul. In *Summa Theologiae* I, he

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6 Graf, *De subiecto psychico gratiae et virtutum*, 2:258. Graf concludes from his survey of the debate that apart from Peter of Tarentaise and William Peter Godinus, who simply follow Aquinas’s position in his *Sentences* commentary, only William of Rubio specifically addressed the question of whether it is possible for a power to be the subject of a moral virtue.

7 See Aristotle, *Cat.* 8, 8b25-9a13. I will discuss the ontological status of virtues as habits in detail in chapter 3 below.

8 Note that while Scotus holds that accidental beings normally require a substantial subject in which to inhere, he denies that inhering in a subject is part of their essential nature; see *In Met.* VII q. 1 (OPh 4:91-101) and discussion in King, “Scotus on Metaphysics,” 29–30.


10 For discussion of power as a species or mode in the category of quality and Scotus’s discussion see chapter 3 below.

11 Aquinas’s account of the powers and their relationship to the soul has been discussed in detail in the scholarly literature. See Künze, *Das Verhältnis der Seele zu ihren Potenzen*, 171–218. See also Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 275–294. As Dominik Perler notes, the status of the powers according to Aquinas is not as simple as my
agrees that a power is a thing that is distinct from the essence of the soul, since it must be in the same category of being as the operations for which it is the potency; and since an operation is not a substance, but an accidental quality, a power of the soul must likewise be an accidental quality of the soul. Nevertheless, in *De Virtutibus in Communi*, Aquinas argues that a habit does depend in a certain way on a power, even though powers are not substances. He distinguishes three ways in which something can be said to be the subject of an accidental being: as that which supports the accident, as the potency to which the accident is the actuality, and as the cause of which the accident is an effect. Aquinas denies that one accident can be the subject of another in the first way, but concedes that it might be said to be the subject if it is in turn supported by a substance. But he goes on to say that it is only in the other two ways that a power can be the subject of a virtue:

As for the other two ways, one accident is related to another in the mode of a subject, for one accident is in potency to another as the transparent medium is in potency to light, and surface to colour. And in this way one accident is said to be the subject of another, not because one accident can provide a support to another, but because the subject is receptive of one accident by the mediation of another. And in this way a power of the soul is said to be the subject of a habit.

very brief summary: they are indeed accidents of the soul inasmuch as they are not part of the essence of the soul, but are properties that “flow” from the essence and are necessarily present in the soul; see Perler, “How Many Souls Do I Have?,” 279–285. But as John F. Wippel points out, Aquinas seems not to consider this an adequate solution to the problem of how an accident can have another accident as its immediate subject, since he explicitly addresses the question of how a habit can inhere in a power at ST I-II 50.2 ad 2 and *De Virt. in Com.* art. 3; see below and Wippel, The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas, 293–294.

12 ST I 77.1 (Piana 463b): “Cum potentia et actus dividant ens et quodlibet genus entis, oportet quod ad idem genus referatur potentia et actus. Et ideo, si actus non est in genere substantiae, potentia quae dicitur ad illum actum, non potest esse in genere substantiae. Operatio autem animae non est in genere substantiae; sed in solo Deo, cuius operatio est eius substantia.” Scotus reports this argument in a discussion of whether the will and the intellect are really distinct. See Rep. II d. 16 §2 (Wadding 11:345): “Dicitur quod saltem duae potentiae, scilicet intellectus et voluntas, sunt realiter distinctae, et hoc ponitur dupliciter. Prima via ponit quod realiter distinguuntur inter se et ab essentia animae sicut accidencia, quae sunt proprietates passiones. Alia opinio ponit quod distinguuntur realiter inter se, sed non ab essentia animae. Pro prima via arguitur: actus et potentia sunt eiusdem generis; sed actus ut intelligere et velle sunt de genere Qualitatis; igitur et potentiae.”

13 *De Virt. in Com.* art. 3 (Marietti 715b): “Dicendum quod subiectum tripliciter comparatur ad accidentes. Uno modo sicut praebens ei sustentamentum; nam accidentes per se non subsistit, fulcitur vero per subiectum. Alio modo sicut potentia ad actum; nam subiectum accidenti subiicitur, sicut quaedam potentia activi; unde et accidentes forma dicitur. Tertio modo sicut causa ad effectum; nam principia subiecta sunt principia per se accidentis.”

14 *De Virt. in Com.* art. 3 (Marietti 715b): “Quantum igitur ad primum, unum accidentium non potest esse in subiecto sustentato, alio modo sicut potentia ad actum; nam accidentium subiecti accidentis activi; unde et accidentia forma dicitur. Tertio modo sicut causa ad effectum; nam principia subiecti sunt principia per se accidentis.”

15 *De Virt. in Com.* art. 3 (Marietti 715b): “Sed quantum ad alia duo, unum accidentium non potest esse subiectum sustentatum, alio modo sicut potentia ad actum; nam unum accidentes est in potentiad ad alterum, sicut diaphanum ad lucem, et superficie ad colorum. Unum etiam accidentium potest esse subiectum sustentatum, ut humor saporis; et per hunc modum dicitur unum accidentium alius accidentis esse subiectum. Non quod unum accidentes possit alius accidentis sustentamentum habere; sed quia subiectum est receptivum unius accidentis altero mediante. Et per hunc modum dicitur potentia animae esse habitus subiectum.”
A power can thus be the subject of a habit, but only in the sense that it allows for a habit to be in the soul. This is exactly in accordance with the definition of a virtue as that which perfects a power by determining it to acting well:

A habit pertains to a power of the soul as an act to a potency, since a power is undetermined from itself, and by a habit is determined to this or that; as well, it is from the principles of powers that the acquired habits are caused. Therefore, it should be said that powers are the subjects of the virtues, because a virtue is in the soul by the mediation of a power.\(^{16}\)

In Aquinas's view then, even though a power is an accident of the soul, it is nevertheless the subject of a virtue, but only in a qualified sense; its subject in the proper sense — i.e. the substance that serves as its ontological support — is the soul.\(^{17}\)

Scotus solves this problem very differently. As noted above, he too holds that a moral virtue, as the perfection of a principle of action, must belong to a power, and not to the soul itself. However, he is able to avoid entirely the problem of how an accident can inhere in another accident by denying that a power is an accident of the soul; he holds instead that it is really identical with the soul. He argues that a power of the soul cannot be an accident that is really distinct from the soul, for in that case it would not be the soul that is perfected when a power acts, but something other than the soul; but this would mean that in the case of the beatific vision of God, it would be the intellect that is formally in a state of beatitude and not the rational soul itself.\(^{18}\) Thus, a power of the soul is not just inseparable from the soul as a proprium, but must also be really identical with it; as Scotus puts it, “the powers are not some other thing, but are univitely contained in the essence of the soul.”\(^{19}\) Since a power of the soul is the very same thing as the soul, the virtue inheres in the soul as an accident.

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\(^{16}\) De Virt. in Com. art. 3 (Marietti 715b): “Nam habitus ad potentiam animae comparatur ut actus ad potentiam; cum potestia sit indeterminata quantum est de se, et per habitum determinetur ad hoc vel illud. Ex principiis etiam potentarum habitus acquisiti causantur. Sic ergo dicendum est, potentias esse virtutum subjecta; quia virtus animae inest, potentia mediante.”

\(^{17}\) Aquinas gives a much briefer version of the argument at ST I-II 50.2 ad 2 (Piana 972b): “Accidens per se non potentia esse subiectum accidentis. Sed quia etiam in ipsis accidentibus est ordo quidam, subiectum secundum quod est sub uno accidente, intelligitur esse subiectum alterius. Et sic dicitur unum accidentis esse subiectum alterius, ut superficies coloris. Et hoc modo potentia esse subiectum habitus.”

\(^{18}\) This is a problem not just because it is not the soul that would be formally blessed, but also because the accidental power that would be formally blessed is not itself a rational being. Rep. II d. 16 q. un. §15 (Wadding 11:348a): “Si intellectus et voluntas sint alius ab essentia, videre Deum et diligere non immediate recipiuntur in essentia animae, imo nec per se, quia si illae potentiae essent separatae ab essentia animae siet quantitas a subiecto, possit intellectus adhuc perfici visione beata, et sic accidentis esse formaliter beatum, et non solum creatura rationalis.”

\(^{19}\) Rep. II d. 16 q. un. §18 (Wadding 11:348b): “Potentiae non sunt res alia, sed sunt unitive contentae in essentia animae.” In holding that a power is really identical with the soul, Scotus rejects not only Aquinas’s position that the powers of the soul are accidents, but also that of Henry of Ghent, who holds that powers of the soul are the soul itself as it is related to different primary objects. See Cross, “Philosophy of Mind,” 267–271.
inheres in a substance, despite the fact that a virtue pertains only to a certain power of the soul. The question whether an accident can have another accident as its immediate subject is thus avoided. In holding that the powers of the soul are really identical to the soul, Scotus is not obliged to give up the claim that a given virtue pertains only to distinct powers. He argues instead that a power is distinct from the soul in a way that allows for one habit to pertain properly to one power, and another habit to another power. Wisdom for example is a perfection of the soul, but only insofar as it is the principle of acts of understanding, i.e. the intellect. The basis for this restriction of how it perfects only in this way has a real basis in the soul, even though the intellect is really identical with the soul.

Scotus makes this claim by appeal to his famous formal distinction. Generally speaking, two items are formally distinct if the definition or ratio of one is not included in the ratio of the other. Thus, two things that are really distinct obviously must also be formally distinct; however, according to Scotus, two items that are formally distinct need not also be really distinct things. In the case of the powers of the soul, the will and the intellect are formally distinct from each other because the ratio of one is not included in the ratio of the other, and likewise the will and the intellect are formally distinct from the rational soul because the ratio of the essence of the latter does not include the ratio of the powers. This is so despite the fact that the intellect and the will are really the same thing as the soul; as Scotus puts it,

Powers are not the same thing formally or quidditatively, neither the same as each other nor even the same as the essence of the soul; nor are they different things, but are the same with respect to identity. Thus, they have a distinction according to their formal characters, which is just like the real distinction that they would have if they were different things that are really distinct.

By positing that the will and the intellect have different formal characters, Scotus is able to hold that certain things can be true of the intellect or the will that are not true of the rational soul as such or of each other, despite their real identity. Thus, although the will, the intellect and the soul are all really the same thing, it is nevertheless true to say that wisdom is a virtue of the intellect but not a virtue of the will, nor of the soul unqualifiedly.

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21 Rep. II d. 16 q. un. §18 (Wadding 11:348b): “Non sunt potentiae idem formaliter, vel quidditativae, nec inter se nec etiam cum essentia animae, nec tamen sunt res aliae, sed idem identitate. Ideo talia habent tale distinctionem secundum rationes formales qualem haberent realem distinctionem, si essent res aliae realiter distinctae.” For discussion of this text, see King, “The Inner Cathedral,” 266–268.
In less metaphysically rigorous terms, one might say that Scotus’s solution to the question of how different virtues really belong to different powers of the soul works by positing that one can distinguish the ontological and functional aspects of what a habit is. Take Scotus’s example of the virtue of wisdom: as a habit, it is an accident in the genus of quality and inheres in the rational soul as its substantial subject; but insofar as it perfects the rational soul by giving it a stable inclination to certain acts – that is, insofar as it perfects the soul only with respect to its being the principle of intellectual acts and not with respect to its being the principle of other acts such as volition – it belongs only to the intellect, and not to the essence of the soul itself, despite the fact that the intellect is really identical to the soul. This claim is made possible by the formal distinction between the soul and its powers.

1.1.3 Moral virtues as habits of the will

Given that a power of the soul is capable of being the subject of a virtue, and that each virtue pertains only to one power, we are now in a position to address the question: Which power or powers do the moral virtues belong to? To answer this question, let us recall briefly what a virtue is, and what distinguishes moral virtues from other virtues. First of all, there are various senses of the term ‘virtue’ (virtus) in scholastic philosophy of the thirteenth century. Virtus is sometimes used to refer simply to a power for a certain kind of action. This usage is sometimes seen in Aquinas, who explains that virtus in this sense refers to a power that is naturally determined from itself to its proper acts. In the more restricted sense that is relevant for the discussion of the moral virtues, virtus is used only to refer to the perfection of a power by which it is determinately disposed to its best possible activity. As Aquinas succinctly puts it,

‘Virtue’ names a certain perfection of a power. For the perfection of each one is considered especially as it is ordered to its own end. But the end of a power is the act; thus, a power is said to be perfected inasmuch as it is determined to its own act. Thus, if a virtue determines a power to its own act – not by bringing it to its act, but by disposing the power so that it is determinately inclined to its act in a way in which it is not already inclined by

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22 ST I-II 55.1 (Piana 994b): “Sunt autem quaedam potentiae quae secundum seipsas sunt determinatae ad suos actus, sicut potentiae naturales active. Et ideo huiusmodi potentiae naturales secundum seipsas dicuntur virtutes.”

23 Various Aristotelian passages are typically quoted to support the contention that a habit of virtue is a perfection of a power: NE II 6.6, 1106a14-23 (quoted below); De Caelo I.11, 281a15, quoted by Aquinas in ST I-II 55.1 (Piana 994a): “Virtus enim est ultimum potentiae”; Phys. VII 7.247a2, quoted by Scotus at Ord. I d. 17 n. 57 (Vat. 5:161): “Virtus est dispositio perfecti ad optimum, ex VII Physicorum.”

nature – virtue must be something other than the power itself. This extra thing that inclines a power is of course a habit; a virtue is therefore an accidental habit by which a power has an inclination to action that is consonant with its proper end. This contrast can be found in the passage of the Nicomachean Ethics where Aristotle remarks that virtue in general “both brings into good condition the thing of which it is the excellence and makes the work of that thing to be done well.” Just as the virtue of the eye is not merely to see but to see well, so the virtue of a human being lies not simply in doing the acts that are specifically human, but in doing them well; or, when virtue is conceived as a disposition of its subject, it gives its subject an inclination to doing them well.

However, in the sense that is usually employed in medieval moral psychology, ‘virtue’ usually refers not to a perfective habit of any sort of thing, but specifically to those habits of human beings insofar as we are capable of acting in the way that is proper to human beings. What then is the specifically human activity that can be rendered good by virtue? Aristotle himself explains at length in the Nicomachean Ethics that this is activity in accordance with the rational principle in man. Though ultimately he concludes in book 10 that pure contemplation by the intellect alone is the highest form of activity, he devotes a great deal more attention to working out what it would mean to have practical action guided by reason. On the basis of Aristotle’s discussion of how practical action must be guided by reason, scholastic philosophers generally adopted as their basic model of human action a two-step process. First, the intellect deliberates and judges about what ought to be done, concluding what would be the good object to seek. Though philosophers like Scotus take pains to emphasize that this is a practical act in the sense that its object is that which ought to be done, and it involves the application of practical principles to particular circumstances, the judgment of the practical intellect is nevertheless only a judgment. Secondly, therefore, a distinct power of action receives the conclusion of the intellect’s practical deliberation and executes it: that is, once the cognitive power of the intellect has presented an object under the aspect of what is good and thus as something to be sought, the appetite can then seek it.

Two distinct powers are therefore involved in rational practical activity, each of which needs to be perfected by its own virtuous habits in order to act in the way that is best according to reason.

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25 NE II.6, 1106a14-23.

26 Scotus explains in detail in part 5 of the Prologue to the Ordinatio how an activity of the intellect is practical and not theoretical in virtue of the fact that it is directive of practical action; see Ord. Prologus nn. 223-269 (Vat. 1:153-183), with analysis in Sondag, Jean Duns Scot: Prologue de l’Ordinatio, 283–293.

27 Scotus discusses in various texts the way in which the intellect and the will interact. This is relevant for the debate on the freedom of the will, which I will discuss in chapter 2.
Scholastic philosophers thus distinguish between the two kinds of virtue that are involved in virtuous human action. The intellectual virtue of prudence (or practical wisdom) perfects the intellect with regard to deliberation and judgment about what ought to be done; prudence thus inclines the intellect to judging correctly and readily about practical action. The intellectual virtue of prudence is contrasted with the moral virtues: whereas the former inclines the agent to judging well, the latter incline the agent to acting well. Since acting well as a human being is to act according to the rational principle, a moral virtue is a habit that inclines the power for practical action (that is, the appetite) to acting according to what is presented to it by right reason (that is, the correct practical judgment of the intellect about action that is to be done). If the appetite is in a virtuous state, it will be inclined to acting according to the dictate of right reason and doing so readily and with pleasure. Thus, the subject of a habit of moral virtue must be an appetite that is capable of being habituated to acting in accordance with the dictates of right reason.

“Acting in conformity with right reason” was interpreted in various ways (as will be seen below in section 1.2), but, Scotus focused primarily on one aspect in his argument for why the moral virtues must be habits of the will, namely the fact that they are habits of choice. Choice, in Scotus’s view, is primarily an act of the will: it is a volition directed at the means to an end, following the judgment of the practical intellect about which means ought to be used. Moreover, as Aristotle notes, a moral virtue is a habit of choice. Since a habit that inclines an agent to certain acts must belong to the power that is the principle of those acts, it follows that as habits of choice, the moral virtues must belong to the will, which is the primary cause of acts of choice.

Scotus makes his argument by considering how habits are generated. According to him, the will by its acts of right choice generates in itself a habit that subsequently will incline it to further acts of choosing rightly. Though he considers various arguments for this view, the one that he adopts when he states his position turns on the way a habit is generated. According to the generally accepted scholastic view, habits are formed by repeated action: when someone repeatedly does a certain kind of act, he or she gradually develops a disposition for similar acts, so that in the future they will be done more readily and more easily. For example, one becomes courageous by doing courageous acts,

28 The circumstances that have to do with the way in which acts are done according to habit will be discussed in detail in chapter 5.

29 NE II.5, 1106b36; Cf. Ord. III d. 33 n. 7 (Vat. 10:143).

30 I rely here on the question on the seat of the moral virtues at Ord. III d. 33 (Vat. 10:141-175). Parallel questions exist also in the Lectura and Reportatio, but these do not differ significantly from the question in the Ordinatio, except perhaps in relying more heavily on the discussion of Henry of Ghent, to whom Scotus is responding most directly.
or becomes just by doing just acts; the more one performs such acts, the more one becomes inclined to doing them. More precisely, the habit that is generated must belong to the power by which the act was elicited, so that that power will be inclined to similar acts in the future.³¹ One can therefore say about the will specifically that by repeatedly making a certain kind of choice, the will acquires a habit that inclines it towards making similar choices in the future. In Scotus’s words:

Just as in the intellect, whether through the first act or through many elicited acts, there is generated a habit of prudence, so also in the will, whether through the first right act of choosing that is consonant with the dictate of right reason or through many right acts of choice, there is generated a right virtue that inclines the will to choosing rightly.

In other words, by repeatedly choosing in a certain way, the will develops a habit that will incline it to similar choices in the future, and if those choices are right choices, the habit that it acquires is a moral virtue.³³

On this basis, Scotus argues that as a habit of choice a moral virtue can belong only to the will. Even though it is the lower appetites that carry out the external act, they are commanded to this act by the will, which first has made a choice about what to do:

By nature, the will chooses before it or reason commands anything to the sensitive appetite. For reason seems to affect the sensitive appetite only by the mediation of the will, which is properly the rational appetite; the will also wills something in itself before it commands something concerning it, for it is not because it commands the lower power that it wills that, but vice versa. Therefore, in that prior [instant] the will is able to generate in itself from its right acts of choice (since it is just as much indeterminate and determinable as the intellect) a habit that will incline it to choosing rightly; and this habit will most properly be a virtue, since a habit of choice most properly inclines to acting just as it was generated from right acts of choice.³⁴

³¹ As Scotus notes in the *Collationes Parisienses*, a habit is an impression of an operation and since the operation is in the power that elicits it, so also is the habit that is generated; it is in this way that a habit disposes the power to receiving further similar operations. I will discuss this text more fully in chapter 3, where I address the ontological status of habits.

³² *Ord.* III d. 33 n. 43 (Vat. 10:162): “Sicut in intellectu vel per primum actum vel per plures actus elicitos generatur habitus prudentiae, ita etiam vel per primum rectum ‘eligere’, consonum dictamini rationis rectae, vel per multas electiones rectas generatur in voluntate virtus recta, inclinans ipsam ad recte eligendum.”

³³ Of course, it is not enough that the acts happen to be right: they must also be done in light of a right dictate of practical reason. It might even be possible for someone to acquire a habit of doing acts that happen to be right, yet if that habit is not accompanied by a corresponding intellectual habit of prudence it will not be a moral virtue I will discuss this point in chapter 6.

³⁴ *Ord.* III d. 33 n. 44 (Vat. 10:162): “Prius naturaliter voluntas eligit quam ipsa vel ratio aliquid imperet appetitui sensitivo. Ratio enim non videtur attingere appetitum sensitivum nisi mediante voluntate, quae est proprie appetitus rationalis; voluntas etiam prius vult aliquid in se quam imperet potentiae inferiori actum circa illud: non enim quia imperat potentiae inferiori, ideo vult illud, sed e converso. In illo ergo priore potest voluntas ex rectis electionibus (cum sit acque indeterminata et determinabilis sicut intellectus) generare in se ipsa habitum inclinantem ad recte eligendum – et hic habitus propriissime erit virtus, quia propriissime habitus electivus inclinat ad agendum sicut generatur ex rectis
The will generates in itself a habit by acts of choice that are naturally prior to any act of the lower powers that the will commands. Moreover, it is this habit in the will that inclines the agent to further similar acts. Thus, as a habit of choice that inclines to further right choices, a moral virtue can belong only to the will.

1.2 Are there moral virtues in the sensitive appetites?

The conclusion that moral virtues are habits of no other power than the will was by no means universally accepted among philosophers in the late thirteenth century. Indeed, in the text where Scotus addresses the question of the subject of the moral virtues, he responds in detail to well known arguments for the moral virtues being habits of the sensitive appetites. I will consider two of these arguments and how Scotus refutes them. I will then address a middle position that Scotus seems to consider at least plausible: that although moral virtues are primarily in the will, they are also present in the sensitive appetites, though only derivatively.

1.2.1 Moderation of the passions of the soul

One objection to positing moral virtues in the will arises from one of the roles traditionally assigned to the moral virtues, namely the moderation of the passions. For Aristotle, one of the signs of virtuous character is feeling pleasure and pain at the right things and to the right degree; in other words, hitting the mean with respect to pleasure and pain. Moreover, medieval philosophers often argued, again following Aristotle, that the passions to be moderated occur in the sensitive appetites; therefore, if the moral virtues are to moderate the passions of the sensitive appetites they must be habits not of the will, which is the rational appetite, but of the sensitive appetites. This is one of the objections to his own position that Scotus raises: “It is argued that ‘where there are extremes, there is a mean’; therefore, where there are excessive passions, there is virtue, which is the ‘moderator of the passions’; and passions are in the sensitive appetite, and not in the will.”

A prominent exponent of this view before Scotus was Thomas Aquinas, who develops an argument for placing the passions of the soul exclusively in the sensitive appetites on the basis of their materiality. According to Aquinas, a passion in the strict sense is an accidental quality, and therefore

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1. Cf. NE II.6, 1106b24-26: “Virtue is concerned with passions and actions, in which excess is a form of failure, and so is defect, while the intermediate is praised and is a form of success.”

36 Ord. III d. 33 n. 13 (Vat. 10:146): “Tertio arguitur, quia ‘ubi sunt extrema, ibi est medium’; ergo ubi sunt passiones excedentes, ibi erit virtus, quae est ‘moderatrix passionum’; passiones sunt in appetitu sensitivo, et non in voluntate.”
it necessarily involves not just the reception of that quality but also the removal of its opposite. This presupposes a stable substrate that persists through the change, and includes a material component that grounds the change. A genuine passion of the soul therefore can occur only in a power that involves a corporeal element.\(^{37}\) The passions of the soul can therefore belong only to the sensitive powers of the soul, which are bound to and operate through material organs of the body. Thus, a passion occurs accidentally in the sensitive appetite because the activity of this appetite is necessarily accompanied by a physical change in the body; for example, the passion of anger in the soul is, according to Aristotelian psychology, accompanied by and partially constituted by a boiling of the blood around the heart.\(^{38}\) Indeed, Aquinas defines a passion of the soul as an act of the sensitive appetite; the passions of the soul are thus excluded entirely from the will, for it does not act through any organ and its acts therefore do not involve any material change.\(^{39}\) Therefore, since the passions of the soul occur only in the sensitive appetites, any habit that moderates those passions must also belong to the sensitive appetites; it follows that the moral virtues, insofar as they moderate passions of the soul, must belong to the sensitive appetites.\(^{40}\)

To be more exact, the passions of the soul can be divided between two different appetites in the sensitive soul. Aquinas argues that the sensitive appetite can be distinguished into the concupiscible and irascible appetites according to their two distinct functions:

\(^{37}\) *ST* I 22.1 (Piana 842a): “Secundum receptionem tantum dicitur quod sentire et intelligere est quoddam pati. Passio autem cum abiectione non est nisi secundum transmutationem corporalem, unde passio proprie dicta non potest competere animae nisi per accidens, inquantum scilicet compositum patitur. Sed et in hoc est diversitas, nam quando huiusmodi transmutatio fit in deterius, magis proprie habet rationem passionis, quam quando fit in melius. Unde tristitia magis proprie est passio quam laetitia.”

\(^{38}\) *ST* I 20.1 ad 1 (Piana 144a): “Semper actum appetitus sensitivi concomitatur aliqua transmutatio corporis; et maxime circa cor, quod est primum principium motus in animali. Sic igitur actus appetitus sensitivi, inquantum habent transmutationem corporalem annexam, passiones dicuntur, non autem actus voluntatis. For more detailed discussion of Aquinas on the passions of the soul, see Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions*; King, “Aquinas on the Emotions”; King, “Aquinas on the Passions”; Pickavé, “Thomas von Aquin: Emotionen als Leidenschaften der Seele.”

\(^{39}\) *ST* I-II 22.3 (Piana 844a): “Passio proprie inventitur ubi est transmutatio corporalis. Quae quidem inventur in actibus appetitus sensitivi; et non solum spiritualis, sicut est in apprehensione sensitiva, sed etiam naturalis. In actu autem appetitus intellectivi non requiritur aliqua transmutatio corporalis, quia huiusmodi appetitus non est virtus alicuius organi. Unde patet quod ratio passionis magis proprie inventur in actu appetitus sensitivi quam intellectivi.” Aquinas goes on to explain that joy and love, which are said to be passions of the intellective appetite (i.e. the will) and are likewise acts of that power, are not passions in the proper sense, since they do not involve any material change. Ibid. ad 3 (Piana 844a-b): “Dicendum quod amor et gaudium et alia huiusmodi, cum attribuuntur Deo vel Angelis, aut hominibus secundum appetitum intellectivum, significant simplicem actum voluntatis cum similitudine effectus, absque passione.”

\(^{40}\) See *ST* I-II 56.4 ad 4 (Piana 1002b): “Quod autem [electio] habeat rectam intentionem finis circa passiones animae, hoc contingit ex bona dispositione irascibili et concupiscibili. Et ideo virtutes morales circa passiones sunt in irascibili et concupiscibili.” Note that, for reasons discussed below, Aquinas does not exclude habits of moral virtue entirely from the will; speaking only of the cardinal virtues, the virtues of temperance and courage belong to the concupiscible and irascible appetites of the sensitive part of the soul, whereas justice belongs to the will.
Since the sensitive appetite is an inclination that follows upon sensible apprehension, just as the natural appetite is an inclination that follows upon the natural form, it is necessary that there be two appetitive powers in the sensitive part of the soul: one by which the soul is inclined in an unqualified way to pursuing what is suitable to it according to sensation and to avoiding what is harmful, and this is called the concupiscible appetite; the other by which the soul resists things assailing it which assail what is suitable and bring harm, and this power is called the irascible appetite. Thus it is said that its object is that which is difficult, because it strives to overcome and rise above what opposes it.\(^{41}\)

This distinction among the sensitive appetites serves to explain the distinction among the passions, and in turn the subject of the moral virtues. The concupiscible and irascible appetites are distinguished by their objects: the object of the former is the sensible good in an unqualified sense, whereas the object of the former is the sensible good insofar as it is difficult to obtain.\(^{42}\) The various passions of the soul, inasmuch as they are nothing other than the acts of their respective powers, are distinguished from each other along the same lines:

> Therefore, whatever passions look to the good or bad in an absolute sense pertain to the concupiscible [appetite], such as joy sadness, love, hate, and the like. But whatever passions look to the good under the character of the difficult, insofar as it is something that can be obtained or fled from only with difficulty, pertain to the irascible [appetite], such as boldness, fear, hope, and the like.\(^{43}\)

Since the moral virtues serve to moderate the passions of the soul, they must be habits that belong to the powers that are prone to immoderate passions. And since it is the sensitive appetites that are able to receive such passions, the virtues that moderate them must be habits of the sensitive appetites. The virtue of temperance, for example, since it moderates sensual desire, must be a habit...

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\(^{41}\) *ST* I 81.2 (Piana 498b): “Quia igitur appetitus sensitivus est inclinatio consequens apprehensionem sensitivam, sicut appetitus naturalis est inclinatio consequens formam naturalem; necesse est quod in parte sensitiva sint duae appetitivae potentiae. Una, per quam anima simpliciter inclinatur ad prosequendum ea quae sunt convenientia secundum sensum, et ad refugiendum nociva, et haec dicitur concupiscibilis. Alia vero, per quam animal resistit impugnantibus, quae convenientia impugnant et nocentura inferunt, et haec vis vocatur irascibilis. Unde dicitur quod eius obiectum est arduum, quia scilicet tendit ad hoc quod superet contraria, et superemineat eis.” For a concise discussion of Aquinas’s doctrine on how and whether the concupiscible and irascible appetites are distinct powers, see Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions*, 46–57.

\(^{42}\) *ST* I-II 23.1 (Piana 845b): “Dictum est autem in primo quod objectum potentiae concupiscibilis est bonum vel malum sensibile simpliciter acceptum, quod est delectabile vel dolorosum. Sed quia necesse est quod interdum anima difficultatem vel pugnam patiatur in adipiscendo aliquod huiusmodi bonum, vel fugiendo aliquod huiusmodi malum, inquantum hoc est quodammodo elevatum supra faciendum potestatem animalis; ideo ipsum bonum vel malum, secundum quod habit rationem ardui vel difficilis, est objectum irascibilis.” Cf. *ST* I 81.2 (Piana 498a-499a).

\(^{43}\) *ST* I-II 23.1 (Piana 845b): “Quaecumque ergo passiones respicientiunt absolute bonum vel malum, pertinent ad concupiscibilem; ut gaudium, tristitia, amor, odium, et similia. Quaecumque vero passiones respicientiunt bonum vel malum sub ratione ardui, prout est aliquod adipiscibile vel fugibile cum aliqua difficultate, pertinent ad irascibilem; ut audacia, timor, spes, et huiusmodi.”
of the concupiscible appetite, whereas the virtue of courage, since it serves to moderate the irascible passion of fear, must be a habit of the irascible appetite.  

Scotus rejects this argument for assigning the moral virtues to the sensitive appetites. He does not deny that the moral virtues serve to moderate the passions, but maintains that it is not just the sensitive appetites that can receive passions, but also the will, and that it is the passions of the will that are moderated by the moral virtues, which must therefore be habits of the will. In the text where he deals with the subject of the moral virtues, he makes the point very briefly:

According to Augustine in *The City of God* XIV, chapters 5 and 6, there are passions in the will; for this reason, if virtue is to be posited on account of action and passion in the power in which the passion and action of the will are present, it follows that the virtues are placed there, since there are some passions in the higher part of the soul.

Here Scotus’s argument for the occurrence of passions in the will is a mere appeal to authority, but he does provide other arguments. First of all, there is the theological point (at which the question is ultimately aimed) about the passions of Christ, who is supposed to have merited in his suffering on the cross. But if his pain occurred only in the sensitive part of the soul, then there cannot have been any merit in it, since it would be a merely natural occurrence not imputable to him as a rational agent. The meritorious passion of Christ must therefore have been in the rational part of his soul, specifically the will, since the passions of the soul occur in appetitive powers and not in cognitive powers.  

It must therefore be possible for the will to receive passions in its own right, and not simply insofar as it is joined to the sensitive appetites. For normal human beings as well, there must be passions in the will, for we will receive the passion of joy when we are immaterially present to God, and so the rational soul must be capable of having passions in its own right. Scotus also appeals to his basic argument mentioned above: as habits of choice, the moral virtues must be habits

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44 Aquinas explains in *ST* I-II 60.4 (Piana 1025a-b) one important difference between the appetites and their respective virtues: whereas the passions of the concupiscible appetite are all directed to one end and so are moderated by one virtue, namely temperance, the passions of the irascible appetite are ordered to diverse ends, and so are moderated by different virtues, e.g., courage concerning fear and boldness, greatness of soul (*magnanimitas*) concerning hope and despair, and mildness concerning anger.

45 *Ord.* III d. 33 n. 34 (Vat. 10:157-158): “In voluntate sunt passiones, secundum Augustinum XIV *De civitate* cap. 5 et 6; et propter hoc, si propter actionem et passionem ponenda sit virtus in illa potentia in qua est passio et actio voluntatis, sequitur quod cum passiones aliquae sint in supraer parte animae, quod ibi ponantur virtutes.”

46 *Ond.* III d. 15 n. 14 (Vat. 9:481): “Christus meruit in passione; meritum principaliter consistit in superiore portione; ergo etc. [sc. Christ did suffer with respect to the rational part of his soul.]”

47 Scotus maintains elsewhere that the beatitude that we will achieve in directly seeing and loving God is not simple but complex: it involves both the act of loving God, which is the most perfect operation of the will, and the concomitant joy, which is a passion of the will; see *Rep.* IV d. 49 q. 7 §4 (Wadding 10:495).
of the power of choice, which is the will; and since the moral virtues also serve to moderate passions, the passions that they moderate must occur in that same power; therefore there must be passions in the will.\(^{48}\)

Over and above these considerations, Scotus gives his own detailed account of the mechanisms by which passions are produced in the appetitive powers of the soul.\(^{49}\) Directly contradicting Aquinas’s argument that the will does not receive passions because its acts do not involve any material change, Scotus gives a general account of how passions are caused in the soul which applies equally to the sensitive appetites and to the will. Abstracting from whether an appetitive power of the soul is material or immaterial, he explains how any appetite as such can be inclined to and affected by an external object. This explanation he grounds in turn in his own even more general account of causation, which has to do with the interaction of the active and passive principles involved:

> Generally, an active and a passive power are the same as an absolute nature. Take a hot thing, for example: one thing [is the same as] the power for heating and one thing [is the same as] the power for being heated. Upon these absolute things are founded certain relations, inasmuch as a particular passive thing is inclined to a particular active thing such that [the former] receives from it [sc. the latter] the form for which it is in passive potency; and when it is thus proportionate and inclined and is brought together [sc. with the active cause], then there is a certain relation of being together, which is a mutual one, upon which it follows that the passive [thing] receives a form from the active [thing].\(^{50}\)

Here Scotus appeals explicitly to the same general framework of active and passive principles that he uses elsewhere to explain how a power can be self-moving.\(^{51}\) In the case of the passions of the soul, however, he is concerned to make clear that both the active cause and the passive cause are distinct absolute beings in their own right. To say that something has an active or passive principle is not to say that there is some second thing added to it, but only to say in an abstract way that the thing itself

\(^{48}\) *Ord.* III d. 15 n. 45 (Vat. 9:496-497): “Virtutes morales ponuntur in appetitu et non in parte cognitiva ut distinguitur contra appetitum, et ponuntur propter delectationem potissime, quia sunt circa delectationes et tristitias; igitur passiones illae videntur esse in eadem parte, et non in sensitiva.”

\(^{49}\) Recent treatments of Scotus’s account of the passions of the soul can be found in Boulnois, “Duns Scot: existe-t-il des passions de la volonté?”; Perler, “Duns Scotus über Schmerz und Traurigkeit.” I discuss Scotus’s account of inclinations and the passions at greater length in Drummond, “John Duns Scotus on the Passions of the Will.”

\(^{50}\) *Ord.* III d. 15 n. 38 (Vat. 9:492): “Aliter potest dici quod sicut generaliter potentia activa et passiva sunt idem naturae absolutae (puta calidum aliquod potentiae calefactive et aliquod potentiae calefactibili), et super ista absoluta fundatur quaedam relationes, secundum quod ‘hoc passivum’ inclinatur ad ‘hoc activum’ ut ab ipso recipiat formam ad quam est in potentia passiva; et quando ipsa sic proportionata vel inclinata approximatur, ibi est aliqua relatio approximationis, scilicet mutuae, ad quam sequitur ‘passivum recipere formam ab activo’.”

\(^{51}\) See chapter 2 below for detailed discussion.
The will as the subject of the moral virtues has a nature such that in the right conditions it will act or be acted upon. For example, fire is something that is capable of heating other material things, and wood is something that is capable of being heated; thus, when fire and wood are brought together, the fire heats the wood and the wood is heated; the result is that the accidental form of heat is produced in the wood. More generally, when something that is active in a certain respect and something that is passive in the corresponding respect are brought together, action takes place and an accidental form is produced in the passive thing. Even though the active thing and the passive thing are related insofar as they have complementary active and passive principles, this relation is not the real basis for an effect being produced when they are brought together. As Scotus notes,

It is not the case that the relation of action in the active [thing] or the relation of passion in the passive [thing], or the inclination that precedes [the active thing and the passive thing] being brought together, or the relation of being brought together between the active and passive [things] are the causes of such a form; rather these relations will be [merely] necessary conditions [causae sine quibus non].

That is, any relation that can be identified between the active and passive causes does not explain why an effect is produced; rather, it is founded on the absolute beings that are in themselves the active and passive causes. These absolute beings have natures in their own right that sufficiently explain why an effect comes about in the passive cause when it is brought together with the corresponding active cause.

For a thing to be inclined to something else is thus precisely for it have a certain nature that includes a passive principle, in virtue of which it can be related to something that has the corresponding active principle. Inclination looked at this way is a general phenomenon in the natural world, such that anything that can receive a form is inclined to the thing that can cause it, this inclination being explained not in terms of a relation to the active thing, but in terms of its own nature which founds a

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52 See In Met. IX qq. 3-4 n. 19 (OPh 4:541-543).
53 Ord. III d. 15 n. 38 (Vat. 9:492): “Non tamen quod huius actionis relatio in activo vel passionis in passivo vel inclinatio praecedens approximationem, sive relatio approximationis activi et passivi, sint causae talis formae, sed relationes istae erunt causa ‘sine quibus non’.”
54 Note that ‘action’ and ‘passion’ in the passage quoted above do not refer to an operation or a passion such as pleasure, which are items in the category of Quality, but to relations in the categories of Action and Passion: the active cause is in the relation of acting and the passive cause in the relation of being acted upon. Scotus draws attention to this distinction between the categories of Action and Passion on the one hand, and on the other hand action and passion as beings in the category of quality at Ord. III d. 15 n. 39 (Vat. 9:394), Ord. I d. 17 n. 49 (Vat. 5:158), Ord. I d. 3 nn. 600-604 (Vat. 3:354-357), and In Prud. qq. 30-36 nn. 54-60 (OPh 1:487-489).
55 As Scotus puts it in his discussion of principles in general, that which has the active principle is “actuative” and that which has the passive principle is “actuable.” See In Met. IX qq. 3-4 n. 29 (OPh 4:548), King, “Duns Scotus on Possibilities, Powers, and the Possible,” 188–189.
relation. Scotus applies it specifically to powers of the soul, which can receive a certain perfection from external objects, and thus can be said to be inclined towards them, whereas they are disinclined to objects that will harm them. Thus, that to which a power is inclined is suitable to it, and that to which it is disinclined is unsuitable. He uses the power of sight as an example:

A particular absolute thing, such as sight, is inclined to something visible as an extrinsic perfective thing (e.g., something perfectly white or beautiful), and conversely to a contrary visible thing that is corruptive, it is not inclined but disinclined. Thus, the relation that terminates the relation of that which inclines to that which is inclined is called suitability, and the other relation is called unsuitability.

Scotus again takes care to note that this inclination is nothing other than a kind of relation, and thus that inclination is entirely explained by the absolute natures of the two terms, the object being active and the object passive: “There is no reason why sight is inclined with such an inclination to white except that sight is a certain kind of passive thing and the white thing is a certain kind of active thing.” When the power and the inclining external object are brought together, the proper effect of their corresponding active and passive principles naturally follows:

This relation that is founded on these absolute things is followed by the bringing together [sc. of the power and a suitable object], and they are most present to each other when the white thing that is present in itself is seen or perceived by sight. Upon this being brought together it follows that that which is inclined receives from that perfective thing to which it is inclined a certain perfection, and this perfection is pleasure, which, because it is not in the power of the passive thing when it is in the presence of the agent, is called a passion (although it is really a quality, and not in the genus of Passion, which is one of the categories).

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56 In the broadest context, matter is as such inclined to form as that which will perfect it. Ord. III d. 15 n. 39 (Vat. 9:493): "Non est alia ratio quare materia inclinatur ad formam ut ad perfectionem intrinsecam nisi quia materia est talis entitas absoluta et forma talis."

57 Ord. III d. 15 n. 39 (Vat. 9:492-493): “Potest dici in proposito quod ‘hoc absolutum’, ut visus, inclinatur ad aliquod visible ut perfectivum extrinsecum (puta ad album perfectum sive pulchrum), et e converso ad contrarium visible ut corruptivum; vel non inclinatur, sed declinatur, et tunc relatio terminans relationem inclinati ad inclinans dicitur ‘convenientia’, et alia vocatur ‘disconvenientia’.” I am not certain of what is meant by “relatio terminans relationem inclinati ad inclinans.” The text in Wadding (7:332: “relatio terminantis relationem in inclinato”) is slightly different but apparently not better, since what is in question is the suitability relation of the object (that which inclines) to the power (that which is inclined), not the reverse.

58 Ord. III d. 15 n. 39 (Vat. 9:493): “Nec est alia ratio quare visus inclinatur tali inclinatione in album nisi quia visus est tale passivum et album est tale activum.” The discussion assumes that among all the colours, which are the proper objects of the power of sight, the colour white is the most perfective.

Since the inclination of a power to its object is to that object insofar as it is perfective of the power, the form that the power receives from the object is a kind of perfection, and this perfection is pleasure. This pleasure can be called a passion, not simply because it is received in the power (operations too are passions in this broad sense), but because it is produced naturally in the power not immanently by the power itself, but by an external active cause.\(^6^0\)

Two important consequences follow from Scotus’s account of the passions of the soul. First, it establishes that the passions – insofar as they are qualities that are caused in a power by an external active cause – can occur only in the appetitive powers of the soul and not the cognitive powers. For in order for a power to be perfected by an external object, that object must first be present to it, and the way in which an object is made present to an animal soul is by being perceived; therefore, since inclination is logically posterior to perception and is distinct from it, the power by which an object is perceived (i.e. a cognitive power) is distinct from the power that is inclined (i.e. the corresponding appetitive power).\(^6^1\) Secondly, and more importantly for the present discussion, it establishes that the will, as the rational appetite, can receive passions in the same way the sensitive appetites can, for the explanation does not depend on whether a power is material or purely spiritual, but appeals only to the nature of an appetite as such as the kind of power to which inclinations of the soul pertain. Where it differs in the case of the will is the basis of the will’s inclination to an external object: Scotus describes the suitability of an object to the will as depending on the occurrent state of the will more than on its basic nature: insofar as the will actually wills something, that thing is suitable to the will and can thus cause joy (\textit{gaudium}), which is the equivalent in the will of the passion of pleasure (\textit{delectatio}) in the sensitive appetites, and insofar as the will wills against it (or “nills” it), it is unsuitable to the will and can thus cause sadness (\textit{tristitia}), which is the equivalent in the will to the passion of

\(^{60}\) \textit{Ord.} III d. 15 n. 39 (Vat. 9:493-494): “Hanc approximationem sequitur quod inclinatum recipiat – ab illo perfectivo ad quod inclinatur – aliquam perfectionem; et haec perfectio est delectatio, quae, quia non moveri nisi in praesentia causae agentis, dicitur ‘passio’, licet sit vere qualitas, et non de genere ‘passionis’ ut est praedicamentum, sicut aliam dictum fuit. Propter similem rationem, intellectio dicitur ‘actio’, licet vere fuerit qualitas; sicut etiam intellectio habet aliquid aliud praeter istam rationem (videlicet quod respicit obiectum sicut actio), ita aliud respicit causam effectivam a qua est sicut passio. Et ex istis duobus dicitur ‘hoc est actio’ et ‘hoc est passio’.”

\(^{61}\) See \textit{Ord.} III d. 15 n. 43 (Vat. 9:495-496), and discussion in Drummond, “John Duns Scotus on the Passions of the Will,” 62–64. In my view, Scotus’s use of the term ‘inclination’ is somewhat unstable in \textit{Ord.} d. 15. As I discussed above, he is careful at the beginning to explain it as a relation that has as its terms a perfective active cause and a perfectible passive cause and is prior to any perfecting form being produced; here, however, he seems to treat inclination as that which naturally occurs once the active and passive causes are brought together. I suggest that the underlying thought is that inclination understood as the mutual fit of suitability between two absolute things regardless of whether they are brought together has to be understood in terms of the actual occurrence that would happen if they were present to one another. This would then be analogous to cases where Scotus talks of an “aptitude” of something for a certain effect, or of an “aptitudinal” relation; in these cases the aptitude is retrojected from the actual occurrence or relation to the beings in virtue of which the actual occurrence or relation is possible.
pain (*dolor*) in the sensitive appetites. It is thus no objection to assigning the moral virtues to the will to say that they could not then moderate the passions of the soul, for the will can receive passions in the same way as the sensitive appetites; it is the passions in the will that the moral virtues moderate.

Nevertheless, objections can still be raised to Scotus’s argument. One has to do with angels: if having right acts of choice is sufficient for an agent to acquire moral virtue, then the angels too are able to acquire moral virtues. However, such moral virtues would be superfluous, since angels are supposed to be incorporeal beings, yet at least some of the moral virtues have to do with the passions that naturally arise in the body. In his reply, Scotus concedes that angels could indeed develop moral virtues, but argues that it is no obstacle that they do not have bodies in which to have passions. All that would be required is that they have virtuous acts of willing with regard to passions that they cognize intellectually:

It can be conceded that if an angel had been created in a purely natural state without having any moral virtues in its will, they could be generated in it from many right acts of choice, which of course would not be about passions that exist in it in its sensitive appetite (nor which have existed in it, nor which will exist, nor which could exist), but only about such passions shown in general through its intellect. If such a showing is posited and there is a dictate of what ought to be chosen by one who is capable of having them, then if its will is consonant with such a dictate, it could have a right moral habit resulting from many such acts of choice.

An angel could in fact have such acts of willing because willing what is good for another is no less a perfection of the will than is willing the good for oneself. There is thus a general point of moral

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62 Ibid., 64–66. See also *Ord*. III d. 15 nn. 47-50 (Vat. 9:498-501). Scotus also argues that even though passions are not directly under the will’s power in the way its operations are, they are nevertheless compatible with the will’s free self-determination. Since the will has power over its own operations, and it is in relation to the occurrent state of the will as it is willing or not willing that an object is suitable or not suitable to it, the will indirectly has control over its passions.

63 *Ord*. III d. 33 n. 46 (Vat. 10:163): “Secundum hoc possent in angelo esse virtutes morales — probatio: nam angelus potest habere recta ‘velle’ circa ea circa quae appetitus sensitivus natus est passionari, et ita ex talibus multis rectis ‘velle’ generaretur in eo virtus.” The appeal to the case of angels might sound bizarre or irrelevant to modern ears, but it is helpful to understand it as a kind of thought experiment testing a theory about human nature against a posited case of a finite rational being that is purely incorporeal. For discussion of the place of angels and their theoretical function in medieval philosophy, see the papers collected in Hoffmann, *A Companion to Angels in Medieval Philosophy.*

64 *Ord*. III d. 33 n. 49 (Vat. 10:164-165): “Potest concedi quod si angelus esset creatus in puris naturalibus, non habens in voluntate virtutes morales, possent generari in eo ex multis rectis electionibus, non quidem circa passiones in appetitu sensitivo sibi inexistentes (nec quae fuerunt vel inerunt vel possunt inesse), sed tantum circa tales passions in universalis ostensionis per intellectum, qua ostensione posita et dictato quid sic esset — potenti habere eas — eligendum in eis, voluntas eius consona tali dictamini ex multis electionibus possit habere habitum moralem rectum.”

65 *Ord*. III d. 33 n. 50 (Vat. 10:165): “Omnem voluntatem non necessario caret perficiatione conveniente voluntati, convenit habere quacumque perfectionem voluntatis; velle autem bonum circa agibile non solum sibi, sed etiam alteri (et hoc non tantum in ordine ad bonum divinum sed in quantum est quoddam bonum proprum), est perfectio quaedam voluntatis.”
psychology to be drawn from the case of the angels: though some moral virtues do as a matter of fact have to do with bodily passions, it is not a defining part of their nature as virtues that they do so, but only that they incline the subject to a certain kind of right choice.

Another objection has to do with precisely the fact that although Scotus argues that the will too suffers passions and therefore needs virtues to moderate them, he does not deny that there are passions in the sensitive appetites. Won’t this mean that we will need virtuous habits in the sensitive appetites to moderate the passions that occure in those appetites? I will return to this question after addressing the broader argument against restricting moral virtues to the will: that the moral virtues also serve to render the appetites obedient to reason, and this function seems more appropriate to the sensitive appetites.

1.2.2 Moral virtues render the appetites obedient to reason

One broader consideration in favour of assigning moral virtues to the sensitive appetites (which in some ways subsumes the argument from their more specific function of moderating the passions) is the traditional role of moral virtue in rendering the appetites obedient to reason, derived from a frequently cited passage in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. This position too is advocated by Aquinas. His underlying reason is that although the human soul is a rational soul, it also includes a sensitive part that is in itself irrational and has its own inclinations. Thus, the concupiscible sensitive appetite is naturally inclined to seek what is pleasant according to sensation, and this inclination might sometimes conflict with what reason would recommend, and so the sensitive appetite resists the command of reason. Nevertheless, this appetite can be commanded in its acts by the higher rational part of the soul, even against its natural inclination. When it repeatedly obeys reason, it acquires the habit of obeying reason more readily than it would if left to its own natural inclination. If reason has commanded rightly, then this new habit is a habit of obedience to right reason; in other words, it is a moral virtue.

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66 NE 1.13, 1102b30-31.

67 Aquinas’s various discussions throughout his career of the seat of the moral virtues are thoroughly analysed in Graf, *De subiecto psychico gratiae et virtutum*, 2:1–119. See also Kent, *Virtues of the Will*, 216–224. Kent’s focus is on the account in *ST* I-II rather than on that in *De Virt. in Com.*, but she agrees with Graf that despite developments in his terminology, Aquinas’s position on the seat of the moral virtues remained the same throughout his career. See Graf, *De subiecto psychico gratiae et virtutum*, 2:114; Kent, *Virtues of the Will*, 217 note 31.

68 See *De Virt. in Com.* art. 4 (Marietti 717b): “Appetitus autem inferior habet propriam inclinationem ex natura sua, unde non obedit superiori appetitui ad nutum, sed interdum repugnat.” This notion of the natural inclination of the sensitive appetite arises against the broader background of Aquinas’s development of the any created things natural inclination to its own proper perfection, an inclination that he sometimes calls the “natural appetite.” For a useful survey of Aquinas’s terminology surrounding this concept, see Laporta, “Pour trouver le sens exact des termes.”
Since the sensitive appetite has a natural inclination to its proper good, which may or may not be in conformity with the good as reason would dictate it, such a view of the role of moral virtues seems to apply better to the sensitive appetite than to the will. Moreover, when we pursue practical means to an end, it is reason and the will that command, but it is the sensitive appetite that is the immediate principle of our exterior acts, and unless this lower appetite is perfected so that it readily obeys the higher appetite, the act itself will not be perfect. In Aquinas’s words:

In the lower appetite, which can resist reason, it is necessary to posit something by which it will carry out the act commanded by reason without resistance. For if the immediate principle of an operation is imperfect, the operation will be imperfect, however great is the perfection in the higher principle.\(^{69}\)

Thus, it is necessary that the sensitive appetites be habituated so that they readily obey reason, for if they resist the dictate of reason, they will not act with pleasure. Since acting readily and with pleasure partially constitute a right act as a virtuous act, the sensitive appetite must be perfected by a habit in order for its acts to be virtuous, for otherwise its acts against natural inclination will be done reluctantly and with sadness:

If the lower appetite were not in a perfected disposition to following the command of reason, the operation that belongs to the lower power as its proximate principle, would not be in perfected goodness, for it would be with a certain resistance on the part of the sensitive appetite. From this, a certain sadness would result in the lower appetite because of the violence in being moved by the higher power, such as occurs in someone who has strong desires which he nevertheless does not follow because reason prohibits it.\(^{70}\)

Since such a habit renders the appetite more obedient to reason, it is properly called a virtue:

Therefore, when the operation of a human being is about objects of the sensible appetite, it is required for the goodness of the operation that there be in the sensitive appetite a certain disposition or perfection by which that appetite will easily obey reason; and this we call a virtue.\(^{71}\)

\(^{69}\) De Virt. in Com. art. 4 (Marietti 717b-718a): “In appetitu inferiori, qui rationi repugnare potest, est necessarium aliquid quo operationem quam ratio imperat, absque repugnantia prosequatur. Si enim immediatum operationis principium sit imperfectum, oportet operationem esse imperfectam, quantacumque perfectio adsit superiori principio.

\(^{70}\) De Virt. in Com., art. 4 (Marietti 718a): “Si appetitus inferior non esset in perfecta dispositione ad sequendum imperium rationis, operatio, quae est appetitus inferioris, sicut proximi principii, non esset in bonitate perfecta; esset enim cum quadam repugnantia sensibilis appetitus; ex quo quaedam tristitia consequeretur appetitui inferiori per quandam violentiam a superiori moto; sicut accidit in eo qui habet fortes concupiscientias, quas tamen non sequitur, ratione prohibente.

\(^{71}\) De Virt. in Com., art. 4 (Marietti 718a): “Quando igitur oportet operationem hominis esse circa ea quae sunt objecta sensibilis appetitus, requiritur ad bonitatem operationis quod sit in appetitu sensibili aliqua dispositio, vel perfectio, per quem appetitus praedictus de facili obediat rationi; et hanc virtutem vocamus.”
The sensitive appetite therefore seems to be most properly the subject of the moral virtues, which dispose them so that they more readily follow the dictate of reason than they would by their natural inclination. The will on the other hand seems to need no such habituation. As Aquinas concedes at the beginning of article 5 of his *Quaestio de Virtutibus in Communi*, the will is naturally inclined to its own proper end just as much as any power is; just as the concupiscible appetite is naturally inclined to sensitive pleasure, the will is naturally inclined to its own proper end, which is the good as apprehended by reason. The will therefore needs no habitual inclination over and above its nature to incline it towards the good as reason presents it. However, Aquinas goes on to explain how the will too is in need of a virtuous habit to incline it fully to acting rightly. It is true that the will needs no habit to be inclined to the good that is proper to it as the rational appetite (i.e. the good in general, or the character of good in any given object), but it does need a habit to be inclined to the good that exceeds its own nature. This can happen in two ways: when the will has the naturally acquired virtue of justice it is able to act for the sake of the good of another and not just for its own good, and when it has the supernaturally infused virtue of charity it is ordered to the supernatural end of God.

In sum, Aquinas holds that the moral virtues must be distributed among the various appetites of the soul. A main reason for this claim is the idea that the central function of the moral virtues is to bring appetites into accord with reason. As the appetite that is directly responsive to the judgment of practical reason, the will is capable from its nature of acting according to reason, but so too are the appetites of the soul. By distributing the moral virtues among the various appetites, the will is given the necessary habit to incline it fully to acting rightly. This is in contrast to the sensitive appetite, which is naturally inclined to sensitive pleasure and, therefore, requires no such habituation. The will, on the other hand, needs a virtuous habit to incline it fully to acting rightly. This habit is necessary because the will is naturally inclined to its own proper end, which is the good as apprehended by reason. Aquinas explains how the will too is in need of a virtuous habit to incline it fully to acting rightly.

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72 *De Virt. in Com.* art. 5 (Marietti 720b): “Virtus autem ordinat potentias ad bonum; ipsa enim est quae bonum facit habentem, et opus eius bonum reddit. Voluntas autem hoc quod virtus facit circa alias potentias, habet ex ipsa ratione suae potentiae: nam eius objectum est bonum. Unde tendere in bonum hoc modo se habet ad voluntatem sicut tendere in delectabile ad concupiscibilem, et sicut ordinari ad somum se habet ad auditum. Unde voluntas non indiget aliquo habitu virtutis inclinante ipsum ad bonum quod est sibi proportionatum, quia in hoc ex ipsa ratione potentiae tendit.”

73 *De Virt. in Com.* art. 5 (Marietti 720b): “Sed ad bonum quod transcendit proportionem potentiae, indiget habitu virtutis. Cum autem uniuscussique appetitus tendat in proprium bonum appertentis; dupliciter aliquod bonum potest excedere voluntatis proportionem. Uno modo ratione speciei; alio modo ratione individui. Ratione quidem speciei, ut voluntas elevertur ad aliquod bonum quod excidit limites humani boni: et dico humanum id quod ex viribus naturae homo potest. Sed supra humanum bonum est bonum divinum, id quod voluntatem hominis caritas elevat, et similiter spec. Ratione autem individui, hoe modo quod aliquis quaerat id quod est alterius bonum, licet voluntas extra limites boni humani non feratur; et sic voluntatem perfecti iustitia, et omnes virtutes in alid tendentes, ut liberalitas, et alia huiusmodi.”

74 For a general analysis of Aquinas’s account of the role of the moral virtues, see Hause, “Aquinas on the Function of Moral Virtue.” According to Hause, Aquinas’s interpretation of the moral virtues in general have an “instrumental function” whereby the appetites of the soul are “trained to respond to the judgment of reason about what is worth pursuing” (Ibid., 4.). The moral virtues of the lower appetites give “weak direction” by orienting the appetite to a good end and moderating the passions that might otherwise be an obstacle to good deliberation about what would be the right action in particular circumstances (Ibid., 5–7.). Finally, the virtue of justice in the will gives “strong direction” by inclining the subject to what is good not merely accidentally (*per accidens*) good, but essentially (*per se*); it thus “call[s] one’s attention to certain valuable ends or morally relevant features of a situation” (Ibid., 8.).
concupiscible and irascible appetites, which according to Aquinas belong to the sensitive part of the soul, and are rational only by participation. They can thus be moderated by acquired moral virtues so that their passions are not contrary to the command of reason, allowing the agent to act according to the dictate of reason readily and with pleasure.

It should be noted that Aquinas was by no means the only philosopher in the later thirteenth century who assigned moral virtues to the sensitive appetites; Godfrey of Fontaines, for example, takes an even more extreme position. He too holds that the main role of the moral virtues is to incline the appetites to acting in conformity with reason, but whereas Aquinas argues that the moral virtues are distributed among the various appetites that can act according to reason, including the will, Godfrey argues that the will does not require any virtuous habit to incline it to following right reason, since this is what is already inclined to by its nature as the rational appetite. He states his position as follows:

I say that with respect to those things that are possible for us and suitable to us from our natural abilities essentially and principally, there is not required any habit that disposes and conditions the will so that it is inclined promptly and rightly towards that which is apprehended by right reason; for what is apprehended by right reason suits it from the condition of its own nature, since it is the rational appetite. However, it is completely proportionate in its act to the intellect, so that very much the same thing happens as what happens in brute animals: that is, for the sensitive appetite to be promptly inclined towards that which is apprehended by the sense power, there is not required some habit conditioning and disposing it, since this [inclination] belongs to it from the condition of its own nature as the appetite in the sensitive part.

Thus, although Godfrey agrees with Aquinas that the lower appetites need moral virtue so that they are inclined to act as reason dictates, he denies that the will requires or receives any acquired virtue, since it is already naturally inclined to the good according to reason; it is only the sensitive appetite that needs to be inclined by habits of moral virtue so that it does not impede the will from acting

75 On Godfrey’s position on the subject of the moral virtues, see Graf, *De subiecto psychico gratiae et virtutum*, 2:156–178. See also Kent, *Virtues of the Will*, 236–237.

76 Godfrey of Fontaines, *Quodl.* XIV q. 3 (PhB 5:342): “Dico quod respectu eorum quae nobis sunt possibilia et convenientia ex naturalibus per se primo et principaliter non requiritur aliquis habitus disponens et habilitans voluntatem ad hoc quod prompte et recte inclinetur in illud quod apprehenditur a recta ratione; quia hoc convenit ei ex condicione naturae suae cum sit appetitus in ratione intellectui tamen est in actu perfecte proportionatus ut in actu consimili conformiter fiat sicut in brutis ad hoc quod appetitus sensitivus prompte inclinetur in illud quod a sensu apprehenditur, non requiritur aliquis habitus ipsum habilitans et disponens, quia cum sit appetitus in sensualitate hoc ei contingit ex condicione naturae suae.” Text from Godfrey of Fontaines, *Les Quodlibets onze-quatroge.*
acquiring to reason. In this way, he argues that even the virtue of justice is a habit not of the will but of the sensitive appetite.\(^77\)

Since Scotus holds that the moral virtues are habits of choice that must belong to the will, how does he respond to the claim that they serve to render the sensitive appetite obedient to reason? His most general argument, which he derives from a quodlibetal question of Henry of Ghent, depends on a certain interpretation of the text from *Nicomachean Ethics* I.13 that serves as the basis for asserting that it is only the sensitive appetites that can be rendered obedient to reason.\(^78\) Citing a passage from early in book I, Scotus argues that when Aristotle speaks of the part of the soul that is “persuadable by reason,” he should be understood to mean the will. Therefore, since it is the acts of the will that are properly human and can be done according to moral virtue, the moral virtues pertain to the will.\(^79\) He goes on to explain that “being obedient to reason” can be understood to apply not just to the lower appetites that are commanded by the rational appetite, but also to the will, which follows the dictate of reason, i.e. of the practical intellect:

Aristotle himself divides that part [sc. the rational part] into that which understands and that which can well be persuaded by reason. Therefore, by ‘persuadable by reason’ he there means the will, since it is clear that by ‘that which understands’ he means the intellect. Thus it seems that it can be clearly concluded on the basis of his own words that sometimes he calls the will obedient to reason, and sometimes he calls the sensitive appetite obedient to reason.\(^80\)

According to this argument then, it cannot be concluded on the basis of Aristotle’s authority that a moral virtue that renders an appetite obedient to reason must belong to the sensitive appetite.

\(^77\) Godfrey of Fontaines, *Quodl.* XIV q. 3 (PhB 5:343): “Planum est quod supposito quod intellectus sit sic dispositus quod convenienter possit exire in actum suum amoto etiam impedimento quod praestatur ex parte appetitus inferioris, primo, per se et principaliter non requiritur aliquis habitus in voluntate ad hoc quod convenienter exeat in actum conformiter rationi. Est ergo iustitia et omnis virtus moralis ponenda in appetitu sensitivo.”

\(^78\) As the Vatican editors note, Scotus’s source for this argument is Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* IV q. 22 (Leuven 8:359-365).

\(^79\) *Ord.* III d. 33 n. 17 (Vat. 10:149): “Ante definitionem virtutis, circa medium I, Philosophus, volens inquirere rationem felicitatis, dicit sic: ‘Separandum nutritivam; sequens est sensitiva quaedam: videtur haec communis omni animali. Relinquitur quaedam operativa: huius ergo hoc quidem ut bene persuasibile ratione, hoc autem in quantum habens et intelligens’. Ex ista littera patet quod primo excludit partem sensitivam, quia in ipsa non est operatio hominis secundum quod homo, – et talis est operatio secundum virtutes morales, et per consequens illae non erunt principaliter ponendae in illa parte; ergo illud quod relinquitur, sedicet operativa respectu habentis, est per se pars animae, excellens super totam partem sensitivam.” Cf. *NE* I.9, 1097b34-1098a5.

\(^80\) *Ord.* III d. 33 n. 17 (Vat. 10:149-150): “Illud dividit ipse in ‘intelligens’ et in ‘bene persuasibile a ratione’; ergo ibi per ‘persuasibile a ratione’ intelligit voluntatem, quia per ‘intelligens’ constat quod intelligit intellectum. Sic ergo videtur quod expresse posset haberi, ex dictis suis, quod aliquando vocatur voluntatem ‘obedibile rationale’, aliquando tamen appetitum sensitivum vocat ‘obedibile rationale’.”
Scotus makes a similar argument against the objection that since the moral virtues serve to moderate the concupiscible and irascible appetites, they must belong to the sensitive appetite. He argues that the distinction between the concupiscible and the irascible pertains not just to the sensitive appetite but also to the will. He proceeds by explaining the concupiscible appetite not in terms of what is desirable according to sensation, but simply as the natural inclination of an appetite towards what is suitable to itself:

The concupiscible is oriented to [*respicit*] that which by nature is essentially suitable or unsuitable [sc. to that appetite], such that with nothing posited concerning it other than apprehension alone, there necessarily follows by nature an act of taking pleasure or suffering pain, or of avoiding or seeking, insofar as it is in its power.81

Likewise, he defines the irascible appetite as the natural inclination of an appetite to resist that which “offends,” that is, whatever is an obstacle to the appetite attaining that which is suitable to it:

“That which offends’ does not refer to what is immediately unsuitable to the concupiscible appetite, but to what stands in the way of what is primarily suitable. For example, if food is primarily suitable to the gustatory appetite of a bird and it thus desires it, that which keeps this food away or removes it is offensive to the animal that desires it. This offending thing is the object of the irascible [appetite], which has a kind of ‘nilling’ with regard to it, not in avoiding it in the proper sense (in the way that the concupiscible [appetite] avoids something when it wills against it), but more in rejecting and pushing back at it. For the irascible in willing pushes against something; it does not just wish for what stands in the way to be removed, but wishes to remove it (and further, to punish).82

It is significant that, despite the example of an animal’s gustatory desire for food, Scotus expresses the account of the two appetites only in terms of suitability, without mention of any connection to bodily sensation. Thus, just like his account of the passions of the soul, it applies equally to the sensitive appetite and the rational appetite, and in this way he can conclude that concupiscible and irascible appetites are present in the will as well, though as different modes of action rather than as distinct powers.83 Thus, the argument that the moral virtues serve to moderate the actions and

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81 *Ord.* III d. 34 n. 35 (Vat 10:193): “‘Concupiscibile’ respicit illud quod natum est ex se esse conveniens vel disconveniens, ita quod nullo alio posito circa ipsum nisi solum apprehensione, necessario natus est sequi actus delectandi vel tristandi, vel fugiendi vel prosequendi, quantum est ex parte eius.”

82 *Ord.* III d. 34 n. 36 (Vat 10:194): “‘Istud ‘offendens’ non dicitur quod statim est disconveniens concupiscibili, sed quod impedit illud quod est primo conveniens (puta, si cibus est primo conveniens appetitui gustativo avis et ideo concupiscitur, prohibens hunc cibum vel removens offendit animal concupiscens): Hoc ‘offendens’ est obiectum irascibilis, – circa quod irascibile habet quoddam ‘nolle’, non quidem proprie refugientis (sicut concupiscibile nolens refugi), sed magis respuentis sive repellentis, quia irascibile volens repellit: non tantum cupid impediens illud amoveri, sed amovere, et ultra punire.”

83 Scotus takes care to explain that, unlike in the sensitive appetite, where the concupiscible and the irascible are really distinct because of operating through different physical organs, in the will they are merely two different modes of acting
passions of the concupiscible and irascible appetites, fails to establish that they do not pertain to the will.

1.2.3 Whether moral virtues are in both the will and the sensitive appetite

A notable feature shared by Scotus’s replies to both of these objections is that they do not prove that the moral virtues are in the will instead of in the lower sensitive appetite. Rather, they show only that the arguments fail to prove that the moral virtues are restricted to the sensitive appetites: to the argument that the moral virtues serve to moderate the passions, Scotus replies that the will is properly a subject of passions of the soul, and so moral habits that moderate passions can be in the will; to the argument that the moral virtues serve to render their subject appetite obedient to reason, he argues likewise that the concupiscible and irascible appetites are present no less in the will than in the sensitive appetite, and so again the moral habits that moderate the inclinations of these appetites can belong to the will. Yet in neither case does Scotus establish that such habits belong only to the will, since what is moderated can belong to either the will or the sensitive appetite. So if this moderating function is a defining feature of moral virtue, does it not follow that moral virtues can be in both the will and the sensitive appetite?

Several of Scotus’s thirteenth-century predecessors adopted such a view, while maintaining that the moral virtues nevertheless pertain primarily to the will. This position originates in part from theological considerations. Bonaventure, for example, argues in his *Sentences* commentary that since (in his view) the cardinal virtues take their origin from grace and ground the possibility of merit, they must belong to the rational part of the soul and so cannot be habits of the lower appetites. Though Bonaventure’s focus is on the supernaturally infused virtues, he suggests that the naturally acquired moral virtues can also in a certain sense be attributed primarily to the will. He concedes that the lower appetites do acquire habits by frequently performing acts, but suggests that acquired virtues such as courage and temperance are principally in the will, since it is the will that first commands the lower appetites to acts that are in line with reason:

> Although the acquired virtue is in a certain way in the sensitive part, which follows and is subordinate, it is principally in the rational part, which commands the act of virtue and presides over the sensible power.


85 Bonaventure, *In Sent. III* d. 33 art. un. q. 3 (Quaracchi 3:718): “Consuetudinalis virtus, etsi aliquo modo sit in parte sensibili quasi in exsequente et subiacente; in rationali vero est principaliter tanquam in imperante actum virtutis et of the single immaterial will, much as apprehending principles and reasoning from premises to conclusions are both operations of the intellect. See *Ord. III* d. 33 nn. 48-50 (Vat. 10:199-201).
According to Bonaventure, the habit that is inculcated in the lower power makes that power more manageable; this manageability is not part of the essence of virtue, though it is “annexed” to it.\(^8\)

Scholastic philosophers who follow in this tradition agree that the moral virtues are principally in the will; the debate turns instead on whether the habits of the lower powers can be considered as moral virtues, and in what sense. It should be noted, however, that they generally reject one central aspect of Bonaventure’s position: in his view, it is only in the lower part of the soul that inclinations are grounded in habits, that is, qualities that dispose their subject in some way with regard to action, whereas the moral virtues in the rational part of the soul do not give the will an inclination, nor are they acquired by repeated action, as the habits of the lower power are.\(^7\) Later authors, by contrast, hold that the will too can develop habits, and that it is habits of the will that are most properly called moral virtues. The general view is that by issuing commands to the lower powers the will develops in itself a habit of commanding well, and inculcates in the lower powers a habit of obeying the right command of reason.

Many philosophers develop this point by appeal to Aristotle’s analogy in the *Politics* between the human soul and the state, where political or constitutional rule is contrasted with despotic rule by appeal to the way in which reason rules in the whole human being; in Aristotle’s words, “The soul rules the body with a despotic rule, whereas the intellect rules the appetites with a constitutional and royal rule.”\(^8\) Aquinas uses this text to argue that the sensitive appetite must have virtues of its own so that it is inclined to obey the dictate of reason and so can be governed like citizens under constitutional rule, who accept the command of the ruler.\(^9\) Others emphasize a different aspect of Aristotle’s discussion to conclude that the habit in the higher commanding power, i.e. the will, is

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\(^6\) Bonaventure, *In Sent. III d. 33 art. un. q. 3* (Quaracchi 3:717): “Et in hic non consistit libertas arbitrii, nec in his sicut in subiecto ponitur virtus cardinals, licet per frequentem assuefactionem aliquo modo illae potentiae non incongrue dicantur habilitari; illa tamen habilitatio non est de virtutis essentia, sed potius sibi annexa.”

\(^7\) Bonaventure, *In Sent. III d. 33 art. un. q. 3* (Quaracchi 3:718): “Ad illud quod obiicitur, quod consuetudinales virtutes reponuntur in ea parte quae obtenterat rationi, dicendum quod hoc non est quia habitus consuetudinalis virtutis, secundum quod virtus est, habeat esse in illa parte sensibili quae rationali obtenterat, sed quia ex quaedam consuetudine bene faciendi in parte illa relinquuitur quaedam habitas. Et ideo potest dupliciter ad rationem illam responderi: primum quidem, quia non est simile de virtute cardinals et consuetudinali secundum quod consuetudinalis est: quia cardinals virtus nominat habitum dirigentem in operibus electiva, consuetudinalis vero praeter hoc nominat habitum acquisitum ex frequenti bene agere.”

\(^8\) *Politics* I.5, 1254b3-5.

\(^9\) *ST* I-II 56.4 (Piana 1002a); cf. *De Virt. in Com.* art. 4 (Marietti 717b). The metaphor of the will as the monarch in the “kingdom” of the soul was widely used in the late thirteenth century. See Teske, “The Will as King over the Powers of the Soul: Uses and Sources of an Image in the Thirteenth Century.”
more properly a virtue than the habit in the lower power. Walter of Bruges, for example, argues that the will needs moral virtue more than the lower appetites do, precisely because it commands them

Just as the one who is set above needs virtue more than the subordinate — according to what is said in *Politics* I: “If the ruler is not just, how will he rule justly?” Or rather, as he says in the same passage, “The ruler needs complete virtue, but to those who are subject (like a child, a woman or a slave) imperfect virtue is enough, namely so that they obey the one who leads” — so the will needs virtue more than does the other power over which it is master and ruler.\(^\text{90}\)

This is not to say that the lower appetites do not have virtues of their own; rather, since the virtue in the will is a virtue of commanding and the virtue in the lower appetite is a habit of obeying, the virtue in the will is more perfect. By commanding the lower powers to their acts, the will inculcates in them a habit, which is a moral virtue in the sense that it is a habit of obeying the rational part; but it is the habit of commanding that is more important and more properly a moral virtue, since without the right commands from the will (and the resulting acquisition of a virtuous habit), there would be no inculcation of right habit in the lower appetite.\(^\text{91}\)

Richard of Mediavilla also argues that the habit of commanding in the will is more properly a moral virtue than the habit of obeying in the sensitive appetite. Contrary to Bonaventure, Richard argues that the will can indeed acquire a moral virtue that is no less a habit than is the habit in the lower power, and is generated in the will by the will itself through repeated action. Thus, according to Richard, ‘courage’ and ‘temperance’ are names both for habits in the will and for habits in the sensitive appetite, the former being habits of commanding and the latter habits of obeying; however, the habit in the will “more principally” has the character of virtue (*rationem virtutis*).\(^\text{92}\) The habit in the lower appetite is only a “likeness” (*similitudo*) or “impression” (*impressio*) of virtue.\(^\text{93}\) Peter of John Olivi likewise holds that the moral virtues are principally in the will, but allows that the habit in the

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\(^\text{91}\) On Walter of Bruges on the subject of the moral virtues, see also Graf, *De subiecto psycho gratiae et virtutum*, 2:130–134; Kent, *Virtues of the Will*, 226–229.

\(^\text{92}\) Richard of Mediavilla, *Quodl.* II q. 20 (Brescia 62b): “Virtutes morales de quibus hic loquimur dicunt habitum in voluntate et habitum in appetitu sensitivo, et quod ille habitus quod dicunt esse in voluntate principalius habit rationem virtutis.” Citations are taken from Richard of Mediavilla, *Quodlibeta doctoris eximii Ricardi de Mediavilla ordinis minorum*.

lower power is partially constitutive of a complete moral virtue: though the habit of commanding in
the will can be called a moral virtue absolutely, the habit in the lower appetite is a complement to the
habit in the will, and since they share the same object they together form a single virtue.\textsuperscript{94}

Scotus’s conclusion in his question on the subject of the moral virtues falls within this line of
thinking. In agreement with the general scholastic consensus, he holds that the will commands the
sensitive appetites to their acts. From this he argues that the habit in the will is more properly a
moral virtue than the habit in the lower appetite:

It is natural that the will chooses before it or reason issues any command to the
sensitive appetite. For reason does not seem to reach the sensitive appetite except by
the mediation of the will, which is properly the rational appetite. As well, the will
wills something within itself before it commands the lower power to act against it;
for it is not because it commands the lower power that it wills that, but vice versa.
Therefore, in that prior [act] the will, since it is just as indeterminate and
determinable as the intellect, is able to generate in itself from right acts of choice a
habit that inclines it to choosing rightly. And this habit will most properly be a virtue,
since an elective habit most properly inclines to acting insofar as it is generated from
right acts of choice.\textsuperscript{95}

Scotus emphasizes that in order for there to be a commanded act in the lower appetite by which the
external act is carried out, there must first be an act in the will of choosing that external act and
commanding it in the lower power; moreover, since habits are generated in a power by its own
repeated acts, a habit of choosing rightly will be generated in the will before there is generated a
habit of acting rightly in the sensitive appetite. Thus, since a moral virtue is a habit of choice, the
habit of will is more properly a moral virtue than the habit in the lower appetite. Nevertheless, as
Scotus points out in what directly follows, the lower appetite, insofar as it too repeatedly acts rightly
at the command of the will, can also receive habits which incline it to acting according to reason and
thus eliciting right acts with pleasure:

\textsuperscript{94} Peter John Olivi, \textit{Quaestiones} q. 4 (Stadter 230): “Licet habitus qui est in voluntate dicatur simpliciter virtus, et habitus
qui est in altera potentia dicatur largo modo virtus, non tamen dicimus quod sint in nobis duae fides aut duae castitates,
et sic de aliiis, sed potius una: tum quia castitas superior et inferior coordinatae sunt ad unum totale objectum et actus
castitatis; tum quia unam et eamdem animam prout est secundum varias sui partes castificabilis, perficiunt tamquam
unum totale subjectum castitatis; tum quia unam rationem virtutis participant, licet analogice.” Text from Peter John
Olivi, \textit{Quaestiones de incarnatione et redemptione; Quaestiones de virtutibus}. For more detailed discussion of Olivi on this topic,

\textsuperscript{95} \textit{Ord.} III d. 33 n. 44 (Vat. 10:162): “Prius naturaliter voluntas eligit quam ipsa vel ratio aliquid imperet appetitui
sensitivo. Ratio enim non videtur attingere appetitum sensitivum nisi mediante voluntate, quae est proprie appetitus
rationalis; voluntas etiam prius vult aliquid in se quam imperet potentiae inferiori actum contra illud: non enim quia
imperat potentiae inferiori, ideo vult illud, sed e converso. In illo ergo priore potest voluntas ex rectis electionibus (cum
sit acque indeterminata et determinabilis sicut intellectus) generare in se ipsa habitum inducit ad recte eligendum, –
et hic habitus propriissime erit virtus, quia propriissime habitus electivus inclinat ad agendum sicut generatur ex rectis
electionibus.”
It can however be conceded that if the will by willing can command the sensitive appetite—whether by moderating its passion or by commanding pursuit or avoidance—and there are acts of the sensitive appetite, it can leave from its right commands a habit in the sensitive appetite that will incline the sensitive appetite to being moved with pleasure to similar acts at the command of the will. And this habit that is left in it [i.e. the sensitive appetite], though it is not properly a virtue (since it is not a habit of choice nor does it incline to acts of choice), nevertheless can be conceded to be in some way a virtue, since it gives an inclination to that which is consonant with right reason.  

Scotus thus seems to concede that the habits of acting according to reason in the lower appetite are therefore also virtues in a certain sense. He again concedes in his concluding replies to objections that a habit that is caused in the lower appetite can in a certain way be a virtue inasmuch as it inclines the appetite to right action, even though it is not a habit of choice: “To all the authorities adduced, I grant what they assume, namely that there is in the sensitive appetite a certain quality that can be called a virtue, though it has less completely the character of virtue than does the quality in the will that inclines the will to choice.”

Nevertheless, one might ask how much weight Scotus attaches to this concession. One should bear in mind his earlier statement about the basic criterion for what counts as a moral virtue, namely, that it is a habit of choice; thus, only a habit of the will can strictly speaking be a moral virtue. Seen in this light, Scotus’s concession might be nothing more than a verbal concession to the traditional way of speaking about moral virtue as that which perfects the agent as a whole and his or her external acts. This seems to be supported by the way he responds to the objection he raises, which has the air of a *reductio ad absurdum*, whereby the scope of what counts as a virtue is very wide indeed:

If from the mere fact that the sensitive appetite is moved by the command of the will there can be generated in it a quality that inclines it to similar acts, then by parity of reasoning there can be generated a moral virtue in a part of the body that is repeatedly moved by the command of the will; and not just here, but in inanimate and irrational things that the will uses.

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96 *Ord.* III d. 33 n. 45 (Vat. 10:163): “Potest tamen concedi quod si voluntas – volens – potest imperare appetitu sensitivo vel moderando passionem eius vel imperando prosecutionem vel fugam, si sint actus appetitus sensitivus potest derelinguere ex imperis rectis aliquem habitum in appetitu sensitivio, inclinantem ad hoc ut appetitus sensitivus delectabilir moveatur ad similia ex imperio voluntatis. Et iste habitus derelicatus, licet non sit proprie virtus, qua non habitus electivus nec inclinationis ad electionem, potest tamen concedi aliquo modo esse virtus, quia inclinat ad illa quae sunt rectae ratione consona.”

97 *Ord.* III d. 33 n. 61 (Vat. 10:170): “Ad omnes auctoritates concedo illud quod assumunt, sicut quod in appetitu sensitivio est quaedam qualitas quae potest dici ‘virtus’, tamen minus perfecte habens rationem virtutis quam illa qualitas quae est in voluntate inclinationis ad electionem.”

98 *Ord.* III d. 33 n. 48 (Vat. 10:164): “Contra secundum membrum arguitur, quia si ex hoc solo quod appetitus sensitivus movetur ab imperio voluntatis, potest generari in ipso quaedam qualitas inclinationis ad similes actus, et illa sit virtus, ergo
But if any habit that rightly habituates any physical power of an agent counts as a virtue, then there seems to be no important difference between the sensitive appetite and any other bodily power: either is capable of being habituated by acts commanded by the will. Some bodily powers may not always act easily at the command of the will – like the hand of someone learning to play an instrument – but they do not have their own inclinations that run counter to reason. However, moral virtue outside the will was traditionally restricted to the sensitive appetite precisely because only it needs to have its natural appetite moderated so that it is not inclined to act against what will commands. Erasing the distinction between good habits of the sensitive appetite and perfective habits of other bodily powers would thus erase the specifically moral status of the former.

Nevertheless, Scotus almost entirely concedes the objection:

It is granted that there can be a virtue and habit in a part of the body, as is obvious in the case of the hand of a scribe or painter, for if my hand has not been trained in playing the lyre it is not disposed to that faculty or facility; but when it has been trained it is disposed, which results only from the habituation that inheres in the hand. This habituation is posited as and is conceded to be a virtue, because it is a quality that disposes it to a deed of moral virtue. This is further conceded of an irrational being, e.g., a horse, that is disposed to certain acts to which it has become accustomed. But such habituation is not found in entirely inanimate things, for a rock is not thrown upwards more easily because of being accustomed to it.

In conceding the point – even as far as irrational beings beyond an agent’s own body that can be habituated to the agent’s command, like a horse or a dog – Scotus seems implicitly to deny that the sensitive appetite has any special moral status in the individual human being: it simply acts at the command of the will just as various parts of the body do. Thus, to the extent that any bodily power or part acts easily and readily at the command of the will, its acquired habit can be called a virtue; however, the virtuous inclination of the sensitive appetite is no more important in explaining morally good action than is the good working order of one’s hands. I suggest therefore that when Scotus concedes that habits of the sensitive appetite can be moral virtues in an extended sense, he is only pari ratione in parte corporis frequenter mota ex imperio voluntatis potest generari habitus moralis, — et non solum hic, sed in inanimatis et irrationalibus quibus voluntas utitur.”

*Ord. III d. 33 n. 60 (Vat. 10:169): “Ad tertiam in instantiam, conceditur quod in parte corporis potest esse virtus et habitus, sicut patet in manu scriptoris et pictoris: manus enim mea inexcercitata inhabilis est in illa facultate vel in eius facilitate quae est ad citharizandum; exercitata autem, habilis est, quod non est nisi ex habilitate inhaerente manu, — quae habilitas ponitur et conceditur esse quaedam virtus, quia quaedam qualitas habilitans ad opus virtutis moralis. Conceditur etiam hoc ulterius de irrationali, ut de equo, qui est habilitatus ad actus quosdam ad quos est assuefactus. Sed in mere inanimatis non inventur talis habilitas: non enim ex consuetudine facilius proicitur lapis sursum.”*
conceding that the condition of the body makes a difference to the execution of the external act. It remains however that a habit of the sensitive appetite is no more a habit of choice than is the skilful habit of a practised hand; if the latter is strictly speaking not a moral virtue – since it is not a habit of choice – then neither is the former.

1.3 Is habituation by moral virtue compatible with the freedom of the will?

Besides the question of whether the moderating role of the moral virtues is more appropriate to the will or to the sensitive appetite, a more fundamental objection to positing them in the will can be made on the basis of the will’s very nature. The argument can be made in two opposite ways.

1.3.1 The will as the appetite for the good

From one side, one might argue that as the rational appetite, the will is already sufficiently determined to willing the good as presented by reason; acquired virtue in the will would thus be superfluous. Scotus presents this objection as follows:

The will is determined from itself to the good unqualifiedly. For either this is its proper object, as distinguished in contrast to the good here and now, which is the object of the sensitive appetite; or, if the will is able to tend towards the good here and now, it can be sufficiently determined in tending or not tending by the presentation by reason, for it seems that the apprehended object insofar as it is apprehended moves the will. Thus, there is no need to posit a habit in the will, but it suffices that the intellect be sufficiently perfected so that it presents [sc. the object] rightly.101

As noted above, this view is the one adopted by Godfrey of Fontaines, who holds that as the rational appetite, the will is naturally determined to willing whatever object the intellect presents to it as good, and so right action requires only that the intellect present the right object to the will. On this view, there is no need for any virtuous habit in the will, since it is sufficiently determined to action by the object presented to it by the intellect.102 Aquinas holds a more moderate version of this

101 There is another way it could be argued that the habits of the body do count as moral virtues in some extended way. As I will discuss in chapter 6, Scotus holds that the external act does have some moral goodness of its own, though it is entirely derivative from the moral goodness of the internal act of will by which it is commanded. Thus, one might say that the habits of the bodily powers that incline them to acts in accordance with reason can also be moral virtues, though again in a way that is entirely derivative from and secondary to the moral virtues in the will.

102 Ord. III d. 33 n. 11 (Vat. 10:144-145): “Voluntas est ex se determinata ad bonum simpliciter, quia vel illud est proprium objectum eius, quod distinguetur contra bonum ‘ut nunc’ (quod est objectum appetitus sensitivi), – vel si possit tendere in bonum ‘ut nunc’, potest sufficienter determinari in tendendo vel non tendendo ex ostensione rationis (videtur enim quod objectum apprehensiones, sicut apprehensionem est, moveat voluntatem); et ita non oportet in ipsa ponere habitum, sed sufficient quod intellectus sufficienter perficiatur ad recte ostendendum.”

102 See Godfrey of Fontaines, Quodl. XIV q. 3 (PhB 5:342-343) and section 1.2.2 above.
position: he agrees that as the rational appetite the will is naturally inclined to the good in general, but says that it needs the inclination of habit to be inclined to determinate goods.\footnote{103} Moreover, while it is naturally inclined to the good that is proportionate to it, it requires the determination of virtue to be inclined to the good that surpasses it; thus it needs justice to be inclined to the good of others, and charity to be inclined to God as the good that is beyond its natural power.\footnote{104}

Scotus responds to this objection by appealing to the will’s freedom: “The will is undetermined with respect to opposites, not just to opposite objects, but to opposite modes of acting, namely rightly and not rightly; therefore it needs something to determine it by inclining it to acting rightly, and this will be a virtue.”\footnote{105} As a free power, the will has mastery over its own acts and determines itself to its acts. It is thus capable of acting rightly or wrongly, and is not naturally determined to one or the other; therefore, says Scotus, it needs a virtuous habit to be determinately inclined to acting rightly rather than wrongly. In other words, it is because of the very fact that the will is free and not naturally inclined in any one way that it requires moral virtue. Though he agrees that the will can will an object only insofar as it is good in some respect, he rejects Godfrey’s contention that it is determined in its acts by a good object as presented by the intellect, for in that case it would not act freely, since it would be determined by something other than itself.\footnote{106}

Responding specifically to Godfrey’s claim that only the intellect needs to be rightly inclined so that it determines the will rightly, Scotus argues that this would entail a conclusion that he considers morally absurd:

But if you say that it is enough that reason rightly presents [the object] and so virtue is not needed in the will, this is false; for then it would be the case that reason errs in presenting before the will chooses badly, and so there would be an error in the intellect before the first sin in the will. But this is absurd, because then the punishment would precede the crime!\footnote{107}

\footnote{103} See \textit{ST} I-II 50.5 ad 1 (Piana 976a).
\footnote{104} See \textit{De Virt. in Com.}, art. 5 (Marietti 720b).
\footnote{105} \textit{Ord.} III d. 33 n. 22 (Vat. 10:152): “Voluntas est indeterminata ad opposita, non tantum ad opposita objecta, sed ad oppositos modos agendi, scilicet recte et non recte; ergo indiget aliquo determinativo inclinante ad recte agendum, et illud erit virtus.”
\footnote{106} See chapter 2 for more detailed discussion of this point.
\footnote{107} \textit{Ord.} III d. 33 n. 23 (Vat. 10:153): “Quod si dicas ‘sufficit rationem recte ostendere, ideo non requiritur virtus in voluntate, sed in ratione’, – hoc falsum est, quia tune oporteret rationem primo errare in ostendendo, prius quam voluntatem male eligere; et ita ante primum peccatum voluntatis esset error in intellectu, – quod est irrationale: poena enim tune esset ante culpam!”
That is to say, we are morally responsible only for acts that are in our power, namely, acts of the will and acts commanded by the will. However, if the will is determined to its act by the object presented to it by the intellect, then our willing wrongly is ultimately due to an error committed by the intellect, and not to our own free action. This intellectual error might be the result of the will having previously directed the intellect wrongly, and in this case it is a kind of punishment; but if there was no prior direction of the will, then, as Scotus says, the error would be a punishment for something that has not yet been done.108

1.3.2 The will as a free power

From the opposite side of the question, one might argue that the will is not the subject of moral virtues precisely because it is a free power. Scotus mentions this as an initial objection to positing moral virtues in the will:

An argument is made based on the freedom of the will: for the will, which is free, can sufficiently determine itself; therefore, it is not in need of any determining thing. This is also argued in another way: for if the will acts freely from itself, it is compatible with it to have a determinate willing that inclines it to action; but virtue inclines in the mode of nature, and thus is incompatible with the mode of action of the will itself, and so it is not present in the will.109

As will be explained more fully in chapter 2, Scotus holds that a free power is one that is capable of determining its own actions entirely from its own free activity, without any extrinsic determination. Moreover, among all created powers, only the will acts in a free way, in contrast with the “way of nature” that characterizes everything other than the will. This included habits, which, if they act, will act in a naturally determinate and unfree way; therefore, however a habit inclines its subject, it will do so in a merely natural way. However, this seems to be incompatible with the will’s free and self-determining mode of action, for a habit would give a determinate inclination to a power that is essentially without determination. Therefore, according to this argument, habits of moral virtue cannot be in the will.

108 See chapter 2 for more detailed discussion of Scotus on the relation between the will and intellect. On intellectual ignorance as a punishment, see Rep. II d. 22 q. un §§2-3 (Wadding 6:844). See also Rep. II d. 42 q. 4 §§13-16 (Wadding 11:412b-413b), where Scotus explains how it is possible for the will to have various objects available and to redirect the intellect from the one to which it is currently attending to another that it also apprehends, though less perfectly.

109 Ord. III d. 33 n. 12 (Vat. 10:145-146): “Arguitur ex libertate voluntatis, quia voluntas – quae est libera – potest se ipsam determinare sufficienter; ergo non indiget aliquo determinante. Hoc etiam arguitur aliter, quia si libere agit ex se, repugnat sibi ‘velle determinate’, ipsam inclinans ad agendum; sed virtus inclinat per modum naturae, et ita repugnat modo agendi ipsius voluntatis, – et ita non est in ea.”
Scotus replies to this objection by arguing that moral virtues are appropriate most of all to the will. First, he notes that moral virtue is traditionally held to be that by which we capable of acting in a praiseworthy manner. Yet for an act to be praiseworthy, it has to be in the power of the agent to do it or not, and so it must be an act of the free will. Moreover, it would be strange if moral virtue – the principle by which human beings are supposed to be able to act in a praiseworthy way – belonged to the sensitive appetite, which we have in common with brute animals, which do not act freely and whose acts are thus not subject to either praise or blame. Secondly, he notes that no one among his opponents denies that the intellect can receive habits, for example the habit of prudence; yet the intellect, despite acting in a more naturally determinate way than the will, still has a kind of essential indetermination, for it is not naturally determined more to one knowable object than to another. The will, therefore, being a freely self-determining power, has an even more complete lack of natural limitation than the intellect, and so is all the more capable of receiving habits.

1.3.3 Henry of Ghent on the will as deliberative

Note, however, that these replies do not directly address the objection to which they are addressed. While they do give grounds for holding that the free will is a more appropriate subject of moral virtue than the sensitive appetites, they do not address the core objection that the will’s free, self-determining mode of action excludes habituation entirely. The question therefore remains open how it is possible at all for the will to receive habits. Scotus addresses one solution, proposed by Henry of Ghent in question 22 of his fourth Quodlibet. There Henry proposes a kind of middle path between the will considered as the rational appetite naturally ordered to the good as presented by the intellect (and thus in no need of habit) and the will considered as absolutely free (and thus rejecting habituation as incompatible with its self-determination).

110 Ord. III d. 33 nn. 28-29 (Vat. 10:155-156): “Illud enim magis indiget dispositione aliqua respectu cuius habet actionem in sua potestate quam respectu alterius, quia si non haberet in potestate, non sibi imputaretur nec ad laudem nec ad vituperium quando ageter vel qualiter. Sed quia in potestate sua habet, laudabiliter vel vituperaliter agit: et ideo eget illo principio per quod possit laudabiliter operari: tale ponitur virtus. Videtur etiam mirabile quod illud prop(er) quod laudatur homo in operando, sit praecise in eo secundum illud quod est commune sibi et brutis.”

111 Ord. III d. 33 n. 30 (Vat. 10:156): “In intellectu tamen, qui magis naturaliter operatur quam voluntas, non negatur habitus, quia non est ex se summe inclinatus; nec ista indeterminatio est ex imperfectione activi, sed ex illimitatione, quae est perfectio activi: alia enim mere naturalis limitatur ad unum, ita quod non possunt in ‘oppositum contrarie’ vel saltem ‘contradictorie’, – voluntas non sic limitatur, sicut dictum est distinctione 25 II.” The text referred to will be discussed in chapter 2.

112 Henry of Ghent, Quodl. IV q. 22 (Leuven 8:349-374). Much of Scotus’s discussion in Ord. III d. 33 is heavily reliant on Henry’s discussion in this text and is largely developed as a critique of certain aspects of it. On Henry’s arguments for the will as the seat of the moral virtues, see Graf, De subiecto psychico gratiae et virtutum, 2:134–140; Kent, Virtues of the Will, 229–232.
Henry proposes that the will can be considered in three ways: as a nature, as deliberative, and as free.\textsuperscript{113} As a nature, the will does not receive any habits, exactly because it is naturally and determinately inclined to its proper object of the good, for “as a nature, the will is naturally inclined to the good unqualifiedly because it is good.”\textsuperscript{114} As free, on the other hand, the will does not receive habits either, for this would represent a limitation on the will’s essential freedom:

Insofar as it is free in its choice, the will is not determinable by any habit, since this is against the nature of freedom. For if it could be inclined from its freedom in the mode of nature to anything other than the first bare and evident good, it could be necessitated against its own natural freedom.\textsuperscript{115}

This leaves only the will insofar as it is deliberative. By this, Henry means the will insofar as it acts with regard to a particular good as presented by the intellect. He explains as follows:

Even when a good is presented in the cognitive [power] under the aspect of true, the will as deliberative restrains its natural motion by deferring the pursuit of that good, and by impelling the cognitive [power] to examine from the circumstances whether it should be pursued or not. On the side of the will, this is called deliberation, but on the side of reason, it is called counsel.\textsuperscript{116}

Henry thus distinguishes a mode of action of the will that is neither the will as naturally determined to the good as such, nor the will as absolutely free; rather, when it faces practical choices it is undetermined between goods, and thus needs a habit of moral virtue to determine it to the right good:

In such deliberation the will is undetermined and is disposed [equally] to both [alternatives], such that even when the judgment of reason has been given, it can still keep itself in its indetermination and can produce in its choice the contrary of what reason judged should be chosen (as was determined in another Quodlibet); for this reason, in order that it will to assent with a complete deliberation to what was judged by right reason, it is very much in need of a habit inclining it to will this.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{113} Henry of Ghent,\textit{ Quodl.} IV q. 22 (Leuven 8:356): “Ad videndum autem quomodo morales virtutes sint in voluntate, intelligendum quod voluntas tripliciter consideratur, ut natura, ut deliberativa, ut arbitrio libera.” Cf.\textit{ Ord.} III d. 33 n. 67 (Vat. 10:172).

\textsuperscript{114} Henry of Ghent,\textit{ Quodl.} IV q. 22 (Leuven 8:356): “Ut natura, inclinatur naturaliter in bonum simpliciter quia bonum.”

\textsuperscript{115} Henry of Ghent,\textit{ Quodl.} IV q. 22 (Leuven 8:358): “Nec est aliquo habitu determinabilis voluntas in quantum est arbitrio libera, quia hoc est contra naturam libertatis. Si enim a sua libertate posset in modum naturae inclinari circa aliiud quam circa primum bonum nudum et apertum, posset contra suam libertatem naturalem necessitari.”

\textsuperscript{116} Henry of Ghent,\textit{ Quodl.} IV q. 22 (Leuven 8:356-357): “Ut autem est deliberativa, bono praesentato in cognitiva sub ratione veri retinet naturalem motum differens prosecutionem illius boni, et impellendo cognitivam ad perscrutandum de circumstantiis, an prosequendum sit vel non, quod ex parte voluntatis appellatur deliberatio, ex parte vero rationis dicitur consiliatio.

\textsuperscript{117} Henry of Ghent,\textit{ Quodl.} IV q. 22 (Leuven 8:356-357): “Et quia in tali deliberatione voluntas indeterminata est ad utrumlibet se habens, ita quod etiam data sententia rationis adhuc potest se tenere in sua indeterminatione et proferre in electione sua contrarium eius quod eligendum sententiaviit ratio, ut determinatum fuit in alio Quodlibet, ideo ut velit assentire complete deliberacione ei quod iudicatum est recta ratione, multum indiget habitu inclinante ut velit illud.”
Henry thus concludes that when it comes to acting on the judgment of practical reason – in other words, exercising free choice – the will needs the habit of moral virtue to be inclined more to the good as judged by right reason than to another good, and it is in this sense that it can be the subject of moral virtues. This does not mean that a habit of moral virtue in any way impedes the will’s free action. Rather, when the will has acquired moral virtue, it is inclined towards the dictate of right reason, such that when it acts rightly and according to virtue, it does so readily and easily.\footnote{Henry of Ghent, Quodl. IV q. 22 (Leuven 8:358): “In quantum tamen deliberativa, bene indiget habitu, ut dictum est, nee sufficit sibi sine habitu, ut ipsa in quantum libera, expedite et faciliter actus sui complementum operetur, licet absolute posset habitu solo iudicio rationis ante generationem habitus virtutis moralis illud complementum actione sua in se acquirere, non tamen sic quod proposito iudicio rationis statim inclinetur et moveatur in illud, quomodo auditus movetur a sono percepto. Voluntas enim semper habet liberam electionem contra sententiam rationis, ut dictum est.”}

Scotus rejects this solution by arguing that the distinctions that Henry makes within the will cannot be maintained. First, he argues against the distinction of the will as a nature, which he interprets to mean the will insofar as it tends towards its proper end (\textit{finis}) of the good as such, as opposed to the means to the end (\textit{ea quae sunt ad finem}), which are the object of choice in the strict sense. But if “tending” is understood as an activity, the distinction of the will as nature does not hold, for according to Scotus all acts of the will are free acts, whether with regard to an end or to a means to an end. Thus, “the will as a nature” cannot mean anything more than the will considered as having an essential nature as an appetite for the good, whether or not it is eliciting any act.\footnote{Ord. III d. 33 n. 73 (Vat. 10:174): “Contra alia duo membra: unum videtur includere alterum, nam ut est ‘deliberativa’, est ‘libera’. Aut enim dicitur ‘deliberativa’ in quantum praecipit deliberationem, aut in quantum eligit praevia deliberatione: utrumque competit sibi in quantum libera, quia libere imperat illam electionem; et ex hoc sequitur quod...”} Secondly, Scotus also rejects the distinction between the will as deliberative and the will as free. For in either of the ways in which the will can be called deliberative – namely, as suspending its own act and directing the intellect to consider further, or as choosing on the basis of a practical judgment of the intellect – the freedom of the will is presupposed:

Against the two other points [sc. that the will can be distinguished as deliberative and as free]: one seems to include the other, for insofar as it is deliberative it is also free. For it is called deliberative either insofar as it commands deliberation or insofar as it chooses on the basis of previous deliberation; and both are compatible with it insofar as it is free, since it freely commands that choice. And from this it follows that there is a contradiction in denying that virtue is in the will insofar as it is free and conceding that virtue is in it insofar as it is deliberative.\footnote{Ord. III d. 33 n. 72 (Vat: 10:174): “Voluntas – ut ‘natura’ – nullo actum elicit, ut dictum est distinctione 15 istius III; ergo, ut natura, non tendit in aliquid objectum, nec in finem, nec in alius (ut in actum elicitum), sed tantum tendit per inclinationem naturalem sicut grave dicitur tendere deorum etiam si quiescat sursum.” On this general point, see chapter 2 below. On...}
Henry’s attempt to show how moral virtues can be in the will by distinguishing different modes of action in the will thus collapses, for when the will acts in a deliberative way, it is still acting freely. Scotus’s conclusion is that the moral virtues, as he has already argued, belong most of all to the will as a free power, for a free power will be most of all in need of habits of virtue precisely because it is by nature undetermined. When the will chooses, it always does so freely by determining itself to act according to some dictate of reason, but it remains in its power not to do so. When it has acquired the habitual inclination of virtue to acting rightly, it continues to act freely, but when it does act rightly, it does so readily, promptly, easily, and with pleasure.\footnote{Scotus concludes his response to Henry’s position by sketching out how this works: when the intellect has the habit of prudence, it arrives more quickly, easily and promptly at the right judgment, and if the will has the corresponding moral virtue, it acts with pleasure; see Ord. III d. 33 n. 77 (Vat. 10:175). How exactly these circumstances result from the presence of the right habits will be discussed in detail in chapters 4 and 5.}

1.4 Conclusion

The conception of moral virtues as something added to an agent raises the question of what their proper subject is, which on Scotus’s account of the soul and its powers will be not the soul as such, but more precisely a power of the soul. Philosophers who more closely follow Aristotle’s conception of moral virtue as inclining the appetites to acting according to reason tend to emphasize the role of virtue in the moderation of the passions, which were conceived as involving a corporeal change and therefore as belonging to the sensitive appetites. They thus tend to assign the moral virtues to the appetites that are not rational in themselves, but can be rendered obedient to reason by having moral virtue instilled in them. Scotus follows an alternative tradition, according to which such habits in the lower appetites are moral virtues in an extended sense at most. By and large, this tradition emphasizes the connection of moral virtue with freedom and moral responsibility. Since only free acts of the will (and derivatively, acts commanded by the will) have a moral dimension, it is primarily and most properly the habits of the will that can be moral virtues. Scotus himself emphasizes the definition of moral virtues as habits of choice: as such, they strictly speaking belong only to the power of choice, which is the will.

However, there seems to be a problem. If a habit acts in the mode of nature, it should not have any bearing on the moral goodness of an action, since an act can be morally good or bad only if the

*negando virtutem esse in ea ut libera, et concedendo virtutem esse in ea ut deliberativa, est contradictio.* Note that Scotus elides the terminological distinction that Henry makes in the passage quoted above, where the consideration by the intellect between practical objects is called *consiliatio*, and the free choice by the will between practical objects is called *deliberatio*. Scotus reserves the term *deliberatio* for the practical consideration by the intellect that precedes the act of choice in the will.
agent can be held responsible for it, and an agent is responsible only for what it does voluntarily. How then can a habit of moral virtue explain the moral goodness of an act, when a habit is a “second nature”? More fundamentally, it might be argued that the determinate inclination given by habit is incompatible with the will’s essence as a free power; for despite Scotus’s arguments for why moral virtues must belong to the will, he does not explain in that context exactly how this is compatible with the will’s freedom.\footnote{122} So far, however, I have only briefly alluded to what Scotus means when he says that the will, unlike all other powers, acts freely and not in the mode of nature. In order to make more clear exactly why an explanation is still needed for how it is possible for the will to be inclined by habits of moral virtue, and ultimately how moral virtues can have any role in moral goodness, I will discuss in the next chapter Scotus’s conception of the will as a freely self-moving and self-determining power.

\footnote{122}{The problem, already present in Henry of Ghent, is well summarized by Bonnie Kent (Kent, \textit{Virtues of the Will}, 232): “Ironically, in protecting the freedom of the will from all forms of determination, Henry has gone some way toward protecting the will from virtues. The inclination to choose in accordance with one’s pattern of past choices has become external to the will as a faculty of choice.” By rejecting Henry's solution for how habituation is compatible with the freedom of the will while retaining his concern with the will’s capacity to determine itself, Scotus makes the problem even starker.}
2. The Will as a Freely Self-Moving Power

The previous chapter was devoted to explaining how Scotus argues that the moral virtues are habits that belong only (or primarily) to the will. Some of these arguments turn on the nature of the will as a free power. First of all, since moral virtues are habits of choice, argues Scotus, they belong to the will, which is the power of choice. But it seems obvious from experience that choice is a free act: when we choose a course of action, we do not feel that we are compelled either by an external agent or by our own nature, but that we determine our own actions from ourselves. So it seems that as the power for free choice, the will must be capable of acting freely. Scotus also argues that it is the will that is most of all in need of habits of moral virtue to give it a determinate inclination to acting rightly; left to itself, the will lacks any such determination precisely because it is free and has power over its own acts. Yet for the very same reason, it remains a problem at the end of Scotus’s discussion how it is possible for the will to be the subject of moral virtues, since as a free power, it has mastery over its own acts and determines itself when it acts. How then can the will receive any habit that gives it a determinate inclination? The explanation of the role of moral virtues will turn on giving an account that is compatible with the freedom of the will.

This chapter will therefore will be devoted to Scotus’s account of the freedom of the human will, both to make clear why there seems to be a problem with allowing habits in the will, and to lay out the terms within which the problem will have to be solved. In section 1, I will briefly lay out the aspect of the freedom of the will that is the most relevant for explaining the role of habits and virtues: a free power is one that is not moved or determined to its act by something else; rather, freedom of action consists fundamentally in the power to determine oneself. In section 2, I will take up two main arguments in which this central criterion of freedom emerges. The first is Scotus’s argument that the will is not moved to its act by its object or by the intellect that presents it, but freely moves itself, with the object playing at most a subordinate causal role. The second takes up the case of the will being presented with beatitude, which as an object of appetition would fully satisfy the will as the rational appetite, and so it could be argued that it necessitate the will’s act of seeking it where more limited goods would not. However, Scotus argues that even in this case, the will retains the power to determine itself to acting or not acting. Finally, I will examine in section 3 the account of self-motion on which Scotus grounds his account of the will as a free power. According to this account, the will is self-moving in the sense that it is both the active cause of its

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1 See chapter 1 above for explanation of these issues.
own acts and the subject in which its acts are passively received. However, what makes the will free and different from all other powers is not merely that it moves itself, but that it determines itself to that motion, rather than being naturally determined.

2.1 Scotus on human freedom

Much of what counts as specifically human action, involving questions of obligation and of right and wrong, depends on the possibility of acting freely. For example, punishing someone for doing wrong can be justified only if we assume that the wrongdoer was able to judge right and wrong and to act deliberately on the basis of that judgment (which is why we do not punish small children or animals for their bad behaviour, but only try to correct it); likewise if I feel remorse at something I did, I presuppose that I had it in my power to do otherwise. Indeed, it was generally accepted that the very possibility of ethics as a part of philosophy requires that we assume as a principle that agents to whom right and wrong actions can be imputed act freely. For there is no moral responsibility for occurrences that are naturally determined, and so unless we do act freely, there can be no genuinely moral action.

But in virtue of what are we free? While some scholastic philosophers emphasize the role of reason in making opposite courses of action available to us as options that can be chosen, Duns Scotus argues that our freedom of action is ultimately derived from the will alone. According to him, the will is essentially different from all other powers in being self-determining, and that it is this self-determining mode of action that distinguishes it as free, and unlike all other powers, which act in a

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2 The example of punishment and remorse is the first of many laid out by Peter of John Olivi in QQ. in II Sent. q. 57 (Quaracchi 2:317-318). In the body of the question, Olivi argues that it is impossible to make sense of any aspect of moral experience and social interaction unless human agents presume that they are free and that other adult human beings are free, leaving metaphysical or psychological considerations to the detailed replies to objections.

3 Thomas Aquinas makes this point succinctly at the beginning of De Malo q. 6 (Leonina 23:148a): “Si enim non sit liberum aliquid in nobis, sed ex necessitate movemur ad volendum, tollitur deliberatio, exhortatio, praeceptum et punitio, et laus et vituperium, circa quae moralis philosophia consistit. Huiusmodi autem opiniones quae destruunt principia alicuius partis philosophiae, dicuntur positiones extraneae, sicut nihil moveri, quod destruit principia scientiae naturalis.” Scotus makes a similar point at Lect. II d. 25 n. 28 (Vat. 19:236): “Non est in potestate patientis pati (patiens enim non dominatur suae passioni); si igitur velle voluntatis comparatur tantum ad voluntatem ut passio eius, sequitur quod non erit in potestate voluntatis actus volendi, et tunc tollitur laus et vituperium, meritum et demeritum.”

4 Scotus develops his account of freedom largely through detailed critique of the positions of his predecessors, but I will discuss their arguments only to the extent necessary to clarify the aspects of Scotus’s own views on which I will focus. On the thirteenth-century debate, see Lottin, “Libre arbitre et liberté depuis Saint Anselme jusqu’à la fin du XIIIe siècle”; San Cristóbal Sebastián, Controversias acerca de la voluntad desde 1270 a 1300; Stadter, Psychologie und Metaphysik der menschlichen Freiheit; Putallaz, Insolente liberté.
naturally determined way. It is this understanding of the freedom of the will that will prove the most relevant for understanding the role of the moral virtues in the will and its free acts.

2.1.1 Aspects of Scotus’s thought on freedom

Scotus’s account of freedom is wide-ranging, however, and involves a number of issues that for the most part will not have a significant role in his answer to the specific question of what it means for the will to be self-determining. One such aspect is divine freedom with regard to the natural law. As a Christian theologian, Scotus holds that God’s act of creating the universe is not naturally necessitated, but is done freely by an act of the divine will. A question that arises has to do with the natural moral law: did God issue His commandments because they are in accord with reason and thus right, or are they right in virtue of the fact that He laid them down? In his discussion of the Decalogue, Scotus distinguishes two senses in which the moral law can be termed ‘natural’. In one sense, the only commandments that are necessary, and thus count as natural law in the strict sense, are those that can be derived directly from the first practical principle that “God is to be loved,” which is self-evidently true and knowable in itself simply in virtue of its terms. The rest, while not strictly derivable from this first practical principle, are nevertheless “very much in harmony” with it, and so are natural law in a broad sense. However, these commandments of the second table do not follow necessarily from a necessary principle; it seems to follow that, with the exception of the laws that are “natural” in the strict sense, the moral law is such only because God willed it, and it could have been otherwise. The question of “voluntarism” in this sense, meaning the idea that the moral law follows from God’s willing to establish it, has been the subject of some debate. However, it is not at issue in the question of the role of moral virtues, which pertains to free human action that is subject to the moral law, whatever its theological basis, and the exact status of the moral law itself has no bearing on it.

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5 See *Ord.* III d. 37 nn. 16-29 (Vat. 10:279-284).

6 Scotus therefore states that the commandments to worship no other gods and not to take God’s name in vain are natural law in the strict sense, while he is in some doubt about the status of the commandment to keep the Sabbath; see *Ord.* III d. 37 nn. 19-24 (Vat. 10:280-282).

7 *Ord.* d. 37 nn. 25-26 (Vat. 10:283): “Alio modo dicuntur aliqua esse de lege naturae, quia multum consona illi legi, licet non necessario consequantur ex primitis principis practicis, quae nota sunt ex terminis et omni intellectui necessario nota. Et hoc modo certum est omnia pracepta – etiam secundae tabulae – esse de lege naturae, quia corum rectitudo valde consonat primis principis practicis necessario notis.”

Scotus also discusses the nature of freedom in connection with the possibility of contingency. This was a long-standing debate in the thirteenth century, and was associated with the question of divine foreknowledge of future contingents. For if God is infallibly omniscient, then He foreknows everything that will happen in the future; but if he knows what will happen, then it seems to follow that it will happen necessarily, and so nothing ever occurs contingently. In his treatment of this question in book I of his *Ordinatio*, Scotus develops a highly sophisticated account of the mode of action of the will, by which he aims to preserve the very possibility of contingency in the universe. According to this account, when the will – whether divine or created – acts, it acts in such a way that it retains the power to do otherwise than what it is in fact doing. The crucial part of the account is that this power to do otherwise is not merely the power to will otherwise at a subsequent time, but is the power to will otherwise at the very same time (for this reason, the theory is referred to as synchronic contingency). In this way, Scotus argues that the resulting act is intrinsically contingent, and that God’s infallible foreknowledge of future contingents does not show that they are in fact necessary, for their intrinsic contingency is part of what God knows about them (strictly, the contingency of God’s willing to create is part of what the divine intellect knows in knowing the content of the divine will). However, although it can be said that Scotus’s account of the will’s contingent mode of action provides the grounding for the logical and metaphysical possibility of a power like the will that is capable of freely determining itself in its acts, it has little bearing on his argument for why the will must be self-determining to be free, or on his account of the causal mechanisms of free self-motion.

### 2.1.2 Freedom as self-determination

As noted above, the part of Scotus’s discussion of free will that matters for the argument in subsequent chapters is his account of the will as a power that determines itself to its acts. The idea

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9 The medieval debate on the logic of future contingents has attracted a great deal of attention in modern scholarship. For a survey and bibliography, see Knuuttila, “Medieval Theories of Future Contingents.” On Scotus on the topic, see Normore, “Duns Scotus’s Modal Theory”; Langston, *God’s Willing Knowledge*; Dumont, “The Origin of Scotus’s Theory of Synchronic Contingency.” Note that while Langston’s account is clear and accessible, his conclusion that Scotus does not hold a “libertarian” account of freedom is highly contested; for a further defence of his position, see Langston, “God’s Willing Knowledge, Redux.” Dumont shows that the theory of synchronic contingency is not entirely Scotus’s original innovation, but can already be found in Olivi.

10 *Ord*. I dd. 38-39 (Vat. 6:401-444).

11 There is room for debate on what is the fundamental characteristic of freedom (or, in a phrase sometimes used, the *ratio libertatis*). I do not claim to show that Scotus holds that self-determination is the defining feature of freedom. I focus on it merely because it is the aspect of free will that is most relevant for laying out the causal framework of free self-motion within which Scotus works out his account of the role of habits and moral virtue; nevertheless, other possible defining features (e.g., acting according to reason, being a power for opposites, being a power for seeking the good) will come up in passing within this context. For a helpful recent discussion on the scholastic debate on the *ratio libertatis*,...
that freedom consists fundamentally in having mastery over one’s own acts has a long history. It is well known that Aristotle lacked the concept of a distinct power of free will; however, he does discuss in connection with the question of moral responsibility what it is for our acts to be voluntary. One important aspect of this is that a voluntary act is one that is “up to us,” which Aristotle defines as one that we have the power to do or not to do. In scholastic philosophy, this idea of our voluntary acts being up to us becomes tied more closely to the idea of the will; thus, what distinguishes us as voluntary agents is our being endowed with a will. What makes the will a free power is that we have power over our own acts in virtue of it; that is to say, the will is not naturally determined to do any particular action, but is able to determine itself either to doing it or to not doing it.

For this idea of the will as having control over its own actions, scholastic philosophers often appealed to the dictum from Augustine that “nothing is so much in the power of the will as the will itself,” which Scotus explicitly interprets to mean that the will has power over its own acts. The will’s power over its own acts was often contrasted with the acts of the lower powers of the soul, which are commanded to their act by the will, which is the highest power in the soul and thus can command the lower powers (the rational and animal powers at least, though not the vegetative powers, which act only automatically). Scotus frequently uses the term ‘mastery’ (dominium or dominari) to describe this commanding role of the will in the human soul. For example, in the context of the question whether Christ had to die, he summarizes the received Aristotelian position on the difference between the way the will moves the body and the way it moves the lower appetites of the soul:

[The soul] was master over the body with a despotic rule like a master over a slave, but over the other lower powers with a political rule, as a king or a prince is master over citizens. For this reason, it more perfectly was master over the body than over the other powers, since a slave cannot do anything against the master, but a citizen can against a prince and sometimes contradicts him.
But just as the will has mastery over the lower powers of the soul in virtue of being the commanding power, so it cannot be mastered by any other power; for in that case its acts would not be in its own power and so it would not act freely. Therefore, nothing other than the will itself can be master of the acts of the will. This emerges clearly in a passage where Scotus contrasts the way in which the will commands or leads in the hierarchy of the human soul:

I say that the sensitive soul in a certain way has the character of an active principle, although not one that is freely active. This is what John of Damascus means when he says that “Sense does not lead, but is led.” That is, it is not master over its own action, this mastery being “to lead.” But with respect to its action it is determined by the agent to a certain operation, and this [sc. being thus determined by something else] is “to be led.”

Here it is clear that “sense” (understood as the sensitive appetite) does not act freely, because it is “led,” that is, it is commanded to its act by the will. According to Scotus, however, not being moved by anything other than itself is still not sufficient for a power to be free. As he notes elsewhere, a power not subject to extrinsic determination still would not act freely if it were naturally necessitated, for then any naturally determinate power not moved by another could count as a free power. Rather, for a power to have mastery over its acts – that is, for it to be free – is for it to determine itself to whether it acts or not with regard to any given object.

2.2 Is the will truly self-determining?

However, it might still be asked whether the will is in fact self-determining in the way required that Scotus argues is required for it to be a free power. The question arises most clearly in the debate about the role of the object of the will in causing or determining the will’s act of volition. It is clear that the object must have some role in volition: every act of willing is directed at a certain object, and the object thus plays an ineliminable role in the bringing about of the act. Just as the sensitive appetite can act only on an object presented by sensitive cognition, so the will, as the rational

politico (sicut rex vel princeps dominatur civibus); quare perfectius dominabatur corpori quam alius viribus, quia servus nihil potest contra dominum, civis aliquid potest contra principem et contradicit sibi aliquando.” Note that in his response to this argument at the end of the question (ibid. n. 57 [Vat. 9:559]), Scotus clarifies that the will does not have mastery over the body as such or over its vegetative powers, but only over its power of motion.

16 Ord. I d. 17 n. 76 (Vat. 5:177): “Ad aliud, de appetitu sensitivo, dico quod ille habet rationem principii activi aliqua modo, licet non activi libere; et hoc est quod Damascenus intelligit, quod ‘non ducit sensus, sed ducitur’: hoc est, non dominatur actioni suae, quod est ‘ducere’, sed respectu actionis suae determinatur ab ipso agente ad certam operationem, et hoc est ‘duci’.” Scotus is referring to John of Damascus, De fide orthodoxa II.22.

17 Ord. I d. 10 (Vat. 4:387): “Dominium necessarium non dominatur, alioquin dicetur quodlibet naturale liberum.”

18 As will be discussed in section 2.3 below, to be free is simply the self-determining mode of activity of the will by which it is distinguished from naturally determined active powers.
appetite, requires an object presented to it by the intellect in order to act at all. But when a suitable object is present to the sensitive appetite, the appetite necessarily seeks it unless it is somehow impeded, since it is in the nature of that power to seek such an object. Similarly, it might seem that the will too necessarily acts once the practical intellect concludes its deliberation and presents an object that is suitable to be the object of an act of volition. For in the absence of any impediment to action, it would be inexplicable how the will could fail to seek a present good apprehended intellectually, since that would go against its very nature as the rational appetite.

According to Scotus, the difference between the two cases is that the will acts freely but the sensitive appetite does not. But why should it be that the will is not determined to its act by its object whereas the sensitive appetite is? I will divide my account of Scotus’s approach to this question into two steps. First, I will look at the general question of whether the object of the will determines its act, where the debate often turned on our freedom not to seek any finite good simply because, as rational beings, we can also find reasons to reject it. Then I will look at the more difficult limit case of the beatific vision, in which the will is presented not just with a suitable object of volition, but an object that is in every way suitable, and so lacks any basis for the will not to seek it.

2.2.1 The role of the object of the will

The basic problem that Scotus faces in establishing that the will acts freely is to account for the role of the object of the act of volition. What exactly is this role? One obvious answer is that the object is an active cause that moves the will to its acts, since in general a power acts only if a suitable object is present to it. Thus, one of the contexts in which Scotus argues for the essential freedom of the will is in the question whether the object is an active cause of the acts of the will. Scotus argues that the object cannot be an active cause of volition – at least not without qualification – for if something is merely passive with respect to a certain modification it is in that respect not free. Therefore, for the will to act freely, it must itself be the primary active cause of its own acts.

Scotus develops his argument for this conclusion by way of a critique of those who hold that the will is moved to its act by the object that is willed. There are different ways of explaining how the object would move the will. According to one, which is basically that of Thomas Aquinas, the intellect determines what object will be available for the will to seek and thus what act the will elicits. This view arises from a consideration of the nature of the will as the rational appetite. As an appetite, the will acts only with regard to objects that are naturally suitable to it; accordingly, just as the sensitive appetite seeks only sensible objects presented by the faculty of imagination as suitable for it, so the
will seeks only objects that can be willed under the aspect of being good, and this *ratio boni* is apprehended rationally by the intellect. The intellect determines what object is available for the will to act on, and this object in turn determines what act the will can have; the intellect might thus be said to determine the act of the will via the object it presents. However, this determination of the will by the intellect need not mean that there is no such thing as human freedom. Though the will can act only according to what the intellect presents to it under the aspect of good, it is not, argues Aquinas, determined by any particular object, since, unlike the sensitive appetite, it is an immaterial power, and so seeks the good in general, under which fall many particulars, no one of which will determine it completely.\(^\text{19}\) Likewise, the intellect is able to consider and present different reasons for acting, and so we are never fully determined in any situation to only one course of action; rather, the intellect can apprehend in any particular object different ways in which it is good and can be sought, and also ways in which it fails to be fully good.\(^\text{20}\) Freedom of choice is thus preserved both by the will’s general mode of action and by the intellect’s power to present the will with different reasons for acting. It follows that the ultimate source of human freedom is not the will but the intellect. This is not to deny that the will is in some way a free power, for it is after all the immediate principle by which acts of free choice are brought about. Rather, as Aquinas puts it, freedom is rooted in the will as its subject, but its cause is reason.\(^\text{21}\) He thus entertains the idea that the power of free choice consists of the intellect and the will together, with the intellect deliberating about action and the will executing the conclusion of this deliberation. He finally concludes, however, that strictly speaking free choice is the same power as the will.\(^\text{22}\)

It might nevertheless be argued that this solution fails to establish that the will acts freely. For even if the intellect can apprehend different *rationes boni* in any given object, it still carries out a process of

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\(^{19}\) Cf. *ST* I-II 10.1 ad 3 (Piana 774b): “Dicendum quod naturae semper respondet unum, proportionatum tamen naturae. Naturae enim in genere, respondet aliquid unum in genere; et naturae in specie accepta, respondet unum in specie; naturae autem individuatae respondet aliquid unum individuale. Cum igitur voluntas sit quaedam vis immaterialis sicut et intellectus, respondet sibi naturaliter aliquid unum commune, scilicet bonum, sicut etiam intellectui aliquid unum commune, scilicet verum, vel ens, vel quod quid est. Sub bono autem communi multa particularia bona continentur, ad quorum nullum voluntas determinatur.”

\(^{20}\) Aquinas makes this point in various texts; e.g., *ST* I 59.3 (Piana 360a): “Solum id quod habet intellectum, potest agere iudicio libero, inquantum cognoscit universalem rationem boni, ex qua potest iudicare hoc vel illud esse bonum. Unde ubicumque est intellectus, est liberum arbitrium.” See the summary discussion in Osborne, *Human Action*, 8–12.

\(^{21}\) *ST* I-II 17.1 ad 2 (Piana 803a): “Dicendum quod radix libertatis est voluntas sicut subiectum, sed sicut causa, est ratio. Ex hoc enim voluntas libere potest ad diversa ferri, quia ratio potest habere diversas conceptiones boni. Et ideo philosophi definiunt liberum arbitrium quod est liberum de ratione iudicium, quasi ratio sit causa libertatis.”

deliberation about what is to be done, and it presents only one ratio boni to the will. Since there is no reason available for the will not to seek whatever object is currently being presented by the intellect, it seems that it will always act necessarily, and will be no less determined in its acts than the sensitive appetite. Aquinas’s solution in question 6 of De Malo is to assign to the will its own kind of free action: though the act to be performed by the will is determined by the intellect, it is up to the will whether or not it will elicit that act. As Aquinas puts it, the determination of the act is by the intellect, but the exercise is by the will. Yet insofar as its act is determined by the conclusion of practical deliberation, the will still seems to exercise that act necessarily, simply because there is no reason for it not to will the good that the intellect presents to it. Aquinas deals with this objection by proposing that the will has a kind of indirect power over its own determination: though it can will only what is presented to it by the intellect, it can also direct the intellect to consider something else. The will thus has indirect power over the determination of what object it can will, and so over what act it can have: it is not bound to act according to any given presentation by the intellect, for it can direct the intellect to consider a different object.

Giles of Rome holds similarly that the will has a kind of indirect power over its own acts, though his account of how this is possible is somewhat different from Aquinas’s. Like Aquinas, Giles holds that the activity of the will depends on the object as presented by the intellect, and that the will is free in its actions with respect to any finite good in virtue of the intellect’s power to apprehend the object as either good or bad in different respects. The will then is able to adopt one option in a bifurcation of reasons for action, or simply to refrain from adopting one or the other. Thus, Giles differs from Aquinas in his view of the exact role of the object in causing volition: whereas Aquinas holds that the object presented by the intellect specifies or determines the act of the will and that the will then has power over whether it will exercise the act, Giles holds that it is the object that moves the will to

23 See De Malo q. 6 (Leonina 23:149a): “Sic ergo ad ostendendum quod voluntas non ex necessitate movetur, oportet considerare motum voluntatis et quantum ad exercitium actus, et quantum ad determinationem actus, qui est ex obiecto. Quantum ergo ad exercitium actus, primo quidem manifestum est quod voluntas movetur a seipsa; sicut enim movet alias potentias, ita et se ipsam movet.” Cf. ST I-II 9.1 (Piana 768a). For a summary of the debate over Aquinas’s distinction of specification and exercise of the act of the will, see Osborne, Human Action, 10–19.

24 De Malo q. 6 ad 15 (Leonina 23:152a): “Illa causa quae facit voluntatem aliquid velle, non oportet quod ex necessitate hoc faciat: quia potest per ipsam voluntatem impedimentum praestari, vel removendo tale considerationem quae inducit eum ad volendum, vel consideringo oppositum, scilicet quod hoc quod proponitur ut bonum secundum aliquid non est bonum.”

25 There has been some debate over whether Aquinas’s argument in De Malo q. 6 represents a change from his earlier position or simply a refinement of his view. See Westberg, “Did Aquinas Change His Mind about the Will?”

26 Giles of Rome, Quodl. III q. 15 (de Coninek 178b): “Quia voluntas est domina sui actus, in postestate eius est sistere in hac consideratione bifurcata, vel sistere in una et desistere ab alia, vel magis sistere in una quam in alia.” Text from Giles of Rome, B. Agidii Columnae Quodlibeta.
its act (or “activates” it), and that what makes the will free (and self-moving) is its power to determine which object will activate it.\(^{27}\)

Unlike Aquinas and Giles, who maintain that the object of the will is the object as presented by the intellect, Godfrey of Fontaines holds that the will is moved to its act by the external object as it is represented by a phantasm in the faculty of imagination.\(^ {28}\) Godfrey maintains that it is a basic and inviolable metaphysical principle that anything that acts is moved to its act by something else.\(^ {29}\) The will is not exempt from this, so it too is moved extrinsically to its act. If the will were the active cause of its own act, argues Godfrey, it would have to be in potency to receiving the act; however, in order to be the cause of its own act, the will would have to have the act already in actuality before it caused it. Therefore, if the will were the cause of its own act, it either would have the act both in potency and in actuality at the same time, which Godfrey maintains is impossible, or it would be always actually willing and would never be only potentially willing.\(^ {30}\) Either way, it is impossible for the will to move itself to its act, and so it must be that it is moved by something else, namely the object. According to Godfrey, this presents no threat to human freedom, because freedom does not belong strictly to the will, but to the rational soul, of which the intellect and the will are both powers; being free, for Godfrey, is coextensive with being immaterial and so the intellect is essentially free just as much as the will is.\(^ {31}\) Moreover, it cannot be the intellect that moves the will to its act, for they are both merely powers of the rational soul, and so to say that the intellect moves the will

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29 On the principle that forms the basis of Godfrey’s rejection of the possibility of self-motion, see Wippel, “Godfrey of Fontaines and the Act-Potency Axiom.”

30 See Godfrey of Fontaines, *Quodl.* VI q. 7 (PhB 3:151): “Sicut impossibile est quod illud activum quod est formaliter tale quale debet facere passivum sit illud passivum et se ipsum faciat formaliter tale, ita impossibile est quod illud quod est virtualiter tale quale debet facere passivum sit illud passivum et faciat se ipsum formaliter tale. Sicut enim contra rationem eius quod formaliter est tale quale debet facere passivum est quod ex quo iam est tale faciat se tale, quia iam esset in actu et in potentia secundum idem et respectu eiusdem, item essent in codem numero et subjecto plura accidentia numero differentia et plura alia inconvenientia sequentur; ita etiam contra rationem eius quod virtualiter est tale quale debet facere passivum, formaliter est quod ex quo iam est tale eminentiori et perfectiori modo, quia est principale agens quod faciat se tale minus perfecto modo.” Text from Godfrey of Fontaines, *Les Quodlibets cinq, six et sept.*

31 Godfrey concedes that freedom pertains more properly to the will, but since in his view freedom is nothing other than being an immaterial power not subject to material causes, the intellect is free in the same sense as the will. See Godfrey of Fontaines, *Quodl.* VIII q. 16 (PhB 4:150), in Godfrey of Fontaines, *Les Quodlibets huitième-dixième.* See also the discussion in Eardley, “The Foundations of Freedom in Later Medieval Philosophy: Giles of Rome and His Contemporaries,” 366–369.
would be to concede that the rational soul moves itself, which would again be a violation of the principle that everything that is moved is moved by another. Godfrey therefore holds that the will is moved to its act not by the presentation of an object by the intellect, but rather by the phantasm present in the imaginative faculty, which moves both the intellect and the will.32

Scotus addresses these positions in distinction 25 of book II of his Lectura and Reportatio, where the question is whether the will moves itself to its acts of willing or is moved by the object.33 As outlined above, his basic position is that as a free power, the will moves itself to its acts. He thus rejects the positions of Aquinas (together with that of Giles) and of Godfrey as variations of the view that the will is moved to its act by its object.34 Scotus notes that according to this view, the will is only a passive power, since the act of the will is a passion that it receives from something else. But nothing has power over its own passions insofar as it is passive, and so if the will is only passive with respect to its own acts, it does not have power over them; they are therefore not imputable to the will, and so praise and blame, and merit and demerit are destroyed.35 To the more extreme position of Godfrey in particular, Scotus argues that there can be no freedom of action if all acts of the will are ultimately caused by an external object that is merely natural:

A natural agent that remains the same and is unimpeded cannot cause opposite effects in the same passive cause that remains in equal condition, for this is what a natural agent is like (thus, according to On Generation and Corruption II [336a27-28], “the same insofar as it is the same by nature does the same.” And this is understood specifically of a natural agent). But an object is an entirely natural agent; therefore, the same object that remains the same cannot cause opposite effects in the same passive cause; and therefore, if the cognized object causes willing-against [nolle] in the will, it cannot cause willing, and vice versa. But to posit this is to remove all freedom from the will, and all contingency from human actions that are in the power of man.36

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33 Note that there is no corresponding question in the Ordinatio.

34 Lect. II d. 25 n. 22 (Vat. 19:234): “Ad hanc quæstionem dicunt quidam quod tota causa actualitatis in actu voluntatis est ex parte obiecti voluntatis, ita quod tota vis est in obiecto cognito respectu actus voluntatis.” Scotus’s ultimate answer on the role of the object in acts of volition is the topic of some debate; I will discuss this in chapter 4.

35 Lect. II d. 25 n. 28 (Vat. 19:236): “Non est in potestate patientis pati (patiens enim non dominatur suae passioni); si igitur velle voluntatis comparatur tantum ad voluntatem ut passio eius, sequitur quod non erit in potestate voluntatis actus volendi, et tunc tollitur laus et vituperium, meritum et demeritum.”

36 Lect. II d. 25 n. 36 (Vat. 19:239): “Agens naturale – idem et non impedimentum – in eodem passo aequaliter disposito non potest causare opposita (hoc enim est de ratione agentis naturalis; unde II De generatione. ‘Idem in quantum idem naturum est semper facere idem’, et hoc specialiter inteligitur de agentis naturali); sed obiectum est mere agens naturale; igitur si obiectum cognitum causat in voluntate nolle, non potest causare velle, vel e contra. Sed hoc ponere est tollere omnem libertatem a voluntate et contingantiam in actibus humanis, qui sunt in potestate hominis.”
Thus, according to Scotus, Godfrey’s position fails to safeguard the freedom of the will because it makes the will merely passive with respect to its acts; and if the object were the total active cause of an act of the will, the will would be determined to its acts extrinsically and merely naturally. Thus, the will would be neither free in itself, since it would be determined to its acts by an external cause, nor would it have freedom from a higher source, since the active cause (the object) would be unfree.\textsuperscript{37}

As for the Thomistic position that free choice is preserved by the will’s power to direct the intellect to consider a different object, Scotus argues that it is incoherent, for it attempts to preserve the idea that the will is determined or specified in its act by the object while appealing to a freedom in the will that must be prior to any intellectual determination.\textsuperscript{38} He points out that the will’s act of moving the intellect to consider a different object itself requires that something move the will to that act, and so the will again requires an object presented by the intellect. He argues that this position is reducible to extrinsic determination by the object or leads to an infinite regress:

I ask: How can [the will] move or command the intellect to knowing or not knowing? The will, according to this account, cannot move unless it is itself moved, and this motion of the will was preceded by cognition. Therefore, either that cognition is under the power of the will or it is not in its power, since it comes before the act of volition and the object moves [the will] to that act. If it is not in the power of the will, [the will] cannot move the intellect to knowing or not knowing. Either there will be an infinite regress or some motion will not be in its power.\textsuperscript{39}

If the will can act only on the basis of an act of the intellect by which an object is made present to the will, and that object is what determines the act of the will, then the will’s act of directing the intellect to consider something else would have to be preceded by another act of the intellect, which would provide the basis of the will’s act of redirecting the intellect’s attention. Either this act of the intellect is naturally determined by some extrinsic object, in which case it is not free; or it was commanded by the will, the act of which requires an object presented by the intellect, and so on \textit{ad infinitum}.

\textsuperscript{37} In chapter 4, I will look more closely at Scotus’s apparent change of mind on the role of the object: in the earlier \textit{Lectura} he concludes that the object must be a partial active cause of the will’s act of volition, whereas in the later \textit{Reportatio} he seems to allow that the will alone could be the total active cause of its own act.

\textsuperscript{38} Scotus summarizes the position of \textit{De malo} q. 6 at \textit{Lect.} II d. 25 n. 29 (Vat. 19:237).

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Lect.} II d. 25 n. 31 (Vat. 19:238): “Quaero quomodo potest movere aut imperare intellectui ad intelligendum vel non intelligendum? Voluntas, secundum illam viam, non potest movere nisi mota; illam motionem voluntatis praecessit cognitione. Aut igitur illa cognitione est in potestate voluntatis, – aut non in potestate eius, quia est ante volitionem et ad illum movet obiectum. Si non est in potestate eius, non potest movere intellectum ad intelligendum vel non intelligendum. Vel ergo erit processus in infinitum, vel non erit in potestate eius aliqua motio.”
Nevertheless, Scotus does not deny that the will does require an act of the intellect. For without a prior act of the intellect, no suitable object will be available for the will to have an act of willing. The question is what causal role this object plays in producing the act of volition. Scotus argues that the object cannot be the total cause of the act of the will, for if it were, the will would be merely passive and so not free. But since the will is free if there is any freedom at all, it must be the primary active cause of its own acts; and if the will is the total active cause of its own acts, the role of the object in volition still has to be explained. According to Henry of Ghent – whose position Scotus presents as lying at the opposite extreme to those of Aquinas and Godfrey – the object is not an active cause of volition at all but is only a necessary condition for the will to cause its own act of volition. In Henry’s words, the object is only a “cause without which” the volition will not occur, or a causa sine qua non; the activity of the intellect in presenting the object is merely the removal of an impediment preventing the will from acting, namely, the absence of a suitable object.  

In the Lectura version of the question, Scotus seeks a middle ground between the two extremes. On the one hand, he holds that the will must be a self-moving power; otherwise it would not act freely, but would be naturally determined by agents that themselves act not freely but naturally. On the other hand, the object of volition must have some kind of causal role in determining the act of the will, for if it had only an incidental and inessential role, various absurdities would follow. For one, Scotus argues that the case of the will causing its own act with the object as merely a necessary condition could be generalized such that there would be no reason to deny that fire is not a cause of a block of wood being burned but only an enabling condition for the wood to burn itself. Also, if the will did not act according to some judgment of the intellect, it would not be acting deliberately, but blindly, and so would not be acting freely; the presentation of the object by the intellect must therefore play some essential role in the causation of the free act of volition, and cannot be just a necessary condition. Note, however, that Scotus seems to have drawn different conclusions in

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41 For Scotus’s detailed reply to Godfrey’s rejection of the very possibility of self-motion on the grounds that nothing can be in act and potency in the same respect at the same time, see section 2.3.2 below.

42 See Lect. II d. 25 n. 57 (Vat. 19:248), summarizing the argument in Godfrey of Fontaines, Quodl. VI q. 7 (PhB 3:151-152, 158-159).

43 See Lect. II d. 25 n. 68 (Vat. 19:252): “Agere libere’ est per cognitionem – unde volens libere, ex hoc quod libere vult, non est caecus; ex hoc igitur quod quis libere vult, sequitur quod vult illud cognoscoendo, ita quod in libertate includitur cognition; igitur objectum cognitum sive cognitio objecti non requiritur ad actum voluntatis ut illud ‘sine quo non’ tantum, sed tamquam aliqua causa inclusa in libertate et potestate liberi arbitrii.” Another objection to the causa sine qua non that
different versions of his commentary on this text. While in the *Lectura* he clearly rejects Henry’s position that the object of volition is only a *causa sine qua non*, his position in the *Reportatio* seems to be much closer to Henry’s. But whichever view is the one that Scotus finally adopted, he consistently denies that the object of the will is the total active cause of the will’s act, for then the will would be passively determined by an extrinsic cause and so would not act freely. Even in the *Lectura*, where he concludes that the object presented by the intellect is an active cause of the act of the will, he allows it a causal role that is only secondary to that of the will itself, such that it contributes causally only if the will primarily causes its own act. Thus, when the will acts, it ultimately determines itself to acting; if the object does have an active role it is strictly secondary to that of the will itself, and so does not compromise the will’s power to move itself freely to its acts.

### 2.2.2 The freedom of the will with respect to its primary object

A more fundamental difficulty for preserving the free self-determination of the will arises from the nature of the will as the rational appetite for the good. As the appetite that is naturally ordered to the good as discerned by reason, the will should be naturally inclined to the *ratio boni* in each object. There is little dispute about whether the will acts freely with regard to any finitely good object. Even those against whom Scotus argues maintain that the will acts freely in virtue of the fact that any finite object will in some respect fail to be completely good, and will thus have a *ratio mali* that the intellect can apprehend alongside its *ratio boni*; the will thus has a rational basis for not willing it and so is not absolutely determined to will any finite good object. But what if the will is presented with an object that is good in every respect and bad in no respect? Such an object would fully satisfy the will insofar as it is the appetite for the good as such, and unlike in the case of a finitely good object, there would be no rational basis for the will not to will such an object. It would therefore not have power over whether it wills that object or not, but would seek it necessarily, for to fail to will it (in

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Scotus mentions is that it seems to be a fifth kind of cause in addition to the four accepted Aristotelian causes; see *Lect.* II d. 25 n. 58 (Vat. 19:248).

44 The apparently different conclusions in the *Lectura* and the *Reportatio* versions of this question are discussed thoroughly in Dumont, “Did Duns Scotus Change His Mind on the Will?” I will return to this issue in more detail in chapter 4 in connection with the question of whether a habit is a partial active cause of acts of the will.

45 Cf. *Lect.* II d. 25 n. 73 (Vat. 19:254): “Sic in proposito voluntas habet rationem unius causae, scilicet causae partialis, respectu actus volendi, et natura ‘actus cognoscent’ objectum’ rationem alterius causae partialis – et utraque simul est una causa totalis respectu actus volendi. Voluntas tamen est causa principalior, et ‘natura cognoscent’ minus principalis, quia voluntas libere movet, ad cuius motionem movet alius (unde determinat alius ad agendum); sed natura ‘cognoscent objectum’ est naturale agens, quod – quantum est ex parte sui – agit semper; numquam tamen potest esse sufficiens ad actum elicium, nisi concurrente voluntate; et ideo voluntas est principalior.”
the absence of any impediment) would be for the will to fail to be the kind of power it is, that is, the appetite ordered to the rationally apprehended good.

This is the conclusion that many philosophers before Scotus adopted. Aquinas, for example, maintains that our freedom of action is to some degree explained by the fact that as the intellective appetite, the will is a kind of universal power, so that no finite particular object can determine it, since no such object could completely perfect the will; in the case of the beatific vision, however, when the intellect apprehends God as the complete good, the rational appetite is fully satisfied and cannot fail to will this complete good. Giles of Rome takes a similar position. Even Henry of Ghent, with whom Scotus largely agrees about the essential freedom of the will, concedes that when the intellect knows the complete good clearly (as in the beatific vision), the will cannot do otherwise than will it, since the ultimate end is necessarily sought by the will, just as first principles of cognition are necessarily known by the intellect.

Scotus, on the other hand, maintains that even in the case of a clear presentation of the complete good, the will retains mastery over its own acts insofar as it is able not to act. But how can the will’s free self-determination with regard even to its ultimate end – which by definition lacks any ratio mali to serve as the rational basis for not seeking it – be reconciled with its nature as the rational appetite? Scotus agrees that it would be against the nature of the will as the rational appetite for it to reject the complete good when the intellect knows it clearly. However, if the will were naturally necessitated to have any act, it would in that case not be acting freely, which would mean that the will sometimes acts freely and sometimes acts by natural necessity. But according to Scotus, this is impossible, because the free mode of action is the essential difference that distinguishes the will from all other powers. Therefore, if the will is free, it must be able not to have an act of willing even the complete good.

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46 See Pickavé, “Que signifie ‘être libre’?,” 92.
47 See for example ST I 82.1 (Piana 501b): “Necesse est quod sicut intellectus ex necessitate inhaereat primis principiis, ita voluntas ex necessitate inhaereat ultimo fini, qui est beatitudo.”
48 Giles of Rome, Quodl. III q. 15 (de Coninck 178a-b) “Beatitudo, quia offertur nobis sub omni ratione boni, necessario est a nobis volita. […] Respectu ergo finis et eius quod apprehenditur sub omni ratione boni, voluntas determinate movetur nec seipsam determinat.”
49 See Henry of Ghent, Quodl. III q. 17 (Badius 79r): “In iis quae fiunt voluntarie propter finem aliquem, finis ipse se habet ad voluntatem et ad operabilia quae sunt ad finem, quia per se, de necessitate, et naturaliter velit illud voluntas et propter illa vult omnia alia quae sunt ad ipsum, inquantum vult illud. Quia igitur bonum simpliciter quod est ultimum et summum bonum et finis unicus omnium, in quo solo potest quiescere appetitus humani animi […] Bonum igitur apprehensionum et cognitum determinate non potest non appeti determinate; et nunc sicut indeterminate cognoscitur in creaturis, indeterminate appetitur.” On Henry’s views on human freedom, see Macken, “La volonté humaine, faculté plus élevée que l’intelligence selon Henri de Gand”; Macken, “Heinrich von Gent im Gespräch mit seinen Zeitgenossen über die menschliche Freiheit.”
good; that is, though it cannot will against something good insofar as it is good, it is free not to elicit any act with regard to any object, including one that completely and in every way satisfies its nature as the rational appetite.

Here I will examine how Scotus argues for this position in distinction 49 of book IV of his *Sentences* commentary. There he poses two related questions: first, whether we necessarily will beatitude as our ultimate end, and secondly, whether everything that is sought is sought for the sake of beatitude. As discussed above, the will should, as the rational appetite, be naturally oriented to its proper end of beatitude. However, it seems that if it were possible for the will not to seek beatitude, it would not even be the rational appetite, for then it would be acting in a way that is contrary to its own nature; it seems therefore that even if the will is free with respect to all intermediate objects, it will seek its primary object of beatitude necessarily. Scotus argues, however, that to concede that the will necessarily wills its ultimate end leads to the conclusion that it wills necessarily in all cases, and is not a free power at all. So it must be that even when the will apprehends its ultimate end, its act of willing that end is not necessitated. He argues for this conclusion by criticizing the position that the will seeks its ultimate end necessarily.

He begins his critique by distinguishing two senses in which the will can be called an appetite:

I say that there is a twofold appetite in the will, namely the natural appetite and the free appetite. By the natural appetite I mean only the power of the will without qualification, but not something added over and above the will; for just as any given nature has a natural inclination to its own perfection, so also an intellectual nature, namely the will, has a natural inclination to its own perfection. The other appetite is the free appetite, which is free willing.

A natural appetite is one that is naturally and determinately inclined to something in relation to which it is perfected, or to that which represents its proper perfection. A stone for example, insofar as it is heavy, is supposed to have as its natural state to be down; thus, it is naturally inclined to being down, and can be said to have a natural appetite for that state. This is the explanation for why a

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50 Scotus also argues for it in book I of his *Sentences* commentary. See discussion in Alliney, “La contingenza della fruizione beatifica nello sviluppo del pensiero di Duns Scoto.”

51 *Rep.* IV-A d. 49 qq. 9-10 §1 (Wadding 10:504-505): “Utrum omnes homines velint de necessitate et summe beatitudinem. [...] Juxta hoc quæritur utrum omnia quae appetuntur appetantur propter beatitudinem.” Note that this text drawn, which is drawn from *Reportatio* IV-A, was printed by Wadding as part of the *Ordinatio* (formerly referred to as the *Opus Oxoniense*); see the editors’ note at Vat. 14:394.

52 *Rep.* IV-A d. 49 qq. 9-10 §2 (Wadding 10:505): “Dico quod duplex est appetitus in voluntate, scilicet naturalis et liber. Naturalem solum dico potentiam voluntatis absolute, sed non aliquid superadditum voluntat; sicut enim quaelibet natura habet inclinationem naturalem ad suam perfectionem, sic etiam natura intellectualis, scilicet voluntas, habet naturalem inclinationem ad suam perfectionem. Alius est appetitus liber qui est velle liberum.”
stone always moves downwards unless something impedes it. \(^{53}\) Likewise, the will, like any nature at all, and insofar as it is the appetite of man \(qua\) man, is naturally inclined to the state of greatest perfection that is proper to it. \(^{54}\) Such an inclination is true of every nature, for if it were not inclined to its own perfection, it would not even be the nature that it is. Thus, insofar as it has a natural appetite for its own perfection, namely beatitude, the will seeks beatitude “necessarily, perpetually, most of all, and it does this in particular.” \(^{55}\)

Scotus explains each of these four conditions as following directly from the conception of a natural appetite. The will seeks beatitude \textit{necessarily} because it is the very definition of a natural appetite that it be inclined to its proper perfection; if a natural appetite were not so inclined it would not even be that appetite. Accordingly, the will seeks beatitude – in the sense of being naturally inclined to it – necessarily. \(^{56}\) Scotus does not provide a separate argument for why the will as natural appetite \textit{perpetually} seeks beatitude, presumably because the same argument applies: if there were ever a moment when the will did not seek beatitude – that is, if it ever were not inclined to beatitude – it would not be the will. It seeks beatitude \textit{most of all (summe)} simply because beatitude is the will’s highest good (\textit{summum bonum}), so by definition there is nothing towards which it could be more inclined than to beatitude. \(^{57}\) Moreover, a natural appetite is not free, and so it does not have power

\(^{53}\) Cf. \textit{Ord.} I d. 17 nn. 69, 89 (Vat. 7:170, 182). Note that this division between the natural will and the free appears on the surface to be related to Scotus’s discussion of the two affections of the will. According to Scotus, the \textit{affectio commodi} is the will insofar as it is naturally inclined to its own perfection as the good that is proper to it, and the \textit{affectio inutilis} is the will insofar as it is able to moderate this natural inclination and seek not just its own good but the good itself. While the terminology of the affections of the will is ultimately derived from Anselm, Scotus’s development of the idea is very different. As Peter King argues, Scotus ultimately turns the affections into a way of conceptualizing how the will can be both an appetite and a free power; see King, “Scotus’s Rejection of Anselm.” For discussion of whether the \textit{affectio commodi} and the natural appetite should be identified in Scotus, see González-Ayesta, “Duns Scotus on the Natural Will.”

\(^{54}\) Scotus states this succinctly at \textit{Ord.} III d. 17 n. 13 (Vat. 9:566-567): “Dico quod ‘appetitus naturalis’, in qualibet re, generali nomine accipitur pro inclinatione naturali rei ad suum proprium perfectionem – sicut lapis inclinatur naturaliter ad centrum; et si in lapide sit inclinationio illa alid absolutum a gravitate, tune consequenter credo quod similiter inclinationis naturalis hominis ‘secundum quod homo’ ad propriam perfectionem, est alid a voluntate libera. Sed primum credo esse falsum…” N.B. the conclusion to the argument that as the natural inclination is not an absolute thing distinct from heaviness, so the natural appetite for beatitude is not an absolute thing distinct from the will as a free power. Cf. \textit{ibid.} n. 18 (Vat. 9:570-571), where Scotus notes that the “natural will” is the inclination of the will as a power to receive passively its proper perfection.

\(^{55}\) \textit{Rep.} IV-A d. 49 qq. 9-10 §3 (Wadding 10:506): “Natura non potest remanere natura quin inincineretur ad suam perfectionem, quia si tollas illam inclinationem, tollis naturam; sed appetitus naturalis non est nisi inclinationis talis; ergo ut sic necessario appetit beatiuminum, quia illa est maxima perfectio.”

\(^{56}\) \textit{Rep.} IV-A d. 49 qq. 9-10 §3 (Wadding 10:506): “Quod de necessitate, patet, quia natura non potest remanere natura quin inincineretur ad suam perfectionem, quia si tollas illam inclinationem, tollis naturam; sed appetitus naturalis non est nisi inclinationis talis; ergo ut sic necessario appetit beatiuminum, quia illa est maxima perfectio.”

\(^{57}\) \textit{Rep.} IV-A d. 49 qq. 9-10 §3 (Wadding 10:506): “Quod summe appetat probo, quia summa inclinationis naturae est ad summam perfectionem; sic enim arguit Philosophus I \textit{Metaphysicae}: ‘si omnes homines natura scire desiderant, ergo maximam scientiam maxime desiderant’ [\textit{Met.} I, 1, 980a22]. Sed summa perfectio voluntatis est beatiuminum; ergo etc.”
over how intensely it seeks its end, but always tends towards it to the greatest degree possible.\textsuperscript{58} The most important condition for the further development of Scotus’s argument is the last one, that the will seeks beatitude not in the abstract or universally, but \textit{in particular}, which is true of the will even insofar as it is a natural appetite. For this Scotus provides two brief arguments. First, a natural appetite is for a real perfection that is intrinsic to the appetite; but since a universal is only a being of the mind, it cannot be a real perfection. Therefore the will seeks particular beatitude, even if considered only insofar as it is a natural appetite.\textsuperscript{59} Secondly, since a universal is only an object of thought, then if beatitude as a universal were the proper object of the will as a natural appetite, the natural inclination of the will would have to presuppose an act of the intellect by which such a universal is apprehended. However, it is only an elicited act of the will that must presuppose an act of the intellect. But Scotus here is drawing a contrast between the will as a natural appetite and the will as the power that freely elicits its acts; the beatitude that the will as a natural appetite seeks therefore cannot be universal, but must be particular.\textsuperscript{60}

Scotus turns next to the other part of the will’s “double appetite,” its free willing. By “free willing” (\textit{liberum velle}), Scotus means not the inclination of the will that follows directly from its nature as the rational appetite, but the act of volition. Unlike the natural appetite for beatitude – which is nothing over and above the will itself as it is naturally inclined to its proper perfection – free volition is something added to the will: it is an elicited act, which is something distinct from the will itself.\textsuperscript{61} But the will can have different objects at different times, and this can happen only by acts that are somehow distinct from each other; the act of volition must therefore be something added to the will. Moreover, when the will does will an object, it undergoes a change from not willing the object to actually willing it. The difference between the will that is not actually willing something and the will that is willing something lies, according to Scotus’s analysis, in the presence or absence of the act

\textsuperscript{58} Rep. IV-A d. 49 qq. 9-10 §3 (Wadding 10:506): “In cuius potestate non est tendere vel non tendere, in eius potestate non est remisse tendere; ergo si voluntas ut natura determinatur necessario ad appetendum beatitudinem, ergo summe.”

\textsuperscript{59} Rep. IV-A d. 49 qq. 9-10 §3 (Wadding 10:506): “Quod in particulari, patet, quia ille appetitus est ad perfectionem intrinsecam realem qua voluntas perfectit; sed perfectio realis non est aliquid universale qua voluntas perfectit, sed particular; ergo etc.”

\textsuperscript{60} Rep. IV-A d. 49 qq. 9-10 §3 (Wadding 10:506): “Praeterea, illud appetere non est actus sequens cognitionem, quia tunc esset liber; universale autem non est nisi obiectum intellectus, vel consequens actum intellectus; ergo ille appetitus non erit nisi beatitudinis in particulari.”

\textsuperscript{61} Cf. Quodl. q. 17 §2 (Wadding 12:459), where Scotus explains that there is also a “natural love” (\textit{dilectio naturalis}) for oneself, but which is an elicited act of the will, unlike the natural inclination to perfection, which is nothing over and above the nature of the will itself as a power.
of willing, or the operation of the will, which is, ontologically speaking, an accidental quality that is received in the will when the will is actually willing an object.\textsuperscript{62}

Since the question is not whether the will has a natural inclination to beatitude, but rather whether the will acts freely or necessarily when it wills beatitude, the sense of ‘seeking’ that is relevant to Scotus’s discussion is only as an elicited act.\textsuperscript{63} Since the will is a free power, it does not elicit its acts necessarily or naturally, but freely. Nevertheless, it is not so clear whether this free volition extends to all objects; for as noted above, some argue that with respect to beatitude the will elicits an act of volition necessarily, precisely because beatitude is the complete good and lacks any basis on which the will could fail to will it. This position is the target of Scotus’s critique:

As for the second article concerning the free appetite, whether everyone seeks beatitude necessarily and most of all with that appetite, there is one opinion which holds that it does seek it universally. The argument for this is that the will cannot not-will something unless there is in it some character of bad or defect of good; but in beatitude universally there is the character of every good, and the privation or negation of every bad; therefore etc. [sc. the will cannot not-will beatitude].\textsuperscript{64}

Scotus is here attacking the position that, despite being a free power and the principle of free action with respect to all finite objects, it nevertheless acts necessarily with respect to the complete good of beatitude. That is, the will cannot refrain from willing beatitude when it is adequately presented by the intellect. Scotus’s target here is Henry of Ghent, who articulates pretty much this view in several of his quodlibetal questions.\textsuperscript{65} As Scotus recounts Henry’s view, the will is free with respect to all particular finite goods, but is necessitated by the complete good of beatitude. The reason is that the will is the rational appetite, which has as its primary object and proper end the attainment of beatitude. Since beatitude is the complete rational good and primary object of the rational appetite, it is unqualifiedly perfective of the rational appetite. Moreover, if the will is an appetite and seeks its objects insofar as they are good, these objects must be in some way oriented to the complete good of beatitude. Scotus rejects Henry’s contention that the will is necessitated with respect to apprehended beatitude. He agrees that freedom is primarily in the will, but goes further than Henry

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\textsuperscript{62} I discuss this in greater detail below in section 2.3.

\textsuperscript{63} Indeed, Scotus concedes that the will does necessarily will beatitude, but only in the sense that it is necessarily inclined to it; see his response to the first argument at Rep. IV-A d. 49 qq. 9-10 §14 (Wadding 10:539).

\textsuperscript{64} Rep. IV-A d. 49 qq. 9-10 §4 (Wadding 10:512): “Quantum ad secundum articulum de appetitu libero, an omnes illo appetitu necessario et summe appetant beatitudinem, est una opinio quae dicit quod sic in universali. Ratio ad hoc est, voluntas non potest non velle aliquid nisi in eo sit aliqua ratio mali vel defectus boni; sed in beatitudine in universali est ratio omnis boni et privatio vel negatio omnis mali; ergo etc.”

\textsuperscript{65} Scotus’s source for the position he summarizes here seems to be Henry’s Quodl. III q. 17 (Badius 78-79). See also Spruyt, “Duns Scotus’s Criticism of Henry of Ghent’s Notion of Free Will.”
and holds that the will is not necessitated to act by any object at all, and tries to show that no other position succeeds in safeguarding the possibility of free action.

Scotus makes several arguments. The first has to do with whether beatitude should be taken as a universal or a particular. According to the view in question, beatitude is the general object under which all particular objects of the will can be subsumed. It is has the complete character of good, of which all particular goods are instances; since there is no character of evil in it, there is no basis on which the will could possibly not will it, and so the will necessarily wills it. Scotus argues, however, that it is self-contradictory to hold that we necessarily seek beatitude taken universally, but not beatitude as a particular:

If beatitude apprehended as a universal is sought necessarily because of the fact that there is in it the entire character of good, and no character of evil or defect of good, and yet this is found more fully in particular beatitude than in universal beatitude, then it follows that everyone would necessarily seek beatitude, or the end apprehended in particular, which is false.66

Scotus is thus reiterating the point he makes in his discussion of the natural appetite of the will, namely, that something that exists as a particular is more perfect than something that exists only as a universal, since a particular exists in itself whereas a universal exists only as an object of the intellect. But if Henry holds that the will is necessitated by universal beatitude because of its character of good and absence of bad, then he will have to admit that the will is even more necessitated by particular beatitude, which is a real thing and therefore more perfect than universal beatitude, which is only a mental being; and in that case we would also necessitated by a particular object, which is exactly what Henry denies.67

Scotus also appeals to the way in which the will depends on the intellect. If the intellect apprehends the end in particular without any more doubt than when it apprehends the universal end, there is no reason why the will should seek one necessarily but not the other.68 Therefore, if the will is free, it is in no way necessitated by the object that is presented by the intellect, for if it were thus necessitated,

66 Rep. IV-A d. 49 q. 9-10 §4 (Wadding 10:512): “[Haec opinio] contradictionem implicat, scilicet quod omnes necessario beatitudinem appetant in universali et non in particulari, quia si beatitudo in universali apprehensa necessario appetitur propter hoc quod est in ea omnis ratio boni, et nulla ratio mali nec defectus boni, cum hoc in beatitudine particulari plenius inventiur quam in beatitudine universali; sequitur ergo quod tune beatitudinem sive finem apprehensum in particulari omnes appeterent, quod est falsum.”

67 Rep. IV-A d. 49 q. 9-10 §4 (Wadding 10:512): “Nullum universale includit maiorem perfectionem quam aliquod particulare suum, immo maiorem, quia omne particular addit perfectionem super universali; ergo beatitudo in universali non est perfectior quam in particulari.”

68 Rep. IV-A d. 49 q. 9-10 §5 (Wadding 10:512): “Si intellectus non plus dubitat de fine in particulari quam in universali, quare non appetet? Non videtur ratio. Sed quod idem appetat necessario et non appetat necessario est contradictio.”
it would be moved to its act by an act of the intellect; but this is impossible because the will is the higher power, and a higher power cannot be moved by a lower power. Indeed, since the will moves the intellect to its acts, then if it did will beatitude necessarily, it would always move the intellect to consider only beatitude and the means to beatitude:

If the higher cause acts necessarily, it also by the same necessity moves the lower causes to doing the acts that are necessary for its own actions. Therefore, since the intellect’s act of apprehension is required for the act of the will, it follows that if the will wills beatitude necessarily, it will determine the intellect to always contemplating beatitude.\(^{69}\)

It is obviously not true that the intellect is always directed to the consideration of beatitude, so one of the premises of the syllogism must be false. However, it is true that the will is a higher power than the intellect (for it directs all the other powers), so Scotus concludes that the will does not will beatitude necessarily, but only contingently, whether this is beatitude taken universally or as a particular object of volition, even if the presentation of the intellect is certain.\(^{70}\)

One outcome of Scotus’s argument here is a way of reconciling the free action of the will with its natural inclination. Although the will is free when it elicits an act – that is, it is not necessitated, but rather elicits its act contingently – nevertheless, as the rational appetite it still has a natural inclination for beatitude. For this reason, it is difficult for a just person to choose death, even if he or she judges rightly that this is the just action, because it goes against the natural inclination for one’s own good. However, to act according to inclination is easier and more pleasant than to act against inclination; thus, it can be said that the will usually wills its ultimate end of blessedness, even though it is not necessitated to will it.\(^{71}\)

Finally, in response to the objection that the will by nature could not fail to will beatitude when clearly presented, Scotus draws his full conclusion about the way in which the will elicits its act. The objection is the following:

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\(^{69}\) *Rep.* IV-A d. 49 qq. 9-10 §5 (Wadding 10:513): “Causa superior si necessario agit, eadem necessitate movet causas inferiores ad agendum actiones suae actioni necessarias. Cum ergo ad actum voluntatis requiratur apprehensio intellectus, sequitur quod si voluntas necessario velit beatitudinem, quod determinabit intellectum ad semper considerandum de beatitudine, quod est falsum.”

\(^{70}\) *Rep.* IV-A d. 49 qq. 9-10 §6 (Wadding 10:513): “Dico ergo quod contingenter vult finem, tam in universali et in particulari, quamvis ut in pluribus vult utrumque, quando non dubitat in quo sit in particulari.”

\(^{71}\) *Rep.* IV-A d. 49 qq. 9-10 §6 (Wadding 10:513): “Iustus homo etiam cum quocumque habitu cum dificultate eligit mortem et est sibi materia patientiae, quia contra appetitum naturalem; cum ergo omnes appetitum naturali appetant beatitudinem (ut dictum est) sequitur quod voluntas ut in pluribus velit beatitudinem.” Scotus examines in detail the connection between inclination and pleasure in the context of his discussion of whether Christ suffered sadness on the cross; see *Ord.* III d. 15 (Vat. 9:477 ff.) and discussion in Drummond, “John Duns Scotus on the Passions of the Will.”
If (according to Augustine in the previously cited passage) we cannot will misery, then I unqualifiedly and necessarily reject misery; but it also follows that if I necessarily reject misery, then I necessarily will beatitude. That this follows is clear on two grounds: first, because there no less a proportion of beatitude to willing than of misery to rejecting. Secondly, an act of rejecting is always in virtue of some volition, for I reject something because I will something else (as was said above by appeal to Anselm); but a cause is more perfect than its effect; therefore, I will beatitude more necessarily than I reject misery.\footnote{Rep. IV-A d. 49 q. 9-10 §8 (Wadding 10:513): “Si secundum Augustinum in praedicta auctoritate non possumus velle miseriam, ergo simpliciter et necessario nolo miseriam; sed sequitur, necessario nolo miseriam, ergo necessario volo beatitudinem. Haec consequentia patet dupliciter: primo, quia non est minor proportio beatitudinis ad velle quam miseriae ad nolle. Secundo sic, quia actus nolendi numquam est nisi in virtute allicuius volitionis; ideo enim nolo aliquid, quia volo aliud, ut dictum est supra per Anselnum; sed causa est perfectior suo effectu; ergo magis necessario volo beatitudinem quam nolo miseriam.”}

Leaving aside the point that an act of rejecting or “nilling” (nolle) presupposes an act of volition (velle), the more important question is whether the impossibility of eliciting an act of nolition with respect to beatitude entails the necessity of eliciting an act of willing with respect to beatitude. This is precisely what Scotus denies:

Just as with respect to something bad that is shown [sc. by the intellect to the will] I can elicit no act of the will except nilling, so with respect to something good that is offered I can elicit no act of the will except willing, and so the argument must be as follows: I cannot will to be miserable, and therefore I cannot hate beatitude. But from this it does not follow that I necessarily will beatitude, since no [act of] willing is necessarily elicited by the will.\footnote{Rep. IV-A d. 49 q. 9-10 §8 (Wadding 10:513): “Sicut circa malum ostensum non possum elicere actum voluntatis nisi nolle, sic circa bonum ostentum non possum elicere actum voluntatis nisi velle, et ideo debet sic argui: non possum elicere actum voluntatis nisi nolle, sed potest se suspendere. Et sic argui: non possum nolere beatitudinem, nisi possum elicere actum voluntatis.”}

Scotus thus concedes that the only act that the will can elicit with respect to beatitude is a positive act of willing; for since beatitude is by definition the complete good for the will, to positively reject it would be contrary to the will’s nature. However, the will is an essentially self-determining power, and so every act of the will is elicited without necessity, even when beatitude is clearly presented:

And if you say that if [the will] does not necessarily will beatitude nor necessarily hates misery, what kind of act then will it have with respect to beatitude when it shown to it by the intellect? I say that in most cases it has an act of willing, but it does not necessarily have some act; rather, it can suspend itself from every act, even when beatitude is shown [to it by the intellect].\footnote{Rep. IV-A d. 49 q. 9-10 §10 (Wadding 10:514): “Et si dicas quod si non necessario velit beatitudinem, nec necessario odit beatitudinem, qualem ergo actum habebit circa beatitudinem quando sibi ab intellectu ostenditur? Dico quod in pluribus habet actum volendi, sed non necessario aliquem actum, sed potest se suspendere ab omni acto, ostensa beatitudine.” In arguing that the will acts in a non-necessary way even in the case of the beatific vision, Scotus seems to have taken a more extreme view than any of his predecessors, even someone like Henry of Ghent, who takes an otherwise similar position on the essential freedom of the will, but holds that the will is necessitated with respect to beatitude (though its act remains free); see Pickavé, “Que signifie ‘Être libre’?,” 92 note 3. Moreover, even Scotus’s own}
Scotus makes one further argument against our necessarily willing beatitude by arguing that if we were not able to suspend ourselves from willing beatitude, we would be necessitated in every case by a good object. This is because even if we do not know the ultimate end, all finite appetible objects are nevertheless naturally ordered to the complete and ultimate good of beatitude, which is the primary appetible object; for if they were not so ordered, they would not fall under the primary object of the will and so could not be objects of the will at all. But it could be argued that then the will would be necessitated by every appetible object, simply insofar as it is naturally ordered to the will’s defining end of beatitude. Scotus replies by arguing that this sort of determination applies only to good objects, but does not extend to the nature of will as a power. That is, although the will is ordered to willing the good, and all good objects are as such ordered to the complete good, it does not follow that the will wills each finite good insofar as it is ordered to the complete good; rather it can will each finite good insofar as it is good in itself.

Scotus’s conclusion that the will is able to refrain from willing any given object has important implications for how it is distinguished from other powers. In having such mastery over its own actions, the will seems to be indeterminate in a way that not even the intellect is. Though the intellect is a power for opposites in the sense that it is capable of knowing either of two opposites, it is nevertheless determinate in the sense that it necessarily cognizes whatever knowable object is present to it. Scotus concedes that the situation with the will is similar: if the will does elicit an act with respect to beatitude, that act will necessarily be an act of willing and cannot be an act of nilling, and if it elicits an act with respect to misery, that act will necessarily be an act of nilling. Unlike the intellect, however, the will is not determined to its act by the presence of an object to eliciting an act, for if it were it would not have mastery over its own acts and so would not act freely. Therefore, it must be that the will has the power not to elicit an act with regard to beatitude, not merely by

followers in the early fourteenth century seem to have drawn back from his view on how we will beatitude; see Alliney, “Libertà e contingenza della fruizione beatifica.”

Note, however, that on Scotus’s account, what allows for positively willing wrongly is the possibility of considering an object other than the ultimate end as good in itself and not as ordered to a further end; see Rep. IV-A d. 49 qq. 9-10 §15 (Wadding 10:540).

Rep. IV-A d. 49 qq. 9-10 §16 (Wadding 10:541): “Dicendum quod primum appetibile in se est causa omnium appetibilium, non tamen in ordine ad potentiam, nisi sit potentia talis quae non potest nisi ordinate velle vel tendere in obiectum; talis autem non est voluntas ut est libera.” Cf. ibid. §14 (Wadding 10:539): “Sicut veritas conclusionis ordinatur ad veritatem principii et praemissarum, sic bonitas eorum sunt ad finem ordinatur ad finem, et ideo comparando principia ad obiecta et fines, vera est propositio; sed comparando ad potentiam vera non est.”
2. The Will as a Freely Self-Moving Power

Note that Scotus does not mean to say that in addition to willing and nilling, the will is capable of a third kind of act of refraining from willing an object. For either the refraining is not an act at all, and is simply the absence of an act (for if the will has its acts in its own power, it follows that it must be able not to have any given act that it is capable of eliciting), or it is a second-order act of willing, the object of which is the first-order act, in which case it is not a third kind of volition besides willing and rejecting. Scotus entertains this latter solution in question 16 of his Quodlibet:

I do not understand this in such a way that the will can voluntarily suspend every one of its acts and can voluntarily not will that object; but in that case it has another act of willing, namely a willing that turns upon its own act, namely, “I now will not to elicit an act concerning this object.” And it can very well do this from itself, since otherwise it would not be able to suspend every act after deliberation.  

Refraining from acting would thus be simply a reflexive act of the will that takes as its object the first-order act. It may be that there is never a moment when the will is presented with a suitable object but elicits no act at all; rather, when the will does not elicit an act with regard to a given object, it elicits an act with regard to some other object, such as willing reflexively to refrain from acting on what the intellect presents, or directing the intellect to consider some other object.

However, Scotus’s point in his discussion of whether the will necessarily wills beatitude is that in order for the will to be capable of even this kind of reflexive self-control, in which it wills not to elicit an act with regard to a given object, it must have a more fundamental power over whether it wills in the first place. Without that, there is no way to explain how the will is free to turn to some

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77 At *Ord.* I d. 1 n. 56 (Var. 2:106), Scotus gives a slightly different way of reconciling the will’s freedom with its nature as the rational appetite by appealing to the basis of the suitability of an object. In general an object is suitable to an appetite to the degree that the appetite would be perfected if it were brought to actuality in being united with that object by way of an act. Since by definition an appetite would be fully satisfied in attaining its ultimate end, that end is maximally suitable to the appetite, there seems again to be no possibility (leaving aside external impediment) for the appetite not to tend towards it, since no other object can incline the appetite to the same degree. Thus, since the complete good is maximally suitable to the will as the appetite for the good, it seems to be impossible for the will not to will it when it is available to it. Scotus’s response to this is again to appeal to the will’s freedom. In general, an object is apt to be suitable to a power if it would perfect the power that seeks it. In the case of natural powers, what is apt to be suitable is also actually suitable by nature; in the case of the will, by contrast, a perfective object remains only aptitudinally suitable, until the will freely wills it as an end, in which case it becomes actually suitable. Scotus thus deals with this apparent challenge to the freedom of the will by subordinating a power’s inclination to its essential nature: that is, the will is of such a nature as to be inclined to the complete good, but is actually so inclined only because of the will’s free act of loving it. See discussion of this point in Williams, “The Libertarian Foundations of Scotus’s Moral Philosophy,” 211–213.

78 *Quodl.* q. 16 (Noone & Roberts 169): “Hoc non intelligo sic quod possit voluntarie suspendere ommem actum suum, sed voluntarie potest non velIe illud objectum; sed tunc habet aliu velIe, scilicet reflexivum super suum actum, istud scilicet, ‘volo modo non elicere actum circa istud objectum’. Et hoc bene potest ex se, alioquin non posset ommem actum suspendere post deliberationem.”
other object. This more fundamental power is rooted in the very freedom of the will as a freely self-determining active power. Thus, to say that the will has the power not to elicit an act with regard to a given object is not to assign to it the capacity of refraining from eliciting an act in addition to the capacity to will or nill. Rather, the capacity of the will to refrain from acting with regard to any given object follows from the will’s essential mode of action: because the will determines itself to its act, no act of volition is ever fully necessitated by the conditions in which it can be caused, and no impediment is required to explain why it should not take place. For Scotus, to say that the will is a free power means that, given any set of conditions that would determine it to act if it were a natural power, the will still contingently determines itself to that act, and it is therefore possible for the will not to have that act.

In the end, Scotus asserts that the fact that the will is not necessitated to any of its acts can be confirmed by experience. He observes that the fact that we are able to refrain from any given act of willing is evident from introspection, since we directly experience that we are capable of not willing whatever we do will.\(^79\) It is worth noting, however, that Scotus does not appeal to such introspection in the course of his argument, but mentions it only in conclusion as the phenomenon that required justification and explanation. Others had already argued that the will is able to refrain from willing whatever is presented to it, but they typically explained this in terms of the will’s pre-eminence over the intellect, such that the will is able to direct the intellect to consider something else, and is thus not necessitated by any given object that it presents as good. Scotus, however, argues that such an answer, in allowing that the act of the will is nevertheless determined by what intellect presents, fails to safeguard human freedom, since the intellect in itself is not free. If the will is the principle of free action, it must be capable of moving itself to its own acts of volition without any determination by the intellect or anything other than the will itself.\(^80\)

\(^79\) Rep. IV-A d. 49 qq. 9-10 §10 (Wadding 10:514): “Hoc potest quilibet experiri in seipso, cum quis offert sibi aliquod bonum, et etiam ostendit bonum ut bonum considerandum et volendum, potest se ab hoc avertere, et nullum actum voluntatis circa hoc eliciere.”

\(^80\) Here one might object that at least in the case of the beatific act of loving God, the will does act necessarily, since Scotus maintains that God will then prevent our will from turning away from him; Scotus explains this, however, as an instance of a higher power impeding a lower power, for the divine will is a higher power than the created will and can thus impede it from acting otherwise. God’s preventing the beatified will from turning away from Him therefore does not compromise the nature of the created will as a power free from natural determination either in itself or by a cause of the same or a lower order than itself. See Ord. IV d. 49 q. 6 nn. 348-371 (Vat. 14:376-383), with discussion (to be used with caution) in Langston, God’s Willing Knowledge, 39–44.
2.3 How can there be a self-determining power?

In the texts that I have discussed so far, Scotus argues that any other position than that the will determines itself to its actions fails to establish that we act freely at all, and so it must be concluded that the will is fully master of its own acts if we are capable of free action at all. However, he does not establish that such freedom is possible or how it would be possible. In this concluding section, I will explain how Scotus does this through a detailed discussion of the possibility of self-motion in his questions on book IX of Aristotle’s Metaphysics, where he develops the metaphysical framework within which the will’s free activity is to be explained. This framework is primarily that of the active and passive principles through which any instance of causation can be explained, including the production of an act of volition in the will by the will itself. I will therefore begin with his general account of active and passive powers; then I will explain how he rejects arguments against self-motion in general by establishing that it is at least not metaphysically impossible for something to be both the active cause of a certain effect and the recipient of that same effect; in other words, that self-motion is possible, and indeed must be the mode of action of powers of the soul like the will and the intellect. Finally, I will examine his treatment of the will as set apart from all other self-moving powers by its free mode of determining itself to its act.

2.3.1 Active and passive potencies

Scotus develops his account of how the will is self-moving and self-determining on the basis of a general understanding of what active and passive powers are. Scotus therefore begins his analysis at a very high level of abstraction by distinguishing and explaining how a real power is different from other kinds of potency. Most relevantly, potentia can refer to different kinds of real potency: to powers such as the will, which are principles of certain effects; or to potentiality, which is the mode of being that is opposed to actuality. But a potential being can be made actual only by some real power, and conversely a being depends on a power for it being actual. Thus, the two senses of potency as potentiality and power are, as Scotus points out, closely intertwined with each other:

In one way, ‘potency’ refers to a certain mode of being; in another way, it brings in specifically the character of a principle. There is a doubt about which of these the

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81 The metaphysical underpinnings of how self-motion is possible are developed in detail over the course of Scoto’s questions on Metaphysics IX. This text has received a thorough analysis in King, “Duns Scotus on the Reality of Self-Change.” Scoto’s views on self-motion are also discussed in a broader context in Effler, John Duns Scotus and the Principle “Omne Quod Movetur Ab Allo Movetur.” Simona Vucu has brought it to my attention that much of Scoto’s account in his questions on Metaphysics IX is apparently a response to Henry of Ghent’s discussion of self-motion in his Quodl. XIV q. 2 (Badius 558v-562r).
name was first imposed on and then transferred to the other. If it was first imposed to signify a certain mode of being, then since it does not suit that kind of being unless by way of some principle of it by which it is able to exist, the name ‘potency’ can suitably be transferred to the principle inasmuch as it is that by which a possible being is able to exist (and not formally that by which, but causally). Similarly, if it was first imposed on the principle by which a thing is able to exist, then it can be transferred to signifying generally the mode of being that is like that which the thing principiates has in its principle.82

Regardless of whether it can be established which kind of potency is prior and which is derivative, the important point is that a principle is a kind of real potency that is distinct from the potency in the sense of potentiality that is opposed to actuality.83 Moreover, insofar as a principle is the principle of some real effect (as a power like the will is the principle of its acts), it remains a real potency regardless of whether or not it is currently causing those effects; in Scotus’s words, “something is no less really a principle when it actually principiates then when it does not principiate but can principiate.”84 This is an important point for Scotus in addressing some of the objections to self-motion that rely on the impossibility of something being both potential and actual in the same respect at the same time; for if he can treat power as a real potency that is distinct from potentiality as a division of being, then the objection is disarmed.85

Having established that a principle is a real potency distinct from metaphysical potency (i.e. merely possible or potential being), Scotus can now develop the metaphysical framework that will provide the general explanation of causation. Scotus develops his discussion in terms of principles. A

82 In Met. IX qq. 1-2 n. 14 (OPh 4:512): “Ad solutiones istarum quaestionum oportet distinguere de potentia. Uno modo potentia dicit modum quendam entis. Alio modo specialiter importat rationem principii. Cui autem istorum fuerit nomen prius impositum, et inde ad alid translatum, dubium est. Si tamen primo imponebatur ad significandum modum quendam entis, cum iste non conveniat enti tali nisi per aliquod eius principium per quod potest esse, convenienter potest nomen potentiae transferri ad principium tamquam ad illud quo possibile potest esse, non ‘quo’ formaliter, sed causaliter. — Similiter, si primo imponebatur principio per quod res potest esse, potest transferri ad significandum generaliter modum essendi similem illi quem habet principiatum in principio.”

83 Scotus also deals briefly with two main kinds of non-real potency. One is mathematical potency, which is potency in only a metaphorical sense, as a point can be said to be potentially a line or a line potentially a square, but this potency is only by imagining a point extending to a line or a line broadening to a square; see In Met. IX qq. 1-2 n. 17 (OPh 4:513). The other is logical potency, which refers to the non-incompatibility of terms, so that a thing is at least logically possible if its definition does not contain a contradiction; as Scotus remarks, logical possibility is a necessary condition for something to be really possible, but this does not constitute its real possibility. See In Met. IX qq. 1-2 n. 18 (OPh 4:514): “Illa potentia est modus quidam compositionis factus ab intellectu, causatus ex habitudine terminorum illius compositionis, scilicet quia non repugnant. Et igitur communiter correspondeat sibi in re aliqua potentia realis, tamen hoc non est per se de ratione huius potentiae.” See also King, “Duns Scotus on Possibilities, Powers, and the Possible,” 176–181.

84 In Met. IX qq. 1-2 n. 15 (OPh 4:512): “Non minus realiter est aliquid principium quando actu principiat quam quando non principiat sed potest principiare.”

85 Note that Scotus goes on in the rest of In Met. IX qq. 1-2 to discuss the various senses in which one can talk of a metaphysical potency. For discussion, see King, “Duns Scotus on Possibilities, Powers, and the Possible,” 192–199.
principle as such, in Scotus’s discussion, need not be a distinct entity, but can be merely a formal aspect of a being in virtue of which certain results follow. Scotus tries to make this clear by an analogy: just as heat is that by which a hot thing is hot, so a principle is that by which something principiates.  

Thus, insofar as a thing in nature has a principle, it can be the cause of a certain effect. The will, for example, is the cause of acts of volition insofar as it has the principle by which a volition is brought about. The language of principiation with which Scotus develops his account here can be fairly directly translated into the language of causation: as a principle is that by which something principiates and produces that which is principiated (the principiatum), so a cause causes a certain effect (that which is caused, or the causatum).

A crucial point for the argument that Scotus ultimately makes for the possibility of self-motion is that principles can be either active or passive. This follows from the more general postulate that when a principle principiates its principiatum – i.e. when it produces that of which it is the principle – it has to be related to something at which that production terminates. Scotus then examines what can be identified as the terminus of such a relation. Obviously, one way in which a principle can have a corresponding term is in its relation to the principiatum of which it is the principle. But a principle can also be related to another principle, and it takes both principles together for principiation to occur:

Not only does a principle have a relation to that which is principiated – as an efficient [cause is related] to the effect, or matter to that which is enmattered – but also one principle has a relation to another principle, since whether they are extrinsic or intrinsic, the one and the other never cause unless they are somehow united with each other and concur, because no one cause suffices to cause that which depends essentially on more than one cause.

The important point here is that when two principles together are involved in an instance of principiation, one principle is active and the other is passive. Take for example heat: fire is able to heat things because it has the active principle of causing heat; but fire doesn’t do anything in virtue of

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86 In Met. IX q.q. 3-4 n. 19 (OPh 4:542): “Sicut enim calor est quo calidum est calidum, et ita respectu eius abstractum, ita principium est quo principians principiat.”

87 Peter King suggests that principles stand to causes as genus to species; see King, “Duns Scotus on the Reality of Self-Change,” 230. One possible motive for explaining causation in terms of the abstract structure of principiation is to allow room to give an account of how the persons of the Trinity are produced without resorting to the language of the Aristotelian causes, which imply a process of change (for the Trinity is eternal and its production involves no change).

88 In Met. IX q.q. 3-4 n. 25 (OPh 4:545): “Principium non tantum habet relationem ad principiatum, et tale principium ad tale principiatum — puta efficiens ad effectum, materia ad materiatum —, sed etiam unum principium respectum habet ad aliud principium. Quia sive sint extrinsecas sive intrinsecas, haec et illa mutuo numquam causant nisi inter se aliquo modo uniantur et concurrant, quia nulla una causa sufficit ad causandum illud quod dependet a multis causis essentialiter”
of this principle unless it is brought into proximity with something that can be heated, such as a block of wood. In other words, only when the active principle of heating is brought together with the passive principle for being heated does heating occur. To bring it back to the abstract level, when two corresponding active and passive principles, which are such that they can actuate or be actuated, are brought together, principiation occurs, and the result is a *principiatum*.

### 2.3.2 How a self-moving power is possible

This abstract account of active and passive principles that are in a certain relation to each other provides the framework for explaining how the will can be a self-moving power. Recall that causation is treated as a specific case of the more general phenomenon of principiation. For principiation to occur, there must be an active principle that is able to bring about some effect, and a passive principle in which the effect can be brought about; when the corresponding active and passive principles are brought together in the right way, principiation occurs, and the end result of principiation is something principiated or a *principiatum*. Causation can be explained in terms of this general model: for a real effect to be caused, there must be an active cause that is the principle of bringing it about and a passive cause in which it is brought about; when the active cause and the passive cause are brought together in the right way, causation occurs, and the end result is that which is caused or the *causatum*. In causation that occurs in nature, the *causatum* will be an accidental form that is brought about in the subject that is the passive cause, i.e. the subject that has the relevant passive principle corresponding to the active principle in virtue of which the active cause acts. This can best be explained with an example, such as the case of a fire that heats up a block of wood. In this case, the fire has an active principle by which it is able to heat, and the wood has a passive principle in virtue of which it is capable of being heated. When the fire and the wood are brought together, heating actually occurs: the fire heats and the wood is heated up. The outcome of this instance of causation is that the wood, in virtue of its passive principle of being heated, receives the accidental form of heat.

Scotus addresses the question of self-motion in the same terms as in the case of fire causing heat in wood, but with the difference that the active cause and the passive cause are the very same thing. Thus, in order to show that self-motion is possible, Scotus will have to show that it is possible for something to be both active and passive in the same respect at the same time. This raises a difficulty, however, for it was widely held that this is simply impossible. Most notably, Godfrey of Fontaines

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argues against self-motion on the basis of what he takes to be a basic metaphysical principle, that nothing is both actual and potential in the same respect at the same time, and therefore nothing can be active and passive in the same respect at the same time. For if a subject causes a change in itself, it will be in both act and potency in the same respect at the same time; this is because a real change is treated in Aristotelian physics as the passive reception of a new accident in a subject that it did not have before. But in order for the passive cause to receive the new accident, the active cause of the change must already have it; for example, a fire can cause heat in the wood only because the fire is already actually hot, and thus can move the wood from being potentially hot to being actually hot. In the same way, argues Godfrey, if a power moved itself to its act, it would have to have the form (i.e. its operation) already in actuality in order to move itself from potentially having it. But then it would follow that the power has the act both actually and potentially at the same time; however, this is impossible because actuality and potentiality are mutually exclusive divisions of being, and so the same form cannot be present in a subject both potentially and actually at the same time; it therefore cannot be both the active cause and the passive cause of the form, and so true self-motion is impossible.

Scotus responds to this objection by arguing that the conclusion that self-motion is impossible does not follow from the mutual exclusion of potentiality and actuality in the same respect at the same time. He does so within his framework of active and passive principles, and the first crucial step is his proof that it is not impossible for an active principle and the corresponding passive principle to be in the same subject. If he can establish this conclusion, then he will have established minimally that self-motion – understood as something being both the agent and the recipient of an accidental form – is not metaphysically impossible. To set up the argument, he first clarifies the way in which corresponding active and passive principles are related to each other: each is the primary object of the other, but the primary object of each, even if it is taken individually, is not another individual, but a kind:

Any active thing whatsoever is related to [respicit] a certain kind of passive thing as its primary object, but not a particular passive thing. For example, that [thing] in general which is capable of causing heat, as much as any given [particular thing] that is capable of causing heat, is related to that which can be heated in general as its primary object, not to this or that [particular thing that can be heated]. Similarly in the reverse: a passive thing, insofar as it can be heated, is related to that which can heat as its primary object, not to a particular [thing that can heat] but to that which

90 On the broader context of Godfrey’s objections, see Wippel, “Godfrey of Fontaines and the Act-Potency Axiom.”
2. THE WILL AS A FREELY SELF-MOVING POWER

heats in general.91

By ‘primary object’ Scotus means the most general aspect of a thing in virtue of which it can be the object of a power, and which in a way defines the power as the power it is. To take a specific example, the primary object of the power of sight is colour in general, under which fall all the specific colours and their particular instances, each of which is a *per se* object of sight. Thus, in Scotus’s example of heat, the primary object of that which can heat is not any particular heatable thing, but “the heatable” in general. Moreover, this is true whether that which can heat is taken generally or as a particular: any particular thing, insofar as it can heat, has as its primary object the heatable in general. The same is true of the passive power for being heated: the primary object of a particular thing, insofar as it can be heated, is “that which heats” in general.

Scotus exploits the distinction between the primary object of a power and its *per se* object to make his general argument for the non-impossibility of self-motion. First, he argues that the very same thing can be both passive and active with respect to the same effect:

> From this it follows that anything that is contained under the primary object of something is a *per se* object of that same thing. Any given thing that can heat is related to any given thing that can be heated as a *per se* object (and conversely, any given thing that can be heated [looks to] any given thing that can be heated [looks to] any given thing that can heat [as a *per se* object]). But it is possible that something is active with respect to *a* in the same way in which something else is active with respect to *a*; and as well, [it is possible that] that same thing is passive with respect to *a* as some other passive thing is passive with respect to *a*.92

That is, the primary object of the active power to heat is that which can be heated in general, even when the active power is in some particular thing; it follows that any particular thing that has the passive principle for being heated can be a *per se* object of the power to heat. But there is nothing that prevents a thing that can be heated from itself being able in turn to heat something else, and in general there is no self-contradiction in claiming that a thing that is active in a certain respect can also be passive in the same respect; in other words, it is possible for something that has a certain

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91 *In Met.* IX q. 14 n. 24 (OPh 4:631): “Activum quodcumque pro primo obiecto respicit passivum tale, non hoc passivum. Verbi gratia, tam calefactibile in communi quam quodcumque calefactivum pro primo obiecto respicit calefactibile in communi, non hoc vel illud. Similiter e converso, passivum, ut calefactibile, et hoc sive in communi sive quodcumque calefactibile, respicit pro primo obiecto calefactivum, non hoc sed in communi.”

92 *In Met.* IX q. 14 n. 24 (OPh 4:631): “Ex his sequitur quod quodlibet contentum sub primo obiecto alicuius sit per se obiectum eiusdem. Et quodcumque calefactivum respicit quodcumque calefactibile pro per se obiecto; et e converso, quodcumque calefactibile, quodcumque calefactivum. Sed possibile est quod alicuium sit activum secundum *a* eodem modo quo alicuium alium est activum secundum *a*; idem etiam sit passivum secundum *a* sicut quodcumque alium passivum est passivum secundum *a*. Ergo illud in ratione activi ita habet se ipsum pro obiecto in ratione passivi sicut quodcumque alium; ergo ita potest in se agere, sicut in alium.”
active principle to have the corresponding passive principle as well. From this, he concludes that it is possible for something to act on itself, at least in the sense that no metaphysical principle prohibits it:

Therefore, that thing, under the aspect of being active, has itself as an object under the aspect of being passive in the same way as [it has] some other thing; therefore, it can act on itself just as it [can act] on something else.\(^\text{93}\)

That is, if some single thing has the active and passive principles that correspond to one another, there is no reason why it cannot produce in itself the effect that follows from those principles being united.

Scotus concludes his general argument by dealing with a likely objection: something acting on itself is tantamount to the impossible situation of a circle of causation. He explains in a similarly abstract fashion as in the main argument how this objection is answered:

If \(a\) is essentially a form that is active with respect to \(b\), and \(a\) is in \(c\), no one denies that it is active with respect to \(b\) being brought about in \(d\). And conversely, if \(a\) were in \(d\), it would be an active principle with respect to \(b\) in \(c\). Therefore, if \(a\) is in \(c\) and in \(d\), and both \(c\) and \(d\) are in potency to \(b\), then \(c\) and \(d\) will mutually act on each other as regards \(a\) by mutually producing \(b\) in each other. But it seems just as incoherent for the same thing to be active and passive with respect to the same [subject] according to the same [effect] as for the same thing with respect to itself [sc. as a subject], since the situation is similar in other cases: just as nothing is the cause of itself, so it is not possible for there to be a circle in causes such that the same thing with respect to the same thing is the cause and that which is caused. Therefore if the first is possible, so is the second.\(^\text{94}\)

The argument here is more or less as follows:

1. Let \(a\) be a form that has the active principle for the \(principiatum\, b\).
2. Let \(c\) be a subject that has the active form \(a\) (i.e. \(c\) has the active principle for \(b\)).
3. Let \(d\) be a subject in subjective potency for \(principiatum\, b\) (i.e. \(d\) has the passive principle for receiving \(b\)).
4. Therefore, subject \(c\) (which has form \(a\)) can cause form \(b\) in subject \(d\).

\(^{93}\text{In Met. IX q. 14 n. 24 (OPh 4:631): “Ergo illud in ratione activi ita habet se ipsum pro obiecto in ratione passivi sicut quocumque alius; ergo ita potest in se agere, sicut in aliud.”}\

\(^{94}\text{In Met IX q. 14 n. 30 (OPh 4:633-634): “Si \(a\) per se sit forma activa respectu \(b\), et \(a\) sit in \(c\), nullus negat quin est activa respectu \(b\) fiendi in \(d\). Et e converso, si \(a\) esset in \(d\), esset principium activum respectu \(b\) in \(c\). Ergo si \(a\) est et in \(c\) et in \(d\), et tam \(c\) quam \(d\) sint in potentia ad \(b\), et \(c\) et \(d\) agent in se mutuo secundum \(a\), producendo in se mutuo \(b\). Sed tantum videtur inconveniens idem respectu eiusdem secundum idem esse activum et passivum, sicut idem respectu sui. Quia in aliis est simile quod sicut nihil est causa sui ita nec circulus possibilis in causis, ut idem respectu eiusdem sit causa et causatum. Ergo, si primum est possibile, et secundum etiam.”}
5. But suppose that \( a \) is also in \( d \) and that \( c \) also can receive \( b \).
6. Therefore (by 1. and 5.), \( d \) can cause \( b \) in \( c \).
7. Therefore (by 4. and 6.), \( c \) and \( d \) can cause \( b \) in each other.
8. However, this is not different from the case of \( a \) being both the active and the passive cause of \( b \).
9. Therefore, it is not absolutely impossible for something to be both the active and passive cause of the same effect.

To bring it down to a concrete example, suppose \( c \) and \( d \) stand for a mug and hot water. Hot water poured into a mug can heat it up, and conversely a mug that is already hot can warm up cold water that is poured into it; thus, both the mug and the water are capable of causing heat and both are capable of being heated. In Scotus's technical language, both have the same general active principle for heating and both have the corresponding general passive principle for being heated. Therefore, despite the fact that neither water nor the mug does in fact heat itself, this is not because self-heating would violate a more general metaphysical prohibition on something being both active and passive in the same respect at the same time.\(^*\)

Yet the example of heating seems to confirm Godfrey's objection that for an agent to be able to produce a form in some subject, it must have that form already. This is exactly the case in any normal case of heating: something has the power to heat only because it is already hot, so self-heating seems to be excluded. However, Scotus rejects Godfrey's argument as falsely limiting causation to univocal causation, in which the active cause of an accidental form that is produced in a subject must already have that form as an accident. Though Scotus concedes that in univocal causation self-motion is indeed impossible, he maintains that this is not the only way in which a form can be caused. It can also be caused by an agent that does not have the accident \( formally \) (continuing the example, it is not actually hot), but nonetheless has the power to cause it, that is, it has the accident \( virtually \) (it has the power to cause heat). Unlike in univocal causation, in which the active principle and the form produced are of the same nature (e.g., the heat in one body is of the same nature as the heat that it causes in another body), an equivocal cause need not be of the same nature.

\(^*\) For a more detailed analysis of the preceding argument, see King, “Duns Scotus on the Reality of Self-Change,” 238–242.
nature as the form that it produces (indeed, since it virtually contains its effects, it is more eminent than its effect).\textsuperscript{96}

In this way, Scotus argues that there can be a self-moving power that does not violate the act-potency axiom to which Godfrey appeals. He proceeds by appealing to the distinctions that he made earlier in his questions on Metaphysics IX in how something can be said to be in potency to an accidental form. If this means simply that it has that form potentially, as opposed to having it actually, then indeed nothing can be in potency and act in the same respect at the same time.\textsuperscript{97}

However, something can also be said to be in potency according to its relation to that in which it terminates as a principle. There are thus two ways in which a principle can be said to be in potency: in one way, a principle is in potency to its proper \textit{principiatum}, as the active and passive powers involved in the process of heating are in potency to the form of heat that they together produce; in the other a principle can be said to be in potency in relation to another principle.\textsuperscript{98} In the first way, nothing can be said to be both in potency and act. To use again the example of heat, it is that which has the principle that is in potency to heat, and the principiated form of heat that is in actuality; but since the cause of heat and the heat that is caused are two different forms, this is not a case of some one thing being in both potency and act.\textsuperscript{99} Rather, it is according to the second kind of principiative relation that something can be said to be in potency and in act in the same respect at the same time. But this too can be distinguished into two relations, the first of which is the relation between corresponding active and passive principles considered simply as such:

But if ‘potency’ means the relation of a principle to an act as to another intrinsic principle, then to accept that it is not the case that both are in the same supposit is to accept that no supposit can be principiated in this way; but then no supposit would be composed of a potential principle and a principle that is called the act, and this is

\textsuperscript{96} Unfortunately for the modern reader, the example often used to illustrate equivocal causation is the sun, which of course causes heat, but is, according to medieval science, not formally hot itself. However, illustrations that are more persuasive for us can be found: for example, a microwave oven causes heat in food without being hot itself, and so is an equivocal cause of heat.

\textsuperscript{97} \textit{In Met.} IX q. 14 n. 82 (OPh 4:657-658): “Si ‘potentia’ accipiatur prout opponitur actui – quo modo sermo habitus est de ipsa in primis duabus questionibut huius IX, – numquam idem est simul in actu et in potentia secundum idem. Nam quando est aqua calida actu, tunc non est actu frigida, sed potentia tantum.”

\textsuperscript{98} \textit{In Met.} IX q. 14 n. 84 (OPh 4:658): “Si autem ‘potentia’ accipiatur ut dicit relationem principii — quo modo dictum est de ipsa in 3 et 4 quaestione huius IX: aut dicit relationem principii ad principiatum, aut ad alid principium — quo modo distinctum est in solutione questionis 3 art. 2.”

\textsuperscript{99} \textit{In Met.} IX q. 14 n. 84 (OPh 4:658-659): “Si ad principiatum, ut illud principiatum dicatur ‘actus’, concedo quod nihil idem essentiatir est potentia et actus, quia nulla una essentia se ipsam principiat proprie effective, nec in quocumque genere principii. Idem tamen suppositum potest in se habere duas naturas, quarum altera sit principium activum et altera principiatum, et ita est in potentia — hoc est ‘potens’ per principium activum — et in actu, sive actus, propter principiatum. Sed isto modo non consuevit communiter accipi ‘actus’ pro acto.”
false.\(^{100}\)

Here Scotus seems to be alluding to the general metaphysical claim that everything is essentially capable from itself of its proper perfection. But it is the second relation between active and passive principles by which Scotus finally responds to Godfrey’s objection:

Finally, if ‘potency’ refers to the relation of a passive principle to an active principle that is said to be in act – that is, active – but is not called act, then to accept that no one thing is in both potency and act is just to state in different terms that nothing is both active and passive. But this is not a proof from a prior premise, but is begging the question by assuming in different terms that which is to be proven.\(^{101}\)

In this whole passage, Scotus is relying on his earlier analysis of how a principle can be said to be in potency. In questions 3 and 4 of his questions on *Metaphysics* IX, he posits that an active principle is in potency in two ways: in relation to the *principiaturum* and in relation to an “actuable” principle, i.e. the corresponding passive principle. A passive principle, on the other hand, is in potency in three ways: in relation to the *principiaturum*, in relation to an “actuative” principle, i.e. the corresponding active principle, and in relation to “an actual principle, which together with it constitutes a composite.”\(^{102}\) In this third sense of principiative potency, the active principle is not considered merely as an “actuative” principle that is in potency as much as the “actuable” passive principle is, but as being in actuality, as opposed to the passive principle that is in potency relative to it. In the earlier discussion, this is discussed in terms of hylomorphic complexes, where the form as such is actual, and the matter as such is potential relative to the form it receives. Transposed to the case of a self-mover, Scotus’s point seems to be that a self-moving thing, considered as active, is already actual, for it already virtually contains its effects, whereas considered as passive, it is in potency to receiving a form.\(^{103}\) Thus, to deny that something can be both in act and in potency in the same

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\(^{100}\) *In Met.* IX q. 14 n. 85 (OPh 4:659): “Si autem ‘potentia’ dicit relationem principii ad actum ut ad alium principium intrinsecum, tunc accipere quod in nullo uno supposito est utrumque, est accipere quod nullum suppositum est sic principiabile. Et ita nullum suppositum esset compositum ex principio potentiali et principio quod dicitur actus, quod falsum est.”

\(^{101}\) *In Met.* IX q. 14 n. 86 (OPh 4:659): “Si tandem ‘potentia’ dicit relationem principii passivi ad principium activum quod dicitur esse in actu, scilicet activo, non autem dicitur actus, tunc accipere quod nihil idem est in potentia et in actu, non est nisi sub aliis terminis exprimere istud quod ‘nihil idem est activum et passivum’. Et non est probatio a priori, sed est petitio, idem accipiendop sub aliis terminis ad probationem sui ipsius.”

\(^{102}\) See *In Met.* IX q. 3-4 nn. 29-30 (OPh 4:548-549), and discussion in King, “Duns Scotus on Possibilities, Powers, and the Possible,” 188–189.

\(^{103}\) One might also understand this passage in terms of the fact that the actuation of the active principle is naturally prior to the actuation of the passive principle in which the activity terminates. Thus, something that contains both the active and passive principles for a certain product can be in actuality (the active principle is actually principiating), but this activity is naturally prior to the reception of the resulting form. Thus, even if there is no moment of time when a self-mover is eliciting and act and has not yet received it, still there are two ordered moments of nature: first it elicits the act and then it receives it, so in the first moment it is both actual as an active power and in potency as a passive power.
respect at the same time is, in this last sense of act and potency, simply to deny that something can be both active and passive in the same respect at the same time; different terms may be used, but they mean the same thing. He thus reduces Godfrey’s argument against the possibility of self-motion to a case of assuming what was to be proven: that is, the premise that nothing can be both actual and potential in the same respect at the same time is identical to the conclusion that nothing can be both active and passive in the same respect at the same time.

2.3.3 The will as a self-determining power

By explaining in terms of active and passive principles how self-motion is possible, Scotus has laid the foundation for his account of the will as a self-determining power. Being self-moving in the way that Scotus has described is at least a necessary condition for a power to qualify as free. If the acts of the will were brought about by an extrinsic cause, the will would be merely passive; but nothing that is merely passive has mastery over its own acts, and as discussed above, to be free is to have mastery over one’s own acts. Therefore, the will must be the active cause of its own acts. On the other hand, if the will were not the subject of its own acts and acted only on external things, it would not be capable of bringing itself to the perfection that is proper to it according to its own nature: as a bare power it is in potency to its proper act of willing, and it is actualized when it actually wills. Therefore, the will must also be the passive recipient of its own acts. The will is thus self-moving in the sense that it both actively elicits its own acts – which it virtually contains as the eminent power for those acts – and passively receives them. It should also be noted that when the model of self-motion discussed in the previous section is applied to a power such as the will, the immanent action of the power can be analysed ontologically as the reception of an accidental form. That is, the will is the active cause that virtually contains any particular act of volition; when it actually elicits an act, that activity terminates in the passive cause which receives a new form, namely the operation of the will or the act of volition; and since the will is also its own passive cause, it is the will itself that receives the operation, which is thus explained as a new accidental quality. Thus, the difference between the will considered just as a power and the will when it is actually willing is explained as the absence or presence of the accidental quality that is the volition itself. This explanation of the act of

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104 Cf. Lect. II d. 25 n. 28 (Vat. 19:236): “Non est in potestate patientis pati (patiens enim non dominatur sue passioni); si igitur velle voluntatis comparatur tantum ad voluntatem ut passio eius, sequitur quod non erit in potestate voluntatis actus volendi, et tunc tollitur laus et vituperium, meritum et demeritum.”

105 See the discussion at Lect. II d. 25 n. 91 (Vat. 19:260), where Scotus distinguishes an “accidental accident” (accidens per accidens) that is produced by an external agent from a proper passion that is not necessarily present in a subject, but can be produced from an internal principle. On the the operation (and nothing else) as the proper perfection of a power, cf. Rep. I-A d. 3 n. 169 (Wolter & Bychkov 1:234-235).
volition as an accidental quality will be of central importance for Scotus’s discussion of the role of habits in action.

But while self-motion is a necessary condition for the will to act freely, it is not a sufficient condition. This can be seen generally from the fact that many things are self-moving that are evidently not free: brute animals move themselves to their acts, plants develop and grow from an internal principle, and even a heavy body causes its own downward motion and a light body causes its own upward motion. Indeed, Scotus holds generally that any nature must be in some way capable of a producing from itself the full perfection that is proper to it according to its nature. Moreover, according to the metaphysical framework on which Scotus builds his account of self-motion, principiation naturally follows when corresponding active and passive principles are adequately united. But then it follows that a self-mover, in which the corresponding principles are always united – for they are present in the same thing – would always be in act unless impeded by some external agent or circumstance. Scotus makes this point just after he has established that self-motion is possible:

It could be said universally that a cause that is merely natural, though it is determined from itself to its effect, can nevertheless be impeded. But when the impediment is removed, it immediately acts towards the production of its effect, as it would have acted from the start if it had not been impeded. Thus, wherever the two conditions mentioned above are preserved [sc. that the self-mover have an equivocal active cause and the corresponding passive cause], which are necessary for something to act on itself, if an external impediment is posited at the start, afterwards when the impediment has been removed, that thing immediately acts upon itself.

How then can it be that the will as a self-moving power is not naturally determined to act when conditions allow for it, but instead determines itself?

In question 15 of his questions on *Metaphysics* IX, Scotus answers this question by explaining the precise respect in which the will is a free power. He does this in a way that might not seem obvious: following Aristotle’s own discussion in *Metaphysics* IX, he examines the difference between rational

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106 Scotus discusses the motion of heavy and light bodies in *Ord. II* d. 2 pars 2 q. 6 (Vat. 7:350-374).
107 See the discussion at *In Met. IX* q. 14 nn. 63-68 (OPh 4:649-651).
108 *In Met. IX* q. 14 n. 44 (OPh 4:640): “In universali diei posset quod causa mere naturalis, licet ex se determinetur ad effectum, potest tamen impediri. Impedimento autem amoto, statim agit ad productionem effectus, sicut a principio egisset si non fuisset impedita. Et ita ubicumque salvantur duae condicioes supra dictae, (necessariae alicui ad hoc quod agat in se), si ab extrinseco ponatur impedimentum a principio, postmodum, amoto impedimento, statim agit in se.” The two conditions mentioned were previously stated in ibid. n. 31 (OPh 4:634).
and irrational powers.\textsuperscript{109} Aristotle defines an irrational power as one that is determined to only one effect, whereas a rational power is able to produce opposite effects; for example, heat can cause only heat and not cold, whereas someone who has knowledge of medicine is able to produce either health or sickness.\textsuperscript{110} Considered in these terms, the will can be considered a rational power; for it is a power for opposite objects, for opposite acts (i.e. of willing and nilling), and for either acting or not acting at all with regard to any given object.\textsuperscript{111}

However, there seem to be many other powers for opposites besides the will. Any passive power, for example, is capable of receiving opposites: water can become hot or cold, a surface can be painted white or black, and most generally, matter as such is in potency to receiving any form. However, something merely passive cannot be a rational power for it is not a power for producing opposite effects, but only for receiving them. What is at issue here are only active powers for opposites, which Scotus defines as follows:

That active power is said to be a power for opposite products (whether contraries or contradictories) which, while remaining one nature, has a primary terminus under which both opposites fall equally. But that power is one for opposite actions which, while remaining one, is sufficient for eliciting such actions.\textsuperscript{112}

Note that this excludes various merely natural powers that seem to be powers for opposite effects. The sun, for example, can liquefy (e.g., by melting water) and also solidify (e.g., by drying out mud), but these opposite effects are explained not by the active power of the sun’s heat, but by the passive causes on which the sun acts.\textsuperscript{113} Thus, even though opposite effects can follow from the sun’s activity, they do not both fall under the primary object of the sun’s active power; their diversity is due rather to the objects that are the passive recipient of the activity.

Scotus even denies that the intellect is a rational power in itself. Up to a point, the intellect does satisfy his definition of a power for opposites, for according to him, the intellect is a self-moving

\textsuperscript{109} In Met. IX q. 15 n. 1 (OPh 4:675): “Utrum differentia, quam assignat Aristoteles inter potentias rationales et irrationales, sit convenienti, scilicet quod istae sunt oppositorum, aliae unius oppositi.”

\textsuperscript{110} See Met. IX.2, 1046b5-24.


\textsuperscript{112} In Met. IX q. 15 n. 11 (OPh 4:677): “Illa ergo potentia activa dicitur esse oppositorum — sive contrariorum sive contradictoriorum — productorum quae, manens natura una, habet terminum primum sub quo potest utrumque oppositum acque cadere. Sed illa est oppositarum actionum quae manens una, est sufficiens elicitivum talium actionum.”

\textsuperscript{113} Cf. In Met. IX q. 15 n. 43 (OPh 4:687): “De sole responsio: forma naturalis, si est illimitata et principium oppositorum in materiis dispositis illorum, est ita determinate sicut illa quae est unius tantum est illius determinate. Nam non est in potestate sua ad alterutram iatarum formarum agere, praesente passo receptivo huilue formae et illius, sicut nec esset si esset unius tantum.”
power just as much as the will is: it is the primary active cause of its own acts, and it receives its own operations as accidental qualities in itself.\textsuperscript{114} Moreover, it is capable of producing opposite acts from itself (and not merely in virtue of a passive cause, as in the case of the sun), for it is able to cognize either of two objects or to know both opposites in virtue of one of them, and it is able to reason to either of two opposite conclusions, all of which fall under the primary object of the intellect as the power for knowing. However, the intellect falls crucially short of the will in not being master of its own acts:

The intellect and the will can be compared with regard to their own acts that they elicit, or the acts of other lower powers in which they have some causality, the intellect by showing and directing, the will by inclining and commanding. The first comparison is clearly more essential; and in this way the intellect falls under nature. For it is determined from itself to understanding and does not have in its own power understanding and not understanding, be it concerning complex [propositions], in which case it can have contrary acts, nor does it have assenting and dissenting in its own power, since, even if one apprehension is of opposite cognized objects, as Aristotle seems to say, with respect to that act of cognition the intellect is not from itself undetermined; rather, it necessarily elicits that act of cognition, just as it would elicit one that was of only one cognized object. The will is related in the opposite way to the eliciting of its own act, as was previously said.\textsuperscript{115}

Thus, even though the intellect is a power for knowing opposites, it is not up to it what act it will have; rather, it is naturally determined by circumstances to knowing one or the other and to acting when circumstances allow for it. The will on the other hand does have this mastery over its own acts, for unlike the intellect it determines itself when it acts, whether to willing one thing rather than another, or acting or not acting at all. In this way, claims Scotus, the will is more properly a power for opposites than even the intellect is, and so is more properly a rational power than is the intellect, simply because it acts freely.

But what exactly makes the will a free power? That is, why is it capable of determining itself when no other power can? Scotus’s answer is simply that the will has its own mode of activity that is

\textsuperscript{114} Scotus discusses in detail the causation of acts of the intellect in several texts, explaining that the object of the intellect is a partial active cause of intellection, but that the intellect itself is the primary active cause. See especially Ord. I d. 3 pars 3 q. 2 (Vat. 3:245-330) and Quodl. q. 13 (Wadding 12:301-346). See also Cross, Duns Scotus’s Theory of Cognition, 117–121, 129–134.

\textsuperscript{115} In Met. IX q. 15 n. 36 (OPh 4:684-685): “Intellectus et voluntas possunt comparari ad actus proprioos quos eliciunt, vel ad actus aliarum potentiarum inferiorum in quibus quandam causalitatem habent: intellectus ostendendo et dirigendo, voluntas inclinando et imperando. Prima comparatio est essentialior, patet. Et sic intellectus cadit sub natura. Est enim ex se determinatus ad intelligendum, et non habet in potestate sua intelligere et non intelligere sive circa complexa, ubi potest habere contrarios actus, non habet etiam illos in potestate sua: assentire et dissentire. In tantum quod si etiam aliquid una notitia sit oppositorum cognitorum, ut videtur Aristoteles dicere, adhuc respectu illius cognitionis non est intellectus ex se indeterminatus; immo necessario elici illum intellectionem, sicut aliem quae esset tantum unius cogniti. Voluntas ad proprium actuum eliciendum opposito modo se habet, ut dictum est prius.”
different from the mode of activity of all other powers. In fact, even before proceeding to his discussion of the will as more properly rational than the intellect, he first explains that the fundamental difference among active powers is not according to their objects, but according to their operations, and more specifically, the way in which they elicit their operations. The precise division among active powers is according to whether their acts are naturally determined:

This mode of eliciting its own operation can be generically only twofold: either a power is determined from itself to acting, such that with respect to acting from itself it cannot not act when it is not extrinsically impeded; or it is not determined from itself, but can do a certain act or the opposite act, or even can act or not act. The first power is generally called a nature, and the second is called will.

Scotus thus makes the will different at a fundamental level from all other powers in having its own mode of eliciting its acts: when the will acts, it freely determines itself to having an act or not having it, whereas a natural power – i.e. any other power than the will – is naturally determined by its own nature and the given circumstances to having only one certain action (or not, if it is impeded).

Scotus states explicitly that there is no further explanation possible about what makes the will free, for it is simply the essence of the will to act in a self-determining way, and of nature to act determinately:

If therefore a cause is sought for this difference, namely, for why nature is [a power] for only one thing (i.e. it is from itself for that or those, whatever they might be), whereas will is [a power] for opposites (i.e. it is from itself indeterminately for this action or the opposite, or for either action or non-action), it can be said that for this there is no cause. For just as an immediate effect is compared to an immediate cause essentially, primarily, and without a mediating cause (for otherwise there would be an infinite regress), so an active cause seems to be related most immediately to its own action insofar as it elicits it. Nor can there be given any cause for why it elicits in this way other than that it is such a cause. And this is that for which a cause was sought.

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116 In Met. IX q. 15 n. 21 (OPh 4:680): “Sciemendum est quod prima distinctio potentiae activae est secundum diversum modum eliciendi operationem: quod enim circa hoc vel illud agat (etsi aliquo modo distinguat), aut distinctionem ostendat, non tamen ita immediate. Non enim potentia ad obiectum, circa quod operatur, comparatur nisi mediante operatione quam elicit, et hoc sic vel sic.”

117 In Met. IX q. 15 n. 22 (OPh 4:680-681): “Iste autem modus eliciendi operationem propriam non potest esse in genere nisi duplex. Aut enim potentia ex se est determinata ad agendum, ita quod, quantum est ex se, non potest non agere quando non impeditur ab extrinseco. Aut non est ex se determinata, sed potest agere hunc actum vel oppositum actum; agere etiam vel non agere. Prima potentia communiter dicitur ‘natura’, secunda dicitur ‘voluntas’.”

118 For a helpful discussion of how Scotus borrows from his scholastic predecessors for the distinction between freedom and nature, and how he goes beyond them in the starkness of the dichotomy, see Noone, “Nature and Will: Nature Revisited.” See also Hoffmann, “The Distinction between Nature and Will in Duns Scotus,” 192–203.

119 In Met. IX q. 15 n. 24 (OPh 4:681): “Si ergo huius differentiae quaeritur causa, quare scilicet natura est tantum unius (hoc est — cuiuscumque vel quorumcumque sit — determinate ex se est illius vel illorum), voluntas autem est oppositorum (id est, ex se indeterminate huius actionis vel oppositae, seu actionis vel non actionis), dici potest quod huius nulla est causa. Sicut enim effectus immediatus ad causam immediatam comparatur per se et primo et sine causa media — alloquin iaretur in infinitum —, ita causa activa ad suam actionem, in quantum ipsam elicit, videtur
Scotus’s view is thus that there is no further explanation of why the will acts freely: acting in a self-determining way is simply the way the will acts, just as causing heat is simply what heat does.\textsuperscript{120}

In one sense, therefore, Scotus’s ultimate account of the freedom of the will is uninformative: the will acts freely because that is the kind of power it is. Acting in a freely self-determining way is the essential characteristic of the will, and is what distinguishes it from all other active powers. Scotus repeatedly emphasizes in this question that there is no deeper explanation for why the will acts freely other than that that is the kind of cause it is.\textsuperscript{121} However, he does identify the precise respect in which the will is free. This emerges if the will’s free activity is understood in terms of the account of self-motion to which the first fourteen of his questions on \textit{Metaphysics} IX are devoted, whereby a self-moving power is both the active cause that elicits its act and the passive cause that receives it. With respect to its passive principle for receiving its own acts as operations, the will is not different from any other passive power, for anything that is passive is determined by something else. It is with respect to its active principle, however, the will does act freely by determining itself to its act of volition.

2.4 Conclusion

I have focused my discussion of Scotus’s account of the freedom of the will on one aspect in particular, namely, freedom defined as mastery over one’s own acts. In defining the freedom of the will this way, Scotus arrives at the conclusion that for a power to be capable of acting freely, it can be determined in its acts by nothing other than itself. Thus, no appetible object presented by the intellect is able to determine the will to an act of willing it, for otherwise the will would not have mastery over its own acts and so would not be free. Even when presented with the object that would fully satisfy its nature as the rational appetite for the good, the will retains the power to determine itself to willing it or not willing it. In light of this radical account of human freedom, I concluded my discussion with Scotus’s account of the metaphysical underpinnings of how it is possible for there to be a power that acts in this self-determining way. First, it must be self-moving, that is, it must be

\textit{immediatissime se habere. Nec est dare aliquam causam quare sic elicit nisi quia est talis causa. Sed hoc est illud eius causa quaerebatur”}\footnote{\textit{In Met.} IX q. 15 n. 25 (OPh 4:681): “Sicut ergo calidum calefacit quia calidum, nec ista propositio ‘calidum calefacit’ est mediatia, sed prima in quarto modo per se, ita et haec ‘calidum ex se determinate calefacit’. Similiter ista ‘voluntas vult’, et ‘voluntas non vult determinate, determinatione necessaria ex se’.”}

\textit{e.g., In Met.} IX q. 15 n. 24 (OPh 4:681); “Nec est dare aliquam causam quare sic elicit nisi quia est talis causa.” Ibid n. 29 (OPh 4:682); “Quare voluntas illud volet? Nulla erit alia causa nisi quia est voluntas.”
both the active cause of its own acts and the passive recipient of them. But what makes the will a free power is not just that it moves itself, but that when it acts it does so by determining itself to acting. For this, Scotus argues, there is no further explanation: free self-motion is simply the mode of activity that is essential to the will.

These two constitutive aspects of how the will acts form the backdrop to Scotus’s discussion of the role of the moral virtues in human action. By grounding the will’s free self-determination within his account of how exactly a power can move itself to its acts, Scotus provides the framework within which to understand how the moral virtues can contribute to acts of the will. Given that the will both actively causes its own acts and passively receives them as accidental qualities, the contribution that a habit such as moral virtue makes to the will’s acts will have to be understood in relation either to the will’s actively eliciting its act or to its passively receiving the volition as an accident. These are indeed the two alternatives that Scotus examines when he addresses the role of habits in general, and the account of what moral virtues contribute will have to conform to whichever of these he concludes is the correct account; and either way, the role of habits and of moral virtues in acts of volition will have to be explained in a way that does not compromise the will’s free mode of activity. I will turn to these questions in chapters 4 and 5, when I make a detailed analysis of Scotus’s question on the role of habits.

However, one remaining part of the backdrop to the account of moral virtues should be addressed. For moral virtues are habits, and if habits do make some real contribution to action, they must have an ontological status that allows for this. In the next chapter therefore, I will look at Scotus’s argument for why habits, as items in the genus of quality, must be absolute entities. Whether or not they have any relational aspect, it is their absolute status that makes it possible for them to make any real causal contribution to action.
3. The Ontological Status of Habits

In the previous two chapters, I have laid out the two main elements in Duns Scotus’s philosophy that give rise to the question of how to explain the role of moral virtues in human action. On the one hand, the moral virtues are habits of choice, and therefore, argues Scotus, they can belong to no other power than the power of free choice, which is the will; on the other hand, Scotus also maintains a radical account of human freedom, such that we are capable of free action in virtue of the will’s self-determining mode of action. Thus, there appears to be a basic problem in accounting for the role of moral virtues: to the extent that it is conceded that a habit in some way determines the acts of the will, it seems to represent a limitation of the will’s power to determine how it will act. How then can a habit of moral virtue make any real contribution to acts of the will in such a way that the freedom of the will is preserved? I will examine Scotus’s answer to this question in the chapters to follow. First, however, one remaining preliminary question needs to be addressed: What sort of thing is a moral virtue such that it can contribute to action? It is generally agreed in medieval philosophy that moral virtues are habits, and as will be seen in the chapters to follow, Scotus holds that in order to understand what role the moral virtues play in action, what first has to be understood is their more general contribution to action as habits. And in order to make any real contribution to action, a habit has to be a real being that can have real effects.

This chapter will therefore be devoted to Scotus’s account of the nature and ontological status of habits. First, I will address an issue that immediately arises from the conception of habit as something that gives its subject an inclination: since inclination involves something to which the subject is inclined, it seems that the account of habit as such essentially involves a relation. I will show why Scotus rejects this conception; he maintains instead that habits must be absolute beings in the genus of qualities. Next, I will look at how habits fit within the genus of Quality. The traditional view derived from Aristotle’s *Categories* is that they form one of the four highest species of the genus. Scotus subjects this to detailed discussion and criticism in his commentary on Aristotle’s text, and proposes two different ways in which to understand Aristotle’s proposed four highest species of quality. In the end, he does not decide between these two accounts, but according to either, habits must be considered as absolute, non-relative beings. Finally, returning to the broader question, I will briefly introduce the question of what distinguishes habits of moral virtue from other habits.
3.1 Are habits absolute or relative?

It is generally accepted among medieval philosophers that habits belong to the genus of quality. The main basis for this is the discussion of quality in chapter 8 of the *Categories*, where Aristotle remarks that “quality is one of the things spoken of in a number of ways.” He then identifies the four main ways in which quality is spoken of: as a state or condition (or habit or disposition), as a natural power or lack of power, as an affection or affective quality (or passion or passible quality), and as shape or external form. In this text, the distinction between a habit and a disposition is simply that the former tend to persist and are difficult to dislodge (for example pieces of knowledge or virtuous character traits), whereas the latter are easily displaced (for example, being hot or cold, or healthy or sick). However, Aristotle notes that a firmly entrenched habit can also count as a disposition in the sense that it disposes its subject in a certain way.

Throughout the scholastic debates on various questions of detail on the category of quality – e.g., how or whether the genus of quality is divided into highest species, what differentiates a given quality as a habit, whether there is a difference between habit and disposition, and so on – most medieval philosophers generally accept that habits, in the sense that is relevant for the moral virtues, are accidental qualities.

As qualities, therefore, habits must be absolute beings. That is, they are beings the account of which does not involve reference to something else, distinguishing them from the genus of relation and the

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1 *Cat.* 8, 8b25. I here restrict myself to what Scotus has to say about habits as beings in the genus of quality, without going into broader questions about the categories in general and about what the real subject matter of Aristotle’s short treatise is. It has for one been a matter of debate at least since the ancient commentators on Aristotle whether the *Categories* is concerned with words, with the things to which the terms refer, or both. For a clear summary of the doctrine of the Aristotelian categories (as received by late medieval philosophers in light of Boethius’s summary), see Pini, “Scotus’s Realist Conception of the Categories,” 66–69. For discussions of various aspects of the medieval reception of the *Categories*, see the papers collected in Newton, *Medieval Commentaries on Aristotle’s Categories*. Scotus argues that the proper subject matter of the *Categories* is beings insofar as they are thought of; in other words, it is a work about concepts; however, these general concepts and the differences among them are reflections of irreducible differences among the highest genera of real beings. Although the *Categories* is a logical work and is not about real beings, it does presuppose a doctrine about real beings, which are divided into ten irreducible genera. Thus, a question that Scotus must address in his interpretation of the *Categories* is how it can have a single subject matter when the genera about which it is concerned are not reducible to some single genus. His solution is to treat the *Categories* not as a metaphysical treatise that deals with beings as such, but as a logical one that deals with simple concepts of beings. On this see Pini, *Categories and Logic in Duns Scotus*, 157–170. For further discussion of Scotus’s interpretation of the *Categories*, see Pini, *Categories and Logic in Duns Scotus*. See also the papers on Scotus in Lloyd A. Newton’s book: Newton, “Duns Scotus’s Account of a Propter Quid Science of the Categories”; Bates, “Fine-Tuning Pini’s Reading of Scotus’s *Categories* Commentary”; Pini, “How Is Scotus’s Logic Related to His Metaphysics?” Newton has also provided an English translation of Scotus’s commentary on the *Categories*, together with a general introduction and extensive bibliography, in John Duns Scotus, *Questions on Aristotle’s Categories*.

2 See *Cat.* 8, 8b26-10a24, passim.

3 See *Cat.* 8, 8b25-9a13.
last six genera, which are relative beings in one way or another. In calling something absolute, Scotus does not mean that it is something that naturally subsists in itself: that would be to restrict absolute entities to substances alone. Rather, an absolute being is such that its existence is not relative to something else and it is understood not in relation to something else but in itself; as Scotus puts it, “the ratio of absolute is something that is ‘to itself’ [ad se], but the formal ratio of relation is a condition ‘towards another’ [ad alium].” Although qualities and quantities naturally inhere in some subject, their essence is not constituted by any relation to their subject; that is, an absolute accident is not essentially constituted by the fact that it inhere in a certain subject, unlike a relation, which by its nature as ad aliquid is understood through its terms; a quality or quantity on the other hand can be understood in itself no less than a substance can and is an absolute being. This is true despite the fact that, as accidental beings, qualities by nature inhere in some subject; for the account of any given quality need not make any reference to its subject; the same is true of accidental quantities. Thus, not just substances are absolute beings, but also qualities and quantities. Thus, since habits fall under the genus of quality, they must be absolute beings.

Nevertheless, there seem to be good reasons for thinking that habits do in some way involve a relation. For the very idea of habit is that it inclines its subject to acting in certain way that it is not determinately inclined to by its nature. If then it is essential to a habit that it gives its subject an inclination to certain acts rather than to others, it seems that a habit is in some way constituted and specified by that to which it inclines its subject; for example, what makes courage different from temperance is that the one inclines its subject to courageous acts and the other inclines its subject to temperate acts. Habits thus seem to be defined by something extrinsic to which they somehow join their subject, and their account seems necessarily to involve reference to something other than itself. It could thus be concluded that, insofar as a habit is specified by the acts to which it inclines its

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4 Note that, according to Scotus, the ratio of a quality does not necessarily involve a reference to the subject in which it inhere, even though every quality does naturally inhere in some substance.

5 See the discussion in Quodl. q. 3 §§2-3 (Wadding 12:67-68), where Scotus discusses the extension of the term ‘being’ (ens). In the strictest sense of the term, only substances count as beings, since only they are self-subsist. In a somewhat broader sense, only absolutes qualify as beings. In the broadest sense, Scotus distinguishes between beings that are merely non-contradictory and exist only in the mind (and as such are distinguished from real beings), and those that exist independently of being thought of, and the latter include real relations, which are thus real beings.

6 Ord. II d. 1 q. 5 textus interpolatus (Vat. 7:122), trans. Henninger, Relations, 83.

7 Scotus discusses the absolute status of quantity and quality in the context of the transubstantiation of the Eucharist. See in particular his core statement of quantity and quality as absolute accidents at Ord. IV d. 12 nn. 39-45 (Vat 12:310-313), with analysis in Cross, The Physics of Duns Scotus, 100–107.
subject, it is an essentially relative being. How then can the definition of habits as giving their subject an inclination be reconciled with their status as qualities, and thus absolute and not relative beings?

3.1.1 the ontological status of relations

In order to understand what is implied in the suggestion that habits are relative beings, it will be necessary to address what a relation is according to Scotus. The usual point of departure for medieval philosophers is Aristotle’s list in the *Categories* of the ten highest genera of beings: substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, state, action, and passion. Whereas substances, quantities, and qualities are absolute beings, which can be understood without reference to something else, a being in any of the remaining six categories is necessarily understood by reference to something else, since in explaining what a relation is, one must refer to the two beings that are in a relation: the foundation of the relation is that which is related and the terminus of the relation is that to which the foundation is related. Scotus maintains moreover that relations are real beings no less than are absolute beings. As he argues in his *Quodlibet*, some relations are not merely beings of thought, but have their own existence that is not dependent on their being thought about:

That a relation is a thing, I prove as follows: a relation (habitudo) that follows upon extremes that are real and are really distinct from their nature is itself real, since the being (entitas) that it has is not in the soul precisely and consequently it is a thing in

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8 Scotus himself raises this as a possible argument against treating habits as active causes, citing Aristotle’s *Physics* VII.3. See *Ord.* I d. 17 n. 15 (Vat. 5:144): “Relatio non est principium activum, nec aliquid essentialiter includens relationem; habitus autem est ‘ad aliquid’, secundum Philosophum VII Physicorum, ergo etc.”


10 *Cat.* 4, 1b25-26.

11 The remaining six categories after substance, quality, quantity, and relation are usually explained as different kinds of relative being. According to Scotus, the category of relation includes only of “intrinsically advenient” relations, which necessarily exist merely in virtue of both terms being posited, whereas the remaining categories include relative beings that are “extrinsically advenient,” that is, something more than the mere co-existence of the related items is required. See Scotus’s explanation at *Ord.* IV d. 13 nn. 42-55 (Vat. 12:450-453), with King, “Scotus on Metaphysics,” 33–34; Cross, *Duns Scotus’s Theory of Cognition*, 116–117.

12 This position is not universally held. Henry of Ghent, for example, holds that relations are beings, though not distinct things; rather, they are only the foundation itself in the mode of being *ad aliquid*. See Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* IX q. 3 (Leuven 13:56;85-88): “Relatio realitatem suam contrahit a suo fundamento, quae non est nisi habitudo nuda, sed solummodo modus rei, nisi extendendo rem ut etiam modus rei dicatur res.” Cf. Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* IX q. 3 (Leuven 13:50;94-96). See also Henninger, *Relations*, 52–56; Decorte, “‘Modus’ or ‘Res’,” 409–421. Scotus argues against Henry that at least some relations are real things that are distinct from their foundation and terminus; see Henninger, *Relations*, 85–87. I thank Simona Vucu for help on this point.
its own way according to its proper being.\textsuperscript{13}

Since at least some relations do not depend on being thought about, and are really distinct from their foundation and their terminus, they must be real beings. The fact that they are relative does not exclude them from having their own existence; rather, the mode of being an accident \textit{ad aliiud}, is the mode of being that is proper to them, just as being an accident \textit{ad se} is proper to qualities and quantities:

I concede, however, that a relation that is an accident among created beings has its proper accidentality, since it is a thing in itself; it is not the thing that is its foundation, nor is it a thing that is a being in itself, like a substance. Thus, it should be granted that it is in itself a thing that has its own accidentality, which is not the accidentality of an absolute being, but is a relative accidentality. For just as absolute being and relative being are not the same, so the accidentality of an accidental absolute being and of an accidental relative being are not the same.\textsuperscript{14}

In arguing that at least some relations are real beings that are really distinct from their foundation and terminus, Scotus creates an even greater problem for those who want to maintain that habits must in some way be relations, insofar as they give their subject an inclination. As noted above, it is well established that a habit is a being in the genus of quality. Thus, to assert that a habit is also a relation is as much as to assert that a habit belongs to two genera at once: the genus of quality and the genus of relation. But it is impossible for any real being to belong simultaneously to two distinct genera, since then it would fail to have a single essence.\textsuperscript{15}

3.1.2 Scotus’s proposal: appeal to the formal distinction

Of course, if it were possible for a given being to belong to two genera at once, a habit could indeed be both an accidental quality and a relation. Scotus suggests in the course of his discussion of the role of habits that this may be possible. The context is the question whether a habit should be

\textsuperscript{13} Quodl. q. 3 §3 (Wadding 12:68): “Quod autem relatio sit res, probo: habitudo consequens extrema realia et realiter distincta, et hoc ex natura rei, est realis, quia entitas eius qualem habet non est praecise in anima et per consequens ipsa secundum entitatem propriam est res suo modo.”

\textsuperscript{14} Quodl. q. 3 §15 (Wadding 12:81): “concedo tamen quod relatio quae est accidens in creaturis propriam habet accidentalitatem, quia illa est per se res, et non est illa res in qua fundatur, nec est res per se ens, sicut substantia; ita oportet dare quod ipsam et per se sit res habens propriam accidentalitatem, quae non sit accidentalitas entis ad se sed accidentalitas ad alterum. Sicut enim non est eadem entitas se ad, et ad alterum, sic nec eadem accidentalitas accidentis entis ad se et accidentalis entis ad alterum.”

\textsuperscript{15} See Super Praed. q. 10 n. 10 (OPh 1:336): “Quod autem idem specie vel genere inferiore non sit in diversis generibus superioribus non subalternis, ut species vel differentia, videtur manifestum, quia ad essentiam speciei pertinet genus. Ergo si idem specie vel genere inferiore esset in diversis generibus superioribus, illa ambo genera essent de eius essentia; igitur illud non esset idem essentialiter, quia duo genera non subalternam diversam essentiam praedicanter. Similiter, differentia cum genere facit unum essentialiter; sed cum diversis generibus non subalternis nihil idem facit essentialiter; igitur etc.”
considered an active principle of the acts of the power to which it belongs.\textsuperscript{16} One of the arguments against habit being an active principle is exactly that habits seem to be relations, and a relation cannot be an active principle of anything; thus, if a habit is a relation, it cannot be an active principle.\textsuperscript{17} In response to this objection, Scotus proposes that it can be argued that a habit is both a quality and a relation, and that these aspects can be distinguished:

Although it is said, on account of what the Philosopher says in book 7 of the Physics, that a habit is not an absolute form, nevertheless, if it is maintained that every quality is an absolute form – and a quality of the first species is no less a quality than one of another species – it can be said that something to which a relation is identical can be an active principle, although a relation is not an active principle, and that that to which the relation is identical is not an active principle through the character of relation, but through the character of the absolute thing to which the relation is identical.\textsuperscript{18}

The suggestion is thus that if a habit is both a quality and a relation, its status as an absolute quality will explain whatever real contribution it makes to the acts of its subject, while its status as a relation will explain why it inclines its subject to one kind of action rather than any other.

However, it can very well be asked whether Scotus has any good reason for proposing such a solution, since it seems to go against the general principle that no single item can belong to two different genera of being. Scotus answers by proposing that there is a minimal distinction based in reality between the habit as a quality and the habit as a relation:

The distinction between these – namely, the relation and the absolute essence with which the relation is identical – can be clear from many other things said above, where together with perfect real identity there is posited a formal non-identity.\textsuperscript{19}

This “formal non-identity” is not merely a product of thought, but is grounded in reality. As an item in the category of quality, a habit is something absolute and non-relative, and as such can be an

\textsuperscript{16} Ord. I d. 17 pars 1 q. 2 (Vat. 5:141ff.): “Utrum necesse sit ponere in habitu rationem principii activi respectu actu.” I will discuss this text in detail in the remaining chapters of this dissertation.

\textsuperscript{17} Ord. I d. 17 n. 15 (Vat. 5:144): “Relatio non est principium activum, nec aliquid essentialiter includens relationem; habitus autem est ‘ad aliquid’, secundum Philosophum VI Physicorum; ergo etc.” The argument for habits as active principles will be discussed in detail in chapter 4.

\textsuperscript{18} Ord. I d. 17 n. 71 (Vat. 5:171-172): “Quamvis dicatur habitum non esse formam absolutam, propter illa verba Philosophi VII Physicorum, tamen tenendo omnem qualitatem esse formam absolutam (et qualitas primae speciei non est minus qualitas quam alterius speciei) potest dici quod aliquid cui relatio est eadem, potest esse principium activum, licet relatio non sit principium activum; nec etiam illud cui ipsa est eadem, per rationem relationis est principium activum, sed per rationem absoluti, cui ipsa relatio est eadem.”

\textsuperscript{19} Ord. I d. 17 n. 71 (Vat. 5:172): “Distinctio istorum, vide licet relationis et essentiae absolutae cui relatio est eadem, patere potest ex multis aliis dictis supra, ubi cum iden tatete reali perfecta ponitur non-identitas formalis.” The reference seems to be to Scotus’s discussions in earlier distinctions in book I about the nature of God; see the Vatican editors’ note on this passage.
active principle. According to the proposed account, however, there is also a relation that is really identical with the habit, although it is formally distinct, and under this formality the habit is also a relation. Scotus of course is appealing here to his famous doctrine of the formal distinction. According to this doctrine, two items are formally distinct if the definition or formal account (ratio) of one does not include the ratio of the other.\(^{20}\) As Scotus puts it more rigorously,

\[
\text{x and y are formally non-identical or distinct if and only if (a) x and y are or are in what is really one thing; and (b) if x and y are capable of definition, the definition of x does not include y and the definition of y does not include x; or, if x and y are not capable of definition, then if they were capable of definition, the definition of x would not include the definition of y and the definition of y would not include the definition of x.}\(^{21}\)
\]

The crucial point is that two items can be formally distinct, i.e. have different formal rationes, and yet be really identical, i.e. be the same thing (rei). The formal distinction allows Scotus to make statements that are true about one formality, but which are not necessarily true of the other, even though it is the same thing that is in question. He applies the formal distinction to various difficulties in disparate areas: he argues, for example, that although the will and the intellect are both really identical with the essence of the soul itself, they are distinct from the soul in their formal account, allowing him to speak about the different modes of operation of the two powers while maintaining that it is the essence of the soul that is perfected by the acts of these powers, not anything really distinct from the soul.\(^{22}\) Scotus also uses the formal distinction to reconcile distinction with real identity in the cases of the divine essence and the persons of the Trinity, the common nature and the individual difference, and the genus and the specific difference.\(^{23}\) In the case at hand, Scotus appeals to the formal distinction to suggest that a habit can be both a quality and a relation. As an item in the category of quality, a habit is something absolute and non-relative, and as such it can be an active principle; but according to the proposed account, there is also a relation that is really identical with

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\(^{21}\) Ord. I d. 8 n. 193 (Vat. 4:261-262), trans. Henninger, Relations, 82.

\(^{22}\) See Rep. II d. 16 q. un. §§15–19 (Wadding 6:770-773). In this case, the formal distinction allows Scotus to reconcile two competing claims: on the one hand, the soul is capable of acts of intellection and volition in virtue of having the powers of intellect and will; on the other hand, if the powers of the soul were really distinct from the soul, then when we have the beatific vision, it would be only the intellect that is perfected, and the soul itself would be only accidentally perfected (§15). If the will and intellect are formally distinct but really identical with the essence of the soul, the problem dissappears. See also the brief discussion in Cross, Duns Scotus, 183–184.

\(^{23}\) For brief summary and references, see King, “Scotus on Metaphysics,” 23.
the habit, but formally distinct, and under this formality the same habit that is a quality that inheres in the soul can also be a relation that explains why a habit involves an inclination to something.

As Scotus points out immediately following the passage quoted above, this appeal to the formal distinction is based on the apparently similar case of a creature’s relation to God. Part of Scotus’s argument for why relations must normally be really distinct from their foundation is that it is possible without contradiction for the real being that is the foundation of the relation to exist without the relation that is founded on it. However, it is impossible for a creature to exist at all without being related to God in a relation of dependence, since God is that which gives every creature existence; thus, a creature’s relation to God is not a thing that is really distinct from the creature itself, but is really identical with the very being of the creature.

To explain how a being in the genus of substance can be really identical to a relation, Scotus appeals to the formal distinction, such that the relation of dependence is only formally distinct from the creature itself. As Scotus suggests in the passage quoted above, the relation of a habit to an act might similarly be not something extrinsic to the habit, but really identical with it and only formally distinct from it. This would be sufficient to allow him to concede that a habit is a relation while also maintaining that a habit is an absolute quality and thus capable of being an active principle.

But even if it is granted that a creature’s relation to God is really identical to its being and only formally distinct from it, it is not clear that this solution can be extended to habits and their relation to the terminus of a habitual inclination. One objection that can be made to the proposal is that the constitutive relation of a creature to God is not a relation that falls under the genus of relation or any other of the highest genera of being, but is a transcendent relation that pertains to every finite being whatsoever insofar as it exists and depends on God for its existence. Scotus himself makes this clear:

\[
\text{It can be said that a relation of this kind [sc. of dependence on God] is transcendent, since that which suits a being before it descends into genera is transcendent; but that which suits every being suits it before it descends into genera; therefore, that which is like this is transcendent and does not belong to any genus. Thus, these relations that follow upon being before it descends into beings of any genus at all, since they are}
\]

\[\text{Ord. I d. 17 n. 71 (Vat. 5:172): “hoc magis patebit in II distinctione 1, ubi dicetur quod relatio creaturae ad Deum est eadem essentiae absolutae rei creatae et tamen non formaliter eadem.” The reference is to Ord. II d. 1, qq. 4-5 (Vat. 7:91-146).}\]

\[\text{For discussion of the transcendent relation of dependence that every creature has to God, see Henninger, Relations, 79–85; Decorte, “Modus” or ‘Res,’” 425–429.}\]
transcendent, will not belong to any determinate genus.\(^{26}\)

Thus, while it might be maintained that a habit is the foundation of a relation insofar as it inclines its subject to certain actions, it seems illegitimate to use the analogy with the transcendent relation to God that is constitutive of every creature’s existence to argue that the non-transcendent relation of inclination can be really identical with the habit that is its foundation. Moreover, it is a defining characteristic of habits that they persist even when that to which they incline their subject is not present. But if a habit is really identical to the relation of inclination, in what does that relation terminate when the habituated agent is not currently being inclined to any particular thing? If it is admitted that a habit continues to exist even when that to which it would incline its subject does not exist, then the habit can exist without the relation of inclination; therefore the habit, considered as an absolute quality, must be really distinct from that relation, and not just formally distinct. In this respect, the case of an inclination and the habit on which it is founded is unlike a created being’s constitutive relation of dependence on God.

3.1.3 Does habit involve a relation to a kind?

An alternative way of saving the idea that a habit involves a relation might be to argue that the terminus of a persistent habitual inclination is not a particular occurrent act, but rather a *kind* of act. For example, the virtuous habit of courage inclines an agent to courageous acts in virtue of a relation not to any individual act or acts, but to courageous acts in general. That is to say, the relation of inclination that results from a habit terminates not in any particular act, which would be posterior to the habit if it has any role in the causation of the act, but in a universal. To this suggestion it could be objected that a relation to a kind of acts would not be a real relation but only a relation of reason. If this can be shown, then such a relation cannot be appealed to in order to explain any real effects, since it does not arise from the nature of the habit but is only an imposition of thought.

Though Scotus does not explicitly address whether the relation of a habit to a kind of act would be a real relation or only a relation of reason, it can be argued that he would have to hold that it cannot be a real relation. This can be extrapolated from what is said in a *Reportatio* of Scotus at distinction 16 of book II, where it is argued that a power of the soul is formally distinct from the essence of the

\(^{26}\) See *Ord.* II d. 1. qq. 4-5 n. 277 (Vat. 7:137-138): “potest tamen dici – consequenter ad dicta alias – quod huiusmodi relatio est transcendens, quia quod convenit omni enti, convenit sibi antequam descendat in genera; ergo quod est tale, est transcendens et non alicuius generis. Et ideo istae relationes quae consequuntur ens antequam descendat in entia cuiuscumque generis, cum sint transcendentes, non erunt alicuius generis determinati.”
There he considers the position of Henry of Ghent, who claims – as Scotus interprets him at any rate – that the powers of the soul are nothing other than the soul itself as it is related to different kinds of act. Scotus argues against this position on the ground that whatever relation the soul might have to acts must be to actual elicited acts; but until an act is actually elicited, the terminus of the relation does not exist, and so the relation that he says constitutes the power cannot exist, and so until an act is elicited, there is no power. Yet as the principle of the act, the power has to be naturally prior to the act. Henry thus fails to explain how a power is the principle of acts. Moreover, even if Henry’s position were accepted, it would imply that there are as many powers as there are acts, since for each elicited act there will be a different relation between it and the soul.

It seems therefore that Henry would have to say that a power is a relation not to actual elicited acts, but rather to a kind of act. For example, the will as a power of the soul would be the soul as it is related to acts of volition in general (as opposed, for example, to acts of intellecction in general), but not to particular elicited acts. But if this is what is meant, then the power is constituted by a relation that terminates not in any real individual but in a general kind, that is, a universal; and according to Scotus, a universal as such is not a real being, but only a being of reason, for a universal is simply the common nature as it is present in the intellect, that is, an object of thought. However, according to Scotus in his commentary on the Categories, unless the foundation and the terminus of a relation are both real beings, the relation is not a real relation but only a relation of reason.

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27 Rep. II d. 16 q. un. (Wadding 6:760ff.). Note that this text seems in fact to be drawn from William of Alnwick’s Additiones Magnae; however, there is no reason to reject it as a report of Scotus’s own views.

28 Rep. II d. 16 q. un. §12 (Wadding 6:768): “Alii dicunt quod potentiae animae sunt idem essentiae animae, distinctae tamen inter se realitate relativa, ita quod potentia animae non dicit nisi esse cum respectu coassumpto. Quod probatur, quia secundum se non dicitur potentia nisi in ordine ad actum et objectum, quia anima secundum se non dicit potentiam. […] Secundum hoc igitur quod anima secundum se comparatur ad diversos actus sunt in anima diversi respectus qui dicitur diversae potentiae et per huiusmodi diversos respectus determinatur ad diversos actus.” The text that Scotus is referring to is Henry of Ghent, Quodl. III q. 14 (Badius, fol. 83rF-83vG)

29 Rep. II d. 16 q. un. §13 (Wadding 6:768): “Principium per se unum prius est operatione et potest esse absque contradictione sine ipsa; sed relatio nec potest esse nec intelligi sine termino qui in proposito est operationi; ergo.”

30 Rep. II d. 16 q. un. §14 (Wadding 769): “Si potentia includit respectum et distinguitur per respectum, voluntas erit duae potentia vel plures. Probo: quia ante relationem ad actum, ut ad velle, non distinguitur vel non est distincta voluntas contra aliam potentiam; igitur secundum multiplicationem respectuum ad diversa velle erit multiplicatio potentiarum volitivorum.”

31 Scotus adopts the basically Avicennian position that a common nature can exist as a real concrete individual or as an object of thought; in the latter case it is a universal. For an overview of Scotus’s account of universals and the common nature, see Noone, “Universals and Individuation,” 100–112.

32 In Prud. q. 25 nn. 5–6 (OPh 1:424): “Relatio non habet verius esse quam subiectum super quod fundatur; et multae relationes fundantur super res rationis, ut relatio generis ad speciem et cetera huiusmodi; igitur huiusmodi relationes sunt tantum entia rationis. […] omnis relatio requirit duo extrema; igitur cius relationis extrema non sunt duo nisi secundum rationem, illa relatio est tantum ens rationis.”
relation that Henry appeals to in order to distinguish the will from the essence of the soul can only terminate in a universal, which is only a being of reason, that relation in turn will be only a relation of reason. But such a relation cannot serve to explain anything real precisely because it is itself not a real thing; therefore, it cannot be on this basis that the distinction among powers of the soul is to be explained.

The same objection can be made in the case of habits. If the inclination that a habit gives to its subject is explained by a relation that terminates not in any real individual but in a general kind, that terminus will be only a universal; and since the terminus of this relation is only a being of reason, the relation will likewise be not a real relation, but only a relation of reason. However, a habit is supposed to explain how its subject is really inclined to certain acts; but a relation of reason does not arise from the real nature of the habit, but is only an imposition of thought, and so cannot be used as an explanation of any real feature of habits.\textsuperscript{33}

3.1.4 Summary

Thus, despite Scotus’s apparent willingness to entertain the idea that a habit is both a quality and a relation, reasons can be found in Scotus’s own works to doubt the validity of this proposal. First, the proposal is questionable in itself, since it is developed by analogy with the transcendent relation of ontological dependence that any finite being has to God, whereas the purported relation here is not transcendent but falls in the genus of Relation. Moreover, given his requirement that both terms of a real relation be themselves real beings, Scotus will have difficulty in establishing that the supposed relation that is identical to a habit is a real relation, and not merely a relation of reason imposed by thought. Finally, even if it were granted that a habit necessarily involves a real relation, it still can be asked what explanatory value this can have; for, as will be seen in chapter 6, Scotus extends real causality only to real absolute beings, and denies that relations can cause anything. Thus, even if it is granted that a habit also contains a relation with which it is really identical, this will not help him to explain the real contribution of a habit to action. The explanation will instead have to be done through the habit’s status as an absolute quality.

\textsuperscript{33} Note that a similar doubt can be found in Scotus’s discussion of whether the will as the appetite for the good is necessarily inclined to the complete good. There he argues that this complete good cannot be good taken as a universal, since in that case the inclination would be only to a being of reason. The appetite for the good – in the sense of an inclination that is nothing distinct from the nature itself as it is ordered to its proper perfection – must therefore be an inclination to the complete good as it exists in reality and not merely as an abstract universal. See chapter 2 above.
3.2 Habits as accidental qualities

Nevertheless, it seems that something more has to be said about habits as beings in the genus of quality. There are many kinds of accidental qualities, and not all of them are habits; there are for example, colours, shapes, and beauty inhering in bodies, and in the soul there can be, in addition to habits, operations, passions, and species. So what distinguishes habits from other qualities? By definition of course they incline their subject, but why is this true of them, and presumably not of other kinds of quality?

3.2.1 Habit as a species of quality

Questions about the different species of quality were extensively debated by medieval philosophers, typically in commentaries on the *Categories*. As mentioned above, Aristotle observes that qualities are spoken of in various ways, and lists four main kinds: habit, power, passion or passible quality, and shape. Aristotle himself leaves it open whether his list is exhaustive or not. Traditionally, however, these four kinds came to be discussed as the four highest species into which the genus of quality is naturally divided, such that every particular quality falls under one of them. The exact status of these four highest species thus became a standard question in medieval commentaries on the *Categories*.

Various questions arise from this idea that there are these four highest species of quality. First of all, is there is any reason why there should be these four and no others? Is there any principle according to which these species can be systematically distinguished from one another? Are they in fact natural species of quality or are they merely ways of speaking about qualities, not based on any real distinguishing features? Thus, much of the medieval discussion of what habits are is carried out in terms of the question about what distinguishes the four highest species of qualities, and whether they can be systematically derived.

One influential source for this debate in the later thirteenth century was the commentary on the *Categories* by the late antique Platonist philosopher Simplicius. As summarized by Thomas Aquinas (who seems to have been the first medieval philosopher to make extensive use of this commentary,

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34 See *Cat.* 8, 8b26-10a24, passim.
35 See *Cat.* 8, 10a25-6.
36 Some of this debate is briefly summarized in Conti, “A Realist Interpretation of the *Categories* in the Fourteenth Century,” 341–342.
37 On the reception of Simplicius’s commentary generally in Arabic and Latin philosophy see Chase, “The Medieval Posterity of Simplicius’ Commentary on the *Categories*.” On its use specifically in discussions of habit and disposition in the thirteenth century, see Boland, “Aquinas and Simplicius on Dispositions”; Côté, “Simplicius and James of Viterbo on Propensities.”
which was translated into Latin by William of Moerbeke in 1266, Simplicius attempts to give a systematic derivation of the four highest species of qualities. He first divides qualities into species according to whether they are brought about extrinsically and are accidental (adventitiae), or whether they are in the subject by nature; those that are adventitiae form the first species of habits and dispositions. Those that are naturally present can be further divided between those that are potentially present and those that are actually present; those that are potentially present form the second species of capacities or powers. Finally, he divides actual qualities into those deeply rooted (in profundum) and those on the surface (in superficiem), thus giving the last two species of affective quality and of shape. Aquinas argues that this way of deriving the species of quality is false and proposes a different derivation. His main argument is that the differences that Simplicius posits are not essential but only accidental, and thus fail to establish any distinction among the species. Aquinas instead derives the species of quality according to the sort of determination they bring to their subject. This determination of qualities can be as they are ordered to the nature of the subject, giving the first species; according to action and passion that follow from the formal and material principles of the subject, giving capacities and affective qualities respectively; or according to quantity, which gives shape. Aquinas then argues that habits must belong to the first species of quality. A habit, as defined by Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*, is a quality that disposes its subject well or badly. But the only kind of quality that can bring in the character of good or bad, argues Aquinas, is one that is ordered with respect to the nature, since the proper end of any being whatsoever is its nature (or the full realization of its nature).

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38 See Simplicius, *Commentaire sur les Catégories*, 1:xix–xx. It has traditionally been said that Aquinas himself commissioned Moerbeke’s translation, but this is mere legend; for references, see Chase, “The Medieval Posterity of Simplicius’ Commentary on the *Categories*,” 9 note 2.

39 *ST* I-II 49.2 (Piana 966b): “Qualitatum quaedam sunt naturales, quae secundum naturam insunt, et semper, quaedam autem sunt adventitiae, quae ab extrinseco efficiuntur, et possunt amitti. Et haec quidem, quae sunt adventitiae, sunt habitus et dispositiones, secundum faciliter et difficile amissibile differentes. Naturalium autem qualitatum quaedam sunt secundum id quod aliqua est in potentia, et sic est secunda species qualitatis. Quaedam vero secundum quod aliqua est in actu, et hoc vel in profundum, vel secundum superficiem. Si in profundum quidem, sic est tertia species qualitatis, secundum vero superficiem, est quarta species qualitatis, sicut figura et forma, quae est figura animati.” The Latin text of Simplicius’s discussion of the four highest species can be found at Simplicius, *Commentaire sur les Catégories*, 2:301–311.

40 *ST* I-II 49.2 (Piana 967a): “Modus autem sive determinatio subiecti secundum esse accidentalum, potest accipi vel in ordine ad ipsam naturam subiecti; vel secundum actionem et passionem quae consequuntur principia naturae, quae sunt materia et forma; vel secundum quantitatem. Si autem accipiatur modus vel determinatio subiecti secundum quantitatem, sic est quarta species qualitatis. […] Modus autem sive determinatio subiecti secundum actionem et passionem, attenditur in secunda et tertia specie qualitatis.”

41 *Met.* V.20, 1022b10, as noted by Aquinas at *ST* I-II 49.1 (Piana 965b): “Habitus dicitur dispositio secundum quam bene vel male disponitur dispositum.”

42 *Phys.* II.7, 198b3, cited at *ST* I-II 49.2 (Piana 967a): “Ipsa forma et natura rei est finis et cuius causa fit aliqua.”
ordering to an end, habits must belong to the first species of quality, which is differentiated from other qualities as being ordered according to the nature, or proper end of its subject.\footnote{The connection between goodness and the natural end will be discussed more fully below.}

Scotus, by contrast, argues that there is no systematic division of the species of quality, or if there is we do not know it. He explains this in a series of questions in his \textit{Categories} commentary on the species of quality.\footnote{\textit{Super Praed.} qq. 30-36 (OPh 3:473-508).} Scotus begins by considering whether the highest species of the genus of quality that Aristotle mentions are correctly identified.\footnote{\textit{Super Praed.} qq. 30-36 n. 1 (OPh 1:473): “Quaeritur primo utrum species qualitatis convenienter assignentur.”} He raises the objection that it appears to be logically impossible that there can even be four highest species: for one thing, division of a genus into species is held to be by contrary differences, and so it seems that if qualities are divided into species, there could be only two highest species.\footnote{\textit{Super Praed.} qq. 30-36 n. 2 (OPh 1:473): “Cuiuslibet unus generis sunt tantum duae primae species; qualitas est unum genus; igitur non habet quattuor primae species.”} It could also be objected that the very same quality could be described as having the features that are supposed to be the specific differences of more than one of the species of quality, and thus could be assigned to more than one species; for example, hot and cold are possible qualities of bodies, and so belong to the first species, but Aristotle also counts them under the first species of dispositions.\footnote{\textit{Cat.} 8, 8b25-9a27. One could also add to Scotus’s point that hot also seems to belong to the second species of power, insofar as it is the principle for causing heat in something else.} But from this it would follow that the two supposed species are in fact the same species:

\begin{quote}
It is impossible for two species of the same genus to be predicated of the same thing; but habit and disposition, which are identified as the first species, and passion or possible quality, which are identified as the third, are predicated of the same quality, for example of hot, cold and the like, which Aristotle counts in the first species and in the third; therefore the first species and the third are not two [sc. distinct species].\footnote{\textit{Super Praed.} qq. 30-36 n. 3 (OPh 1:474): “Impossibile est duas species eiusdem generis praedicari de eodem; sed ‘habitus’ et ‘dispositio’ quae assignantur pro prima specie, et ‘passio’ vel ‘passibilis qualitas’ quae assignantur pro tertia, praedicantur de eadem qualitate, ut de calore et frigore et consimilibus, quae Aristoteles enumerat in prima specie et tertia; igitur prima species et tertia non sunt duae.”}
\end{quote}

To address such doubts about the status of the supposed species, Scotus proposes two different ways of understanding what the species of quality are and how they are distinguished.

In his first proposed way of answering the question whether there are four highest species, Scotus answers the initial objections by conceding that the four ways of speaking of quality do not identify
distinct species of quality, but only modes of qualities. He explains the difference between treating them as modes and as species in terms of the kind of difference that they add to quality in general:

A species adds an essential difference over and above that to which it belongs, but a mode adds an accidental difference. And so these modes indicate a different relation \([\text{habituidinem}]\) of the quality to its subject, according to whether it is a persistent being or not, whether it arises from the nature [sc. of the subject] or not, and whether it is sensible or not. But all these [modes] do not vary the quality essentially, because all of these relations (or most of them), can be in a quality that remains essentially the same.\(^{49}\)

Thus, according to this view, the distinguishing features of the four ways of speaking of qualities that Aristotle lists are not essential differences among qualities, but only accidental differences, which are the various ways or modes in which a particular quality can inhere in its subject; since these modes are only accidental to the quality, they cannot be specific differences and so do not constitute distinct species. Thus – as in Scotus’s example of qualities such as hot and cold, a given quality could have the mode that distinguishes it as a habit, as well as the mode that distinguishes a power or a passible quality – no problem would arise from a quality belonging to two of the supposed highest species, since the modes are not specific differences, and so not necessarily mutually exclusive. This solution also answers the objection that there can be only two highest species: since these four modes are not specific differences, the problem does not arise.

Scotus also proposes an alternative view, according to which the fourfold distinction among qualities does refer to four distinct species, but the differences mentioned identify the species only indirectly and accidentally:

It can be said, while still maintaining that Aristotle is enumerating species of quality and not just modes, that these differences – namely, ‘being easily moved or with difficulty’, ‘being a principle of action or not’, ‘bringing a passion upon the sense’ and ‘externally disposing the subject’ – are differences that are accidental to the genus of quality, but that Aristotle uses these instead of the essential differences, because the essential differences are unknown; and thus the forms that primarily fall under these differences are the four species of quality.\(^{50}\)

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\(^{49}\) *Super Praed.* q. 30-36 n. 36 (OPh 1:483): “Est autem differentia inter speciem et modum. Quia species, super illud cuius est, addit differentiam essentialem; modus differentiam accidentalem. Et ita isti modi dicunt diversam habituidinem qualitatis ad subiectum penes hoc quod est ‘esse permanens’ vel non, ‘a natura’ vel non, ‘sensibile’ vel non. Quae tamen omnia non variant qualitatem essentialiter, quia omnes istae habituidines, vel plures, possunt esse in eadem qualitate secundum essentiam."

\(^{50}\) *Super Praed.* q. 30-36 n. 65 (OPh 1:491): “Sustinendo quod Aristoteles enumeret species qualitatis et non tantum modos, potest dici quod istae differentiae ‘esse faciliter mobile vel difficulter’, ‘esse principium operandi vel non’, ‘inferre passionem sensui’, ‘exterius disponere substantiam’ sunt differentiae accidentales generi qualitatis, quibus tamen Aristoteles utitur pro differentiis essentialibus, quia differentiae essentiales sunt ignotae; et ita illae formae, quae subsunt primo istis differentiis, sunt quattuor species qualitatis.”
According to this alternative, the differences that Aristotle mentions to identify the four species of quality are not the essential differences that constitute the species; rather, Aristotle uses them only to stand in for the essential differences, which are not known. Thus, as Scotus remarks, this alternative account of the four species of quality might not differ much from the first one, since it likewise holds that the features by which we usually distinguish the four species are not the essential specific differences. The second alternative can also be understood in a different way, however, such that the accidental differences that we know are proper to each species, and thus mutually exclusive:

In the second way of putting it, it has to be conceded at least that these differences, although they are accidental, are proper to the four distinct species of quality, such that just as one of those species is not said of another, nor are both said of the same thing, so also none of these differences is said of another, nor two of the same thing, since 'proper' is said universally of that to which it belongs, and only that.

On this understanding of the second interpretation, there is an important difference between the two accounts. According to the first, the different modes, being only accidental to the particular quality that has the mode, are not mutually exclusive, and so a given quality could exist under more than one mode, whereas according to the second, the different attributes are proper to each species, and thus two different attributes among them cannot be predicated of a single given quality.

How then do these two accounts affect the way in which habits should be understood, and which is better? According to the first, since the species of quality are in fact only modes, habits are not a distinct species of quality, but only an aspect under which any given quality might be described. This answers the objection that a quality cannot fall under two species at once, since they are not distinct species, but only accidental modes; there is thus no reason in principle why any given quality could not have the mode of being a habit or disposition. The second account, under its first interpretation, likewise makes the differences that Aristotle gives among the four species mere modes, and so again there is no obstacle to saying that a habit can also be the principle for some effect. Under its second interpretation, however, there seems to be a greater problem, since the differences are mutually exclusive propria. However, it might still be able to furnish an answer to the objection on the basis of the way in which the species are distinguished. For even though the second account posits that the

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51 Super Praed., qq. 30-36 n. 65 (OPh 1:491): “Iste modus dicendi non multum differt a priori, nisi in hoc quod secundum priorem modum non oportet concedere istos quattuor modos consequi per se distinctas species qualitatis, quin plures possint inesse eidem qualitati secundum speciem.”

52 Super Praed., qq. 30-36, n. 65 (OPh 1:491): “Secundo modo dicendo, oportet ad minus concedere has differentias — quamvis accidentales — esse proprias quattuor distinctis speciebus qualitatis; ita quod sicut illarum specierum una non dicitur de alia necque ambae de aliquo eodem ita et istorum differentiarum nulla dicatur de alia neque duae de aliquo eodem, quia ‘proprium’ dicitur universaliter de eo cuius est et tantum.”
true specific differences of the species of quality are not known, it nonetheless allows for a wide scope of what can be considered as a habit or disposition. The three other species of power, passible quality, and shape are each distinguished by a differentia; the species of habit on the other hand does not have its own proper differentia. It is instead distinguished by the absence of any proper differentia:

The first species [of habit and disposition] does not seem to be obtained through any positive difference that is distinct from these three, but through the privation of each one of them, such that that quality which does not fall under any of these differences (which is as it were a ‘mere quality’, since there is not known any difference that it adds over and above quality, neither an essential one nor a proper accidental one) is said to be in the first species of quality.53

In other words, the other three highest species are distinguished by a specific difference, which is not known, but is tracked by the proper difference that is known; habit on the other hand is simply the species that is left by the lack of any positive specific difference. Scotus thus seems to suggest that to be a habit is not different from being a quality in general: any quality considered just as a quality in general, can be considered as a habit. Scotus adds that the difference of being persistent or easily removed, which is usually said to be that of the first species giving habits and dispositions respectively, is not proper to the first species, but can just as well be said of a quality that falls under any of the species.54

Scotus does not finally come to a conclusion about which interpretation of the four highest species is correct. Indeed, this commentary does not necessarily reveal Scotus’s positive views about what a habit is in a way that will help to illuminate how they incline their subject and how they might thus contribute to action, and he says very little in this text about what habits as such actually contribute to their subject. It could be that he is merely proposing ways in which to understand Aristotle’s own remarks on the supposed four highest species of quality in a way that renders them internally consistent; he does not, for example, say anything about how exactly a habit gives its subject a determinate inclination, which in the context of moral psychology is the most salient feature of habits. However, one point in common between the two accounts that Scotus proposes of the distinction among the four supposed highest species of quality is that there is nothing intrinsic to

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53 Super Praed., q. 30-36 n. 68 (OPh 1:492): “Prima autem species non videtur sumi per aliquam differentiam positivam distinctam ab his tribus, sed per privationem cuilibet istorum, ita quod illa qualitas quae nulli istorum differentiarum subest (quae est quasi ‘tantum qualitas’, quia nulla differentia quam superaddit qualitati nota est, neque essentialis neque propria accidentalis), dicatur esse in prima specie qualitatis.”

54 Super Praed., q. 30-36 n. 68 (OPh 1:492): “Istae enim differentiae, ‘faciliter mobile a subiecto’ vel ‘difficulter’, non sunt distinctae ab alis quin possint dici de eadem qualitate de qua aliqua illarum differentiarum dicitur.”
habits (or nothing intrinsic that is known to us, at any rate) by which they are essentially
distinguished either from the other species of quality or from quality in general. Indeed, the aspect of
habit that Scotus emphasizes here has nothing to do with giving its subject an inclination, but is
simply the fact that a habit is a quality that persists and is not easily dislodged; but this seems to be a
mode possible for qualities in general. Thus, on either account, being a habit seems not to add any
positive characteristic that is not already present in qualities in general. Thus, from a purely
ontological approach such as Scotus’s in his questions on the *Categories*, we apparently learn nothing
about what a habit is beyond the basic presupposition that it is an accidental quality.

So can this text be usefully applied to understanding Scotus’s account of the role of habits and of the
moral virtues? One important point, which I have emphasized in the above discussion of Scotus’s
different interpretations of the supposed four highest species of quality, is that there are reasons to
question whether habit, or perhaps any of the supposed species of quality, tracks any real essential
difference among qualities. This will be important when I discuss the role of habits in action in the
chapters to follow. For it appears that if habit does have some role in action, it must be in some way
a principle of action, and in that sense it will partake of the supposed second species of quality,
namely power. It seems moreover that not just certain qualities, but any quality at all in some way
disposes its subject, and so given the right conditions it might be part of the explanation about how
its subject is inclined under certain conditions. On the other hand, as regards the soul, the last two
species of passible quality affecting the senses and shape seem not to be relevant, since they have to
do with bodies; Scotus even remarks that perhaps any quality of the soul, such as a passion like
anger, should perhaps be assigned to the first species of habits and dispositions. Thus, the question
will be: Which qualities that inhere in the soul can be principles of action, and how are they
distinguished from other accidental qualities in the soul?

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55 *Super Praed.* q. 30-36 n. 68 (OPh 1:492): “Istae enim differentiae, ‘faciliter mobile a subiecto’ vel ‘difficulter’, non sunt
distinctae ab alis quin possint dici de eadem qualitate de qua aliqua illarum differentiarum dictur.”

56 Cf. *Super Praed.*, q. 30-36 n. 87 (OPh 1:497-498): “Potest dici quod potestia animae est in secunda specie qualitatis, 
loquendo de qualitate cui attribuitur ista ratio quae est principium operandi.” The basic point that a quality considered as
a principle of action would fall under the second species. However, mentioning the powers of the soul as an example
seems inconsistent with his explanation elsewhere that the powers of the rational soul are only formally distinct from the
soul but really identical with it; see *Rep.* II d. 16 q. un §§9-19 (Wadding 11:-347a-349a), and discussion in *Cross, Duns
Scotus’s Theory of Cognition*, 145–149. On this point it is important to take into account that this is a commentary on a
standard philosophical text, focusing primarily on explication without bringing in issues that belong more properly to
theological commentary.

57 I will discuss Scotus’s general explanation of inclination in chapter 5.

58 *Super Praed.*, q. 30-36 n. 88 (OPh 1:498): “Dici potest quod ira et dementia et huiusmodi sunt in prima specie, et forte
omnes qualitates animae.”
3.2.2 Habit as that which inclines its subject to operation

Scotus’s answer is fairly straightforward: the habits that are in question – namely, those which incline the soul to action, or more precisely, those which incline a power of the soul to action – are those that have been acquired through repeated action. In his discussion in *Ordinatio I* distinction 17 of the role of habits in action, he addresses an initial argument for habits being active principles: that a habit of knowledge (*scientia*) is that by which the soul acts when it actually knows and so is an active principle of the act of knowing.\(^{59}\) In response, Scotus draws a distinction between knowledge, which can be considered a habit in a broad sense, and intellectual habits considered in a narrow sense:

> I say that knowledge, by which the soul is reduced from essential to accidental potency, is the intelligible species of the object itself; concerning this [species], I concede that it is an active principle with respect to consideration. But that species is not the habit that we are talking about, which is a certain quality left by repeatedly elicited acts; for the species itself naturally precedes the first act that is elicited about the object that it is about, and although this species could be rooted in the intellect, and when it has been rooted could be called a habit, it is not that habit which is generated from acts that are repeatedly elicited, as has been said [i.e. just above]. Thus, all the words that talk about the species as a habit do not contribute to the understanding of this question, nor do those that take knowledge as this species.\(^{60}\)

Scotus thus concede that there is a broad sense of habit according to which any persistent quality of the soul counts as a habit. In the case of the intellect, an intelligible species that is the basis of persistent intellectual knowledge is a habit in this broad sense; it also has a role in the causation of acts of the intellect, but this role is not one of inclining the intellect to acting in certain ways (it is rather that by which an external object is intelligible and thus able to be the partial active cause of the act of intellection).\(^{61}\) Scotus makes clear, however, that what he is concerned with is habit taken

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\(^{59}\) *Ord. I* d. 17 n. 13 (Vat. 5:144): “Secundum Philosophum VIII *Physicorum* et II *De anima*, anima ante scientiam est in potentia essentiali, habens autem scientiam est in potentia accidental. Quod autem reduct de potentia essentiali ad accidentalem respectu operationis, videtur esse principium activum respectu eius, quia est quo habens operatur: unde Philosophus vult II *De anima*, quod sicut scientia est 'quo scimus', ita anima est 'quo vivimus et sentimus' etc., et per consequens sicut anima est quo agimus actus vitales, ita scientia est quo active specularmur.” On *scientia* bringing the intellect from essential potency to accidental potency, cf. *Phys.* VIII.4, 255a30-b4.

\(^{60}\) *Ord. I* d. 17 n. 90 (Vat. 5:183): “Dic o quod scientia, per quam anima reductur de potentia essentiali ad accidentalem, est species intelligibilis ipsius obiecti, et de illa concedo quod ipsa est principium activum respectu considerationis. Sed illa species non est habitus de quo loquimur, qui est quaedam qualitas, relicta ex actibus frequenter elicitis; ipsa enim species praecedet naturaliter primum actum elicitum circa obiectum circa quo quod est, et licet ista species posset esse radicata in intellectu et - cum fuerit radicata - posset dici habitus, non tamen est ille habitus qui generatur ex actibus frequenter elicitis, ut dictum est. Ideo omnia verba quae loquuntur de specie tamquam de habitu, non procedunt ad intellectum huius quaestionis, nec etiam illa quae accepiunt scientiam pro ista specie.”

\(^{61}\) See the conclusion to the paragraph cited above. *Ord. I* d. 17 n. 90 (Vat. 5:144): “Dic o quod scientia, stricte accipiendo pro habitu acquisito ex speculationibus, non est proprae quo specularmur, sed quaedam inclinatio ad faciliter et delectabiliter specularum; illud autem quo ut principio activo - ex parte obiecti - specularmur, est species intelligibilis.” Scotus’s distinction here between intelligible species and intellectual habits in the strict sense is drawn from his detailed discussions of cognition proper. For parallel passages and discussion, see Cross, *Duns Scotus’s Theory of Cognition*, 90–95.
in a narrow sense: not any quality that is persistently present in the soul, but only those which were produced in the soul as a result of previous actions. In this sense, of course, he is simply reaffirming the traditional conception of the kind of habits that can have moral relevance: this does not include all persistent acquired states of a subject, such as health or sickness, but only those that give the subject an inclination to act in one way or another, and such habits are inculcated by training and repeated action: by repeatedly acting in a certain way, one acquires an inclination to act similarly in the future.

However, Scotus does also give an account of how habits in this narrow sense, considered as real absolute qualities, differ from any other persistent quality of the soul. But rather than attempting a systematic derivation of some essential difference of such habits, he appeals instead to the way in which they are caused. On this his position is clear: the active cause of the habits that incline a power to a certain kind of act is a prior act by the power to which the habit belongs. Stated so bluntly, of course, this is just a restatement of the traditional idea that habits are acquired through repeated action; however, when understood according to Scotus’s ontological account of action and habit, it tells us something more precise. For as discussed in chapter 2, Scotus explains an operation as a real accidental quality that inheres in a power while it is in act; and as a real absolute thing, an operation can have real effects. This is precisely how Scotus explains how habits of action are caused: their active cause is an operation, which leaves an impression of itself in the power in question.

Scotus argues for this account of the causation of habits in a short text from his *Collationes Parisienses*. There he notes that the efficient cause of habits, considered as accidental forms, will have to be either the power itself, or the operations of the power. He argues that it cannot be the power that directly causes a habit, and so it must be the operations of the power that cause it:

will return to the way in which Scotus’s account of volition is parallel to his account of intellectual cognition, and how it differs, in chapter 4.

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62 There are two separate sets of *Collationes* by Scotus, those conducted at Oxford and those at Paris, but the printed text of Wadding obscures this fact by jumbling them together. *Collatio Parisiensis* 3, for example (which I discuss here) is printed by Wadding as *Collatio* 6. For the correctly ordered list of the two sets of Scotus’s *Collationes*, see Pelster, “Handschriftliches zur Ueberlieferung der Quaestiones super libros Metaphysicorum und der Collationes des Duns Scotus. 2. Die Collationes Parisienses und Oxonienses,” 84–87. See also Balić, “De Collationibus Ioannis Duns Scoti,” 196; Doucet, “Descripoc Codicis 172 Bibliothecae Communali Assisiensis,” 502, note 4. The results of these earlier works are summarized in Dumont, “William of Ware, Richard of Conington and the *Collationes Oxonienses* of John Duns Scotus,” 69–70, esp. note 26. For more recent discussion of the status of Scotus’s *Collationes*, see Alliney, “The Treatise on the Human Will in the *Collationes Oxonienses*”; Alliney, Fedeli, and Pertosa, “In vista di un’edizione critica.” Alliney argues on doctrinal grounds that a subset of the *Collationes Oxonienses* are probably not genuine works of Scotus; the rest of the *Collationes* seem to be genuine works of Scotus.
An act of the will that generates a habit in the will causes the habit sufficiently as the total cause, and the will does nothing in the production of the habit, since in that case the acts that naturally generate a habit would not generate it if the will willed against an act of this kind generating a habit. But this is false: for however much the will that elicits an act of justice willed that [a habit of] justice not be generated in itself from these acts, [a habit of] justice would still be generated in it necessarily, since acts of this kind naturally impress their similitude in the will. Therefore, the will has no immediate causality over habit, but only over the acts from which the habit is generated; therefore, an act is the total cause of a habit.63

Scotus argument thus turns on an appeal to the freedom of the will, which can acquire habits no less than any other power.64 Since the will acts freely, it has mastery over whether or not it will do whatever it does do; but although the will has power over whether or not it will act, it does not have power over whether or not it will acquire a habit when it does act. Therefore, the will cannot be the immediate cause of its own habits, nor by extension will any power be the cause of its own habits.65 The total efficient cause of a habit must therefore be the operations of the power.

Note that the habit not only is caused by the operations of the power, but is also “impressed” into the power as a “similitude” of the operation. In other words, a habit in some way resembles the operation that caused it, and therefore also resembles the operations to which it will incline the power in which it inheres. This causal account of how habits are produced thus provides some explanation of why a habit inclines a power to certain operations. According to the view presented in this text, a habit inclines a power to an act insofar as the habit is an imperfect state of the form that is the actual operation. As Scotus says, “a habit inclines a power in the way that a prior form is said to incline its subject to a posterior form with which the prior form is naturally suited and through which the prior form is somehow perfected and preserved.”66 His conclusion here seems to

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63 Coll. Par. 3 §5 (= Collationes 6, Wadding 3:358a-b): “Actus enim voluntatis generans habitum in voluntate sufficienter causat habitum ut causa totalis, et nihil voluntas operatur in productione habitus, quia tune actus nati generare habitum ipsum non generarent si voluntas nollet huiusmodi actus generare habitum, quod falsum est; quatumcumque enim voluntas eliciens actus iustitiae nollet, quod ex istis generaret iustitia in ipsa, adhuc necessario iustitia generaretur in ea, cum huiusmodi actus naturaliter suam similitudinem imprimit in voluntate; ergo voluntas nullam activitatem immediate habet super habitum, sed tantum actus ex quibus generatur habitus; ergo actus est totalis causa habitus.”

64 Indeed, as noted in chapter 1, it is the most appropriate subject of habits, since it is undetermined in itself.

65 Scotus goes on to explain how it is possible for the sensitive appetite to acquire habits that go against the natural inclination of the appetite. Left to itself, a sensitive appetite would always act according to its natural inclinations, and so would never acquire a contrary habit (and so again it cannot be that the power is the efficient cause of its habits); but since it acts at the command of the will, it is possible for it to be habituated to acting in a way that is contrary to its natural inclinations by being moved by a command of the will to acting against its own natural inclinations, and those commanded acts are the immediate cause of its habits. See Coll. Par. 3 §§5-9 (= Collationes 6, Wadding 3:358b-360a).

66 Coll. Par. 3 §11 (= Collationes 6, Wadding 3:360b): “Habitus inclinat potentiam secundum quod prior forma dicitur inclinare subjectum suum ad formam posteriorem cum qua convenit naturaliter forma prior et per quam quodammodo perfectur et salvatur forma prior.”
rely on two ideas. First, understood as a trace of the previous operation that generated the acquired habit in the first place, a habit is in some sense the operation itself in a less perfect form. Secondly, anything whatsoever naturally tends towards its own most perfect actualization (even a stone tends from its own nature to move downwards as long as nothing impedes it). As a persistent trace of a previous operation, an acquired habit is similar to that operation but in an imperfect way, and thus inclines the subject toward having the same form in a more perfect way i.e. as an actually elicited operation. This seems to be a promising way to explain how a habit inclines not in virtue of any relation but simply in virtue of the kind of absolute quality that it is. The exact way in which it inclines the power to certain operations will be discussed in detail in chapters 4 and 5.

3.3 What distinguishes a habit as a moral virtue?

This chapter so far has been devoted to an examination of the identity of habits as accidental qualities, without much attention to the identity of moral virtues specifically. This has been a deliberate choice, in order to prepare the ground for Scotus’s account of the role of moral virtues, which he approaches by first discussing what they contribute according to their more general character as habits. I will conclude with a brief glance at the habits of moral virtue and what, if anything, distinguishes them from habits in general.

3.3.1 Are moral virtues distinguished by their subject?

One way that moral virtues might be distinguished from other habits is by their subject. To a certain degree this is true: as was discussed in chapter 1, moral virtues are habits of action, and as such they can be habits only of the appetitive powers of the soul (such as the will or the sensitive appetite) and not of the cognitive powers (such as the intellect or the senses). They are also habits of choice, and so, according to Scotus, they can belong to no other power than the one that is the principle of acts of choice, namely the will. As was also noted in chapter 1, Scotus concedes that habits of the sensitive appetite that are in conformity with a habit of virtue in the will can also be called moral virtues, inasmuch as they incline the lower power to obey the right command of the will readily and with pleasure; however, this will be at most a derivative sense of ‘moral virtue’, for such a habit of the lower power lacks the character of being a habit of choice, which is essential to being a moral virtue. However, it can’t be the subject alone that distinguishes the moral virtues, for while all moral virtues are habits of the will, not all habits of the will need be moral virtues. It is obvious that there

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67 On the notion of acquired habit as a trace of prior action in Suárez and Descartes, see Des Chene, “From Habits to Traces.”
can also be bad habits of the will, i.e. vices: just as much as I could acquire the virtues of courage or justice, I can also have the vices of cowardice or injustice, and the latter will be bad habits of choice – i.e. habits of the will – no less than the former are good habits of choice.

3.3.2 Are moral virtues habits distinguished by how they incline the will?

The most obvious way to reply to this objection is point out that moral virtues incline the will only to good action. So perhaps what distinguishes moral virtues from other habits of the will is that they incline the will only to good action rather than to bad or indifferent action. Of course, a moral virtue by definition inclines only to good action, so is this answer merely question-begging? One could reply by saying that it is exactly by the inclination that it gives to its subject that one habit is distinguished from another. For example, a habit of reasoning well is different from a habit of doing arithmetic accurately, precisely because of the kind of action that it inclines the intellect to doing well (or to put it differently in light of an earlier objection, the habits are distinguished precisely by the kinds of action that caused them in the first place). So one might say that moral virtues are simply the habits that incline the will to one kind or another of good actions: courage inclines the will to courageous choices because it was caused by courageous actions in the past, whereas abstinence inclines the will to choose to act abstinently because it has chosen likewise in the past.

Here too something more is needed. To take the example of abstinence, let us assume that abstinent action is generally good, and the right way to act. Someone who has the habit of abstinence is inclined to acting abstinely, and so will generally do so. But one could also imagine someone who has acquired such a habit merely because of some accident of their personal history (e.g., they had strict parents, they lived for a long time with limited resources, etc.), or even became abstinent for the sake of something bad (e.g., they avoided self-indulgence for the sake of feeling superior). In the second case especially, it is obvious that such a habit is not a moral virtue, and even in the first case it seems to be a morally indifferent habit. Yet in either case, the action chosen could be praiseworthy if considered in itself.

3.3.3 Moral virtue as a habit of action guided by prudence

What then makes the difference between a habit of doing something that merely happens to be the right action, and the habit of moral virtue that inclines an agent towards choices that really are morally good? The answer to this question turns on what counts as morally good action: in scholastic thought, a necessary component for action to be morally good and praiseworthy is that it
not just happen to be what ought to be done, but also follow a correct rational judgment by the
agent about what ought to be done. In other words, the rational agent’s power for action (for
Scotus, principally the will, which commands the lower appetites) should act only in light of a right
practical judgment by the intellect. Therefore, a morally good act not only is what right reason would
recommend, but also is an act done in conformity with the agent’s own correct process of reasoning,
in which the right principles are considered and the right conclusion is reached.68 Thus, for a habit of
the will to count as a moral virtue, it must incline the will not simply to actions that happen to be
right and so at least could be morally good – for example, an act of abstinence, regardless of why
that act is chosen – but rather to actions that are actually good, that is, actions that are done in
accordance with the agent’s own correct practical judgment.

This might seem to be a more precise way of identifying the kind of action to which a moral virtue
inclines the will. If this is true, we could return to the proposal above, and conclude that a moral
virtue is indeed distinguished by the kind of act to which it inclines the will (choosing in accordance
with right reason) or by how it came to be present in the will (by previous choices following right
reason). Scotus points out, however, that this is not true:

To the substance of a habit, insofar as it is a form in the genus of quality, moral
virtue adds only a habitual conformity to right reason. For the very same habit in its
nature, which was generated from acts of abstinence elicited with erroneous reason
in the [agent] eliciting them, when it remains afterwards with right reason would be
the virtue of abstinence, whereas before it was not a habit of virtue, as long as there
was not the right reason for abstaining. Yet nothing has changed about that habit in
itself, but only that it is now joined with prudence and before it was not.69

That is, a habit of abstinence is simply a habit that inclines the will to certain acts and it does so
because the will has repeatedly acted in the same way in the past; moreover, considered simply as
instances of acting abstinently, the acts in themselves are of the same kind whether or not the
motivation for the acts or the deliberation that preceded them was right or wrong. Accordingly, the
habit of abstinence that is produced results in an inclination to a certain kind of act that is indifferent

68 As Scotus explains in the Prologue to his Ordinatio, practical action (practic) is action that can be elicited in conformity
with a prior dictate of reason, while practical cognition is an act of the intellect that is extended to practical action (that is
to say, it has to do with practical action as opposed to merely theoretical cognition). See Ord. Prologus nn. 228-264 (Vat.
1:155-178), with discussion in Möhle, Ethik als scientia practica, 20–41; Sondag, Jean Duns Scot: Prologue de l’Ordinatio, 283–
293; Osborne, Human Action, 80–83.

69 Ord. I d. 17 n. 65 (Vat. 5:167-168): “Virtus moralis non addit super substantiam habitus - ut est forma in genere
qualitatis - nisi conformitatem habitualem ad rationem rectam. Idem enim habitus in natura, qui generarentur e actibus
abstinentiae elicitis cum ratione erronea in elicenti, manens post cum ratione recta, esset post virtus abstinentiae et prius
non habitus virtutis, quamdiu non fuit ratio recta abstinendi; nec tamen aliquid mutatum est circa illum habitum in se,
sed tantummodo nunc coniungitur prudentiae et prius non.”
to the practical judgment that precedes it. There is thus nothing intrinsic to a habit that makes it a moral virtue. Rather, what makes a habit of the will a moral virtue is a certain relation to right reason; specifically, along with the habit of abstinence, there must also be an intellectual habit of prudence that inclines the intellect to issuing right dictates about why one ought to act abstinent.

The idea of the intellectual habit of prudence that guides the deliberation of the intellect is of course fundamental in scholastic moral psychology, though its relationship to the moral virtues was interpreted in different ways. According to Thomas Aquinas, prudence and the moral virtues are mutually dependent. Moral virtue requires that prudence also be present because for moral virtue to incline to right choice the agent needs the habit of prudence to incline her judging rightly about what ought to be chosen. Conversely, prudence requires the presence of the moral virtues, since prudence inclines the intellect to deliberate well about means to an end, but the end that is a principle for practical deliberation must be presupposed; the moral virtues thus serve to incline the agent to the right end so that deliberation can proceed well. Scotus takes a very different view. He concedes that anyone who has acquired moral virtue in the will must also have acquired prudence in the intellect, for right willing presupposes right judgment, so whenever there has been a right act of willing there must also have been the corresponding right act of the practical intellect. Thus, since habits are caused by operations, a habit of right judgment will always have been produced whenever a habit of right choice has been produced. However, the reverse is not true, for since the will is free, it need not act even when the intellect has issued a dictate; thus, it is possible for the intellect to acquire a habit of prudence but for the will to lack the corresponding habit of choice. Furthermore, Scotus concludes on the basis of this account of how habits of prudence and moral virtues are caused that prudence is not a single habit in the intellect but many: for each moral virtue in the will

70 ST I-II 58.4 (Piana 1015a): “Ad hoc autem quod electio sit bona, duo requiruntur. Primo, ut sit debita intentio finis, et hoc fit per virtutem moralem, quae vim appetitivam inclinat ad bonum conveniens rationi, quod est finis debitus. Secundo, ut homo recte accipiat ea quae sunt ad finem, et hoc non potest esse nisi per rationem recte consiliantem, iudicantem et praecipientem; quod pertinet ad prudentiam et ad virtutes sibi annexas, ut supra dictum est. Unde virtus moralis sine prudentia esse non potest.”

71 ST I-II 58.5 (Piana 1016a-b): “Sicut homo disponitur ad recte se habendum circa principia universalia, per intellectum naturalem vel per habitum scientiae; ita ad hoc quod recte se habeat circa principia particularia agibilium, quae sunt fines, oportet quod perficiatur per aliquos habitus secundum quos fiat quodammodo homini connaturale recte iudicare de fine. Et hoc fit per virtutem moralem, virtuosus enim recte iudicat de fine virtutis, quia quals unamquaeque est, talis finis videtur et, ut dicitur in III Ethic. Et ideo ad rectam rationem agibilium, quae est prudentia, requiritur quod homo habeat virtutem moralem.” Cf. Thomas Aquinas, De Virtutibus Cardinalibus art. 2.

72 See Ord. III d. 36 nn. 72-93 (Vat. 10:249-258), esp. n. 92 (Vat. 10:257-258). For detailed discussion of Scotus on the connection (or not) between prudence and the moral virtues, see Dumont, “The Necessary Connection of Moral Virtue to Prudence According to John Duns Scotus - Revisited.”
that inclines it to acting rightly, there must be a corresponding habit in the intellect of right practical judgment.\footnote{See \textit{Ord.} III d. 36 nn. 96-100 (Vat. 10:259-261).}

Scotus’s conception of how a habit of the will is a moral virtue is thus somewhat complicated. On the one hand, he affirms the traditional dependence of the moral virtues with prudence, since an inclination to right action presupposes an inclination to right judgment about practical action, though he denies that there is a converse dependence. On the other hand, he also states explicitly that a non-virtuous habit of the will that happens to incline to what would be right can become a moral virtue merely in virtue of the intellect acquiring the corresponding habit of prudence, yet that habit of the will remains, as a quality, the very same as before. As Scotus explains immediately following the passage quoted above:

> Being joined with prudence therefore attributes to a habit, insofar as it is a form in the genus of quality, [the status of] being a virtue when that habit is from its nature naturally conformed to prudence; and thus a habit that is a moral virtue in absolute existence \[entitate absoluta\] means nothing other than that which is such [a habit] in nature, but is not a virtue if it exists without prudence.\footnote{\textit{Ord.} I d. 17 n. 66 (Vat. 5:168): “Contiungi ergo ‘prudentiae’ attribuit habitui (ut est forma de genere qualitatis) esse virtutem, quando ille habitus ex natura sua natus est esse conformis prudentiae, – et ita nihil aliud in entitate absoluta dicit habitus qui est virtus moralis, ab illo qui est talis in natura, et non virtus, si sit sine prudentia.”}

It seems therefore that what makes a habit of the will a moral virtue is a relation to a habit of prudence. But what sort of relation is this, and does it adequately explain what moral virtues are over and above their status as habits of the will? And given Scotus’s views about the lack of causal efficacy in relations, can moral virtues as such have any role? Ultimately, the answer to these questions can come only through an examination of what moral goodness itself is and how human acts can be morally good. For the question of the role of moral virtues as such is whether they have a role in causing acts of the will to be morally good; and as the following chapters will explore, Scotus is careful to distinguish the naturally perfective aspects of an act that can be attributed to the inclination of habit, from the moral perfection that is supposed to be due to moral virtue. Only with an understanding of the nature of this moral perfection of an act – that is to say, its moral goodness – can a full account be given of what a moral virtue is.

### 3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have laid out Scotus’s understanding of what kind of thing habits are in general. In the sense that will be relevant for the discussion of moral virtues, habits incline their subject to acts
of a certain kind; they thus seem to include a relation to the acts to which they give such an inclination. However, even if Scotus accepts that a habit in some way is identical to or includes a relation, that relation cannot be the basis for explaining how a habit makes a real contribution to action, since a relation cannot be the principle of any real effect. He will have to appeal instead to the status of habits as accidental qualities, that is, as absolute non-relative beings, which belong to one or another power of the soul. In the remainder of this dissertation, it will be presupposed that moral virtues are habits; as such, they are absolute real beings, and so are in principle capable of having some real effect; that is, they can incline their subject to action and thus contribute in some way to that action. The question I will address is how this contribution can be grounded ontologically.

In his discussion of this question, Scotus reduces the possible accounts of the contribution of habits to two main options, according to whether they cooperate actively with the power or dispose it passively. Either way, since the discussion is ultimately aimed at explaining the role of moral virtues, which are habits of the will, this contribution will have to be such that it is compatible with the will’s free self-determination of its own acts. However, over and above their contribution as habits of the will, moral virtues as such seem to contribute something more, for they are not merely habits that happen to incline the will to good actions rather than bad ones, but they are also thought to have some role in making the act of the will morally good. The remaining chapters of this dissertation will be devoted to these questions. First, how exactly do moral virtues contribute to action as habits of the will, that is do they contribute actively or not? In light of this, it will be clear that much of what moral virtues contribute to action results from their general character as habits. In this way, it will be possible to distinguish what they contribute specifically as moral virtues, and finally to explain what makes moral virtues more than just a certain sub-grouping of habits of the will.
PART II: ANALYSIS
4. Habit as Active Cause

The first three chapters of this dissertation have been devoted to establishing the theoretical context of Scotus’s account of the role of moral virtues in human action. Chapter 1 laid out Scotus’s argument for why the moral virtues (in the primary sense at least) are habits of no other power than the will itself. Chapter 2 was devoted to explaining his account of the will as a freely self-moving power, and thus served to establish the causal framework of volition within which the role of the moral virtues will have to be situated, namely, his account of a self-moving power as one that is both the active and passive cause of its own actions, which are accidental qualities that inhere in the power; the will, moreover, not only is self-moving, but also moves itself freely, that is, it is determined to its act by nothing other than itself. Finally, in chapter 3 I discussed the ontological status of habits as absolute qualities, which allows for them to have a real effect in action.

The remainder of the dissertation will be devoted to explaining how Scotus uses this framework to explain the role of the moral virtues in human action. In the text on which I will focus, from distinction 17 of book I of Scotus’s Ordinatio, the guiding question is, “Whether it is necessary to posit in a habit the character of an active principle with respect to the act.”¹ Scotus thus proceeds in his account of the role of moral virtues by first giving an account of how they contribute to action not specifically as moral virtues, but under their general character as habits. He lays out five possible ways in which one might explain their role in the causation of acts of volition. Of these five, three are different ways of assigning habits an active role with respect to the actions of their subject, the fourth is a proposal for how habits can contribute without being active causes, while the fifth turns specifically to the contribution of moral virtues as such. In the following three chapters I will follow Scotus’s order of presentation. I will first discuss the positive answer to the question and how one could maintain that a habit is an active principle with respect to acts, then I will discuss the negative answer, and finally I will discuss the somewhat distinct question of whether the habits of moral virtue cause the moral goodness of acts of the will.

Accordingly, the present chapter will be devoted to Scotus’s discussion of how habits can have an active role with respect to the actions of the power to which they belong. First, I will discuss the different ways of assigning an active role to habits. I will begin by addressing in turn the first two positive ways that Scotus considers and why he rejects them both; I will then lay out the third way,

¹ Ord. I d. 17 n. 6 (Vat. 5:141): “Propono aliam [quationem] in generali de habitu, utrum necesse sit ponere in habitu rationem principii activi respectu actus.”
which Scotus considers the most probable account of how a habit can be an active principle of an act without compromising the role of the active power itself as the primary active cause of its own operations. Secondly, I will discuss how an explanation of a habit as a secondary active causes might be defended by appeal to Scotus’s somewhat parallel account of the role of the object of the will in causing acts of volition. Finally, I will suggest that, despite the fact that Scotus elsewhere seems to endorse a positive answer to his guiding question in this text, the reasons in favour of it are not entirely convincing.

4.1 Can habits be active principles?

It can be said that Scotus’s discussion of the role of habits generally, and of moral virtues specifically, is guided by two main considerations. First, whatever role is assigned to the moral virtues must be consistent with Scotus’s general account of how a power such as the will moves itself to action. The role of moral virtues will thus have to be explained in connection either with the will’s active eliciting of its own volition or with its passively receiving its own operation as an accidental quality, and this role will be to contribute, whether actively or not, to the operation that is the product of the will’s activity. Moreover, since nothing can be the cause of any real effect unless it is an absolute being, the contribution of the moral virtues will have to be considered in light of their status as absolute beings, that is, as habits; accordingly, before proceeding to the role of moral virtues as such, Scotus first addresses their role through the more general question of how habits contribute to action; that is, before addressing what moral virtues as such contribute to acts of the will, he first explains what they contribute in virtue of their general character as habits of the will.

The second consideration is that whatever contribution moral virtues make as habits must be compatible with the will’s freely self-determining mode of action. Scotus’s discussion of the role of habits is thus geared towards giving an account that is general enough that it can apply to any power that is capable of receiving habits, including the will. Therefore, whatever contribution habits make to action will have to be compatible with the will’s free self-determination.

Scotus begins his discussion of whether habits are active principles of action by discussing and critiquing views that were proposed by previous philosophers. A central point that in Scotus’s view

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2 Existing scholarly discussions of Scotus’s account of the role of moral virtues in Ord. I d. 17 have not fully taken into account how Scotus takes care to distinguish what moral virtues contribute as habits from what they contribute as moral virtues. M. E. Ingham, for example, treats the third way in this text (Scotus’s probable account of habits as active principles with respect to action) as an alternative to the fifth way, ignoring the fact that they answer different questions; see Ingham, *Ethics and Freedom*, 185–197. Peter Nickl is more attentive to this point, though his analysis is quite brief; see Nickl, *Ordnung der Gefühle*, 63–71.
must be preserved in any account of the role of habits in action is that the power itself must always be in some way an active cause of its own operations, for otherwise it would not be a self-moving power at all. This is all the more important in the case of the will, since if it is to act freely, it must have power over its own acts; therefore, it cannot be merely the passive recipient of its own acts, but must cause them as well. It follows that if a habit is an active principle of acts, it can be only a partial active cause, together with the power itself, which (according to Scotus) is by definition the primary active principle of its own operations. Any account of habit as an active principle will therefore have to show how the active contribution of a habit to action is compatible with the active role of the power to which it belongs, and how it is possible for the power and the habit to work together to produce the operation as a single effect. Before proposing his own probable account of habits as active principles, Scotus first considers and rejects two other possible accounts, which for the sake of convenience can be referred to as the first way and the second way.

4.1.1 The first way: infused virtue as a cause of meritorious action

The first way of explaining the role of habits in the operation of a power makes a distinction between how naturally acquired habits contribute to operations and how supernaturally infused habits do. Scotus notes first that what an acquired habit contributes to action is a determinate inclination to a certain kind of act, and it can thus be seen as a perfection of the power to which it belongs:

It is said that things are one way with an acquired habit, but otherwise with an infused habit. For the natural act of a human being and the readiness for the act proceed from the one [sc. the acquired habit] on account of the indeterminacy that the nature has with respect to that act, and so an acquired virtue is a perfection of the nature that is presupposed in the account of the principle of an act.

The natural habits are thus those that form the basis of Aristotle’s account in the *Nicomachean Ethics* of virtuous action: through training and repeated action, a habitual disposition is produced in the agent that inclines him or her to continue to act in the same way such that he or she will in the future act in the same way, but with greater ease and pleasure. An acquired virtue is thus a perfection of the power in which it inheres. To the extent that a power by itself lacks a determinate inclination

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3 This clearly is determined by the broader context of the question. Ultimately, Scotus’s discussion in part 1 of distinction 17 will culminate in an account of the role of the infused virtue of charity, but since charity is a habit no less than any natural habit, its contribution to acts of the will must be compatible with the will’s mode of action just as much as that of natural habits.

4 *Ord. I d. 17 n. 21 (Vat. 5:146):* “Ad istam quaestionem dicitur quod aliter est de habitu acquisito et aliter de habitu infuso. Nam ab alio est actus naturalis hominis, et expeditio actus, propter indeterminationem quam habet natura respectu illius actus, - et ideo virtus acquisita est perfectio naturae, prae suppositae in ratione principii actus.”
to right action (which for the will is its perfection as the rational appetite), it is perfected by the inculcation of virtuous habits that give it a determinate good inclination that it lacks by nature.\(^5\)

But in addition to the virtues that can be acquired naturally by repeated action, there are also the supernatural virtues that can be directly infused by the grace of God.\(^6\) The doctrine of infused virtues has a long history going all the way back to Augustine, who argued that is impossible for us to merit salvation by our own effort, and so we need the gratuitous gift of God who inclines us towards Him: as Augustine puts it in *On Grace and Free Choice*, it is not by our turning to God that we deserve salvation but by God turning to us.\(^7\) The proposition that we merit salvation because of our own good works rather than by the grace of God, is universally condemned among medieval theologians as a heretical view. Rather, we require the supernaturally infused virtues of faith, hope and charity in order to be united with God in a way that is not possible for us merely through our own unaided power. There were different views on how extensively God infuses virtues into us: Thomas Aquinas holds that in addition to the three theological virtues, God also infuses supernatural versions of the moral virtues, by which the agent as a whole is duly oriented towards the supernatural end of God rather than towards the merely natural end of the happiness that can be attained by human power alone.\(^8\) Scotus goes in the opposite direction on this point, holding that the moral virtues are only natural habits and that there is no need for the infusion of supernatural moral virtues along with charity.\(^9\)

According to the position that Scotus addresses as the first way, the way in which infused habits contribute to action is different from the way naturally acquired habits do. A natural habit merely perfects a power, and the act to which the habit inclines it is still caused by the power; the infused habits

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\(^5\) See chapter 1 above for how habits can be perfections of their power, and why the will as a free power is most in need of determination by habit. Here it is clear that although Scotus frames this question as concerning habits in general, he implicitly is concerned primarily with the habits of the will, such as the moral virtues. Indeed, it is a question that Scotus will have to address: whether any power other than the will can even have habits in the strict sense: if a habit is needed to provide a determination that is lacking, it seems that only the will needs habits at all, since it alone, as the sole created power that is free, is naturally undetermined to its act.

\(^6\) Thus they are variously referred to as supernatural virtues, infused virtues, gratuitous virtues and theological virtues.

\(^7\) Augustine, *On Grace and Free Choice* 5.10 (tr. Peter King, 149): “When God says: ‘Turn to me and I shall turn to you’ [Zch. 1:3], one of these actions seems to pertain to our will, namely that we turn to Him, whereas the other pertains to His grace, namely that He also turns to us.”

\(^8\) For a concise account of Aquinas’s views on the role of virtues, see Kent, “Habits and Virtues.” On the infused moral virtues as distinct from the naturally acquired moral virtues, see Ibid., 122. See also *ST* I-II 63.3-4.

\(^9\) See *Ord.* III d. 36 n. 109 (Vat. 10:265-266).
virtue of charity, however, must, according to this view, be the primary cause of the meritorious act of loving God that charity makes possible:

If a supernatural virtue were [a perfection] of the nature that is presupposed in that being to which such an action corresponds, then it would only facilitate the nature as an acquired virtue does. But this is false; rather, “gratuitous being” comes from the same thing as that by which a gratuitous act is elicited without qualification according to that degree [i.e. according to the degree of the infused virtue]. Thus, an acquired virtue is a virtue according to the definition of virtue that is given in *Nicomachean Ethics* II, but a theological virtue is not like this; rather it is according to the definition of virtue by which it is posited that virtue is the “ultimate state of the power.”

The position that Scotus here summarizes is that of Henry of Ghent, which addresses a problem arising from the theological context of the discussion of virtues. According to Henry, grace and charity are not separable but are really the same thing; thus, grace as such perfects the essence of the soul, but grace as charity perfects the will as a power of the soul. But it also follows from this that whereas the essence is perfected in its first act (i.e. in its being), the way in which the will can be perfected as a power is in its second act (i.e. in its operation):

In no way should it be posited that grace is in reality something other than charity, although it should be posited that it differs in reality from every other virtue, since without it they [sc. the other virtues] remain formless and dead. For it is the life of the spirit inasmuch as it is grace and is in the essence of the soul; it is the form of the virtues inasmuch as it is charity and is in the will. Insofar as it is the perfection of the substance, it in some way gives first actuality, which is being; and insofar as it is the perfection of the power, it gives second actuality, which is to do the operation that is proper to it.

Charity perfects the will with respect to its operations, but the way in which the infused virtues contribute to operations will be different from the way in which the acquired virtues do. The acquired virtues perfect the power in a natural way by disposing it to the action that is most appropriate to it, i.e. operations that are perfected according to their nature. The infused virtues on the other hand dispose the power not to eliciting its acts easily and with pleasure, but rather to eliciting them in a way that is simply impossible without the virtue: just as grace perfects the

10 *Ord. I d. 17 n. 21* (Vat. 5:146): “Sed si virtus supernaturalis esset naturae, praesuppositae in illo esse cui correspondet talis actio, tunc ipsa tantum faciliterat naturam, sicut virtus acquisita: sed hoc est falsum, immo ab eodem est ‘esse gratuitum’ et simpliciter elicitar actio gratuita, secundum illum gradum, - ita quod virtus acquisita est virtus secundum illam rationem virtutis quae ponitur II *Ethicorum*, sed virtus theologica non sic, sed secundum illum rationem virtutis qua ponitur quod virtus est ‘ultimum de potentia’.”

11 Henry of Ghent, *Quodl.* IV q. 10 (Leuven 8:82) “Nullo ergo modo poni debet gratia esse aliquid alius re a caritate, quamquam poni debet de differe a quacumque alia virtute, quia sine illa informes manent et mortuæ. Est enim vita spiritualis secundum quod est gratia in essentia animae, et forma virtutum, secundum quod est caritas et in voluntate; et ut est perfectio substantiae dat quasi actum primum, qui est esse, ut autem est perfectio potentiae quasi dat actum secundum, qui est operari operationem proprior sibi.”
4. Habit as Active Cause

substance of the soul in first act, so charity perfects the power in its second act by giving the operation “gratuitous being.” That is, the being of an act elicited with the supernatural virtue of charity is different in kind from the being of a merely natural act. From this it seems to follow that the supernatural virtue of charity is in fact the cause of the being of the meritorious operations of a will in which charity has been infused, and the power itself is left with no causal role with respect to its own operation.

This is exactly the basis of Scotus’s criticism of Henry’s account, namely, that it leaves open the possibility that something other than the will itself can be the primary or total cause of volition. Scotus raises two arguments for why this possibility must be rejected. First, he argues that it raises problems for the nature of the habit of charity. If charity is the primary cause of the acts of a will that possesses charity, and not the will itself, then charity is not a habit but a power, for that in virtue of which an agent acts primarily without qualification is a power. But charity is not a power, but a habit that is infused into the human soul – more specifically, into the will. Furthermore, charity is supposed to perfect the will in which it inheres; but if charity is the primary cause of the meritorious acts of the will, then, it cannot perfect the will. Scotus argues as follows. Suppose per impossibile that charity could exist separately from a will: for just as heat is not a perfection of wood – since if it existed separately it could still make something else hot, and so its activity should not be attributed to the wood – so charity, if it existed separately, could be the cause of meritorious acts of volition; it would thus have to be admitted that charity is not a perfection of the will. But charity does perfect the will by making it able to love God; therefore, it cannot be that charity is the primary cause of meritorious acts.

The second line of argument shows how this account also entails that acts of charity are not free acts. As was discussed in chapter 2, Scotus holds that the will is unique among all created things in

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12 Henry of Ghent, Quodl. IV q. 10 (Leuven 8:84): “Nunc autem id quod sic ordinatur ad actum secundum* quod sine ipso omnino elici non possit, debet esse, sicut dictum est, id ipsum quod dat actum primum et esse cui correspondet ille actus secundus.” *Note that the critical edition has ad actum primum; however, ad actum secundum (as Badius has it) seems to make better sense of the sentence.

13 Ord. I d. 17 n. 22 (Vat. 5:147): “Quo quis potest simpliciter operari, illud est potentia; ergo habitus supernaturalis erit potentia. Antecedens patet, quia potentia est qua simpliciter et primo possumus agere.”

14 Ord. I d. 17 n. 23 (Vat. 5:147-148): “Praeterea, ex hoc sequitur ulterius quod non plus erit voluntas bona si operetur per habitum caritatis, quam lignum perficitur in agendo si agit per calorem inhaerentem accidentaliter; exemplum: sicut enim ex hoc nulla competit actio ligno per formam ligni, sed tantum illi agenti quod recipitur in ipso, ita etiam videtur quod actio illa quae competet caritati ut principali principio, nullo modo competeret voluntati ut volunatas. Et etiam sequitur ulterius quod sicut calor si esset separatus, acque calefaceret, ita caritas si esset separata, acque ageret, nam omnis forma quae est totale principium agendi ut est in subiecto, si per se est, potest per se operari, et ita sequitur evidenter propositum, quod scilicet habitus erit potentia.”
being the only free power; therefore, the only acts that are free are those that are elicited or commanded by the will. But if charity is the total cause of acts of the will, those acts will not be free, since their principle is not free, for charity is a habit distinct from the will itself, and so if it is an active principle it is not a freely active principle, but a natural one (since only the will itself is a free principle); therefore, if charity is the primary active principle of the acts of the will that has charity, those acts will be merely natural acts and not freely elicited. Thus, if the acts of an agent endowed with charity have charity as their total cause, then someone who has charity will not be able to sin, for since the habit predominates as the cause of volitions, and since it is not a free power, all of that agent’s acts will be elicited necessarily according to the inclination given by the habit of charity. Finally, the acts done with charity will not even be the agent’s own acts strictly speaking: since a habit acts in the mode of nature, the acts caused by charity will be naturally determined, and not under the command of the agent’s will. It follows that acts done with charity will not be meritorious acts, since they will be merely natural acts not imputable to the voluntary agent. Yet this would be absurd, since it is precisely those acts done with charity that are supposed to be meritorious.

Scotus therefore denies that the causal contribution of infused habits to the acts of the power in which they inhere is any different from that of naturally acquired habits; rather, even in meritorious acts, the will must remain the primary cause of those acts. Although this appears to be a purely theological point about the supernatural virtue of charity, it is relevant to Scotus’s account of the role of habits in general. In order to make room for the supernatural virtues really being given to an agent but not overpowering the agent, thus cancelling the merit that they are supposed to make possible, the account of what habits are and how they contribute has to be made more broad. If a virtue is held to be a perfection of a power, this must be understood in a way that does not leave open the possibility that a virtue could be the primary cause of a perfected operation. In other

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15 *Ord.* I d. 17 n. 24 (Vat. 5:148): “Praeterea, operatio non elicitur libere, cuius principium activum est mere naturale; sed habitus cum non sit formaliter voluntas, nec per consequens formaliter liber, si est principium activum erit mere naturale; ergo operatio eius non erit mere libera, et ita nullum ‘velle’ erit liberum si eliciatur ab habitu ut a totali principio activo.”

16 *Ord.* I d. 17 n. 25 (Vat. 5:148-149): “Praeterea, tunc homo semel habens caritatem, numquam posset peccare mortaliter, quod est inveniendas. Probatio consequentiae, quia habens formam aliquam activam praedominantem sibi, numquam potest moveri contra inclinationem illius formae praedominantis, sicut numquam corpus mixtum grave potest ascendere contra inclinationem terrae dominantis; sed caritas – si est totale principium activum - praedominatur ipsi voluntati, quae non potest in actum illum; ergo voluntas sequitur semper inclinationem caritatis in agendo, et ita numquam peccabit”

17 *Ord.* I d. 17 n. 26 (Vat. 5:149): “Praeterea, actus ille non est meus qui non est in potestate mea; sed actio ipsius habitus non est in potestate mea, quia habitus ipse – si est activus – non est liber, sed principium naturale; ergo illud ‘diligere’ non erit meum, sic quod in potestate mea sit, et ita non merebor illo actu.” Cf. the *textus cancellatus* that follows (ibid.): “Nec ego potero dici agere operationem illam, et ita actiones meritoriae non sunt voluntatis nec suppositi volentis quod videtur inconveniens.”
words, any contributing active principle other than the power itself can cause only in such a way that it is impossible for its causal contribution to supplant that of the power. Thus, it cannot be that a habit and a power concur as causes in the same order of causality. In such a case the causes concur only accidentally; for example, when many rowers together cause a ship to move, there is no essential order among them, and any one rower could in principle supplant all the other rowers as the total cause of the ship’s motion.\footnote{Cf. \textit{Lect.} II d. 25 n. 71 (Var. 19:253): “Aliquando multa concurrunt ad unum effectum causandum, quae tantum habent ordinem per accidens, et tunc multa concurrunt per accidens (quia si tota virtus esset in uno, illud faceret totum effectum), sicut est de multis trahentibus navem.”} The case of a power and a habit, however, is quite different: for while a power could act by itself without any contribution by a habit, it is impossible for a habit to supplant the power as the total cause of an act; if it could, it would not be a habit but rather a power. Thus, by raising the problem of the causal role in volition of the supernatural virtue of charity, Scotus establishes a condition for a habit of any kind to be an active cause of the operations of the power to which it belongs: since the primary cause of the act has to be the power itself, a habit that is an active cause can be at most a secondary active cause.

4.1.2 The second way: habit as the cause of the intensity of an act

If a habit is an active cause of the operation of a power, and it is only a secondary cause (the power itself being the primary cause), a new question arises: In what way exactly does a habit contribute as a secondary cause of an operation? According to the second way of explaining the role of habits that Scotus discusses, the power is the active cause of the operation itself while the habit determines the degree of intensity of the operation that is elicited:

It can be said in another way that the acquired and infused virtues do not differ in the previously described way [i.e. the first way], but both are alike with respect to the substance of the act. Thus, in one way of speaking, the act has its substance from the power, but has this or that intension from the habit; thus, it is as if there are two things in the act (namely, the substance and the intension) that correspond to two things that have the character of principle or cause.\footnote{\textit{Ord.} I d. 17 n. 27 (Var. 5:149-150): “Alia via potest dici quod virtutes acquisitae et infusae non differunt modo praedicto, sed eodem modo comparantur ambae quantum ad substantiam actus: et tunc est unus modus dicendi, quod actus habet suam substantiam a potentia, sed intentionem talem vel talem habet a habitu, ita quod quasi duobus in actu – scilicet substantiae et intentioni – correspondeant duo in ratione principii vel causae.”}

In order to understand this position, some explanation is needed of the idea that qualities can exist in different degrees. Scholastic philosophers generally held that accidental qualities can exist in varying degrees: just as a body can become larger or smaller, so too can various accidental qualities that inhere in a subject increase or diminish in intensity. The colour that inhere on a surface, for
example, can become more intense or less intense (by getting a new coat, or by getting bleached by the sun) while still remaining the same colour; closer to the issue at hand, acquired inclinations seem to get stronger the more often we act in a certain way, which implies that the habit itself is intensified. This doctrine is usually referred to as the intension and remission of forms. There was plenty of debate about how an accident can exist in different degrees, and what occurs when the degree (gradus) of intension of an accident increases or diminishes. Indeed, intension and remission of forms is crucial for Scotus’s account in the second part of Ord. I d. 17, where he discusses how it is possible for the infused virtue of charity to grow or diminish, and engages in a detailed critique of the position of Godfrey of Fontaines on the exact mechanism by which the intension and remission of an accidental form occurs. For the present purpose, however, there is no need to delve into the details of the theory; it is necessary only to note that Scotus accepts the generally held doctrine that it is possible for accidental forms in the genus of quality to exist in different degrees of intensity.

As applied to volition, the theory of intension and remission of forms seems to be supported by the evidence of introspection. For we can experience in ourselves that sometimes we will more fully or resolutely, and other times we will half-heartedly or reluctantly. When understood within the framework of Scotus’s account of self-motion, this experience receives an ontological grounding. As was discussed in chapter 2, Scotus explains the real occurrence of actually willing as the inherence in the will of an accidental quality which is the act or operation of the will; when the will ceases to will whatever object it is willing, that particular operation ceases to exist. Since the operation is an accidental quality in much the same way that a colour or an acquired habit is, it likewise must exist at some determinate degree of intension, but could exist at some other degree. The eagerness or

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20 On the medieval theory of the intension and remission of forms generally, see especially Maier, “Das Problem der intensiven Grösse”; Sylla, “Medieval Concepts of the Latitude of Forms: The Oxford Calculators.” On the history of the doctrine and terminology of the intension and remission of forms, see Solère, “Plus ou moins: le vocabulaire de la latitude des formes.” As Solère notes, the extension in medieval philosophy of growth and diminution to things other than quantities probably originates with Augustine’s analogy between size in bodies and goodness in spiritual things. Cf. Augustine, De Trinitate 6.8: “In rebus autem spiritualibus, cum minor maiori adhaerescit, sicut creatura Creatori, illa fit maior quam erat, non ille; in eis enim quae non mole magna sunt, hoc est maius esse, quod est melius esse; melior autem fit spiritus alicuius cum adhaeret Creatori, quam si non adhaeret, et ideo etiam maior quia melior.”

21 See Ord. I d. 17 nn. 195-257 (Vat. 5:233-264). Scotus’s position is that when an accidental form acquires a greater degree of intensity, it does so by addition such that the form as it existed at the lower degree is preserved in the form at a higher degree (he is therefore said to hold an “addition theory). He thus rejects the view of Godfrey, who holds that when a form increases in intension, the form at a lower degree is destroyed, to be succeeded by a new form at a higher degree (Godfrey’s view is thus a “succession theory”). For a helpful survey of different versions of the theory of intension and remission in the early fourteenth century (specifically as received and critiqued by Peter Auriol), see Schabel, “Place, Space, and the Physics of Grace in Auriol’s Sentences Commentary,” 117–126.

22 Cf. Ord. I d. 17 n. 70 (Vat. 5:171), where Scotus defends the idea that habit contributes to the intension of an act by noting that we are able to experience that an act done according to inclination is more perfect than one done against it, though the effort (conatus) on the part of the will might be equal in both cases.
reluctance with which someone has a particular act of willing can thus be explained in terms of the degree of intensity at which the elicited act of volition exists: when I will resolutely or eagerly, the operation inhering in the will has a high degree of intensity, whereas when I will half-heartedly or reluctantly, it has a lower degree.

The editors of the Vatican edition of Scotus suggest that the second way is derived from a brief discussion of the role of habits by Godfrey of Fontaines, where he asks “whether charity is the formal reason by which an act of love is elicited.” Godfrey begins by mentioning an argument similar to Scotus’s argument against Henry:

It was argued that charity is not the formal basis of eliciting an act, because when something is the formal basis for eliciting an act, if it happens that it is separated from a substance, it will elicit the same act that the whole composite elicited in virtue of it, just as it is clear that if by divine power the heat of fire were separated from fire, it would still heat. But if charity were separated, it would not love, since it is not a rational nature. Therefore [sc. charity is not a formal basis of eliciting an act].

He goes on to argue that to deny any causal role to habits, and thus also to charity, would lead to the conclusion that we can perform meritorious actions by our own effort alone and without the grace of God, which would be the Pelagian heresy. Thus, although neither charity nor any other habit is a cause of acts of the will, the habit of charity establishes a kind of relation to God, whereby our acts are accepted by God regardless of their having any meritorious worth in themselves. As for the natural role of habits in general, Godfrey says that they could never cause the act itself; rather, as dispositions they merely incline the power in which they inhere to eliciting an act in a more prompt and perfect way than without that habit; or, as Godfrey puts it, a habit is “a formal disposition that brings it about that a power can more perfectly and promptly be in the act that is suitable to that power.” If this is indeed the text to which Scotus is responding, he is taking some liberty with the

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23 Godfrey of Fontaines, Quodl. XI q. 4 (PhB 5:22): “Utrum caritas sit ratio formalis qua elicitur actus dilectionis.”

24 Godfrey of Fontaines, Quodl. XI q. 4 (PhB 5:22): “Arguebatur quod caritas non sit ratio formalis elicitiva actus, quia cum aliquid est ratio formalis elicitiva aliarius actus, si contingat illud a substantia separari, eundem actum eliciet quem totum compositum virtute illius eliciet, sicut patet quod si virtute divina calor ignis esset ab igne separatus calefaceret. Sed si caritas esset separata, non diligeret, cum non sit natura rationalis. Ergo et cetera.”

25 Godfrey of Fontaines, Quodl. XI q. 4 (PhB 5:23): “Et ideo circa hoc est intelligendum quod gratia, quae est id ipsum essentialiter quod caritas vel inseparabiliter ei annexa, est habitus necessarius ad hoc quod mens elevatur ad quandam supernaturallem conformationet assimilationem ad Deum per quam simus Deo grati et accepti; per quam etiam opera nostra sunt Deo grata et accepta et apud ipsum ex suo beneplacita ordinacione et constitutio quasi pactio et non ex eorum secundum se pretio vel valore meritoria de condigno vitae aeternae.” Scotus will adopt a very similar account of the role of charity in the supernatural merit of acts of volition (see chapter 6 below).

26 Godfrey, Quodl. XI q. 4 (PhB 5:23): “Habitus autem quicumque superveniens est dispositio formalis ad hoc faciens quod ipsa potestia promptius et perfectius possit esse in actu sibi conveniente.”
sense of what Godfrey says. To Godfrey’s denial that acquired virtues and infused virtues contribute differently to the operation of the power to which they belong, Scotus adds the suggestion that the way in which habits contribute is by determining the degree of intension of the act. It may be that this is a probable alternative that can be argued for, or perhaps he is offering a different interpretation of what Henry says in question 10 of his Quodlibet IV. There Henry could be taken to mean that the role of habits, whether acquired or infused, is to determine the degree of the act, the acquired ones giving the act a natural degree, the supernatural ones giving the act a supernatural degree, which the power is incapable of attaining without divine aid.

In any case, Scotus rejects the proposal of the second way that the role of a habit is to determine the intensity of the act. As he did against the first way, Scotus advances two main lines of argument, the first demonstrating that the proposal is untenable in itself, and the second that it is incompatible with the freedom of the will. First, he argues that it is impossible to separate the intension of an act from the act itself, since an act must always have some determinate degree of intension:

The intension of an act is not something extrinsic that is accidental to the act, but is a degree that is intrinsic to the act, such that an intense act is something that is in itself one, like an individual of a certain kind in a species. Therefore, it cannot be that there is one principle of the substance of such an act and [another principle] of its intension, since that from which it is this individual is the same as that from which there is the intrinsic grade that is proper to this individual: for it cannot receive a nature from something when this nature is signate without receiving it in a certain degree.

Here Scotus argues that it is incoherent to separate out the cause of the intension of an act from the cause of the act itself, since this would mean that the act and the intension are caused as two distinct things. But it is impossible for an act to be caused without it having some determinate degree of intension. Moreover, a power can cause an act without already having any habit, but that act must

27 Indeed, it is doubtful that this is the text that Scotus has in mind. Peter Hartman informs me that there is some evidence that there was confusion even in the early fourteenth century about the numbering of Godfrey’s Quodlibets, which may be reflected in the choice of the Vatican editors to cite Quodl. XI q. 4. Peter Nickl suggests that Scotus may rather have in mind Quodl. XIV q. 3 (PhB 5:342); see Nickl, Ordnun. der Gefühle, 63 note 270. However, this other passage of Godfrey seems no more relevant to Scotus’s point here than the one cited by the Vatican editors.

28 Henry, Quodl. IV q. 10 (Leuven 8:83-84): “Virtutes vero infusae perficiunt in esse gratuito non secundum gradum operationis propriae qui debetur rei secundum suam speciem, sed secundum gradum quo est supra naturam speciei.”

29 Ord. I d. 17 n. 28 (Vat. 5:150): “Contra istud arguo, quia intensio actus non est aliquod extrinsecum, accidens actu, sed gradus intrinsecus actu, – ita quod actus intensus est quoddam ‘per se unum’, sicut huiusmodi individuum in specie. Non ergo potest esse alium principium substantiae huiusmodi actus, et intensiois suae, quia a quo est hoc individuum, ab eodem est gradus intrinsecus proprius huius individuo: non enim potest recipere naturam ab aliquo, et ‘hane naturam’ signatam, quin recipiat eam in certo gradu.”
also have some determinate degree of intension. Thus, the causation of the degree of intension cannot be distinguished in this way from the causation of the act itself.

Scotus also argues that the second way is incompatible with the freedom of the will. As was discussed in chapter 2, Scotus holds that free self-determination is the will’s essential mode of activity: only the will properly has mastery over its own acts and so, unlike naturally active powers, is not determined to act even when circumstances allow for it. Scotus holds further that the will’s self-mastery with respect to action entails that it has mastery not just over whether it will act and what act it will have, but also over the intensity of the act that it elicits. Scotus explains this by contrasting the way the will acts with the assent of the intellect:

It is not in the power of the intellect to assent more firmly or less firmly to what is true, but only to assent in proportion to the truth that moves it; however, it is in the power of the will to assent more intensely to the good or not to assent (even if it is seen more imperfectly).\(^\text{30}\)

All natural powers – that is, all powers other than the will, including the intellect – act in a naturally determinate way; therefore, they always act to the maximum degree that is possible under the given circumstances. The will on the other hand is not determined by circumstances, but is able to determine itself to willing to a greater or lesser degree, simply in virtue of the fact that is not a natural power but a free one.\(^\text{31}\) However, if a habit determined the degree of an act of the will, then the degree would be determined naturally:

Whenever a principle that is naturally active concurs with a cause that is freely active, that natural principle always co-acts as much as it is able to; for example, a will and an inferior power that acts inasmuch as it acts from itself. For although such [a principle] is impeded when the free [agent] does not act, nevertheless, when the free [power] does act, it [sc. the natural principle] acts necessarily, since it acts together with that free [power] as much as it can in the mode of nature, inasmuch as it acts from itself. Therefore, if a determinate habit in the will gives a determinate degree of intension to the act, then, though the will acts with respect to the substance of the act, the habit will necessarily give the intension that corresponds to itself. Thus, regardless of whether the will acts with a moderated effort, its act would always be equally intense, since, while [the will] causes the substance of the act, the habit, since

\(^{30}\) Cf. Ord. I d. 1 pars 1 q. 1 n. 22 (Vat. 3:16): “Dico quod intellectus assentit cuilibet vero secundum evidentiam ipsius veri quam natum est facere de se in intellectu, et ideo non est in potestate intellectus firmius vel minus firmiter assentire vero sed tantum secundum proportionem ipsius veri moventis; in potestate autem voluntatis est intensius assentire bono vel non assentire, licet imperfectius viso.”

\(^{31}\) Cf. Ord. II d. 6 q. 2 n. 50 (Vat. 8:50): “[Voluntas] in quantum est appetitus mere intellectivus, summe inclinaretur actualiter ad optimum intelligibile (sicet est de optimo visibili et vissu), in quantum tamen liber est, potest se refrenare in eliciendo actum, ne sequatur illam inclinationem – nec quantum ad substantiam actus nec quantum ad intensionem – ad quam potentia naturaliter inclinatur.”
it acts in the mode of nature, would necessarily cause that which is its own [sc. the intension].  

Scotus speaks of the will’s free control over its acts in terms of the “effort” (conatus) with which it actively elicits its act: the greater the effort with which the will elicits its act, the greater should be the intension of the operation that comes to exist as an accidental quality in the will. However, a habit is a merely natural being, so if it is active, it will always act to the maximum extent possible under the given circumstances. Thus, if the intension of the act were determined entirely by a habit, it would always be naturally determined when a power already has the relevant habit, regardless of the will’s power to freely exert more or less effort in eliciting an act of willing. It would follow that a will that has been habituated is no longer free with respect to the degree of intensity of its own acts, which would contradict the will’s freedom with respect to its own acts.

Scotus also argues that to distinguish the causation of the intension of an act from the causation of the act itself ends up with the affirmation that not even the act itself is caused by the will alone. The argument hypothesizes two wills that both cause an act of volition with the same degree of intension, but one will does it with a habit and the other without a habit:

If a habit gives the intension to the act, this would be in some determinate degree. Suppose that that degree is determined; a will with this habit is therefore able to have an act that is intense in a particular degree. Let there be posited another will that is more perfect than this will according to the proportion of degree $a$ to an act of the lowest degree; for example, if $a$ is the fourth degree in the act, let the other will be posited as exceeding the first will by four degrees. Therefore, this will could, without a habit, have an act that is just as intense as could the will with a habit. Therefore, the substance of an act is not from the power precisely, just as the intension is not.

According to Scotus’s thought experiment, there is a will that, together with its habit, is capable of eliciting an act of a certain degree $a$. There is also another will that lacks a habit, but is more powerful than the first, such that it can elicit an act of the same degree $a$. In order to conclude that

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32 *Ord. I d. 17 n. 29* (Vat. 5:151): “Praeterea, secundo, quandocumque principium naturaliter activum concurrirrit cum causa libera agente, semper illud principium naturale coagit quantum potest (exemplum de voluntate et potentia inferiore naturaliter agente quantum est de se); tale enim licet impediatur ab agendo quando liberum non agit, tamen - libero agente - ipsum necessario agit, quia per modum naturae, quantum est de se, coagit illi libero quantum potest; ergo si habitus determinatus in voluntate det intensionem determinatam actui, tunc voluntate operante ad substantiam actus, necessario habitus dabit illam intensionem sibi correspondentem, et ita quantumcumque ex modico conatu voluntas operaretur, semper esset actus eius acque intensus, quia ipsa causante substantiam actus, habitus quia agit per modum naturae - necessario causaret quod suum est.”

33 *Ord. I d. 17 n. 30* (Vat. 5:151): “Praeterea, si habitus det intensionem actui, hoc esset in aliquo gradu signato (signetur ille gradus); voluntas ergo cum habitu isto potest habere actum intensum in ‘hoc’ gradu. Fiat alia voluntas, perfectior ista voluntate secundum proportionem ‘a’ gradus ad actum in infimo gradu (puta, si $a$ est gradus quartus in actu, fiat alia voluntas excedens primam voluntatem in quattuor gradibus), ista ergo voluntas – sine habitu – posset habere actum aeque intensum sicut illa voluntas cum habitu. Ergo a potentia non est praecise substantia actus ita quod non intensio.”
this shows that the substance of the act is not caused entirely by the power, Scotus needs a tacit premise: if it is possible for the will by itself to elicit an act of degree $a$, then it follows that the degree of the act must be intrinsic to the substance of the act, and is not anything distinct from the act itself. Thus, if the degree of an act that is elicited by a habituated will is due not to the power but to the habit, then the act itself is not elicited strictly by the power; but this goes against the hypothesis that the will causes the substance of the act, and so the second way is self-contradictory.\textsuperscript{34}

### 4.1.3 The third way: habit as a secondary active cause

The third way that Scotus proposes for explaining how a habit can be an active principle can be seen as one that preserves what seems correct in the first two ways while avoiding the problems of both. Thus, if a habit is in any way active with respect to the operation of the power to which it belongs, it must be in such a way that it neither compromises the primary causal role of the power itself (which the first way allows), nor generates the absurdities that follow from separating the causation of the degree of the act from the act itself (which the second way allows). This is what Scotus proposes next with his third way:

If it were maintained that a habit is a partial cause with respect to the act, it would be a secondary cause and not primary, but the power itself would be the primary cause and, in an unqualified sense, it will not need a habit to have its act; however, it acts less perfectly without a habit than with a habit (and this is so given equal effort [\textit{conatus}] on the part of the power), just as when two causes concur to a single effect, but one of them alone is not capable by itself of as perfect an effect as both together are. In this way, it is explained why an act is more intense [when it is produced] by a power and a habit than by a power alone: not because the power is the cause of the substance of the act and the habit the cause of the intension of the act (as if to two effects there corresponded two causes), but because when both causes concur they can produce a more perfect effect than one of them alone. Nevertheless, this effect, with respect to itself as a whole and as something that is in itself one, is from two causes, but which cause in different orders [of causation].\textsuperscript{35}

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\textsuperscript{34} Scotus adds one further argument against the second way by comparing a finite will with the infinite divine will: just as the divine will is capable of an infinite act, so a finite will has some determinate degree of finitude and so is capable of acts of some determinate finite degree, and just as the infinite will needs no habit for its infinite act, so a finite will would need no habit for the degree of action that suits it. \textit{Or.} I d. 17 n. 31 (Vat 5:151-152): “Praeterea, sola voluntas infinita circumspecta omni ratione habitus - potest in actum infinitum; ergo et voluntas, in quocumque gradu naturae, potest in actum determinati gradus. - Antecedens patet, quia voluntas unde infinita, non est receptiva alicuius habitus, quia non deficit sibi aliqua perfectio possibilis voluntati. Consequentia probatur, quia 'sicut summum ad summum, ita simpliciter ad simpliciter' et quilibet gradus ad gradum sibi correspondentem.”

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Or.} I d. 17 n. 40 (Vat 5:154): “Tenendo habitum esse causam partiali et respectu actus, esset causa secunda et non prima, sed ipsa potestia esset causa prima et absolute non indiget habitu ad operandum; tamen minus perfecte operatur sine habitu quam cum habitu (et hoc, posito aequali conatu ex parte potentiae), sicut quando duae causae concurrunt ad effectum unum, una sola non potest per se in ita perfectum effectum sicut ambae simul. Et hoc modo salvatur quare actus est intensior a potentia et ab habitu quam a potentia sola: non quidem quod potentia sit causa substantiae actus, et habitus causa intensio actus (quasi duobus causatis corrispondeant duae causae), sed quod ambae causae concurrentes
According to this solution, a habit can be an active principle, but its causal contribution is different from that of the power: the power is able to cause its own acts by itself, but when it has a habit it is able to produce a more perfect act than without the habit. The two partial causes are thus not of the same kind or order, like two rowers on a boat, but of different orders that nevertheless concur to produce an effect that is essentially one. As in the second way, a habit is an active cause with respect to the intension of the act; however, it does not determine the degree of intension of the act, but merely contributes to it. Nevertheless, since the degree of intension of the act is due in part to the habit and since the degree of an accident is not separable from the being of the accident, the habit will be, according to the third way, a genuine partial cause of the act along with the power. Thus, unlike the second way, the third way treats the habit as a partial cause of the act itself, and not of the intension as if it were something distinct from the act; and unlike the first way, it treats the habit as a cause that is necessarily secondary to the power.

Scotus summarizes the role of habits according to the third way by way of an analogy:

A habit moves a power like a sort of weight, which nevertheless does not by itself suffice for actively eliciting the operation itself, whereas the force solely of the active power does suffice without such a weight; but when both concur, but in such a way that there is no greater conatus now on the part of the power than before, a more perfected operation is elicited now than could have been elicited before by the power alone.36

The habit is thus like a weight that inclines a body in a certain direction, but cannot ever be the primary source of motion; however, when the body is set in motion, the weight adds to the motion. He also points out that treating the habit as a partial cause of a more intense act seems to explain what we are able to experience in ourselves. That is, when we act according to habit, we seem to be able to act more resolutely and intensely when it is according to inclination than when we are disinclined or if we have no inclination one way or the other. This seems especially clear with acts of willing: if we act against inclination, our willing is weaker and seems to take more effort, whereas when it is according to inclination it seems to take less effort to will more resolutely. If this evidence

36 Ord. I d. 17 n. 69 (Vat. 5:171): “Habitus movet potentiam quasi quoddam pondus, quod tamen ex se non sufficit ad eliciendum active ipsam operationem, sufficit autem solo virtus potentiae activae, sine tali pondere; sed quando ambo concurrunt, ita tamen quod non sit maior conatus ex parte potentiae nunc quam prius, perfectior operatio elicitur nunc quam prius posset elici ab ipsa potentia sola.”
from introspection is trustworthy, then a habit can be treated as a partial active cause that helps the power to elicit a more intense act than it would without the habit.\footnote{Ord. I d. 17 n. 70 (Vat. 5:171): “Et videtur pro ista via esse experientia communis, quia quilibet potest experiri, se habituatum, ex aequali conatu posse habere perfectionem operationem quam possit habere non habituatus (quae perfectio actus non posset attribui habitui, si esset tantum principium passivum inclinans), quia saltem, ut videtur, in priore instanti naturae in quo elicetur - prius quam recipiatur in potentia - esset aequalis ratio principii activi in eliciendo, et ita aeque perfecta operatio elicetur aequali conatu a potentia habituata et non habituata.”}

It is clear that Scotus considers the third way to be a solution that strikes a middle path between the first two, preserving what seems correct in each while avoiding the problems of each. Against the first way, Scotus has shown that if a habit is an active cause with respect to the operations of its power, it cannot be in the same order of causality as the power itself, for then there would be no reason why a habit cannot become the total cause of the act. Scotus raises an objection to the third way that poses this very problem:

If a habit is a kind of secondary cause that supplies a certain degree of causality that is lacking in the power, it could become so perfect that it would take the place of the whole power, and so a habit alone without a power could be a cause sufficiently both in the character of a habit and in the character of a power; for universally, in agents of the same nature, it seems that the force of one could be so intensified that it was equal the two of them.\footnote{Ord. I d. 17 n. 44 (Vat. 5:156): “Si habitus est quasi causa secunda, supplens aliquem graduem causalitatis qui deest potentiae, ergo posset habitus fieri ita perfectus quod suppleret vicem totius potentiae, - et ita aliquid habitus solus, sine potentia, posset esse sufficienter causa et in ratione habitus et in ratione potentiae: universaliter enim, in agentibus eiusdem rationis, videtur quod ita posset intendi virtus unius quod acquearetur duobus.”}

In reply, Scotus asserts that this is impossible simply because it is in the nature of a habit to be only a secondary cause:

I say that a habit, in however great a degree, could not take the place completely of a power. For even if its causality is limited \footnote{Ord. I d. 17 n. 85 (Vat. 5:180): “Dico quod habitus – in quantocumque gradu – non posset suppleare totam vicem potentiae, quia etsi causalitas eius sit deminuta, et causalitas etiam potentiae deminuta, tamen alterius rationis est causalitas habitus quam causalitas potentiae quia etsi causalitas potentiae sit deminuta, tamen ‘ex ratione sui’ habitus est causa secunda, qua videlicet potentia potest uti, - et ita si in infinitum augeretur, numquam posset fieri principium utens. (sicut virtus generativa patris, quantocumque augeretur, non posset fieri virtus solis). Non ergo eiusdem rationis est causalitas potentiae cum causalitate habitus, nec ista intensa posset ascendere ad illam, sed sunt alterius rationis semper.”} [deminuta], and also the causality of the power is limited, nevertheless the causality of the habit is of a nature \footnote{Ord. I d. 17 n. 17 (Vat. 5:171): “Et videtur pro ista via esse experientia communis, quia quilibet potest experiri, se habituatum, ex aequali conatu posse habere perfectionem operationem quam possit habere non habituatus (quae perfectio actus non posset attribui habitui, si esset tantum principium passivum inclinans), quia saltem, ut videtur, in priore instanti naturae in quo elicetur - prius quam recipiatur in potentia - esset aequalis ratio principii activi in eliciendo, et ita aeque perfecta operatio elicetur aequali conatu a potentia habituata et non habituata.”} [rationis] different from the causality of the power, since even if the causality of the power is limited, nevertheless a habit is, from its own nature, a secondary cause, namely one which a power can use. Thus, even if it were increased to an infinite degree, it could never become the principle that uses, just as the generative power \footnote{Ord. I d. 17 n. 85 (Vat. 5:180): “Dico quod habitus – in quantocumque gradu – non posset suppleare totam vicem potentiae, quia etsi causalitas eius sit deminuta, et causalitas etiam potentiae deminuta, tamen alterius rationis est causalitas habitus quam causalitas potentiae quia etsi causalitas potentiae sit deminuta, tamen ‘ex ratione sui’ habitus est causa secunda, qua videlicet potentia potest uti, - et ita si in infinitum augeretur, numquam posset fieri principium utens. (sicut virtus generativa patris, quantocumque augeretur, non posset fieri virtus solis). Non ergo eiusdem rationis est causalitas potentiae cum causalitate habitus, nec ista intensa posset ascendere ad illam, sed sunt alterius rationis semper.”} [virtus] of a father, however much it was increased, could not become the power of the sun. Therefore, the causality of a power is not of the same nature as the causality of a habit, nor could the latter be intensified to ascend to the same level; rather, they are always of different natures.\footnote{Ord. I d. 17 n. 70 (Vat. 5:171): “Et videtur pro ista via esse experientia communis, quia quilibet potest experiri, se habituatum, ex aequali conatu posse habere perfectionem operationem quam possit habere non habituatus (quae perfectio actus non posset attribui habitui, si esset tantum principium passivum inclinans), quia saltem, ut videtur, in priore instanti naturae in quo elicetur - prius quam recipiatur in potentia - esset aequalis ratio principii activi in eliciendo, et ita aeque perfecta operatio elicetur aequali conatu a potentia habituata et non habituata.”}
That is, a habit is something that inclines an agent, and even if the inclination by a habit is understood as active, its activity cannot take the place of the primary activity of the agent or power that the habit inclines.

It is even more clear that the third way is in some ways an improved version of the second way. Not only does the third way preserve the idea that the role of a habit, if it is an active cause, is to intensify the act, but also Scotus specifically explains how his third way solves the objections made against his second way.\footnote{See Ord. I d. 17 n. 77 (Vat. 5:177-178): “Ad argumenta quae facta sunt contra viam secundam, ponentem habitum esse principium activum intensionis in actu, quia videntur esse contra istam viam (pro tanto, quia ista ponit actum ‘elicitum ab habitu et potentia agentem cum aequali conatu’ esse intensionem quam elicitum a potentia sola), discurrendo per illa ostendo quomodo non repugnat huic viae.”} First, to the objection that the second way treats the act itself and its degree of intension as two different things each with its own cause, Scotus notes that the third way avoids it by treating the act as something that is essentially one that has two principles that belong to different orders of principiation.\footnote{Ord. I d. 17 n. 78 (Vat. 5:178): “De primo patet quod haec via non ponit duo distincta in actu, habentia duo principia, sed idem actus ‘per se unus’ habit du principia in diverso ordine principiandi.”} To the objection that the degree of intension will always be the same if it is due only to the habit, he explains that the third way avoids this, for again the intension is not something distinct from the act. If the \textit{conatus} with which the power acts is kept constant, the act will be more intense when a habit contributes than when it doesn’t; however, a habit will \textit{not} determine the intension regardless of the power’s \textit{conatus}, for the intension is due to both the power and the habit.\footnote{Ord. I d. 17 n. 79 (Vat. 5:178): “Ad secundum concedo quod infertur, videlicet quod potentia operante ex aequali conatu ‘semper actus sit intensor habitu coagente quam non coagente’, sed ex hoc non sequitur illud inconveniens - quod sequitur contra illam viam - videlicet quod potentia ex quocumque conatu agentem ‘actus sit semper aequaliter intensus’; hoc ibi sequitur, quia intension tota attribuitur habitui, - sed non hic, quia intension attribuitur duabus causis: et potentiae quidem, ex maiore vel minore conatu, - habitui autem semper aequaliter, quantum est ex se.”} Thus, in the case of the will, although a habit contributes in a naturally determinate way by making an act done according to inclination more intense, the will nevertheless retains the power to have more or less intense acts by eliciting its act with more or less \textit{conatus}. Likewise, as Scotus explains in addressing the third objection to the second way, the possibility of a will without a habit willing as intensely as a will willing according to habit is not a problem for the third way, because the habit is ordered as a secondary cause to the will, which is the primary cause of its own acts.\footnote{Ord. I d. 17 n. 80 (Vat. 5:178-179): “Ad tertium concedo quod posset fieri voluntas in puris naturalibus, quae actum intensionem eliceret quam alia voluntas cum habitu; et hoc non est inconveniens, ponendo ista duo esse principia ordinata, sicut esset inconveniens ponendo totam intensionem ab habitu vel attribuendo totam intensionem habitui et non potentiae.”} Thus, Scotus’s third way adopts the position of the second way that if a habit is active, its role is to intensify the act of the power that the habit inclines. It also solves the problem of attributing the
intension entirely to the habit by explaining the active habit as a cause of a different order from that of the power itself, such that the habit’s causality is secondary to that of the power, and the two causes of different orders can together be partial causes of a single effect.

In addressing the objections to the third way specifically, Scotus changes focus. Whereas the third way answers the objections to the second way by treating the habit as a strictly secondary cause, the objections to the third way have to do with whether it is possible for a habit to be an active cause at all with respect to the operations of the power it belongs to. The problem arises from the way in which habits are brought about: as Scotus explains elsewhere, the immediate active cause of a habit is an operation, which generates a habit as a persistent similitude of itself. But then this raises a problem of apparent circularity: an operation is an active cause of a habit, and a habit is an active cause of an operation. This is the substance of the first objection:

No [two] things that are specifically distinct are equivocal agent causes for one another; but habit and act are distinguished in species, and therefore they are not equivocal agent causes for one another; but an act is necessarily an equivocal cause in the generation of a habit (an acquired habit at any rate), and therefore not vice versa.

This argument depends on the notion of equivocal causation. When the cause and effect are of the same species, it is a case of univocal causation, as when fire causes fire, but when they are of different species, it is a case of equivocal causation, as when the will (which is really identical to the rational soul) causes acts of volition, which are accidental qualities. Likewise, operations and habits are different species of quality, and so the causation of a habit by an operation will also be a case of equivocal causation. The solution at hand proposes that a habit can also be a cause of subsequent acts, so this too will be a case of equivocal causation. However, equivocal causation normally involves the idea that the cause is in some way higher, or more eminent, than the effects that it can bring about, and so “virtually” contains them. An operation will thus be a more eminent cause than

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44 In what follows, I will deal with only the first two of the four objections that Scotus discusses. The third objection – that a habit could increase in strength to the point that it could supplant the power – was discussed above. The fourth objection raises a problem that has to do with the way in which a habit increases in intension: a habit is a partial cause of an operation, but the operation is the immediate cause of an increased habit, so when a habit of a higher degree is generated, it should destroy the existing habit of the lower degree in the very act in which the prior habit is a partial cause. As Scotus notes in his reply, this objection assumes a succession theory of intension and remission, but as he argues further on in distinction 17 in his discussion of how charity increases, accidental forms are augmented not by succession but by addition. See section 4.1.2 above.

45 See Coll. Parl. 3 §5 (Wadding 3:358a), and section 3.2.2 above.

46 Ord. I d. 17 n. 41 (Vat. 5:155): “Nulla distincta specie sunt sibi invicem causae aequivocae agentes; habitus et actus distinguuntur specie, igitur non sunt sibi invicem causae aequivocae agentes; sed actus est necessario causa aequivoca in generatione habitus, acquisiti saltem, - non ergo e converso.”
a habit, and a habit will be a more eminent cause than an operation, and each will virtually contain the other, which is impossible. Moreover, both operations and habits are in some way caused by the power in which they inhere, but there is an ordering between them, since operations are caused immediately by the power, and the power is only a mediated cause of habits, since their immediate cause is an operation. Since a habit (a natural habit at least) cannot exist without a prior act as its immediate cause, habits are posterior to acts; they therefore cannot be the cause of acts.

Scotus replies that this objection applies only to total equivocal causes. In the case of partial causes, however, it is possible for equivocal causes to be causes of one another. He appeals to the case of the intelligible species and the act of the intellect, which are both caused by the intellect, but each can be considered a partial cause of the other:

I say that two effects, as compared to their one common cause, can have a mutual ordering to one another as partial causes, just as the intelligible species and [the act of] knowing can, as compared to the agent and possible intellect, since with respect to the act of intellection, the species is a partial cause, and the act of intellection can be posited as a cause of the species, inasmuch as it [the act of intellection] includes it [the species].

Similarly, in the case of habits, it is true that the immediate cause of a habit is an operation, but this does not prevent a habit being in turn a partial cause of an operation, since it is only a secondary cause, which causes only if the power causes as the primary cause of the operation.

The second objection has to do with the order of eminence between partial causes:

If a habit is a partial cause with respect to the act and is an equivocal one, then the cause of this cause will be more perfect than the equivocal cause of the same act; the proof is clear, since in equivocal causes the cause of the cause is a more perfect cause.

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48 Ord. I d. 17 n. 42 (Vat. 5:155): “Ergo respectu potentiae – quae est causa communis actus et habitus – habebunt isti duo effectus ordinem determinatum, ita quod vel necessario actus secundum totam speciem praecederet habitum, vel e converso; et cum aliquis actus de necessitate praecedat habitum ut causa eius, habitus non praecedet aliquem actum.”

49 Ord. I d. 17 n. 83 (Vat. 5:179): “Ad probationem eius, quae est per eminentiam causae equivocae, respondeo: illa probation tenet de causa totali, et non ponit circulum in causis aequivocis totalibus.”

50 Ord. I d. 17 n. 83 (Vat. 5:179): “Dico quod duo effectus, comparati ad unam causam communem eorum, possunt ordinem mutuum habere ad se invicem in ratione causae partialis, - sicut species intelligibilis et intelligere, comparando ad intellectum agentem et possibilem, quia respectu intellectionis causa partialis est species, et posset ponit ‘intelllectio’ aliqualis causa speciei, pro quanto includit eam.” Scotus discusses the role of the intelligible species in the causation of acts of the intellect in Ord. I d. 3 pars 3 q. 2 (Vat. 3:245-330); there he concludes that the intelligible species is a partial active cause of the act of intellection, together with the intellect itself, which as the power is the primary cause. For discussion of the role of the intelligible species in acts of the intellect, see King, “Duns Scotus on Mental Content”; Pini, “Two Models of Thinking,” 94–96.
than the cause that is more proximate to what is caused. But an act is the cause of
the generation of a habit; therefore, if a power together with a habit is capable of a
perfected act, so much the more would it be capable of the same perfected act if it
currently had an act that is generative of the habit. But this seems absurd, since two
perfect acts cannot be in the same power, or if they could, it does not seem that one
of them could somehow be an active principle with respect to the other.\footnote{Ord. I d. 17 n. 43 (Vat. 5:155-156): “Si habitus sit causa partialis respectu actus et aequivoce, ergo causa huius causae erit perfectior causa aequivoce eiusdem actus (consequentia patet, quia in causis aequivoce causa causae est perfectior causa quam causa proximior causato); sed actus est causa generationis habitus; ergo si potentia cum habitu potest in actum perfectum, multo magis si esset sub actu generativo habitus, posset in eundem actum perfectum, quod videtur inconveniens, quia duo actus perfecti non possunt esse in eadem potentia, aut saltem si possent, non videtur quod unus illorum possit esse aliquo modo principium activum respectu alius.”}

As noted above, the habit that is supposed to be a partial cause of an act is, according to Scotus,
caused by a previous operation, which itself is caused by the power. But since a power is supposed
to be capable of a more perfect act when it has a habit as a partial secondary cause of the act, a
power that has the act that causes the perfecting habit should already virtually contain the perfection
that is supposed to be partially caused by the habit. So if a habit does perfect an act, the power
would have the same perfection twice, which is impossible. Scotus replies:

It can be said that an act that is generative of a habit should not be considered a basis
of acting “by which” in the same way that a generated habit can be a basis from
which action proceeds, just as the power of the sun cannot be the principle “by
which” with respect to every act of which the form of what is generated by the sun
can be a principle “by which.” And when it is said that “whatever is the cause of a
cause [is a more perfect cause than the cause that is nearer to what is caused]”; this is
true in the case of a remote cause “by which” (where there is a remote cause “by
which”), but not in the case of an immediate cause “by which.”\footnote{Ord. I d. 17 n. 84 (Vat. 5:179-180): “Potest dici quod non oportet actum generativum habitus esse rationem agendi ‘quo’, sicut habitus genitus potest esse ratio ‘quo’, - quemadmodum virtus solis non potest esse principium ‘quo’ respectu omnis actus, respectu cuius forma geniti a sole potest esse principium ‘quo’. Et cum dicitur quod ‘quidquid est causa causae’ etc., - verum est sicut remotum ‘quo’ (ubi est remotum ‘quo’), sed non sicut immediatum ‘quo’. “}

Scotus’s reply turns on how natural forms are produced and persist. According to Aristotle, the sun
is a partial cause of a living animal (together with its parents), but once the animal has been
generated, there is no reason to claim that the sun is a cause of all the acts of that animal. Likewise, it
is admitted that every habit has been generated by a prior operation, but the habit persists after the
operation that generated it has ceased. Thus, the objection that the degree of perfection that a habit
contributes to the operation will be redoubled when the power actually acts (and is thus capable of
generating a habit) does not apply because there are different items in play: one is the habit caused
by a prior operation, the other is a new operation that can generate a new habit – or rather, can
cause an addition to the intension of the existing habit. In short, the objection posits a paradoxical
situation that does not exist, since the operation that generates a given habit is necessarily prior to the generated habit, which cannot contribute to its perfection.

4.2 The framework of ordered causes

As was seen in the objections to the first way, the causal contribution of a habit as an active cause must be of a different kind from that of the power, for otherwise there is no reason why a habit could not simply displace the power in causing acts. The second way treats the habit as causing the degree of intension of the act as if it were something distinct from the act itself, which is caused by the power, but this solution again fails to safeguard the primary causal role of the power. Finally, according to the third way, which Scotus defends, habits contribute to action by giving the act a higher degree of intensity than it would have from the power alone, but this causal contribution is possible only if the power itself acts. The account of habits as active causes that Scotus finally puts forward as defensible thus depends on the possibility of two causes of different kinds being ordered to produce a single effect.

4.2.1 Habit as ordered partial cause

The importance of the idea of ordered partial causes to the affirmative solution of the third way emerges most clearly in Scotus’s responses to the initial arguments against assigning habits an active role at all. One of these is the following:

A single action requires a formal principle by which is elicited something that is essentially one thing; but the aggregate of a power and a habit is one accidentally, not essentially; therefore, this whole cannot be the ‘by which’ with respect to an operation that is essentially one thing.

That is to say, the operation of a power, as an absolute quality that is essentially one thing, should have a principle that is also one thing essentially, and not merely accidentally; however, if a power and a habit together cause the operation, its active cause is only accidentally one cause, since the habit is an accidental quality that is really distinct from the power to which it belongs. The implication is thus that there is no reason to maintain that the operation that is caused by two things (namely, a power and a habit) is essentially one thing; it may be an aggregate of, for example, the act and its degree, leaving it open to the objections made against treating the intension of an operation

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53 Here I leave aside the objection that habits are relative beings and therefore cannot have any causal power. This objection was discussed above in chapter 3.

54 Ord. l. d. 17 n. 18 (Vat. 5:145): “Una actio requirit principium formale quo eliciatur ‘per se unum’; aggregatum ex potentia et habitu est ‘unum per accidens’, non ‘per se’; ergo hoc totum non potest esse ‘quo’ respectu operationis ‘per se unius’.”
as somehow distinct from the operation itself (as in the second way in Scotus’s discussion). Some explanation is therefore needed of how it is possible for two distinct causes to produce an effect that is truly one thing.

In his reply, Scotus defends the possibility of a power and a habit concurring as active causes to produce an operation that is not accidentally, but essentially one, by appealing to the ordering of causes:

I say that there is one essential principle of one action, and it belongs to one order of principiation; however, there can be multiple principles belonging to different orders of principiation, and the only unity they have when they principiate is the unity of order, even though sometimes it happens together with the unity of order that there is the unity of accident and subject; but this is incidental [sc. and not essential].

That is, for the production of an effect that is essentially one, it is sufficient that the total cause have a unity of order, even if it lacks the essential unity of a principle that is only one thing. Even though only the power is the “one essential principle of one action,” a habit can be a partial cause together with the power without endangering the essential unity of the operation that results. This is possible in virtue of the fact that the habit belongs to a different order of cause from the power itself, such that its causality with respect to an operation is essentially ordered to that of the power. The power thus remains the primary and essential cause of the operation, and the habit’s causality with respect to the operation depends on that of the power. Understood this way, a habit can be a partial cause of an operation; however it does not cause directly, but only through the causality of the power.

Notice also that in proposing that a habit’s causality is ordered to that of a power, Scotus states explicitly that the unified causality of the power and habit is not connected with the fact that they are accidentally unified as subject and accident:

Along with this unity of ordering there also concurs the unity of accident and subject between these ordered [principles]; but this unity is incidental, since if a primary cause could be joined with a secondary one without this sort of informing of one by the other, as they are joined when one is informed by the other, they could in the same way have a unity that is sufficient for causing one effect. Therefore, when it is said that of one action there is an active cause that is essentially one, I concede the point, namely that [there is an active cause that is essentially one] in one order [of

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55 Ord. d. 17 n. 73 (Vat. 5:174-176): “Ad secundum argumentum dico quod unius actionis unum est principium per se, et hoc in uno ordine principiandi; tamen multa possunt esse principia, in diverso ordine principiandi, quorum non sit unitas in quantum principiandi nisi unita ordinis, licet quandoque cum unitate ordinis concurat quod sit unitas accidentis et subjici, sed hoc accidit.”

56 Marilyn McCord Adams explains that in essentially ordered causes, the important point is that the posterior cause depends on the prior cause in causing, not that it depends on it for its existence. See Adams, “Essential Orders and Sacramental Causality,” 195.
principiation], but in another order of principiating there can very well be one cause or another, whether the former and the latter constitute something that is accidentally one, or do not, but only one by the unity of ordering. And although there is [in the case of power and habit] an accidental unity, still the unity of ordering of the principle to what is principiated is always preserved.\footnote{Ord. I d. 17 n. 73 (Vat. 5:176-177): “Cum ista unitate ordinis concurrit unitas accidentis et subjecti inter haec ordinata, sed hoc accidit, quia si ita posset coniungi causa prima cum secunda sine informatione tali unius ad alteram, sicut coniunguntur quando informatur una ab altera, eodem modo possent habere unitatem sufficientem ad causandum unum effectum. Quando ergo dictur quod ‘unius actionis est causa activa per se una’, concedo, quod scilicet in uno ordine, - sed in alio ordine principiandi bene potest esse alia et alia causa, et hoc sive haec et illa constituant ‘unum per accidens’ sive non, sed tantum ‘unum unitate ordinis’; et licet sit ibi ‘unitas per accidens’, adhuc tamen semper salvatur unitas ordinis principii ad principatum.”}

It is true that a habit inheres in the power as an accidental quality; however, this accidental unity is not relevant for explaining how they can concur to produce a single effect, since the fact remains that a habit is an absolute being that has its own causality (according to the third way). Rather, it is the unity of ordered causality that matters, regardless of the power and habit being accidentally unified as subject and accident.

At one level, the idea that the causality of a habit must be subordinate to that of a power arises from the very concept of a habit: a habit is not an agent or a power, but it somehow inclines an agent or a power in its actions. Thus, if a habit is an active cause at all, its causality will be exercised only in conjunction with an active power. However, the necessarily subordinate causality of a habit can perhaps be explained more fully in terms of Scotus’s more abstract account of ordered causes, which is developed most systematically in his treatise De Primo Principio. As Marilyn McCord Adams explains, Scotus examines various ways in which there can be an essential order between causes as they are ordered to a single effect.\footnote{See Adams, “Essential Orders and Sacramental Causality,” 192–200.} It is clear that Scotus has such a model in mind in his solution in the third way: the case of two rowers as causes that are accidentally ordered to a single effect is clearly contrasted with the idea that a power and a habit have different kinds of causality with respect to action, and that it is in the nature of a habit that it acts only in conjunction with a power.

However, among the various ways in which causes can have an essential ordering between them, one might wonder which would fit the case a power with a habit. In Scotus’s most general statement of essential ordering of causes, two causes are essentially ordered to one another if a posterior cause can cause only if the prior cause causes. More precisely: (1) the posterior cause depends on the prior cause in causing; (2) the prior cause is more perfect than the posterior cause; and (3) all of the
ordered causes are required to produce what is caused. This can perhaps be adapted to the case of a power and a habit. (1) As a posterior cause, the habit will cause (if it causes) only if the power, as the prior cause, causes an act. (2) The power is a more perfect cause than a habit, for as Scotus points out, a power by itself is more unlimited since it extends to more acts than a habit (since a habit inclines the power only to a determinate subset of the acts of which the power as such is capable). Of course, as Scotus has pointed out, a power is capable of acting without the habit, so perhaps condition (3) will not apply unless the effect towards which the power and the habit is taken to be the operation of the determinate intension that is partially due to the habit.

Perhaps then a better model for the role of habits would be Scotus’s account of instrumental causes. Indeed, Scotus appeals to the idea of habits as instrumental causes in one of the initial arguments in favour of treating them as active, since according to a dictum of Averroes, “a habit is that which an agent uses when he wills,” and since using is something only an agent does, and an agent does not use a passive principle, the habit that is used must be an active principle. This conclusion – that the habit, insofar as it is used and contributes to the intension of the act, is an active cause – can be compared to an argument that Scotus gives concerning the causality of the intelligible species with respect to the act of the intellect: just as someone wielding a knife uses it and its sharpness to cut, so the intellect uses the intelligible species, which contributes its own causality to the resulting action (rather than increasing the causality of the intellect in which it inheres). Likewise, the habit that an agent uses when it acts is a secondary active cause with respect to the resulting operation.

It might seem that some support for this position can be found in Scotus’s account of the role of the sacraments, where he remarks that “every disposition that necessitates to a form [and] which is not a basis for reception [sc. of the form] can be called in some way an active cause or instrumental cause.

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60 Ord. I d. 17 n. 36 (Vat 5:153): “Similiter, potentia est illimitatior in agendo quam habitus, quia ad plura se extendit; sed causa superior videtur esse illimitatione extensio; ergo etc.”
61 Ord. I d. 17 n. 6 (Vat. 5:142): “Habitus est quo habens utitur cum voluerit, ex Commentatore III De anima commento 18; ‘uti’ competit agenti, nam patiens principio passivo non utitur.”
with respect to the form.”63 Scotus here has in mind a somewhat more complicated case than that of acquired habits. The situation being considered is when, in order for cause C2 to produce effect E2, it is a necessary condition that cause C1 have produced effect E1; thus both C1 and E1 are instrumental causes that are “somehow active” with respect to E2.64 However, it is questionable how well this analysis maps onto the case of habits. For if habits as instrumental causes fit this model, it suggests that not just the habit (as a prior effect) is an instrumental cause of the later operation, but also the prior operation that caused the habit. Moreover, although Scotus remarks that instrumental causes according to this model can be called somehow active, they seem rather to be a kind of necessary condition, in which effect E1 must first be caused for effect E2 to be caused; and this does not mean that they are an essential part of the causal account of E2. Indeed, the similar case of the role of the object in volition seems to rule this out: as Scotus there notes, the volition does not depend on its object as on something previously caused, but rather as properly a cause.65 Likewise, if an operation partially depends on a habit (insofar as the operation has a greater degree of intensity than it would otherwise), this dependence cannot be on the habit merely as a necessary prior condition, but as a partial cause of the operation. Thus, whatever is the precise kind of essential ordering under which a habit and a power fall as partial causes of action, it is clear that in order to solve the problems that arise in the first two ways from treating habits as active causes, Scotus relies in his third way on the idea that there must be an essential order between the respective causalities of a power and its habits.

4.2.2 The object as partial active cause of volition

As noted just above, a helpful comparison to the third way can be found in Scotus’s discussion of the object of the will as an active cause of volition. In Lectura II, distinction 25, Scotus begins by considering two opposite answers to the question, “Whether an act of the will is caused in the will by an object moving it or by the will moving itself.”66 On one side is the position that the will does

63 *Ord.* IV d. 1 n. 311 (Vat. 11:110): “Dico breviter quod omnis dispositio necessitans ad formam, quae non est ratio receptivi, potest dici quodammodo causa activa sive causa instrumentalis respectu formae.”

64 See Adams, “Essential Orders and Sacramental Causality,” 199.

65 *Lett.* II d. 25 n. 66 (Vat. 19:251-252): “Non autem dependet actus voluntatis ab obiecto cognito ut a causato priore; igitur, sicut a causa.”

66 *Lett.* II d. 25 n. 1 (Vat. 19:229): “Circa libertatem voluntatis quaeritur an actus voluntatis causetur in voluntate ab obiecto movente ipsum, vel a voluntate movente se ipsum.” My discussion of this text is directed mainly at Scotus’s appeal in his solution to the ordering of essential causes. For more detailed discussion, see Möhle, *Ethik als scientia practica*, 174–191.
not move itself to its act, but is moved by a willable object.\(^{67}\) Scotus rejects this position as incompatible with human freedom, for if the object did move the will to its act, argues Scotus, the will would not be active with respect to its own acts, but only passive; it would thus not have mastery over its own acts, nor would it be a power for opposites in the full sense, and so it would not be a free power.\(^{68}\) The opposite position, that of Henry of Ghent, is that the object has no active role in causing volition:

The opinion at the other extreme – that of Henry of Ghent – is that only the will is an efficient cause with respect to the act of willing, and the cognized object is only a “cause without which not” \([\text{causa sine qua non}]\), and the intellect cognizing is the removal of an impediment; and so they say that the cognized object is “that without which not” \([\text{sine quo non}]\) and the intellect that knows is like the remover of an impediment; for if the object does not have “cognized being” \([\text{esse cognitum}]\) in the intellect, there will be no volition; also, if the intellect does not know [sc. the object], the will cannot will, since in that case it is impeded.\(^{69}\)

According to this view, the object has no active role at all in volition, for if it did something other than the will would move the will to its acts, and so it would not be a free power; therefore, the will alone must be the total active cause of its own acts.\(^{70}\) Nevertheless, since every act of the will is directed at some object, there can be no volition without an object; the object is therefore at least a necessary condition, or \([\text{causa sine qua non}]\), of volition. Specifically, in Henry’s view, the object as presented by the intellect (as an \([\text{esse cognitum}]\) removes the lack of awareness of an appropriate willable object which impeded the will from acting; once this impediment is removed, the will is able to act, and the efficient cause of the will’s free act of volition is the will alone.

Although this position would safeguard the will from being determined to its act by the object, Scotus argues that it is not defensible. He first makes several related arguments against the very

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\(^{67}\) Scotus considers different versions of the position that the will does not move itself to its act; see \textit{Lect.} II d. 25 nn. 22-27 (Vat. 19:234-236). See also the discussion in chapter 2 above.

\(^{68}\) See \textit{Lect.} II d. 25 nn. 28-37 (Vat. 19:236-240). On Scotus’s conception of the will as a power for opposites and what he means by this, as well as his specific engagement with the different versions of this position, see chapter 2 above.

\(^{69}\) \textit{Lect.} II d. 25 n. 54 (Vat. 19:246): “Alia opinio – Gandavi – extrema est, quod sola voluntas est causa effectiva respectu actus volendi, et obiectum cognitum ext tantum causa ‘sine qua non’, et intellectus intelligens ‘amotio impedimenti’; et ideo dicunt quod obiectum cognitum est ‘sine quo non’ et intellectus intelligens ut amovens impedimentum: si enim obiectum non habet ‘esse cognitum’ in intellectu, non erit volitio, si etiam intellectus non intelligat, voluntas non potest velle, quia tunc impeditur.”

\(^{70}\) Henry discussed the freedom of the will at numerous points in his career; for references to passages from Henry from which Scotus may be deriving his summary, see the \textit{apparatus fontium} at Vat. 19:246. For discussion of Henry on the will’s relation to the intellect, see Macken, “La volonté humaine, faculté plus élevée que l’intelligence selon Henri de Gand.”
coherence of Henry’s *causa sine qua non*. More relevant here, however, are the arguments for why
the object cannot be merely a necessary condition that makes the act of willing possible, but must
also be an essential part of its explanation, that is, it must be part of the causal account of the
volition, so that individual acts or formally distinguished from one another by their object. If
volitions were not distinguished from one another by their object, various unacceptable
consequences would follow. For if the will were the total cause of all of its own acts and the object
had no essential causal role, all acts of the will would be of the same kind. But then, since habits are
caused by operations, all habits would also be of the same kind, which is false, since they are
specifically distinct and give different inclinations; therefore, the acts themselves must also be
specifically distinguished from one another by their objects. As well, unless the object essentially
distinguished the act, all that would be necessary for one volition to be better than another would be
for it to be elicited more intensely, and in that case there would be no reason why an act of loving a
higher object like God is better than loving a lower object like a fly, or why an act of loving God
when clearly apprehended in the next life is better than loving God as imperfectly apprehended.
But these acts must be essentially different, and so the object must be an essential cause of volition,
and not a mere *causa sine qua non*.

However, since the will must be self-moving in order to be free, the object cannot be the total cause.
Scotus therefore proposes a middle path between the two extreme solutions that he rejects:

I reply to the question that the efficient cause of an act of willing is not just the
object or the phantasm, as the first opinion posits, since this in no way preserves
freedom; nor is the efficient cause of an act of willing just the will
as the second
extreme opinion posits, since then all the conditions that accompany an act of willing
could not be preserved, as has been shown. Therefore, I maintain a middle way: that

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71 These arguments are at *Lect.* II d. 25 nn. 55-59 (Vat. 19:247-249). Scotus points out first that if the object had no
causal role, then the will would always be able to act, since the active and passive causes are already together. On the
other hand (according to an argument borrowed from Godfrey of Fontaines, *Quodl.* VI q. 7 [PhB 3:151-152, 158-159]), if
the object were a *causa sine qua non* in the sense that it removes an impediment to the will’s acting, then there would be no
reason why one could not say similarly that the presence of fire does not cause wood to burn but only makes it possible
for the wood to burn itself. Furthermore, if a *causa sine qua non* does not fall under one of the four Aristotelian causes,
then either it has to be reduced to a prior cause that removes the impediment, in which case it is only an accidental
remote cause, or it is refers to nothing more than the fact that the passive and active causes have been brought together
and so action can follow. Finally, if the presentation of an object by the intellect removes an impediment to the will’s
action, then when the intellect does not present a suitable object it impedes the will, but the intellect is a lower power
than the will, and what is lower cannot impede what is higher.

72 *Lect.* II d. 25 n. 60 (Vat. 19:249): “Si objectum cognitum sit tantum causa ‘sine qua non’ respectu volitionis, igitur
volitiones non distinguenter formaliter ab objectis. Sed hoc est inconveniens.”

73 For these arguments, see *Lect.* II d. 25 nn. 61-63, 67 (Vat. 19:249-250, 252).
both the will and the object concur in causing the act of willing, such that the act of willing is from the will and from the cognized object as from an efficient cause.\footnote{Lect. II d. 25 n. 69 (Vat. 19:253): “Respondeo igitur ad quaestionem quod causa effectiva actus volendi non est tantum obiectum aut phantasma (quia hoc nullo modo salvat libertatem), prout ponit prima opinio, nec etiam causa effectiva actus volendi est tantum voluntas, quemadmodum ponit secunda opinio extrema, quia tunc non possunt salvari omnes condiciones quae consequuntur actum volendi, ut ostensum est. Ideo teneo viam mediam, quod tam voluntas quam obiectum concurret ad causandum actum volendi, ita quod actus volendi est a voluntate et ab obiecto cognito ut a causa effectiva.” The reference to the phantasm has to do specifically with the position of Godfrey of Fontaines; see chapter 2 above for discussion.}

Scotus thus concludes that the will and the object together constitute the total efficient cause of the act of volition. In other words, the will and the object are partial causes that together produce a single volition as their joint effect.\footnote{Notice that Scotus’s solution here about the role of the object in volition is exactly parallel to his account of the role of the object in the act of the intellect, whereby the intellect and the object are joint active causes of the intellect’s operation. See Ord. II d. 3 n. 270 (Vat. 7:525): “Obiectum habet aliquam causalitatem partalem respectu intelleccionis (et hoc, obiectum in quantum est actu intelligibile), et intellectus habet suam causalitatem partiale respectus eiusdem actus, secundum quam concurrit cum obiecto ad talem actionem perfecte producendam, – ita quod ista duo, quando sunt in se perfecta et unita, sunt una causa integra respectu intelleccionis.”} Note also that Scotus has anticipated his conclusion in one of the arguments against the object as a \textit{causa sine qua non}, where he observes that a volition depends on its object insofar as it is the measure against which the volition can be compared (since the act of willing is specified by its object), and that it depends on the object not as something that must first be caused, which would be as a mere necessary condition, but as an effect depends on a cause. He also asserts, moreover, that the object must be an efficient cause and not any other kind of cause.\footnote{Lect. II d. 25 n. 66 (Vat. 19:251-252): “Actus volendi essentialiter referetur ad obiectum ut mensuratam ad mensuram, et non e contra (ex hoc enim quod lapis est volitus, non dependet a voluntate); sed mensuratam dependet a mensura vel sicut causatum posterius referetur ad causatum prius, vel sicut causatum ad causam […] Non autem dependet actus voluntatis ab obiecto cognito ut a causato priore; igitur sicut a causa, et non est dare nisi in respectu causae efficientis, ut patet discurrendo.” Clearly, the object cannot be either the material or formal cause, since it is not a constituent part of the operation. Nor can it be the final cause, perhaps because the end moves the efficient cause, and then the will would be moved by its object; cf. also ibid. nn. 38-39 (241)). The argument from the dependence of the volition of the object as the measure is developed in a little more detail at \textit{Additiones Magnae} II d. 25 (Balić 280-281).}

But how exactly can the will and its object be partial active causes of the act of volition? In his solution, Scotus lays out three different ways in which causes can concur to produce a single effect.\footnote{Lect. II d. 25 nn. 71-73 (Vat. 19:253-254). Compare this account of ordered causes with the account of the role of the object of the intellect at Lect. I d. 3 nn. 365-368 (Vat. 16:367-368).} First, two causes that have no essential ordering to each other can be accidentally ordered to a single effect, as when two or more rowers together move a ship. Scotus dismisses this kind of ordering, since it has to do with causes of the same kind that only happen to concur to the same effect, such that either cause could be dispersed with and the other could still cause the same effect, as any single rower could in principle do the work of the others. In the case at hand, however, there is an essential order between the causes, since the object must be presupposed for the will to act at all,
and it can be a cause of willing only if it concurs with the will. In the second kind of ordered causality, there is an essential ordering between causes, but this is because the secondary cause derives all its causality from the primary cause; Scotus gives the example of the causality of a particular sublunary body, which derives its causal power from the celestial body together with which it is a partial cause. However, this too is not relevant, since the object’s causality with respect to volition is not derived from or dependent on that of the will, nor is that of the will derived from that of the object.

It is the third kind of causal concurrence that describes the object’s causal contribution to volition:

In the third way, more than one agent sometimes concur in causing, such that they are of different orders or of different natures (against the first way), and none of them gets its active power from the other, but each has its own causality, which is complete with respect to its own kind of causality [in suo genere]; however, one is the principal agent and the other is less principal, like the father and mother in the production of offspring, or the tip of the pen and the quill in the act of writing, or the man and the woman in the running of a household.

In this third kind of concurrence, there are two distinct kinds of active cause, of which each has its causality from itself and not from the other; however, when they concur, one is the primary cause of the single effect, and the other is secondary and acts only if the other acts. This is the way in which the will and its object concur to produce an act of volition:

So in the case at hand, the will has the character of the one cause, namely a partial cause, with respect to the act of willing, and the nature that is actually cognizing the object has the character of the other partial cause, and both together are one total cause with respect to the act of willing. However, the will is the more principal cause and the cognizing nature is less principal, because the will causes motion freely, and [the will] moves the other to its own motion and thus [the will] determines it to acting. But the nature that cognizes the object is a natural agent that always acts to

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78 _Lett._ II d. 25 n. 71 (Vat. 19:253): “Aliquando multa concurrunt ad unum effectum causandum quae tantum habent ordinem per accidens – et tunc multa concurrunt per accidens (quia si tota virtus esset in uno, illud faceret totum effectum), sicut est de multis trahentibus navem. Et sic non est in proposito, quia hic est per se ordo et una causa partialis presupponit aliam.”

79 _Lett._ II d. 25 n. 72 (Vat. 19:254): “Alio modo, aliquando multa concurrent ad unum effectum causandum, ita quod unum ab alio capit virtutem effectivam causandi, sicut corpus caeleste et agens particulare aliquod (ut elementum vel aliquod mixtum) respectu actus causandi. Et sic etiam non est in proposito, quia objectum ‘cognitum ab intellectu actu’ non habet virtutem causandi a voluntate, nec e contra, quantum ad actum primum.”

80 _Lett._ II d. 25 n. 73 (Vat. 19:254): “Tertio modo, aliquando plura agentia concurrunt in causando, ita quod alterius ordinis sunt aut rationis (contra primum modum), quorum neutrum capit ab alio virtutem activam, sed utrumque habet causalitatem propriae, perfectam in suo genere, unum tamen est agens principale et aliud minus principale, ut pater et mater ad productionem prolis, et stilus et penna ad scribendum, et vir et mulier ad regimen domus.”
habit as active cause

the full extent of which it is capable; however, it can never be sufficient for eliciting an act unless the will acts with it, and thus the will is the more principal cause.\(^8^1\)

Scotus’s point is that the object – or, as he explains it here, the intellect that cognizes the object and makes it available to the will – does have an active role in causing an act of volition, but it is only partial and secondary to that of the will itself.\(^8^2\) Unless the will acts, the object cannot exercise its causal power, since it is the will as the principal cause that determines it to contributing causally as a secondary cause to the act of the will.

Scotus also points out that this solution preserves the freedom of the will with respect to its acts while giving the object an essential role in volition. As explained in chapter 2, Scotus holds that only the will acts in a freely self-determining way, and contrasts this mode of action with the mode of nature; even the intellect is naturally determined to act always to the greatest extent possible in the circumstances. Thus, when the object (or the intellect that presents the object) contributes causally to volition, its causal contribution is not a free one; however, this causal contribution is strictly subordinate to the will’s free activity. Scotus concludes:

From this it is clear how there is freedom in the will. For I am said to see freely because I can freely use the power of sight for seeing. So it is in the case at hand, regardless of how much a cause is natural and always acts uniformly (as regards only itself), for it nevertheless does not determine and does not necessitate the will to willing; rather the will, from its own freedom, can concur with it to an act of willing or to no act of willing, and so can use it freely. Thus, willing and nilling freely are said to be in our own power.\(^8^3\)

Since the object contributes causally only if the will itself elicits an act, it is possible for it to contribute actively to the acts of the will without compromising the free nature of the will’s acts. For

\(^8^1\) \textit{Lect.} II d. 25 n. 73 (Vat. 19:254): “Sic in proposito voluntas habet rationem unius causae, sicut causae partialis, respectu actus volendi, et natura ‘actu cognoscens objectum’ rationem alterius causae partialis, et utraque simul est una causa totalis respectu actus volendi. Voluntas tamen est causa principialis, et ‘natura cognoscens’ minus principialis, quia voluntas libere movet, ad cuius motionem movet alius (unde determinat alius ad agendum); sed natura ‘cognoscens objectum’ est naturale agens, quod, quantum est ex parte sui, agit semper: nunquam tamen potest esse sufficiens ad actum eliciendum, nisi concurrente voluntate, et ideo voluntas est causa principalior.”

\(^8^2\) Perhaps Scotus should be more rigorous in distinguishing the role of the object as presented by the intellect from the role of the intellect and its act! Could he not say that the intellect and intellection are instrumental causes in the sense that they are necessary conditions for the will to act, whereas the object that is presented by them is a partial active cause? Despite what he says here, he seems in a passage from book II of the \textit{Ordinatio} to allow that the cognizing intellect is a \textit{causa sine qua non} for the will to act; see \textit{Ord.} II d. 3 n. 287 (Vat. 7:535): “… et hoc modo, cum voluntas sit praeens ut actus primus, est quodammodo perfectus ad habendum actum secundum respectu sui ipsius sicut effectus, in causa sufficiente ut in voluntate, et in eo ‘sine quo non’ ut in intellectione.”

\(^8^3\) \textit{Lect.} II d. 25 n. 74 (Vat. 19:255): “Ex hoc patet quomodo est libertas in voluntate. Nam ego dico ‘libere videre’, quia libere possum uti potentia visiva ad videndum; sic in proposito, quantumcumque aliqua causa sit naturalis et semper uniformiter agens (quantum est ex parte sui), quia tamen non determinat nec necessitat voluntatem ad volendum, sed voluntas ex libertate sua potest concurrere cum ea ad volendum vel non volendum et sic libere potest uti ea, ideo dicitur ‘libere velle et nolle’ esse in potestate nostra.”
the will retains mastery over whether or not it will elicit an act directed at the object that the intellect presents.

This account of the role of the object of the will is thus very similar to the account of the role of habits according to the third way in *Ordinatio* I distinction 17. In both cases, a cause other than the power itself is a partial secondary cause of action that is ordered to the power as the primary cause, such that it does not act unless the power acts; the active power’s primary causal role with respect to its own operations is thus safeguarded. Moreover, the appeal in the case of the object to essentially ordered causes as a way of preserving the freedom of the will can be made in just the same way with regard to the causal contribution of a habit. In both cases, the will is always the primary cause of its own act of volition, and just like the object, a habit of the will can only ever be a secondary cause which the will “uses.” Thus, even though habits are merely natural beings and so will always act to the maximum extent possible, the contribution of habit does not threaten the freedom of the will, for it contributes to the intensity of an act of volition only if the will itself causes that volition. Scotus concedes that when a habit does contribute to the intension, it contributes in a naturally determinate way, for as a natural form it always acts exactly to the extent possible. Nevertheless, the will retains the freedom to exercise greater or lesser *conatus* when it elicits an act, and thus it retains its free power to act to a degree other than what circumstances would naturally determine.

### 4.3 Doubts about the applicability of ordered causality to habits of the will

As noted above, there is a clear parallel between Scotus’s third way of accounting for the role of habits and the way he explains the role of the object of the will in the *Lectura*. In both cases, something other than the power itself can be a partial active cause of the acts of the power, as long as there is an essential ordering such that the other cause (the object or a habit) can only ever be secondary to the power itself. Scotus’s unambiguous adoption of ordered causality in the *Lectura* thus seems to offer support for his third way of accounting for the role of habits. In particular, it provides an explanation of how something other than the will itself can be a partial cause of volition.

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84 Scotus himself draws attention to the similarity. See *Ord*. II d. 7 n. 44 (Vat. 8:95): “Aut possumus loqui de principio totali volitionis, aut de principio partiali. Voluntas quidem est principium activum partiale, sicut tectum fuit distinctione 17 I et tanger infra distinctione 25.”

85 *Ord*. I d. 17 n. 85 (Vat. 5:180): “Etsi causalitas potentiae sit deminuta, aut ex ratione sui’ habitus est causa secunda, qua videlicet potestia potest uti.”

86 See *Ord*. I d. 17 n. 79 (Vat. 5:178): “Concedo quod infertur, videlicet quod potestia operante ex aequali conatu ‘semper actus sit intensior habitu coagente quam non coagente, sed ex hoc non sequitur illud inconvenienti - quod sequitur contra illam viam [sc. secundam] - videlicet quod potestia ex quocumque conatu agenti ‘actus sit semper aequus intensus.’”
without limiting the will’s free self-determination with respect to its own acts. However, in a later version of the same question about the role of the object of the will, Scotus seems to reverse his position, and defends the view that the will, as a free power, must be the total cause of its own acts. But if Scotus considers it problematic to allow the object an active role in volition, one might similarly raise doubts about whether the account of habit as a secondary cause fully answers the objections to assigning habits an active role.

4.3.1 The will as the total cause of its own acts

There is clear overlap between the discussion in the Lectura of the role of the object of the will and the discussion of the same question in the later Reportata Parisiensia. In both versions, for example, Scotus addresses the same arguments of Godfrey of Fontaines and Henry of Ghent on whether the will moves itself and what the role of the object of volition is. A very significant difference, however, is in Scotus’s response to the position of Henry of Ghent that the object presented by the intellect not an active cause of volition but only a necessary condition or causa sine qua non. In the Lectura version of this question discussed above, Scotus explicitly rejects Henry’s position and argues that the object must be a partial active cause of volition together with the will itself. In his Paris lectures on the other hand, Scotus describes the role of the cognized object in volition in a way that in a certain way defends Henry’s position. This is most clearly stated in the text from the Additiones Magnae published as an appendix to Balić’s study of the text of Scotus’s Sentences commentaries. Scotus first argues for the general case that there can be an effect that must be caused for another effect to be caused, and yet the first effect is not part of the essential account of the second effect:

In ordered powers, the lower power is in act before the higher power, such that for the act of the higher power it is a necessary precondition that the lower power be in

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Footnotes:

87 Twentieth-century scholars long held that Scotus’s initial position was that the object of volition is a partial cause; that he then proposed that the will alone is the total cause and the object only a necessary condition; and that he finally reverted to his initial position. More recently, however, Stephen Dumont has argued convincingly that this chronology is mistaken. Rather, Scotus’s last and most mature position was the one that William of Alnwick reports in the Additiones Magnae as what Scotus proposed in his Paris lectures (as opposed to what Alnwick says was Scotus’s position at Oxford, which lines up with the account in the Lectura). See the thorough discussion of the relative dating of the different versions and the history of the scholarly debate in Dumont, “Did Duns Scotus Change His Mind on the Will?” Peter Hartman argues against Dumont that although Scotus is more circumspect in the Reportatio, he does not definitively reject the account of the object as a partial active cause of volition; see Hartman, “Durand of St.-Pourçain on Cognitive Acts,” 65–81.

88 Balić, Les commentaires de Jean Duns Scot, 264–301. In the account that follows of the different position that Scotus considered in his Paris lectures, I quote variously from the relevant part of the text that Balić publishes from the Additiones Magnae, from the text that Wadding printed as part of the Ordinatio (which is in fact a reportatio extracted from Alnwick’s Additiones, see Dumont, “Did Duns Scotus Change His Mind on the Will?,” 726.), and from the Reportatio in volume 11 of Wadding’s edition. The position is substantially the same in all of them, though they are not always equally clear.
its proper act (just as for the intellect to be in act it is required that the phantasm by in its act). Yet the act of the lower power does not cause the act of the higher power. Therefore, it is false that what is a prior requirement for an effect to be caused must be a cause of that effect. And when it is said that an effect depends only on essential causes, I say that there is not just the dependence of what is caused on its cause; there is also the dependence of a posterior effect on a prior effect, and this is the case whether those effects are ordered by the same cause or by two causes where causation by one presupposes causation by the other. In this case, one effect does not depend on the other in the mode of a cause, but because the one effect cannot exist unless the prior effect existed.  

Notice that this is basically a statement of what Scotus elsewhere calls instrumental causes, where it is necessary for cause C1 to cause effect E1 before cause C2 can cause effect E2. Though he there observes that instrumental causes are “somehow active” with respect to the posterior effect, it is clear from what follows here that this is at most a way of speaking, and does not describe the true causal account. For he goes on to apply this model to the case of the intellect’s act of presenting an object to the will, making clear that the necessarily required presentation is not an active cause of volition:

Thus, I say that that proposition (namely, that for a given effect nothing is required before it other than its cause) is generally false in effects that are essentially ordered. This is clear from what has been said, and from the fact that the will requires as a precondition for its willing a certain prior effect, which is nonetheless not a cause of the volition. Thus, in this case there is a dependence not with respect to causality, but a necessary dependence with respect to what is a co-requirement, since volition necessarily requires intellection. Thus, the will is as it were in remote essential potency to causing volition until there is caused an act of intellection through which the object is present to it and through which an object is shown to it; that which is thus called an effect required for the being of something else is called a \emph{causa sine qua non}.

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89 \textit{Additiones Magnae} (Balić 294): “In potentiis ordinatis, potentia inferior prius est in actu suo quam potentia superior, ita quod ad actum potentie superioris necessario preexigitur quod potentia inferior sit in actu suo, ut ad hoc quod intellectus sit in actu suo requiritur quod phantasma sit in actu suo et tamen actus potentie inferioris non causat actum potentie superioris; ergo falsum est quod illud requiritur ad hoc quod est effectus causetur prius eo sit causa eius. Et quando dicitur quod effectus non dependet nisi a causis essentialibus, dico quod non solum est dependentia causati a causa sed effectus postteroris ad effectum priorem, et hoc sive illi effectus sint ordinati ab eadem causa, sive a duabus causis, quorum causatio unius causa presupponit causationem alterius et tunc unus effectus non dependet ab alio effectu per modum cause, sed quia ille effectus non potest esse nisi prius esset alius effectus.”

90 See section 4.2.1 above.

91 \textit{Additiones Magnae} (Balić 294-295): “Unde causa, non causato proximo effectu, intelligitur ut causa remota respectu posterioris effectus et est in potentia propinqua causato priori effectu. Unde dico, quod illa propositione est universaliter falsa in effectibus essentialiter ordinatis, quod sc. nihil requiritur necessario ad effectum prius eo nisi causa eius, ut patet secundum dicta et secundum quod voluntas preexigit aliquem effectum ad suum velle tamquam effectum priorem, qui tamen non est causa volitionis, et ita est ibi dependentia non quantum ad causalitatem, sed dependentia necessaria quoad coexigere, quia volitio coexigit necessario intellationem, ita quod voluntas est quasi in potentia remota essentiali ad causandum volitionem antequam causetur intellectio per quam obiectum est sibi presens et per quam ostenditur sibi obiectum, et illud quod sic dicitur effectus requisituid ad esse alterius, dicitur causa sine qua non.” Cf. the somewhat more compressed version of this whole argument at \textit{Rep.} II d. 25 q. un. §16 (Wadding 11.1:370b).
Thus, while it is true that the will cannot act unless the intellect has made a willable object present to it, the act of presentation is not an essential cause of the volition, but is merely a necessary precondition without which the will cannot elicit its volition. It can thus be called a *causa sine qua non* with respect to volition, but it is not properly an active cause of volition. Scotus then concludes that “nothing other than the will is the total cause of volition.” Scotus thus defends the position of Henry on the role of cognition that he had explicitly rejected in the *Lectura*.

One might ask then how Scotus would answer the major objection he raised in the *Lectura* against denying the object an essential causal role in volition. How can volitions be specifically distinguished from one another unless the object at which they are directed is part of their essential causal account? One might argue that Scotus still leaves room to make the object an essential cause, since in his defence of the *sine qua non* theory, the prior effect that he speaks of is not the object, but the act of the intellect by which the object is presented to the will. Could he not then maintain that the intellect and its act are indeed only necessary conditions, while it is the object that is an essential cause? However, he also notes that this argument allows for the conclusion that nothing other than the will is the total cause of volition, and since the question is whether anything other than the will is an *efficient* cause of volition, this can be understood as the total efficient active cause. So the position in the Paris lectures still seems to rule out the object as a partial active cause.

If the object is not an efficient cause of volition, one way in which it could still have an essential role is as the final cause. This is suggested in the answer that Scotus gives to an initial objection, where Aristotle is cited as proof that the appetible object moves the appetite as an efficient cause, for if it moved it as an end, he would be equivocating on the term ‘motion’, since an end moves in only a metaphorical sense. In reply, Scotus divides the two alternatives. First, he considers how it would support the position he adopts in the *Lectura* that the object move the will as a partial efficient cause:

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92 Scotus also explains that a cause that produces an effect that is a necessary condition for a further effect is only an accidental cause of the latter, though it can be reduced to an essential cause of the former. See *Additiones Magnae* (Balič 298): “Non omnis causa per accidens reductur ad causam priorem origine, sed priorem perfectione ut frangens trabem est causa per accidens motus gravis, sed non reductur ad causam et causalitatem per se proprii effectus respectu cuius est causa per se; unde causa per accidens motus gravis reductur ad causam per se fractionis trahi.”


As for those who would say that the object moves the will as an efficient cause, though not as the total cause but as doing something in this case: then the passage [sc. from Aristotle] would not have to be glossed as saying that the object moves, that is, metaphorically, and so the authority would support me.⁹⁵

The other alternative is that motion does not refer univocally to the motion of efficient causes.

Scotus continues:

But if it is maintained and asserted that the appetible object moves the appetite only metaphorically, then [the passage] should be understood [as saying] that just as the appetible object moves the appetite metaphorically, so the appetite that is thus moved moves the limbs efficiently [i.e. as an efficient cause] to striving so that that appetible object is acquired. And when it is said that he [i.e. Aristotle] would be equivocating on the term ‘mover’, this objection has no force, since it need not be that all things that are ordered with respect to being causes be ordered under one kind of cause. For the efficient cause is ordered to the final cause, which is a cause of another kind and moves metaphorically.⁹⁶

Scotus here argues that to say that the object moves the will metaphorically is not an admission that it does not really move the will; rather, it moves the will not as an efficient cause but as a final cause. The motion is therefore “metaphorical” only in the sense that the term ‘motion’ is extended to include final causality as well as efficient causality. Scotus thus raise the possibility that there are two alternative solutions: the object could be a partial efficient cause of volition (as he concludes in the Lectura) or it could be the final cause.

But can he maintain that the object is the final cause of volition? This position might be justified by appeal to the will’s radical freedom, which extends not just to the object that can be chosen as a means to an end, but also to end themselves. One way in which Scotus explains this is by the distinction he makes between efficacious willing (volitio efficax) and simple willing (volitio simplex).⁹⁷

Efficacious willing can be understood as the more familiar concept of choice, which for Scotus is an act of the will by which the object that is willed is willed with reference to an end, in other words, as

⁹⁵ Rep. II d. 25 §24 (Wadding 6:889): “Ad primum principale: qui diceret quod obiectum movet voluntatem effective, non tamen ut totalis causa, sed ut aliquid ibi faciens, tune non esset glossanda auctoritas quod movet scilicet metaphorice, et tune auctoritas esset pro me.”

⁹⁶ Rep. II d. 25 §24 (Wadding 6:889): “Vel sustinendo et dicendo quod appetibile movet appetitum tantum metaphorice, tune debet intelligi quod sicut appetibile movet appetitum metaphorice, ita appetitus sic motus movet effective membra ad exequentum ut acquiratur illud appetibile. Et cum dicitur, acquivocaret de movente, hoc nihil valet, quia non oportet quod omnia ordinata secundum rationem causandi sint ordinata in uno genere causae. Causa enim efficientis ordinatur ad finalem, quae est causa alterius generis, quae movet metaphorice.”

⁹⁷ Scotus explains the distinction between volitio efficax and volitio simplex (or volitio complacentiae) in several passages, but in similar terms in each case; see Ord. III d. 33 n. 55 (Vat. 10:167), Rep. II d. 6 q. 1 §5 (Wadding 11:286b). At Ord. II d. 6 nn. 14-15 (Vat. 7:29-30), Scotus explains in a little more detail how he understands volitio efficax as the willing of means to an end that follows upon practical deliberation.
4. HABIT AS ACTIVE CAUSE

a means to an end. Simple willing, on the other hand, is not done by joining (referre) one good to a
further good as means are joined to an end, but is the act of willing an object as good in itself (or an
act of complacentia in the object). Since this is not an act of willing means to an end that is
presupposed, it must instead be an act of willing the object as an end in itself. The possibility of
willing any object in itself and not merely as a means seems to be a consequence of the freedom of
the will. For when simple willing and efficacious willing are treated as modes of willing, then the
mode of the act of willing is an aspect of volition over which the will has control, and so the will can
will any willable object either by relating it to some further end, or it can will it in itself without
relating it to a further end. The most telling discussions, however, are those that have to do with
our freedom with respect to beatitude. As was discussed in chapter 2, Scotus argues that the will is
not necessitated to act by any suitable object, not even its ultimate perfection of beatitude, for if the
will is a free power at all, it must have mastery over its own acts even in this limit case; it therefore
remains free to elicit an act or not with regard even to its ultimate end. Moreover, the will is not
even naturally inclined to its ultimate end. Scotus explains this claim in his discussion of beatitude in
book I of the Ordinatio.

I say that something is aptitudinally suitable or actually suitable. That which is
aptitudinally suitable is that which is suitable to something from itself and from
the nature of the thing, and such a thing is actually suitable to everything that does not
have in its power that something be suitable or unsuitable to it; and thus whatever is
suitable to something naturally or aptitudinally, in virtue of a natural appetite or
sensitive appetite, is also suitable to it actually. But it is in the power of the will that
something be suitable or not be suitable to it actually, for nothing is actually suitable
to it except what actually is pleasing to it. For this reason, I deny the minor premise
[of the argument he is disproving], when it is said that “the end necessarily is suitable
to the will,” for this is true not of actual suitability but of aptitudinal suitability.

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98 Note that it is because the will is able to join means to end that it can be called a vis collativa. *Ord. III* d. 33 n. 36 (Vat. 10:159): “Magis etiam potest voluntas referre ad finem consonum rectae ratione quam appetitus sensitivus, quia voluntas est propria appetitiva rationis, et ita proprie collativa ad finem quem ratio ostendit; ‘uti’ quippe, quod est referre ad finem debitum, non est actus appetitus sensitivi, sed voluntatis.” Cf. *Ord. I* d. 45 n. 11 (Vat. 6:375), *Lect. III* d. 26 n. 53 (Vat. 21:190); see also Hoffmann, “Freedom Beyond Practical Reason.”

99 Cf. *Ord. I* d. 1 n. 16 (Vat. 2:10): “sicut in potestate voluntatis est velle vel non velle, ita in potestate eius est modus volendi, scilicet referre vel non referre; ergo in potestate sua est aliquod bonum velle propter se, non referendo ad alium bonum et ita praestituendo sibi in eo finem.”

100 *Ord. I* d. 1 n. 156 (Vat. 2:106): “Dico quod aliquid est aptitudinaliter conveniens, vel actualiter conveniens. Conveniens aptitudinaliter est quod convenit aliqui ex se et quantum est ex natura rei, et tale convenit actualiter omni e in cuius potestate non est quod ei actualiter aliquid conveniat vel disconveniat; et ideo quidquid convenit aliqui naturaliter vel aptitudinaliter, appetitu naturali vel appetitu sensitivo, convenit etiam actualiter. Sed in potestate voluntatis est ut ei aliquid actualiter conveniat vel non conveniat; nihil enim actualiter convenit sibi nisi quod actu placet. Propter hoc nego minorem, cum dicitur ‘finis necessario convenit voluntati’; hoc enim non est verum de convenientia actuali, sed aptitudinali.”
What distinguishes the will from all other appetites is not merely that it is the rational appetite that can seek what is rationally apprehended as good, but also that it is free. Thus, beatitude, which is naturally the object most apt to be an end for the will, is not actually an end for the will unless the will freely wills it as an end; natural beings on the other hand are necessarily inclined to their natural ends, which are suitable to them simply in virtue of their nature. Scotus makes the point succinctly in his discussion of the passions of the will when he explains that any object, including the ultimate end of beatitude, actually inclines the will only as a result of the will’s free act of complacentia.\(^{101}\)

The will’s freedom to will something as an end in itself and not merely as a means to an already given end could perhaps support the suggestion that the object is an essential cause of volition even though it is not an efficient cause. For as a free power, the will is able to freely posit the end for the sake of which it will act (unlike natural powers, which have merely natural and determinate ends), and insofar as that is the end for the sake of which it will act, it will be the final cause of the volition.\(^{102}\) Thus, in desiring the object as an end (in an act of complacentia or volitio simplex), it sets the object as a final cause for its own act (a volitio efficac). In this way, there would be no need to posit that the object is a partial efficient cause of the act, for its role is as a final cause, and as such it is not merely a necessary condition for volition, but is an essential cause of it.

Regardless of whether the above suggestion is defensible or not, it seems clear that in his Paris lectures, Scotus at least entertained doubts that the object of the will should be treated as an efficient cause of volition. The most likely reason is that he had reason to doubt that his earlier solution fully preserves the will’s freedom with regard to its acts. But if, as he concludes in the Lectura, the object can only ever be secondary to the will as an active cause, why would he come to doubt that this solution is adequate?

\(^{101}\) \textit{Ord. III d. 15 n. 47 (Vat 9:498)}: “Iste appetitus [sc. sensitivus] naturaliter se habet ad obiectum […]; non sic obiectum comparatum ad voluntatem, quae libera est, licet aliquod ex natura sua sit conveniens voluntati, puta ultima finis, cum sit ultimate conveniens sibi per actum voluntatis acceptantis et complacentis sibi in illa. Et talis convenientia est posita per velle objecti.” Scotus insists that, since we are responsible for the passions in our will, they must ultimately be voluntary. He explains this by arguing that they result from inclinations that the will freely gives to itself in virtue of its own free acts. But if beatitude were actually (and not merely aptitudinally) suitable to the will simply in virtue of its nature, the will would receive some passions over which it has no control; it seems therefore that beatitude can be actually suitable to the will only in virtue of a free act of willing it. For discussion of this point, see Drummond, “John Duns Scotus on the Passions of the Will,” 67–72.

\(^{102}\) This solution would also draw a clear distinction between natural ends and final causes. As Marilyn McCord Adams notes, natural ends according to Scotus are ultimately reducible to the nature itself that is oriented to that end. Final causes, on the other hand, pertain to effects, specifically volitions; as Adams puts it, “The final cause of an effect is the end that the intelligent cause adopts in producing it” (Adams, “Final Causality and Explanation in Scotus’s \textit{De Primo Principio},” 162–163.)
One consideration that Scotus raises is that one should concede that the will needs another cause other than itself only if it is required in order to give a coherent account:

Just as a plurality should never be posited without necessity, so a nature should never be considered less noble without necessity. But something is more perfect if it is in potency to receiving some perfection if it has an active power for that perfection, and so nature has supplied what is missing, as is often the case. Therefore, when something exists perfectly in first actuality and is only in accidental potency to its second actuality, it does not need an extrinsic agent to go from potency to act.103

Scotus thus takes it as a methodological principle, like the principle of parsimony, that one should not propose an account that treats a nature as less “noble” than it would otherwise be if an account is available that can avoid doing so. The nobility of the will that Scotus refers to here does not lie merely in the fact that it is the highest and commanding power of the soul that moves the lower powers to their acts, nor in the fact that the will acts freely while all other powers act in a naturally determinate way; here it means simply the will’s status as the primary active cause of its own operations. Thus, to posit that the will’s operation (i.e. the natural perfection of the will as a power) is actively caused by its object, even if only as a partial cause, seems to curtail the will’s nobility as an active power that virtually contains its own acts. But if an alternative account that does not qualify the status of the will as the cause of its own acts can be sustained, that account is preferable: “I say generally for everything that fully existing in first actuality suffices for it to proceed to its second act, unless it can be manifestly proven that something else is required for this.”104 Thus, unless the sine qua non account of the object can be shown to be false, it ought to be adopted over the partial- causation account, since it posits no active cause of volition other than the will itself.105

Besides this, Scotus seems also to be concerned that conceding that the object is a partial cause of volition may be incompatible with the will’s freedom. This is suggested by the way in which he proceeds to explain his conclusion that “nothing other than the will can be the total cause of volition.” As he immediately explains (in the text reported by William of Alnwick), this is “because

103 Rep. II d. 25 q. un. §16 (Wadding 11.1:371a): “Sicut igitur numquam est ponenda pluralitas sine necessitate, sic numquam est natura ignobilissima sine necessitate. Sed perfectius est aliud si est in potentia receptiva aliquius perfectionis si habeat potentiam activam respectu eiusmod. Ideo natura supplevit defectum, ut frequenter, ubi potuit. Cum igitur existens in actu primo perfecte, et tantum in potentia accidentalis ad actum secundum, non eget agentem extrinsecum ad hoc quod exeat de potentia ad actum, ut patet octavo Physicalum et secundo De Anima, illud est nobilitas naturalis.”

104 Rep. II d. 25 q. un. §17 (Wadding 11.1:371a): “Ideo dico universaliter quod omne existens in actu primo perfecte, sufficit ad hoc quod exeat in actum secundum, nisi possit manifest probari quod alium ad hoc requiratur.”

105 Note that Scotus raises this same consideration in favour of his fourth way of explaining the role of habits; see chapter 5 below.
the will determines itself freely to causing an act of willing.”\textsuperscript{106} But if something other than the will determined it to its act, it would not do so freely, and so the will’s act would not be free or contingent.\textsuperscript{107} The account in the \textit{Lectura} claims to solve this problem by making the active causality of the object of volition strictly secondary to that of the will. But what is the nature of that causality? A central argument for treating the object as an active cause was that unless it is an essential cause of volition, there will be no way to distinguish different kinds of volition from one another. So if the object does have an active causal role, this must be to specify the volition as being about that object; but in that case, even though the will retains mastery over whether it will elicit an act, the specific determination of the act will be due to some cause other than the will itself, thus compromising the will’s power to determine its own acts.

\textbf{4.3.2 Can ordered causation be applied to habits?}

Some of the doubts raised by the alternative account of the role of the object in acts of volition have limited relevance to the account of the role of habits. For one, the distinction among orders of cause is quite different: whatever its precise causal role, an object must in some way be an essential cause of volition, whereas a habit need not enter at all into the causal account of any action. Furthermore, the interpretation I suggest of the alternative solution in the \textit{Reportationes}, whereby the object might be considered a final cause, would obviously not apply to habits, for an act is not directed to a habit (if anything, it is the act that should be the end for a habit).

Nevertheless, other doubts about whether the object should be considered a partial active cause of acts of the will seem also to apply to the case of habits. The worry about unnecessarily detracting from the nobility of a nature is exactly one of the considerations that Scotus mentions in favour of not assigning an active role to habits: if it is in the nature of a power to be the active principle of its own acts, one should avoid an account of the contribution of habits that unnecessarily curtails a power’s complete causality with respect to its own operations.\textsuperscript{108} The doubt that arises from the freedom of the will is perhaps even more salient in the case of habits. If it is correct that allowing the object an active role with respect to volition would represent a limitation on the will’s self-determination, then the same concern should apply to habits. For if a habit contributes actively to the intension of the resulting operation, then in the case of the will, the mode of the resulting

\textsuperscript{106} Additions Magnae II d. 25 (Balić 299): “Respondeo ergo ad quaestionem quod nihil aliud a voluntate potest esse totalis causa volitionis in voluntate secundum quod voluntas determinate se libere ad actum volendi causandum.”

\textsuperscript{107} Scotus develops this objection in the text that follows; see Additions Magnae II d. 25 (Balić 299-300).

\textsuperscript{108} See Ord. I d. 17 n. 47 (Vat. 5:157-158), and discussion in chapter 5 below.
volition will be in part beyond the control of the will itself, despite the fact that the will is necessarily
the primary cause. But even if the partial-causation account of the object of the will is accepted, this
doubt would remain in the case of habit as a partial cause. For when the will acts, it freely
determines itself to willing a certain object, and so it remains under the control of the will what
object will be a partial active cause of the volition (leaving aside the doubts expressed above about
whether this model is coherent). The same will not be true of a habit as an active cause, for when the
will acts, it does not determine itself to using a habit. Indeed, as Scotus observes in the parallel
question in the Lectura, the will seems to be no more free to “use” or not to use a habit than any
non-free power. Rather, when the will (or any other power) acts, the habit naturally will make its
causal contribution. Therefore, to the extent that the degree of intensity of the operation is due to
the habit’s active causality, the will does not have full mastery over its own acts.

Another doubt about the third way might be raised from the opposite side of the question. Rather
than questioning whether a habit’s active role is compatible with free self-motion, it might be asked
whether it can be active according to its own nature. As noted above, Scotus appeals to the dictum
that the agent “uses” habits when it wills. But if habits are used, they can be likened to an
instrumental cause like a tool. Recall that in his discussion of the sacraments, Scotus notes that a
necessary condition for a further effect is a kind of instrumental cause that can be called active
(though strictly speaking it seems not to be). He goes on, however, to explain that an instrumental
cause like a tool does not bring any active causality in addition to the causality of the person wielding
it. A knife or a saw, for example, does not add any active causality in causing some other body to be
cut or split; rather, the person wielding it sets the tool in motion and it splits the softer body because
of the formal incompossibility of two bodies occupying the same space.

4.4 Conclusion

In his third way of explaining the role of habits in actions, Scotus addresses doubts about how a
habit can be an active cause by hemming in the active role of a natural secondary cause in such a way
that it threatens neither the essential role of active powers generally as the primary cause of their
own acts nor specifically the will’s self-determination. He does this by explaining the role of habits in

109 Lect. I d. 17 n. 107 (Vat. 17:213): “Quando arguitur quod est in potestate nostra uti habitu, dico quod non videtur semper hoc esse verum, quod aequaliter sit in potestate nostra uti habitu voluntatis, sicut nec est in potestate nostra aequaliter speculari aliquam conclusionem.”

110 See Ord. IV d. 1 nn. 318-320 (Vat. 11:113-114), d. 6 n. 124 (Vat. 11:332-333), with discussion in Adams, “Essential Orders and Sacramental Causality,” 199–200. Compare, however with Ord. I d. 3 n. 496 (Vat. 3:293-294), where the spear is a kind of secondary active cause, though one that derives its causality from the primary cause.
terms of a framework of ordered causation, according to which two kinds of active cause can jointly cause a single effect, such that one cause is secondary and contributes causally only in conjunction with the other, primary cause. By positing that the habit can only ever be a secondary cause, he handles the objection that a habit might usurp the role of the power; and by positing that a habit can be only a partial active cause of the unified operation, which gets a determinate degree of intension from the power that is increased by the habit, he answers the objection that a habit that determined the intension of the act would be incompatible with the will’s free self-determination.

Yet, as I have suggested, there may be reasons to doubt that this solution is entirely satisfactory. Moreover, despite the fact that Scotus does reply to all the objections that he raises against the third way, at no point in the text where this is the subject of discussion does he fully endorse it as the correct account of the role of habits. Rather, when he summarizes the results of his discussion, he says only that the third way is “probable,” that is, it can be sustained by argument. But he notes as well that the next account he describes is also probable. The next chapter therefore will look in detail at the fourth way of *Ordinatio* I.17, which proposes that habits are not active causes at all, but only passively incline their subject.

111 Note however that Scotus elsewhere seems to assume the third way as the correct account, and indeed that this is the conclusion that he reaches in this very distinction. See *Ord.* III d. 33 n. 74 (Vat. 10:174): “Virtus autem, si est agens aliquo modo ad actum, est inferior agens, sicut dictum est distinctione 17 de habitu, et ibi etiam dictum est qualiter non repugnat quod libere agat, et tamen quod habitus agat in ea per modum naturae respectu eiusdem effectus.” In general, Scotus assumes that other active principles can concur with the will to cause volition, which is nonetheless free; cf. *Quodl.* q. 16 n. 61 (Noone & Roberts 191): “Si etiam quandoque concurrat potestas naturaliter activa cum ipsa voluntate sicut est de potentis inferioribus quibus utimur ad agendum, licet actio proprie ut est illius principii sit per modum naturae, tamen quia totum subiacet voluntati, ideo libere utimur et dicimus totum libere agere a principali agente.”

112 *Ord.* I d. 17 n. 53 (Vat. 5:160): “Sic ergo patet qualler, duabus viis primis ‘de habitu’ tamquam inconvenientibus derelictis, duae ultimae possunt sustineri.” Cf. ibid. n. 54: “Ad argumenta quae sunt contra istas duas vias ultimas, quorum utraque possit probabiliter sustineri […].”
5. Habit as Passive Inclination

Having discussed in the previous chapter Scotus’s positive answer to the question whether a habit should be considered an active principle of action, I will turn now to the opposite solution that he considers in *Ordinatio* I distinction 17. According to the fourth way of answering the question, a habit is not an active cause at all, but only inclines its power to receiving certain actions. It is thus clear from the start that the solution of the fourth way depends fundamentally on Scotus’s conception of how a self-moving power acts: that is, it actively elicits the acts for which it is a power, and that act is passively received in the power as an accidental quality. Whereas the third way posited that the habit is a partial active cause together with the active power, the fourth way proposes that the role of a habit has to do with the way in which the act is received.

In this chapter, therefore, I will examine Scotus’s account of how a habit can be understood as giving its subject a passive inclination to receiving certain acts. First, I will explain the position of the fourth way and how it is meant to explain the contribution of a habit to action without attributing to the habit any active causality; in particular, Scotus proposes that it can be used to explain the circumstances of pleasure, ease, readiness, and promptness that are traditionally ascribed to the inclination of habit. Secondly, using Scotus’s account of how passions of the soul are caused, I will explain his technical understanding of inclination, according to which a power that is inclined to certain objects or actions is the passive cause in an instance of inclination, and will apply it to the inclination of habit. Finally, I will evaluate the fourth way against the third way, both of which Scotus considers defensible. I will argue that, despite the fact that elsewhere Scotus seems to assume the third way as the correct account, the fourth way is in many ways better supported by his broader moral psychology; in particular, it gives a more systematically grounded explanation of how habituation in the will can be reconciled with its free self-determination.

5.1 The fourth way: habit as passive inclination

Scotus arranges his presentation of the first four ways in *Ordinatio* I distinction 17 in a dialectical fashion. The first way proposed treating habits simply as active principles without qualification; this was rejected because it fails to distinguish their causal contribution from that of a power, thus leaving open the possibility that a habit could entirely displace a power and cause an act on its own. The second way then proposed that only the power causes the act itself, while the role of a habit is to determine the degree of intensity of the operation that the power elicits. This also was rejected, because allowing the degree of an act to be fully determined by something other than the power
presents a problem in the case of the will, for the will would lose full mastery over its own acts once it has acquired a habit, and so would not act freely once it has acquired a habit. The third way, the most probable version of how a habit can be an active principle of action, resolves the difficulties of both of the first two ways by subordinating the habit’s active contribution to that of the power, so that a habit can only be a secondary cause which augments the intensity of the act elicited by the power but does not determine it. Scotus then raises a number of objections to the third way, some of which are against the particular details of that solution, but others that would apply generally to any account according to which habits are active causes.¹

However, instead of immediately answering these objections, he first supposes – at least for the sake of argument – that they can be conceded to be valid. In that case, a different solution will be required; and since the guiding question of this text is whether habits must be treated as active, this other solution will have to be one which does not attribute any active causality to habits.² This is exactly what the fourth way in Ordinatio I distinction 17 proposes:

Someone who wants to maintain the conclusion of these arguments [namely, the arguments against the third way] could deny that a habit has any aspect of an active principle, and say instead that a habit only inclines to the operation like a prior act that is suitable to a second act and determines it to that [second] act.³

The fourth way thus proposes that a habit is not an active cause with respect to the operations of the power it belongs to, but somehow disposes the power so that it is inclined more to a certain kind of operation than to others. The question then is how the inclination that a habit gives to its subject can be explained without attributing active causality to the habit.

5.1.1 How the fourth way depends on the account of self-motion

It should first be pointed out that the fourth way presupposes from the start Scotus’s general account of how a power can be self-moving. Scotus carefully develops in his questions on book IX

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¹ See chapter 4 above, especially section 4.1.3; on broader doubts that can be raised against the solution of the third way, see section 4.3.2.

² After the presentation and refutation of the first two ways, the structure of the text becomes somewhat more complex. After the initial presentation of the third way and the objections to it (nn. 32-45), Scotus does not immediately answer the objections, but instead considers the opposite position of the fourth way (nn. 46-52). He then considers in the fifth way the slightly different question of the role of the moral virtues (nn. 55-68; see chapter 6 below), before returning to answer the objections raised against the third way (nn. 69-86). He then applies the solution of the fourth way to answering the initial arguments for why habits must be active (nn. 87-91). He concludes by elaborating the fifth way.

³ Ord. I d. 17 n. 46 (Vat 5:156-157): “Qui vellet tenere conclusionem istorum rationum, posset negare ab habitu omnem rationem principii activi, et dicere quod habitus tantum inclinat ad operationem, quasi actus prior conveniens cum actu secundo, et determinans ad actum illum.”
of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* a metaphysical apparatus of complementary active and passive principles on which he bases his account of the self-motion of powers. Speaking abstractly, principiation occurs when corresponding active and passive principles are brought together. An occurrence of principiation originates in the active principle and terminates in the passive principle; the result of this is something that is principiated (the *principiatum*), which is produced in the terminating passive principle; more concretely, an active cause produces that which is caused (the *causatum*) in the corresponding passive cause. In cases of natural causation this *causatum* is generally an accidental quality. For example, when fire, which has the active principle of heating, is brought together with a kettle of water, which has the passive principle for being heated, heating occurs; the result is the form of heat, which is produced in the water as an accidental quality, that is, the water becomes hot. Scotus argues further that it is possible for the very same thing to contain both the active principle for producing an effect and the passive principle for receiving the same effect. A power or thing can thus be genuinely self-moving in the sense that it is both the active cause of its own acts insofar as it elicits them, and the passive cause of those same acts insofar as it receives them in itself as accidental qualities which are its own operations. Thus, for a power to be in second act is, ontologically speaking, for its operation to currently inhere in it as an accident.\(^4\)

Seen in the light of this general account of self-motion, the contribution of habit to action will have to fall either on the side of the active eliciting of its act or on the side of the passive reception of the act as an accidental quality. As was seen in chapter 4, the third way proposes that a habit cooperates with the power in actively producing an act that is more intense than it would be without the contribution of the habit; that solution thus treats the habit as contributing on the side of the power as the active cause of its own operations. But if the account of habits as active causes is rejected, their contribution to action can only fall on the other side of the power’s self-motion. The fourth way thus proposes that habits somehow have to do with the way in which the act of a power is passively received by the power. Thus the inclination that habit gives to a power is not active, but somehow passive.

### 5.1.2 Presentation of the fourth way

In support of the position that a non-active role for habits is *prima facie* probable, Scotus makes two related arguments. First, he makes a general methodological point:

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\(^4\) See chapter 2 above for a much more detailed exposition.
This [i.e. the fourth way, which treats the habits as giving only an inclination] seems probable, since causality should not be attributed to anything with respect to something unless such causality is evident from the nature of the things in question (whether the cause or that which is caused); as well, perfect causality should not be denied of any cause unless an imperfection of causality is manifestly evident in it, since it should not be denied that some nature has a perfection that is does not evidently lack.\(^5\)

Thus, before even explaining how the fourth way works as a solution, Scotus notes that it would be preferable to avoid assigning active causality to habits, in order to respect the nature of a self-moving power as an active cause. For when there is no need to qualify an active cause’s nature as the primary principle of its effects, one should not do so. He thus appeals to a methodological principle somewhat akin to the principle of parsimony. In this case, it is accepted that a power is the primary active cause of its own acts, so an account that avoids making anything other than the power an active cause of its acts should be preferred, if it can be defended. Thus, if the fourth way succeeds in accounting for what habit is supposed to contribute to action, it is to be preferred over the third way, according to which a habit is a partial active causes of the acts of the power to which it belongs.\(^6\) Secondly, Scotus claims that the fourth way does in fact succeed in explaining the contribution of habit to action:

But there does not seem to be any necessity to posit any active causality in a habit with respect to an act, since without doing so, all the conditions that are generally attributed to habit are nevertheless saved; as well, there is no need to take away from a power the perfect character [rationem] of causality in order to attribute partial causality to the power. Therefore no [active] causality should be attributed to habit.\(^7\)

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5 Ord. I d. 17 n. 47 (Vat. 5:157): “Et istud videtur probabile, quia nulli debetur attribui causalitas respectu alicuius nisi talis causalitas sit evidens ex natura rerum (vel causae vel causati); nulli etiam causae neganda est perfecta causalitas nisi manifeste appareat imperfectio causalitatis in ea, quia nullam naturam negandum est habere perfectionem qua non est evidens eam carere.”

6 Scotus’s point is not that the simplest account should be preferred: the third way is in some ways a simpler account, since it needs only an account of ordered causes, whereas the fourth way (as will be explained below) will involve Scotus’s full account of active and passive principles, as well as his explanation of how passions of the soul are caused. However, the fourth way does preserve without qualification the principle that a power is the active cause of its acts, and does not need to justify how something other than the power itself can be a cause of the power’s acts. As noted in section 4.3.1 above, Scotus raises the same methodological point in Reportatio II d. 25 against treating the object as a partial active cause of volition, for that too would qualify the will’s causality with respect to its own acts. It is perhaps worth asking whether this “principle of nobility” is thus a specific application of the principle of parsimony (such that no more active causes are posited than necessary), or a distinct principle; and if it is a distinct principle, whether it trumps the principle of parsimony.

7 Ord. I d. 17 n. 47 (Vat. 5:157-158): “Nulla autem videtur necessitas ponendi causalitatem aliquam activam in habitu respectu actus, quia sine hoc salvabuntur omnes condiciones quae communiter attribuuntur habitui; nulla etiam est necessitas auferendi a potentia perfectam rationem causalitatis, ut attribuatur partialis causalitas potentiae. Ergo non est aliqua causalitas habitui attribuenda.”
The question then is what these conditions that habit is supposed to contribute to action are, and how they can be explained without making the habit active.

5.1.3 The conditions that habit contributes to action

Scotus identified these conditions at the very beginning of his investigation into the role of habit:
“We attribute four conditions to habit and the one who has the habit: that [the agent] acts pleasurably, easily, unimpededly, and promptly.”\(^8\) However, when he provides this list of the conditions that habit is supposed to contribute, he presents it as evidence that habits are active, since if each condition pertains to the agent insofar as it is active, the habit must be an active cause.

According to the brief argument here, an act is done with pleasure because it is suitable to the power by which an agent does it, and is suitable according to how the power is disposed. However, an active power is disposed or not to a certain action not insofar as it is acted upon but insofar as it acts.\(^9\) A habit must therefore incline the power insofar as it actively elicits its acts rather than insofar as it passively receives them. Likewise, an act is done more easily with a habit because it disposes an agent not to being acted upon but to acting, since a power that is capable of receiving habits (such as the will or the intellect) is already fully disposed by nature to receiving its own operations.\(^10\) Similarly, if a power is impeded from acting by an opposing habit, the habit seems to impede the power in eliciting its act, not in receiving it. Conversely, therefore, a habit that expedites the power so that it acts readily does so actively; it therefore pertains to the power insofar as it is active.\(^11\) Finally, since slowness in acting pertains to a power not insofar as it is acted upon but insofar as it acts, the habit that gives the opposite condition of promptness again pertains to the power insofar as it is active.\(^12\)

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\(^8\) *Ord.* I d. 17 n. 7 (Vat. 5:142): “Quattuor conditiones attribuimus habitui et habenti habitum: quod operatur delectabiliter, faciliter, expedite et prompte.”

\(^9\) *Ord.* I d. 17 n. 8 (Vat. 5:142): “Actus qui prius fuit disconveniens agenti, non fit conveniens sibi nisi ipsum in quantum agens alter se habet; ergo cum per istum habitum, per quem competit sibi operari, sit sibi conveniens, et ita delectabile, - agens ipsum alter se habet in quantum agens.”

\(^10\) *Ord.* I d. 17 n. 9 (Vat. 5:143): “Quod est ex se summe dispositum ad patiendum non indiget facilitari ut patiatur; sed potentia habitualis – cuiusmodi est intellectus et voluntas – est ex se summe disposita ad recipiendum actum (quia non habent [sc. intellectus et voluntas] contrarium, et propter hoc non indigent motu ad hoc ut agent); ergo habitus per quem facilitatur disponit ipsum ad agendum et non ad patiendum.”

\(^11\) *Ord.* I d. 17 n. 10 (Vat. 5:143): “Cuius est impediiri, ei competit expeditio; sed impediiri competit agenti, quando virtus activa eius deficit et ab alia superatur; ergo habitus per quem competit alcei expedite operari, est ipsius ut est activum.”

\(^12\) *Ord.* I d. 17 n. 11 (Vat. 5:143): “Cuius est tarde vel non prompte operari, eius est etiam promptitudo; sed ’non prompte operari’ competit agenti in quantum activum, non in quantum passivum; ergo et promptitudo, quam tribuit habitus, pertinet ad agens in quantum agens.”
In his presentation of the fourth way, however, Scotus rejects the idea that habit is somehow an active cause of the conditions of pleasure, ease, readiness, and promptness, and claims instead that they can be explained entirely in terms of the passive inclination that a habit contributes to a power:

Those four conditions which are attributed to a habit – namely, that it is that by which the [agent] who has it acts easily, pleasurably, readily, and promptly – are preserved on account of the mere inclination of a habit which [the habit] gives to the power insofar as it is receptive of an operation.”

In other words, these conditions result from the inclination that a habit gives to a power, but this inclination is not something that actively contributes to the eliciting of the act; rather, it passively disposes the power to receiving certain operations. Scotus then briefly explains how each of the four circumstances that habit is supposed to contribute can be explained in terms of the power’s receptivity.

The explanation of the latter three conditions in terms of the passivity of the power is fairly clear. To explain ease, Scotus contrasts it with the opposite condition of difficulty:

Difficulty in an operation arises from that which is receptive of the operation not being disposed to receiving [it], and not only from a deficiency of its active force [virtus]; therefore, if that which is receptive is disposed, there will be ease in acting insofar as the agent acts on a passive cause of this kind.

Scotus here points out that difficulty in producing an effect can arise not from an insufficiency of strength or force on the part of the active cause, but from resistance or non-receptivity on the part of the passive cause. For example, the difficulty in pressing a seal into wax might be explained not in terms of the seal itself or the weakness of the hand pressing it, but instead in terms of the malleability of the wax: it is easier to impress the seal into soft wax than into hard wax. Likewise, according to the fourth way, the reason we find it difficult to choose to do something that we are not inclined to choose is not that the will is too weak to elicit the act – it is after all free and able to elicit any act as long as a suitable object is present to it – but that the will is not disposed to receiving such an operation. Thus, if difficulty in acting can be explained in terms of the disposition of the power to receiving the operation, the opposite condition of ease will be explained in terms of a disposition to receiving the operation. The ease that habit brings to an act is thus a result of its

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13 *Ord. I d. 17 n. 48* (Vat. 5:158): “Illae quattuor conditions quae attribuuntur habitui, videlicet quod est ‘quo habens faciliter operatur, delectabiliter, expedite et prompte’, salvantur propter solam inclinationem habitus, quam tribuit potentiae ut est receptiva operationis.”

14 *Ord. I d. 17 n. 50* (Vat. 5:159): “Difficultas in operatione accidit ex hoc quod receptivum operationis non est dispositum ad recipiendum, et non solum ex defectu virtutis activae; ergo si receptivum sit dispositum, erit facilitas in agendo, in quantum agens agit circa tale passum.”
disposing the power to being more receptive of certain operations. Readiness and promptness can similarly be explained in terms of the passive disposition of the power to certain operations. They too are explained by being contrasted with their opposites:

Impediment and slowness of the agent in acting can be on account of the indisposition of that which is passive, especially when the same thing is the agent and the recipient, such that it will not operate promptly because it is not disposed to operating. Therefore, this indisposition is not for doing an action (in the category of action), but for having an action (in the category of quality). For nothing is said to operate formally insofar as it elicits the operation, but insofar as it receives it in itself.\(^5\)

Here Scotus appeals directly to his ontological analysis of the action of a self-moving power, according to which for a power to be occurrently acting is for it to have received an operation that currently inheres in it as an accident. Thus, the disposition for acting slowly or unreliably (i.e. with impediment) pertains not to the active eliciting of an act but to its reception. Therefore, if being impeded and being slow in action result from the passive disposition of the power, so too do the opposite conditions of readiness and promptness.

Scotus summarizes all this when he responds to the initial objection that a habit contributes actively to these circumstances:

Ease, readiness, and promptness are posited in the character of what is passive, since the passive can receive [only] with difficulty when it is not disposed, and unreliably and slowly (i.e. not promptly), and the difficulty and slowness are there by reason of the indisposition of what is passive. Therefore, the agent can act readily, promptly, and easily on account of the disposition of that which is passive, and a habit is such a disposition in that which is passive.\(^6\)

This explanation of the circumstances of ease, readiness, and promptness thus follows somewhat intuitively from the very idea that a power passively receives its own operations as accidental forms. Even the ways of describing how something is passively inclined to receiving an accidental form directly invoke them. One might say, for example, that soft wax takes the impression of a seal more easily and promptly than hard wax because the reception of the seal is not impeded by the wax’s hardness. Similarly, one might say that a power is inclined to receive an operation if it receives it

\(^{15}\) *Ord. I d. 17 n. 51* (Vat. 5:159): “Nam impeditio et tardatio agentis in agendo potest esse propter indispositionem ipsius passi, potissime quando idem est agens et recipiens, ita quod ipsum non operabitur prompte quia est indispositum ad operandum. Haec ergo indispositio non est ad agendum actionem de genere actionis, sed ad habendum actionem de genere qualitatis; nihil enim dicitur formaliter operari in quantum elicit operationem, sed in quantum recipit eam in se.”

\(^{16}\) *Ord. I d. 17 n. 88* (Vat. 5:181): “Facilitatio, expeditio et promptitudo ponuntur ratione passi, quia passum difficulter potest recipere quando non est dispositum, et impedita et tarde sive non prompte, et ratione indispositionis passi est ibi difficilas et tarditas. Potest ergo agens expedite et prompte et faciliter agere, propter dispositionem passi, et habitus est talis dispositio in passo.”
easily, and it receives it easily because it is not in a state that impedes the reception of an operation. Likewise, it receives its operation promptly because the active power is not impeded or slowed in having to overcome an opposing passive disposition. Moreover, since for a power to proceed to act is simply for it to receive its operation as an accident, then receiving it easily, readily, and promptly is tantamount to the act being done with the conditions of ease, readiness, and promptness.

Like the other three conditions that habit is supposed to contribute, the condition of pleasure pertains, according to the fourth way, not to the active eliciting of action but to the passive reception of the operation.\textsuperscript{17} Scotus states the basic explanation as follows:

Since the action is in the agent, the action can be pleasurable on account of the suitability of the agent to the object; this suitability can be attributed to a habit on the basis of the fact that it inclines to action and to the object. Therefore, pleasurable does not lead to the conclusion [that the habit has] the character of an active cause, but only that there is the suitability of a passive principle to an action and an object, and this is so as regards the action that is in the category of Quality, not action of the category of Action (this difference of ‘actions’ was stated above in distinction 3). An operation is an action that is a quality, and it is suitable to a habituated power that is inclined by a habit to such an act and to the object that terminates such an operation, whereas to a [power that is] non-habituated, neither such a form nor such an object is suitable in this way.\textsuperscript{18}

At one level, this explanation of how pleasure is caused seems not to differ significantly from the explanation of ease, pleasure, and promptness. The general position of the fourth way is that a habit inclines a power by disposing it so that it is more inclined to receive certain operations. Thus, if pleasure results from acting according to inclination, it too will pertain to the passive reception of

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ord. I d. 17 n. 49 (Vat. 5:158)}: “

\textit{Delectatio quidem est propter condicionem recipientis, cui convenit* operatio recepta et obiectum circa quod est operatio. Numquam enim delectatio est in factione quae praecise est factio.” I adopt the reading of convenit in place of competit; see the following footnote for explanation.

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ord. I d. 17 n. 49 (Vat. 5:158-159)}: “Quia actio est in agente, potest esse actio delectabilis propter convenientiam agentis ad obiectum; hanc autem convenientiam potest tribuere habitus ex hoc quod inclinat ad actionem et obiectum. Ergo delectabilitas non concludit rationem principii activi, sed tantum convenientiam principii passivi ad actionem* et obiectum, et hoc quantum ad actionem quae est de genere qualitatis, non quae est de genere actionis, - de qua differentia actionum dictum est supra distinctione 3. Operatio quidem est actio quae est qualitas, et illa convenit* potentiae habituatae, quae per habitum inclinatur ad talem actum et ad obiectum terminans talem operationem; non habituatae autem non sic convenit*, nec talis forma nec tale obiectum.”

*The Vatican editors note some textual variants that seem relevant. As I argue in section 5.2 below, Scotus explains the inclination of a power in terms of suitability or convenientia, so where the editors have chosen the reading competit, I suggest that the alternative reading of convenit would better reflect the underlying account of inclination and pleasure in terms of suitability, as developed in \textit{Ord. III d. 15}. As well, where the editors have convenientiam principii passivi ad potentiam et obiectum, it is clear that the alternative reading of convenientiam principii passivi ad actionem et obiectum better represents what seems to be the argument: it is the power itself that has the passive principle, in virtue of which it is inclined to a suitable object or operation and thus receives the passion of pleasure when such an object or operation is present.

The distinction between action or operation as an accidental quality and action as a relation between an agent and a patient (i.e. a being in the category of Action) is explained in \textit{Ord. I d. 3 nn. 600-604 (Vat. 3:354-357)}.
the operation rather than to the active eliciting; and as Scotus makes clear, the pleasure that habit is
supposed to contribute will have to do with the power receiving the operation as a quality. However,
unlike with the other three conditions, the explanation of how pleasure is produced is not directly
implicated in the account of what it is to passively receive an accident when the subject is inclined to
receiving it. For pleasure is not merely an aspect of the way in which an operation is received, but is
for Scotus an additional thing, namely a passion of the soul. Moreover, pleasure does not pertain
generally to passive reception, but specifically to appetitive powers insofar as they are more or less
inclined to external things insofar as they are suitable or unsuitable to the power. The habit thus
disposes the power so that there is a greater “suitability” or “suitedness” (convenientia) between the
power and the operation than there would be otherwise, such that the power is inclined to receive
the operation, and its reception is accompanied by the passion of pleasure.

5.2 Habits and inclination

As noted in chapter 1, Scotus provides a detailed explanation elsewhere of how pleasure and other
passions are produced in the soul. This explanation is in turn grounded in an abstract account of
how one thing is inclined to another. Since a primary function of habits is to incline their subject in
one way or another, it seems plausible that this account of how passions are caused can be applied
to show not only how the condition of pleasure in action can be explained by the passive inclination
of a power, but more generally how a power can be inclined by a habit to receiving certain
operations.

5.2.1 Scotus on inclination and the passions of the soul

According to Scotus’s general account of the passions of the soul in Ordinatio III distinction 15, an
appetitive power will receive the passion of pleasure simply in virtue of being brought together with
an object that is suitable to it.19 This is so regardless of whether the appetite is material and bound to
a corporeal organ, like the sensitive appetites, or immaterial like the will. The will is therefore able to
receive passions in exactly the same way as the sensitive appetites. When an appetite and an
appetible object are brought together, they enter into a relation whereby the appetite is inclined
towards the object because it is suitable to the power; that is, it is something that would be
perfective of the power, as, for example, food would be perfective of a hungry animal. Scotus
explains the passion of pleasure directly in terms of this inclination, which he analyses as a causal

19 See Ord. III d. 15 esp. nn. 25-60 (Vat. 9:485-505), which I discuss in detail in Drummond, “John Duns Scotus on the
Passions of the Will.” See also section 1.2.1 above.
process. Thus, the external object that is perfective of the appetite is the active term that inclines the appetite, while the appetite is the passive term that is inclined to the object. Moreover, as Scotus explains in detail in his questions on book IX of the *Metaphysics*, the result of a causal process is the production of an accidental form in the passive term; thus, when an appetite is occurrently inclined to an external object, it receives an accidental quality. This quality is precisely what the passion of pleasure is (and conversely, when an unsuitable object is present to the appetite, the appetite is disinclined and receives the passion of pain).

On the face of it, therefore, it seems plausible that Scotus’s general account of how passions are caused in the soul underlies his explanation of how the condition of pleasure accompanying action can be attributed to habit according to the fourth way. Most significantly, he explains the pleasure that can accompany an act in terms of the relation of suitability between the power and the object, and remarks that this suitability can be due to the presence of a habit: “The action can be pleasurable on account of the suitability of the agent to the object; this suitability can be attributed to a habit on the basis of the fact that it inclines to action and to the object.” It is true that here he expresses the relation of suitability somewhat differently, saying that the agent (i.e. the appetitive power) is suited to the object rather than that the object is suited to the agent. However, this does not weaken the case for applying his general account of passions of the soul to his fourth way of explaining the role of habits. As he explains, the relation of suitability or suitedness is reciprocal: an object is suitable for a power because it has such a nature that it is perfective of that power, and a power is suited to an object because it has such a nature that it can be perfected by such an object. The basic point stands that an action will be pleasurable – that is, that the reception of the operation will be accompanied by the reception of the passion of pleasure – if the object of the operation is one that is perfective of the power.

But how exactly does a habit condition its subject so that it is passively inclined to certain objects or actions? To answer this, it is necessary to look more closely at how Scotus explains inclination in his

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20 Notice that when Scotus uses the idea of inclination to explain how passions are produced, he uses the term in a somewhat novel way to describe what happens when an appetite and a suitable object are brought together. “Inclination” is normally used to describe the persistent state of the appetite or agent that would ground this occurrence, but here he uses it to explain the process by which a passion is produced in a power when it is brought together with a suitable object.

21 *Ord.* III d. 15 n. 39 (Vat. 9:493-494): “Hanc approximationem sequitur quod inlinatum recipiat – ab illo perfectivo ad quod inlinatur – aliquam perfectionem; et haec perfectio est delectatio, quae, quia non movet nisi in praesentia causae agentis, dicitur ‘passio’.”

22 *Ord.* I d. 17 n. 49 (Vat. 5:158). See section 5.1.3 above.
account of the passions of the soul. He there goes to some trouble to make clear that, although a
power and the object that can cause a passion in it are related to each other by being suited or not
suited, the production of passions is due entirely to the natures of the power and the object
considered in themselves as absolute beings. He begins as follows:

Generally, an active and a passive power are the same things as absolute natures.
Take a hot thing, for example: one thing [is the same as] the power for heating and
another thing [is the same as] the power for being heated. Upon these absolute
things are founded certain relations, inasmuch as a particular passive thing is inclined
to a particular active thing such that [the former] receives from it [sc. the latter] the
form for which it is in passive potency. When it is thus proportionate and inclined
and is brought together [sc. with the active cause], then there is a certain relation of
being together, which is a mutual one, upon which it follows that the passive [thing]
receives a form from the active [thing].

Scotus thus makes clear that in any given instance of causation there will be several relations
between the active cause and the passive cause. Most immediately, when action takes place, there
will be a relation of action founded in the active cause and a relation of passion founded in the
passive cause (note that these are beings in the categories of Action and Passion, as opposed to the
actions that are elicited operations and the passions under discussion, which are both absolute
qualities). As well, they will be in the relation of being brought together (approximatio), which is a
necessary condition (or a sine qua non cause) for causation to occur at all. There will also be a kind of
relation between them even before they are brought together: simply in virtue of the fact that they
have the corresponding active and passive principles, a heatable thing, qua heatable, and a thing that
can heat, qua thing that can heat, are suitable to each other; thus the heatable thing (as the one that
has the passive principle) is inclined to the thing that can heat, and in general a passive cause is
inclined to the corresponding active cause, and so they are in a relation of inclination (at least
aptitudinally).

However, Scotus goes on to explain that these relations that precede causation do not explain why
causation takes place, but are merely necessary conditions for causation to occur:

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23 Ord. III d. 15 n. 38 (Vat. 9:492): “Aliter potest dici quod sicut generaliter potentia activa et passiva sunt idem naturae absolutae (puta calidum aliquod potentiae calefactiue et aliquod potentiae calefactibilii), et super ista absoluta fundantur quaedam relationes, secundum quod ‘hoc passivum’ inclinatur ad ‘hoc activum’ ut ab ipso recipiat formam ad quam est in potentia passiva; et quando ipsa sic proportionata vel inclinata approximatur, ibi est aliqua retio approximationis, scilicet mutuae, ad quam sequitur ‘passivum recipere formam ab activo.’”

24 Scotus notes in several places this distinction between items in the categories of Action and Passion on the one hand, and actions (i.e. operations) and passions as qualities, on the other; see Ord. III d. 15 n. 39 (Vat. 9:394), Ord. I d. 17 n. 49 (Vat. 5:158), Ord. I d. 3 nn. 600-604 (Vat. 3:354-357), and In Prad. q. 30-36 nn. 54-60 (OPh 1:487-489).
It is not the case that the relation of this action in the active cause or of the passion in the passive cause, or the inclination that precedes their being brought together, or the relation of the active and passive causes being brought together, are the causes of this form; rather, these relations will be *sine qua non* causes. 

The (aptitudinal) inclination that precedes the two terms being brought together is thus not the cause of the passion that is produced, but merely a necessary condition. As noted above, inclination is explained in terms of the relation of suitedness of one term to another, and the suitedness of one thing to another is in turn reduced to the natures of the two terms considered as absolute things in themselves. Thus, the inclination that Scotus speaks about here as a relation that precedes the terms being brought together is not an explanation of why they will actually interact, but seems more like a way of describing the fact that the two absolute terms have natures that are such that they would interact causally if they were brought together. In the end, however, it is the absolute natures themselves that explain the causation that follows when they are brought together.

Thus, according to this account of inclination, the way a habit inclines a power is by conditioning it, not insofar as it elicits its operations, but insofar as it is an absolute thing that can interact causally with some other absolute thing. Since inclination is ultimately explicable in terms of the absolute natures of that which is inclined and of that to which it is inclined, and since a habit does not change the nature of the external thing to which a power is inclined, it can only be that it somehow modifies the nature of the power. A habit will thus be a “second nature” in the sense that it somehow modifies the essential nature of its subject by modifying the absolute state of its subject. The result of the power having this second nature from habit is that its relation of suitability, of which the power is one term, will be different. Certain objects will thus be more suitable to the power than

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25 *Ord.* III d. 15 n. 38 (Vat. 9:492): “Non tamen quod huius actionis relatio in activo vel passionis in passivo vel inclinatio praecedens approximationem, sive relatio approximationis activi et passivi, sint causae talis formae, sed relationes istae erunt causae ‘sine quibus non.’”

26 One might wonder then about the exact status of the relations of suitability and inclination (considered as one that precedes *approximatio*). How can there be a relation between two terms prior to their being brought together? One response Scotus might endorse is that the terms are *apt* to be in a relation of actual inclination, which is just to say that they have natures such that they could enter into that relation if they were brought together. Cf. the discussion in chapter 6 below of a similar quandary of the status of the relation between a habit of the will and a habit of prudence which is supposed to explain why a habit of the will is a moral virtue.

27 Scotus is very insistent on the point that the production of a passion of the soul is explained entirely by the natures of the two terms involved, despite the fact that necessarily there will also be a relation of inclination between the terms prior to their causal interaction. He again underlines the point just a few lines further with two further examples at *Ord.* III d. 15 n. 38 (Vat. 9:493): “Nec est alia ratio quare visus inclinatur tali inclinatione in album nisi quia visus est tale passivum et album est tale activum, sicut non est alia ratio quare materia inclinatur ad formam ut ad perfectionem intrinsecam nisi quia materia est tali entitas absoluta et forma talis.” For more detailed discussion of this account of inclination and how Scotus uses it to ground his account of the passions of the soul, see Drummond, “John Duns Scotus on the Passions of the Will,” 60–65.
they were when the power did not have the habit, and the power will be inclined to them; accordingly, when they are present to the power it will receive the passion of pleasure. The condition of pleasure that habit contributes to action can thus be explained following Scotus’s general account of the passions of the soul. Moreover, there will be no need to attribute any active causality to habit; rather, the reception of the operation is accompanied by the passion of pleasure because the operation and the object to which it is directed are suitable to the power according to the power’s habitual state. Furthermore, as noted above, the other three conditions of ease, readiness, and promptness are explained directly in terms of the passive state of the power insofar as it receives its operations.

5.2.2 The general account of inclination as applied to the fourth way

One question that might be raised about the validity of the fourth way is whether the general account of inclination that Scotus develops to explain the passions of the soul can be applied to the inclination that habits are supposed to contribute to their subject. His account of how a power is inclined depends crucially on its having a certain absolute nature in virtue of which it will be inclined to certain objects. It seems therefore that if a habit gives its subject an inclination, it must somehow count as part of the absolute nature of the power. Thus, it might be objected that what is inclined is not the power itself, but the power as disposed by the presence of a habit.

In fact, Scotus’s account of the passions already seems to allow for the state of the power to be conditioned in various ways that are not essential to it, and thus for its inclinations also to be modified accidentally. This emerges when he extends his general account of passions to explain how the will too can receive passions in fundamentally the same way as the sensitive appetites. Although his account of the passions of the soul applies to appetitive powers generally, the case of the will has the added complication that it is a free power. It seems therefore that if some object necessarily caused a passion in the will, then the will would be determined in a way that is not under its own power; but since the will is essentially free and self-determining, this would go against the will’s very

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28 See Scotus’s summary of how the fourth way explains the conditions that habits contribute. Ord. I d. 17 n. 88 (Vat. 5:181): “Dicetur quod delectatio est ex convenientia operationis ad potentiam et objectum circa quod est operatio; quae convenientia est objecti ad potentiam in quantum recipit actionem, non in quantum elicit earn, quia factio sola ut factio numquam est delectatio, et ideo propter delectationem numquam oporteret ponere rationem principii activi.”

29 See section 5.1.3 above.

30 For more detailed discussion of how Scotus reconciles the passions of the will with the will’s essential freedom, see Drummond, “John Duns Scotus on the Passions of the Will,” 65–72.
nature.\textsuperscript{31} Thus, argues Scotus, whatever passions it receives must be somehow voluntary, however, the passions of the will are not free in the way in which the will’s own operations are free, for the will has power over whether to elicit an act or not, whereas it is part of the very idea of a passion that it is not directly under our control whether we have them or not. Thus, if the passions of the will are in any way voluntary, they can be so only in an indirect way.

Scotus’s solution is to posit that the will can have certain inclinations, which are under its control insofar they follow from its own freely elicited acts. Thus, unlike a sensitive appetite, which is naturally and determinately inclined to objects insofar as they are beneficial to it and not harmful, the will is inclined freely:

This appetite [sc. a sensitive appetite] is naturally disposed to an object […] but the object is not related in this way to the will, which is free, although there is an object that is from its nature suitable to the will, namely the ultimate end, but it is ultimately suitable to it by an act of the will that accepts and endorses it. And this suitability is posited by a willing of the object (or unsuitability is posited by a willing against the object). Thus along with the relations of being suitable or unsuitable, the grounds of being willed or willed against are followed by the bringing near \textit{[approximatio]} of this object, that is, the apprehension that what is willed or nilled has being; from this there seems finally to follow in the will a passion from the object that is present in this way (that passion being joy or sadness).\textsuperscript{32}

The necessary conditions for a passion to be produced in the will are the same as those for the passions in the sensitive appetites, namely, that the corresponding cognitive power apprehend an object, thus making it present to the appetite; thus, since the will is the rational or intellectual appetite, its object must be presented to it by the intellect. Where the will differs in how it receives passions is in the basis of the suitability of the object. A sensitive appetite has a naturally determinate nature in virtue of which certain objects will necessarily be suitable or unsuitable to it. The will, on the other hand, because it is freely self-determining, is in itself indeterminate, and therefore has no determinate inclinations. There is thus no object that is naturally suitable to the will; rather, an object becomes suitable to the will insofar as the will wills it. The will is thus \textit{actually} inclined to an object

\textsuperscript{31} See \textit{Ord.} III d. 15 n. 49 (Vat. 9:499-500): “Tunc obiectum necessario agit in voluntatem imprimendo istam passionem (quod videtur esse contra libertatem voluntatis).”

\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Ord.} III d. 15 n. 47 (Vat. 9:498): “Iste appetitus naturaliter se habet ad obiectum (unde secundum Damascenum, ubi prius, ‘ducitur et non ducit’), non sic obiectum comparatum ad voluntatem, quae libera est, licet aliquod ex natura sit ultimate conveniens sibi per actum voluntatis acceptantis et complacentis sibi in illo. Et talis conveniencia est posita per velle objecti, vel disconvenienitia per nolle objecti, et ita relationibus conveniencius et discoveniencius – concomitantibus rationes volitii et nolitii – sequitur approximatio huius objecti, videlicet apprehensio quod voluit vel noluit habet esse; et ex hoc ultimo videtur sequi in voluntate passio ab objecto ipso sic praesente, gaudium scilicet et tristitia.”
only when it is actually willing it.\textsuperscript{33} It will then receive the passion of pleasure (or joy, as the corresponding passion of the will is called) in exactly the same way that a sensitive appetite receives pleasure in the presence of an object that is naturally suitable to it.

This way of explaining how the free will can receive passions thus modifies the basic model of inclination that was developed with the case of the sensitive appetites. In the case of the sensitive appetites, the passive cause in an instance of inclination can be the power in its essential nature, with no reference to its occurrent state, whereas in the case of the will, the passive cause in an instance of inclination is not the bare will alone, but the will insofar as it wills something or nills something (i.e. wills against it), and it is by being willed or nilled that an object is suitable or unsuitable to the will. Scotus makes this clear when he explains why a passion is not under the immediate power of the will, despite the fact that the will is free:

If it is asked: “Why then can the will not receive a passion from the object as it receives the volition from what is willed?” I reply: The will qua will is free, but qua nilling it is not formally free, since it has a form that is determined to one [opposite], which is the nolition itself. But although something free qua free is not acted upon immediately by an object, nevertheless qua determined to one of the opposites that is a form natural to it, it can be determinately disposed by that form to one opposite and not to both, and can thus be acted upon.\textsuperscript{34}

The passions of the will can thus be reconciled with the will’s freedom by distinguishing between its essential nature as a free power and its occurrent state of willing or nilling. It is under the will’s free power to elicit an act or not, but once it has elicited its act and there is an operation inhering in it, the way it will be affected by an external object is not under its direct power, for it is now determinately inclined insofar as it has that act. In this way, the absolute nature of a power that is inclined need not be just the power’s essential nature, but can be the power as it is currently determined to a certain act. In the case of the will, it is determinately inclined not by nature to something, but insofar as it wills it, that is, insofar as an operation inheres in it.

\textsuperscript{33} One possible exception to this is the will’s ultimate end of beatitude, which seems to be naturally suitable to the will as its complete perfection. It would seem therefore that the will has an essential inclination towards its self-perfection, which Scotus sometimes refers to as the affectio commodi. Scotus addresses this in the context of the passions at \textit{Off.} III d. 15 nn. 52-54 (Vat. 9:501-502); I argue elsewhere that, in light of Scotus’s claim that all passions of the will are ultimately voluntary, this reveals a deep tension in Scotus’s account of the will as a free appetite; see Drummond, “John Duns Scotus on the Passions of the Will,” 71–72. See also section 2.2.2 above, on Scotus’s claim that beatitude as the primary object of the will is only naturally apt to be suitable to the will but is actually suitable only insofar as the will freely wills it.

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Off.} III d. 15 n. 50 (Vat. 9:500-501): “Et si quaeratur ‘quare ergo non potest voluntas recipere passionem ab objecto sicut ipsam volitionem a volito?’, – respondet: voluntas ut voluntas libera est, – sed ut nolens non est formaliter libera, quia habet formam determinatum ad unum, quae est ipsa nolitio. Licet autem liberum non immediate patiatur ab objecto, tamen ut determinatum ad unum oppositum quod est sibi forma naturalis, potest determinate se habere per illam formam ad unum oppositum et non ad utrumque, et ita pati.”
This solution is relevant for the account according to the fourth way of how a habit conditions the inclination of a power to receiving its operations. If the passive term of inclination can be a power together with a certain operation, there seems to be no reason why it cannot also be a power together with a certain habit. Indeed, as Scotus explains in his text on the passions, one of the ways in which it is possible for the will to receive passions is very much like habituation. For it need not be only by having an occurrent act that a will is inclined, but it can also have “conditional willing” that inclines the will despite the act that is actually elicited. Scotus explains this using the traditional example from Aristotle of a merchant caught at sea in a storm:

A merchant who is in danger at sea would, if he could, will not to jettison his goods, but this “nilling” is conditional: considered in itself, he would nill it, but in an unqualified way he does will without qualification to jettison the goods, since he jettisons them without being extrinsically coerced. For although he jettisons the goods because of something nilled (namely, the present peril), he is not forced to jettison them unwillingly \([invitus]\). This volition would be expressed absolutely as “I will,” and the conditional nilling by “I would nill if I could do otherwise.” Such conditional nilling seems to suffice for him to be sad that what he nills comes about (inasmuch as he jettisons the goods sadly), and the opposite act of willing does not result in as much joy as the sadness that results from the conditional nilling.\(^{35}\)

The point here is that despite Scotus’s general account of how inclinations of the will track the act that the will is currently eliciting, there are cases that seem to go against this model. It seems that the merchant at sea who jettisons his cargo to save his own life should feel the passion of joy at sending the cargo overboard, since that is actually what he wills to do, and yet he feels sadness instead. As Scotus explains, this is because he would will something else, if he could avoid having to jettison the cargo to save his life.

But what is the status of this conditional willing? One might say that there was some previous or ongoing volition that inclined the merchant’s will (e.g., a decision to bring the goods to port to sell them), so that he feels sadness when things turn out against this volition. Yet this answer still is vulnerable to the objection that he later elicits an act of willing to jettison them, which should entirely displace the prior volition. It seems therefore that this conditional willing should not be understood as some actual volition, but as a persistent inclination of his will that remains even when he later elicits an opposite act; in other words, it is a habitual state of the will. In fact, when Scotus

\(^{35}\) *Ord.* III d. 15 n. 58 (Vat. 9:504): “Mercator, periclitans in mari, nollet – si posset – eicere merces; sed hoc nolle est condicionatum, siclicit, quantum in ipso est, nollet, tamen simpliciter vult eicere, quia non coactus ab extrinseco eicit: licet enim propter aliquid non volitum, puta periculum, eicit, tamen non cogitur invitus eicere. Haec volitio absolute exprimeretur per ‘volo’, nolitio condicionata per ‘nollem si possem aluid’. Talis nolitio condicionata videtur sufficere ad tristandum de sic nolito eveniente (sicuit ille tristando eicit merces), nec ibi velle oppositum facit tantum gaudium sicuit nolle condicionatum tristitiam.” The example is taken from *NE* III.1, 1110a4-19.
summarizes this case, he describes conditional nilling precisely as a habitual inclination that goes against the volition that is actually elicited.\(^{36}\) That is to say, the passion of sadness is due not to the inclination that follows from an elicited act, but from the inclination of a habit.

It can therefore be concluded that the inclination of habits according to the fourth way in *Ordinatio* I distinction 17 can be explained in much the same way as inclination and the passions in general are explained in *Ordinatio* III distinction 15. Just as the absolute state of the will is conditioned by the operation that currently inheres in the will, so its absolute state can also be conditioned by a habit that inheres in it. Moreover, the case of passions that follow from conditional willing or nilling, where the problem is that the passion cannot be explained in terms of an elicited operation, can be described as resulting from a habitual state of the will, and this is precisely what the fourth way proposes.

However, there is one possible problem: a habit is supposed to incline a power not just so that certain objects are more suitable to it, but so that certain *operations* are suitable. This apparent difference between the general account of the passions of the will and the fourth way might be reconciled by taking note of how an operation is specified. Every operation of appetitive and cognitive powers is directed to some object; the way in which a habit inclines a power to a certain kind of action would thus be in virtue of the way it inclines it to the object of its actions. The operation would thus be done with pleasure, ease, readiness, and promptness because the object of the operation is one that is suitable. From the way Scotus himself explains the fourth way, it seems that he considers this as a possibility; as he puts it, the pleasure that accompanies the act of a habituated power is due to “the condition of the recipient to which are suitable both the operation that is received and the object that the operation is about.”\(^{37}\) Although here, as in the general account of passions, Scotus attributes the circumstance of pleasure to the suitable object, he also notes that the operation too is suitable to the power, so it seems that it too should have some role in explaining the pleasure that results. It might then be argued that the suitability of an operation to a power is simply derived from the suitability of the object of the operation, since an operation is

\(^{36}\) *Ord. III* d. 15 n. 60 (Vat. 9:505): “Sic igitur, recolligendo istud membrum, videtur de quadruplici ‘disconveniente voluntati’ esse tristari proprie: […] allo modo, de habitualiter nolito et actu condicionaliter, licet tamen absolute volito contra inclinationem habitualem.” The four ways in which sadness can be produced in the will are: 1) by something that is nilled nevertheless coming about; 2) by conditional nilling; 3) by a passion in the sensitive appetite that gets into the will; and 4) by the presence of something that is naturally contrary to the will’s *affectio commodi*. See my discussion in Drummond, “John Duns Scotus on the Passions of the Will,” 67–72.

\(^{37}\) *Ord. I* d. 17 n. 49 (Vat. 5:158): “Delectatio quidem est propter condicionem recipientis, cui competit operatio recepta et objectum circa quod est operatio.”
suitable to a power insofar as it is through the operation that the power is united with a suitable object. Thus, one kind of act is be more perfective of its subject than another act in virtue of its object, as for example, the act of loving God known clearly is a more complete perfection than loving God known obscurely, because it is by that act that the will is united with its most suitable object.\(^{38}\)

I suggest that the operation is also in itself something that is suitable to the power. At one level, this must be so according to the very idea that an operation or second act is the proper actualization and perfection of a power insofar as it is a power. As well, however, the same account of inclination and suitability that is given concerning the external object can also be applied to the operation itself. Although an operation inheres in the power – and is in that sense not something external – it still is an accidental quality, and thus an absolute being that is really distinct from the power. The same account of inclination that is applied to an external object can therefore also be applied to the operation itself: just like an external object, the operation can be a term in the relations of inclination and suitability. Thus, if the operation is one that is suitable to the power, its reception in the power will be accompanied by the conditions of pleasure, ease, readiness, and promptness, which will be explained in exactly the same way as they are with a suitable object. Moreover, if the role of habit is to dispose the power insofar as it is the passive recipient of certain acts, the condition of pleasure that a habit is supposed to contribute to action can be explained using the model of inclination that Scotus uses to explain passions in general; and if the power is habituated so that certain operations are suitable to it, it will also receive them easily, readily, and promptly.

*Why do habits incline to operations specifically?*

But even though it is at least possible for a power to be inclined to operations as such and not just to external objects, and even though this inclination can be attributed to a habit, it might still be asked why a habit should be understood to incline its subject to operations rather than to external objects. One possible answer involves appeal to the causal origin of habits. As Scotus makes clear, his discussion of habit is not about all accidents that might incline their subject one way or another, but only about those that incline their subject to a certain kind of action because they were left behind by previous similar actions.\(^{39}\)

\(^{38}\) Cf. *Lect.* II d. 25 n. 67 (Vat. 19:252).

\(^{39}\) See *Ord.* I d. 17 n. 90 (Vat. 5:183) and section 3.2.2 above.
Scotus explains the causal origin of habits in greater detail in *Collationes Parisienses* 3, where, as in *Ordinatio* I distinction 17, he poses the question whether a habit is an active principle with respect to an act, and adopts a view that is largely consistent with the fourth way.\(^{40}\) It is of course a standard part of the traditional model of virtues and habituation that habits are inculcated and strengthened by action: the more you act in a certain way, the more habituated you become and the more inclined you are to acting the same way in the future. However, since a habit is a quality and therefore an absolute being, it must have an efficient cause, and this can be only the power itself or an operation of the power. Scotus argues that it cannot be the power that immediately causes a habit, and so it must be an operation:

An act of the will that generates a habit in the will causes the habit sufficiently as the total cause, and the will does nothing in the production of the habit, since in that case the acts that naturally generate a habit would not generate it if the will willed against an act of this kind generating a habit. But this is false, for however much the will that elicits an act of justice willed against justice being generated in itself from these acts, justice would still be generated in it necessarily, since acts of this kind naturally impress their similitude in the will. Therefore, the will has no immediate causality over habit, but only the acts from which the habit is generated [sc. has immediate causality], and therefore an act is the total cause of a habit.\(^{41}\)

Scotus thus argues from the special case of the free will, which has mastery over what acts it will have. Yet it is not in the will’s power whether it will acquire a habit or not when it acts; thus, it cannot be that the will is the active cause of its own habits, for then it would not have self-mastery. Therefore, the total active cause of a habit must be an operation of the power.

This causal account of how habits are produced might thus provide a somewhat more concrete explanation for why a habit inclines a power to receiving certain operations. Since a habit is a similitude of the operation that is “impressed” in the power, it might be thought of as a kind of imperfect form of the operation. When the power elicits such an operation in the future it will be more readily received, since in a way it already exists imperfectly in the power as a habit. Scotus suggests something like this in the *Collationes Parisienses*, where he remarks, “A habit inclines a power insofar as a prior form is said to incline its subject to a posterior form to which the prior form is

\(^{40}\) *Coll. Par.* 3 (Wadding 3:356b): “Utrum habitus perficiens aliquam potentiam sit principium activum actus, ita quod per habitum, tanquam per principium elicitivum, vel activum eliciatur.” On the *Collationes* in general, see chapter 3 note 62.

\(^{41}\) *Coll. Par.* 3 §5 (Wadding 3:358a-b): “Actus enim voluntatis generans habitum in voluntate sufficienter causat habitum ut causa totalis, et nihil voluntas operatur in productione habitus, quia tune actus nati generare habitum ipsum non generarent si voluntas nollet huiusmodi actus generare habitum, quod falsum est; quantumcumque enim voluntas eliciens actus iustitiae nollet, quod ex ists generaret iustitia in ipsa, adhuc necessario iustitia generaretur in ea, cum huiusmodi actus naturaliter suam similitudinem imprimit in voluntate; ergo voluntas nullam activitatem immediate habet super habitum, sed tantum actus ex quibus generatur habitus; ergo actus est totalis causa habitus.”
naturally suited and through which the prior form is somehow perfected and preserved.”\textsuperscript{42} It seems then that one could liken the habit to a kind of partial impression that prepares the way for an elicited operation that is like those that produced the habit in the first place, as, for example, a cart might more easily move along the grooves in the path made by carts that already went by, or a complete impression of a seal might be made more easily in hard wax on the second try because of a partial impression left by a first try.

5.2.3 How does a non-active habit incline its subject?

However, this way of explaining the inclination of habit opens up a new problem. In the above examples, it could be said that the path over which the cart moves is really the road together with the grooves left by previous carts, and that it is not just the lump of wax that receives the impression of the seal, but the lump together with a previous partial impression. Similarly, the passive cause of the operation of a habituated power will be not the power itself, but the power together with the habit. On the face of it, this seems to make sense in light of the model of active and passive causes with which Scotus explains how a power can be self-moving.\textsuperscript{43} For according to the third way, a habit is a secondary active cause of action that is ordered to the power as the primary cause, so that the power and the habit together form the total active cause. But if the third way is rejected in favour of the fourth way, it seems that if a habit contributes at all to the operations of its power, it can only be as a passive principle. By analogy with the active account of habits, a self-moving power and the habit should, according to the fourth way, be together the total passive receptive cause of the power’s operations.

However, this would mean that the operations of a power that has acquired a habit will be received not in the power alone, but in a composite of the power and the habit. But in the \textit{Collationes Parisienses}, Scotus argues that this would lead to an absurdity:

\begin{quote}
It is said that a habit inclines and facilitates a power, but not to being acted upon, nor to acting. Not to being acted upon and receiving, because then the act would be received in the whole that is composed of the power and the habit. But this is false, since the acts that precede the habit, inasmuch as they are of the same species as the acts that come after the habit [has been acquired], will have the same receptive
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Coll. Par.} 3 §11 (Wadding 3:360b): “Habitus inclinat potentiam secundum quod prior forma dicitur inclinare subiectum suum ad formam posteriorem, cum qua conventit naturaliter forma prior, et per quam quodammodo perfectur et salvatur forma prior.” Cf. \textit{Ord.} I d. 17 n. 89 (Var. 5:182): “Posset dici quod [habitus] inclinat sicut forma prior ad susceptionem formae posterioris.”

\textsuperscript{43} See chapter 2 above.
[cause]. But the acts that precede the habit are received in the bare power; therefore the acts that follow the habit similarly [are received in the bare power].

In effect, argues Scotus, if the habit is part of the total passive cause of action, the subject of the operations of a power that has already acquired the relevant habit will be not the power itself but the composite of the power and the habit; consequently, the subject of the acts of a habituated power will not be the same the subject of the unhabituated power. This would be self-contradictory, because the very idea of a habit is that it inclines a power to receive acts of the same kind as those that caused the habit in the first place, but in a more perfect way. However, if the habit forms part of the receptive cause, the acts perfected by habit will not have the same subject as those that were caused the habit in the first place.

In defence of the fourth way, therefore, it will have to be shown how a habit can give an inclination without forming either part of the active cause of the operation (as the third way maintains) or part of the passive receptive cause of the operation. Scotus does this by arguing that a habit is a kind of “prior form” that inclines its subject to receiving a “posterior form,” but without itself being part of the basis for the reception of the posterior form:

It could be said that [a habit] inclined as a prior form inclines the reception of a posterior form, just as heaviness inclines [a heavy object] to being down (even according to those who say that heaviness is not an active principle with respect to downward motion); nor does something that in this way passively inclines have to be a basis for receiving the form to which it inclines [its subject], just as heaviness too is not a principle that is receptive of place.

His argument here is somewhat obscured by the fact that he invokes heaviness as a comparison to the inclination that is due to a habit. For when a heavy object moves downwards, this can be taken to be because it moves itself downwards in virtue of its heaviness, which is an active tending

44 Coll. Par. 3 §11 (Wadding 3:360b): “Dicitur quod habitus inclinat potentiam et facilitat, sed non ad patiendum nec ad agendum: non ad patiendum et ad recipiendum, quia tune actus recipiatur in toto composito ex potentia et habitu, quod est falsum, quia actus praeceentes habitum, ex quo sunt eiusdem speciei cum actibus sequentibus habitum, habebunt idem receptivum; actus vero praeceentes habitum recipiuntur in nuda potentia; igitur similiter et actus sequentes habitum.”

45 Scotus makes the same argument more briefly in the Ordinatio as one of the initial arguments for why habits must be active. Ord. I d. 17 n. 11 (Vat. 5:143-144): “Habitus inclinat potentiam ad actum. Duplex autem est inclinatio, videlicet potentiae passivae ad formam et potentiae activae ad agere: habitus non inclinat primo modo, nam actus recipitur in potentia immediate, aliquam actus perfectus et imperfectus non haberent idem susceptivum; ergo inclinat secundo modo, ut principium activum ad agere, - quod est proposittum.”

46 Ord. I d. 17 n. 89 (Vat. 5:182): “Ad aliu, de inclinatione, posset dici quod inclinat sicut forma prior ad susceptionem formae posterioris, sicut gravitas inclinat ad deorsum esse (etiam secundum eos qui dicunt gravitatem respectu descensus deorsum non esse principium activum); neque operet sic passive inclinans esse rationem recipiendi formam ad quam inclinat, sicut nec gravitas est principium receptivum ‘ubi’.”
downwards, or because it is receptive of a downward location and so is passively inclined to being down in virtue of its heaviness. Here, however, at least for the sake of argument, Scotus treats the heaviness of an object as a form that a heavy body has in virtue of which that body has an inclination to being down, that is, it is inclined to passively receiving a downward location. However, it is the body itself that comes to be in a downward location, not the heaviness of the body; heaviness is thus a prior form of a body that inclines a body to receiving a posterior form (being down), but is not part of the receptive cause of that form. Similarly, it is the power that receives the operation, not the power and the habit together, though a habit gives its subject power an inclination to receiving certain operations, as a prior form that inclines its subject to a posterior form. The prior form moreover is perfected in the posterior form inasmuch as the latter is what the former is ordered to: the heaviness of a heavy body is perfected or actualized in the body’s downward location, and a habit is perfected in the operation to which the habit inclines.

Scotus clarifies his position with another analogy. One of the initial arguments in *Ordinatio I* distinction 17 in favour of habits being active is that a self-moving power like the will is already by nature fully disposed to receiving the operation to which it is in passive potency, and therefore does not need the inclination of habit to be disposed so that it receives that form with ease. Scotus responds to this argument by way of an analogy:

> When it is said that it is not a facility for being acted upon, since that which is acted upon is maximally disposed, I reply: It is maximally disposed through the absence of a contrary disposition, but not through the positing of a suitable disposition. Take, for example, dry wood and neutral wood [i.e. neither dry nor wet]. Wood that is in a neutral state is maximally disposed to [receiving] heat in a privative way by the lack of any opposite disposition, but it is not disposed in a positive way by a suitable

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47 Scotus discusses the self-motion of heavy bodies in detail in *Ord. II* d. 2 nn. 444-471 (Vat. 7:351-368). For discussion see King, “‘Duns Scotus on the Reality of Self-Change,’” 286–289.

48 Compare with the parallel passage at *Coll. Par.* 3 §11 (Wadding 3:360b): “Exemplum, si ponatur quod gravitas non sit principium activum, quo grave movet se deorsum, tune gravitas non inclinat grave ad movendum se effective deorsum, nec etiam gravitas inclinat passive grave ad recipiendum ubi deorsum, quia sola quantitas est principium recipiendi ubi, sicut et replendi locum; ideo gravitas dicitur inclinare grave ad ubi deorsum, sicut forma prior ad formam posteriori per quam salvatur, nam grave naturaliter quietat et salvatur in ubi deorsum.” Note that Scotus seems to use “passive inclination” in different ways in the two texts: in *Coll. Par.* 3, he seems to use it to mean being part of the receptive cause of the form, whereas at *Ord.* I d. 17 n. 89 (quoted above), he means only that it inclines the receptive cause without being part of it. Apart from this terminological difference, however, the point is the same. Scotus also suggests that the habit is perfected by the operation because it is intensified by it. *Coll. Par.* 3 §11 (Wadding 3:360b): “Sic in proposito, habitus perfectur et augetur per actum, et ideo dicitur habitus inclinare potentiam ad actum sicut ad formam per quam salvatur et perfectur.”

49 *Ord.* I d. 17 n. 9 (Vat. 5:143): “Quod est ex se summe dispositum ad patiendum, non indiget facilitari ut patiatur; sed potestia habituali - cuiusmodi est intellectus et voluntas - est ex se summe disposita ad recipientem actum (quia non habent contrarium, et propter hoc non indigent motu ad hoc ut agant); ergo habitus per quem facilitatur disposit ipsum ad agendum et non ad patiendum.
disposition such as dryness. And if this suitability were accompanied by sensation, the dry wood would become hot with pleasure, but not the wood that is neither wet nor dry, because the form [of heat] that is received is not suitable to it in the same way.\(^{50}\)

Here he concedes that wood as such is by nature disposed to receiving heat, but it can be impeded from receiving heat by being wet. Thus, it can be said that wood that is not wet is maximally disposed to being heated by the lack of an opposite disposition due to wetness; however, this can be turned around so that wood is positively disposed to being heated by being dry. In either case, it is only the wood itself that is heated; its wetness is only an impediment to receiving heat, and conversely its dryness is only an enabling condition, or the removal of an impediment to receiving heat. Similarly, a power like the will is naturally disposed to receiving volitions, and the inclination of a contrary habit is a kind of impediment to reception of a given operation, whereas the inclination of a habit that matches the volition will be an expediting condition. In addition, in the case of the will (and appetites generally), the operation can be received with pleasure or pain, depending on how the appetite is habitually disposed. But like the wood, it is the power alone that is the receptive cause of its operations, and habits only make their reception easier or more difficult.

### 5.3 Comparison of the fourth way with the third way

Having presented two possible answers to how to explain the role of habits – either as partial active causes or as passive inclinations – Scotus sums up his argument so far:

And so, with the first two ways concerning habit abandoned as impossible [inconvenientibus], it is clear how the last two ways – namely, the third and the fourth – can be sustained as probable: according to the third way, by attributing some activity to the habit and not just attributing the nature [rationem] of an active principle to the power; and according to the fourth way, by denying of the habit the nature [rationem] of an active [principle] and stating that it is like a form inclining [the power] to receiving some further form, though it is not the basis [ratio] of receiving with respect to it (as heaviness inclines downwards, though it is not the basis [ratio] of being receptive of being down, but rather the body of some magnitude [is receptive] inasmuch as it is receptive of some ‘where’).

\(^{50}\) Ord. I d. 17 n. 88 (Vat. 5:181-182): “Quando ergo dicitur quod ‘non est facilitas ad patiendum, quia passum est summe dispositum’, respondeo: per abnegationem contrarii est summe dispositionis convenientis. Exemplum de ligno sicco et neutro: lignum quidem neutrum est summe dispositum ad calorem privative, per carentiam cuiuscumque dispositionis oppositae, - non tamen summe dispositum positive, per positionem dispositionis convenientis, qualis est siccitas; et si ista convenientia esset cum sensu, lignum siccum delectabiliter caliefaret, non sic lignum neutrum, quia non similiter convenit sibi forma recepta.”
To the arguments against these last two ways, both of which could plausibly be sustained, I will reply later on by maintaining a position regarding each of them with respect to the act as it pertains to the substance of the act or to its intrinsic degree. As Scotus summarizes here, he first considered and rejected two different ways of treating habits as active principles, arriving at the third way, according to which habits are secondary active causes that make an operation done according to the inclination of habit more intense than it would otherwise be. He then considered the fourth way, according to which habits are not active at all, but only passively incline a power so that it is more receptive of certain operations (though without forming part of the passive cause). Finally, he remarks that he will examine the arguments against each position. In the end, however, he does not endorse any argument against either position, but shows only that both the third and the fourth ways provide consistent accounts of how habits contribute to action. Thus, as he remarks, he considers both the third and fourth ways “probable” (that is, defensible by argument) accounts of the role of habits in action, and he refrains from deciding between them. It is true that in other texts he seems to assume the active account of habits as his settled position, sometimes referring explicitly to his own commentary on distinction 17 of book I of the Sentences. In this concluding section, however, I will argue that the fourth way is ultimately the better account of how habits contribute to action.

5.3.1 The fourth way has greater explanatory power

One way in which the fourth way is at least equal to the third way is in its explanatory power, since all the conditions that are attributed to a habit as an active cause can also be explained in terms of passive inclination. As discussed above, one of the initial argument for treating habits as active was that they seem to cause the conditions of pleasure, ease, readiness, and promptness that accompany an act done according to the inclination of habit, and therefore seem to be active. With the fourth way, however, Scotus develops a detailed account of how the contribution of a habit to these

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51 Ord. I d. 17 nn. 53-54 (Vat. 5:160): “Sic ergo patet qualiter, duabus viis primis ‘de habitu’ tamquam inconvenientibus derelicitis, duae ulteriae viae probabilis possunt sustineri, videlicet tertia et quarta: attribuendo, secundum tertiam viam, aliquam activitatem habitui, et non solum ‘rationem principii activi’ potentiae, - et secundum quartam negando ab habitu rationem activi, et quod sit tamquam forma inclinans ad aliquam formam ulteriorem recipiendam, licet non sit ratio recipiendi respectu eius (sicut gravitas inclinat ad deorsum, licet non sit ratio receptivi eius quod est deorsum, sed ‘corpus quantum’, in quantum est receptivum aliquius ‘ubi’). Ad argumenta quae sunt contra istas duas vias ultimas, quarum utraque posset probabiliter sustineri, postea respondebatur, secundum alterutram iistam viarum tenendo de actu quantum ad substantiam actu sive quantum ad gradum intrinsecum.”

52 See chapter 4 and above in the present chapter.

53 E.g., Ord. II d. 7 n. 44 (Vat. 8:95); Ord. III d. 33 n. 74 (Vat. 10:174); Ord. IV d. 49 n. 132 (Vat. 14:321); In Met. IX q. 8 (OPh 4:591-593); Quodl. q. 16 n. 61 (Noone & Roberts 191).
conditions can be explained without attributing to it any active causality; rather, they can be explained instead in terms of the state of the power insofar as it is receptive of its own operations.54

Indeed, the fourth way in some ways gives a better explanation of these circumstances than the third way. It might be argued that in general case, readiness, and promptness can be explained just as well either in terms of the active eliciting of an act or its passive reception of the operation. However, it might be doubted whether the third way is fully applicable in the specific case of the will. For since the will is a freely active power that is able to determine what act it does and how it will do it, any act that is possible for the will should be just as easy for it to elicit as another. With the fourth way, on the other hand, the ease of an act is explained in terms not of the active eliciting of the act, but of the reception of the act as an operation; and with respect to its receptivity, the will behaves exactly like any merely natural passive power. The condition of pleasure moreover is explicable only in terms of the passive inclination of a power, at least when Scotus’s general account of passions is kept in mind. According to this account, it is not the subject of the passions or the state of the subject that is the active cause of pleasure, but the external suitable object (though the state of the subject will make a difference to whether it will receive a passion because of the object).

Moreover, the same basic ground on which the fourth way explains the circumstances of action can also serve to explain the increased degree of intension in the operation. According to the third way, a habit renders an elicited operation more intense than it would have been if not for the habit, and in that sense is a partial active cause of the operation.55 In the Ordinatio account, Scotus does not explicitly address the increased intension due to habit in terms of the fourth way, leaving the impression that this is a point in favour of treating habits as active. In the Collationes Parisienses, on the other hand, he explicitly argues that the increased degree of intension due to habit can also be explained in terms of passive inclination:

When it is argued that a more perfect and intense operation requires a more intense active principle, or greater effort [conatus] in the active principle, it should be said that this is true. However, everyone experiences that when they have a habit, they elicit an equal act with less effort on the part of the power than when they lack the habit, and that the habit removes difficulty in acting; thus it seems that habit is an active principle of acting when there is diversity on the part of the receptive [principle]. Therefore, just as with an equal action fire causes a more intense heat in dry wood that in fresh wood because of the difference in the supposit or receptive [cause], so in the matter at hand. For although a habit is not a basis of receptivity such that the

54 See above in this chapter.
55 See section 4.1.3 above.
composite of power and habit is the proper receptive [cause] of the act, nevertheless, it is because of the suitedness of the habit to the act that the act received in the habituated power is more perfect than the one received in a bare power; thus, just as dryness in wood inclines it to receiving a more intense heat because of its suitedness, so also a habit inclines a power with respect to its act, and according to this it is clear how a habit is said to remove difficulty.\(^{56}\)

Scotus begins by conceding that in general a greater \textit{conatus} on the part of the eliciting active cause will produce an operation that has a greater degree of intensity. However, this operation is received by the power insofar as it is the passive cause at which the power’s activity terminates, and as has been explained above, the receptivity of the passive cause can be conditioned by habit so that the operation is received more or less easily. Moreover, when an act is done with ease – that is, when it is received easily – this ease means nothing other than that it takes less effort to produce an act in a power that is disposed to receiving it than to one that is not disposed. Thus, the contribution of a habit to the intensity of an act can be grounded in Scotus’s analysis of self-moving powers. A habit renders an act more intense because it gives the power an inclination to receiving the operation more easily and more readily, and because it is received more easily and more readily, the resulting operation will have a greater intensity than if it had been elicited with the same amount of active effort (\textit{conatus}) by an unhabituated power. In this way, the fourth way also can explain the increased intensity due to habit that in the \textit{Ordinatio} account Scotus leaves explained only according to the third way.

Thus, a broad point in favour of the fourth way over the third way is that it is tightly bound up with the details of Scotus’s account of how the powers of the soul work. As should by now be quite clear, Scotus develops the solution of the fourth way directly in terms of his understanding of the powers of the soul as self-moving, that is, as being both the active and passive causes of their own action; the act or operation is thus understood ontologically as an accidental quality that is passively received in the power. Using this apparatus, he is able to explain in detail how habits contribute to action without being active causes. With the third way, on the other hand, Scotus appeals to the

\(^{56}\) \textit{Coll. Par.} 3 §14 (Wadding 3:361b): “Quando arguitur quod operatio perfectior et intensior requirit principium activum intensius, vel majorem conatum in principio activo, dicendum quod est verum, sed tamen quilibet experitur, quod habens habitum cum minori conatu potentiae, aequalem actum elicit quam carens habitu, et habitus amovet difficultatem agendi: unde videtur, quod habitus sit principium agendi quando est diversitas a parte susceptivi; sicut igitur ignis aequalis actione intensiore calorem causat in ligno sicco quam in ligno viridi, propter diversitatem suppositi vel susceptivi, sic in proposito; licet enim habitus non sit ratio susceptivi, ita quod compositum ex potentia et habitu sit proprium susceptivum actus, tamen propter convenientiam habitus cum actu, actus receptus in potentia habituata est perfectior quam in potentia nuda receptus; unde sicut siccitas in ligno inclinat ad recipiendum calorem intensiorem propter convenientiam quam habet, sic et habitus inclinat potentiam respectu actus, et secundum hoc patet, quomodo habitus dicitur amovere difficultatem.”
metaphysical apparatus of essentially ordered causes. While this gives a consistent account, it does so at the expense of detail: a habit is said to be a secondary active cause, but no explanation is given of how exactly its active causality is different from that of the power itself. The third way thus seems like a somewhat abstract higher-level account of the fact that certain conditions of an act are to be attributed to the presence of a habit, whereas the fourth way explains how the conditions of action attributed to habit actually come about.

5.3.2 The fourth way safeguards the freedom of the will

Another way in which the fourth way seems superior is that it more clearly safeguards the freedom of the will with respect to its own acts. There are two aspects to this. First, as noted above, one of the initial reasons that Scotus gives in favour of the fourth way is a kind of “nobility argument.” According to this, the total causality of an active power with respect to its own acts should not be qualified by positing other partial causes unless it is evident that they must be posited, that is, unless an adequate account of the phenomenon in question is otherwise impossible. Thus, if a solution is available that adequately explains the role of habits without treating them as active causes, that solution is to be preferred, for it will leave the power alone as the total active cause of its own acts. Thus, since the third way posits that a habit is a partial active cause of the operations of its power, whereas the fourth way leaves the power alone as the total active cause of its own operations, the latter is on the face of it preferable. Moreover, as explained above, the fourth does in fact succeed in explaining all the circumstances due to the inclination of habit without making habits active causes; therefore, even if the third way is no less consistent and complete an account than the fourth way, the latter ought nevertheless to be preferred.

Secondly, in the specific case of the will, it might be doubted whether the solution of the third way fully preserves the will’s freedom. In presenting the third way, Scotus claims that acts of volition to which habits contribute as partial active causes are nonetheless free because the habit’s active causality is subordinate to that of the will: although a habit would contribute as an active cause to the act in a naturally determinate way, the act remains free because its primary cause elicits it freely.

57 Another objection that might be made to the third way is that its appeal to essentially ordered causes is questionable. In the texts where Scotus talks about essentially ordered causation, the context is usually theological and cosmological, as in the sacraments or how God concurs with all created causes. Is it legitimate to use a framework developed for supernatural questions and questions about the order and coherence of creation as a whole to answer a question about a specific phenomenon within creation? Or if legitimate, is it informative?

58 Walter Hoeres likewise observes that of the two probable accounts of the role of habits, the fourth way is the more carefully thought through in terms of Scotus’s broader views; see Hoeres, Der Wille als reine Vollkommenheit, 167.
Against this conclusion, however, it might be argued the act done according to habit is still not produced in an entirely free way, for when the will does elicit an act, it has no power over whether or not the habit will actively intensify it. Since the freedom of the will includes not just whether it will elicit an act, but also how intensely it will act, habits as active causes might nonetheless represent a limitation on the will’s free active causality with respect to its own acts.\textsuperscript{59}

This worry is sidestepped if habits are treated only as passive inclinations. For even though a habit does affect the intensity of the volition, it does not do so as an active cause that cooperates with the will insofar as it elicits its acts, but only by conditioning the will insofar as it receives them. This distinction is significant, since, as Scotus establishes in his questions on \textit{Metaphysics} IX, the will is different from all other powers in the way in which it elicits its acts. Rather than being determined to its acts by an external agent or by its own nature, as all other powers are, the will’s essential mode of action is to determine itself to its act; in other words, it acts not naturally, but freely.\textsuperscript{60} As Scotus observes, the will’s free mode of action is what differentiates it from all other active powers: the will is a free power insofar as it is active and determines itself to eliciting its acts. However, its freedom does not extend to the way in which it receives its own acts. In this latter respect, the will is exactly like any other passive power; that is, if there are no impediments to actions, then when an active cause causes elicits an act, the corresponding passive cause receives the effect in a naturally determinate way. Dry wood, for example, would be heated no less necessarily by the hot fire brought close to it, even if it were up to the fire whether to be hot or not; likewise the will, insofar as it is the passive cause of willing, receives its volition in a naturally necessitated way, even though the will freely determined itself to eliciting the act.

The fourth way thus avoids raising the question of how habituation is compatible with the freedom of the will. It is true that when the appropriate habit is present in the will, the degree of intensity of the operation will not be due only to the will’s active \textit{conatus} in eliciting the operation, since the degree will be explained in part by the inclination from the habit. However, this inclination pertains to the will only insofar as it is the passive power for receiving operations, which are received more easily when the will is inclined to receiving them; they are thus received with a higher degree of intensity with a habit than without, even if the will’s \textit{conatus} in eliciting them is unchanged. However, this does not represent a limitation of the will’s freedom as an \textit{active} power, for the will remains the

\textsuperscript{59} See section 4.3.2 on this point.

\textsuperscript{60} See the discussion in section 2.3.3 above.
total active cause of its own acts and still freely determines itself to whether it will elicit an act and the degree of *conatus* with which it elicits it. In this way, the fourth way explains the contribution of habit to action without needing also to explain how habituation is compatible with the freedom of the will.\(^{61}\)

### 5.3.3 Why does Scotus not decide between the two probable accounts?

When the two probable accounts of the role of habits are considered on Scotus’s own terms – or indeed, especially when so considered – the fourth way appears to be the superior account. Why then does Scotus not draw this conclusion, but instead leaves the question unresolved? One reason might be that his views were in flux at the time when he was drawing up this part of his *Ordinatio*. It is clear that between the *Lectura* version of this distinction and the *Ordinatio* version, his approach to the question of the role of habits became markedly more sophisticated. In the *Lectura*, he addresses habit only in passing in the context of discussing the role of charity in the eliciting of a meritorious act.\(^{62}\) In the *Ordinatio* on the other hand, he takes much greater care to separate out the different kinds of explanation that are required for different levels of habit. He begins by discussing what habits in general can contribute to action, and though the difficulties that arise often come from the will, he appears to be attempting to give an account that applies generally to powers of the soul and their habits.\(^{63}\) He then turns to habits of moral virtue, taking care to explain that a different kind of explanation is needed; only then does he turn to the role of the supernatural virtue of charity, which requires yet another kind of explanation.\(^{64}\)

In addition to this more careful sifting out of the levels of explanation, a notable change introduced in the *Ordinatio* version is the entire fourth way. In the *Lectura*, the first three ways of the *Ordinatio* are recognizable, though without the greater attention given in the later version to distinguishing the

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\(^{61}\) It can be observed that even according to the fourth way, the will is still not fully self-determining, if complete self-determination is taken to include exactly how intensely it will *have* an operation, and with what conditions. One might further speculate that if the fourth way is Scotus’s most fully developed account of habituation, it could be interpreted as a reflection on our finite state. We are free, but we exist in a natural world beyond us, and even the will’s own finite existence is part of the world in which we are capable of acting freely, but which is at most partially subject to our free mastery.

\(^{62}\) See *Lect.* I d. 17 nn. 44-103 (Vat. 17:196-213).

\(^{63}\) The first of the five ways in the *Ordinatio* version, which has to do with the role of charity, might thus be seen as a holdover from this earlier version, in which Scotus does not take the same care to distinguish the accounts of habit in general, moral virtue, and charity.

\(^{64}\) The account of the role of moral virtues as such will be the topic of chapter 6; Scotus discusses the role of charity in a separate question at *Ord.* I d. 17 nn. 101-194 (Vat. 5:190-231). The *Reportatio* version of distinction 17 of book I focuses only on the role of charity and does not have an equivalent discussion of its status and role as a habit; see *Rep.* I-A d. 17 nn. 1-74 (Wolter & Bychkov 1:460-481).
contribution of habit in general to action from the contribution of the habit of charity to meritorious action. However, any equivalent to the fourth way in the *Ordinatio* is entirely absent. The insertion of the fourth way in the later version suggests that at some point Scotus realized that there was another option he had not previously considered. For whereas the first three ways all treat habits as active causes in one way or another, the fourth way takes a fundamentally different approach by considering whether their contribution is instead on the side of the reception of the operation. Perhaps, as he revised his account to distinguish more carefully what can be said about habit and inclination as natural phenomena from the realms of morality and merit to which the moral and infused virtues pertain, he saw that in order to give an account of habits as natural beings with merely natural effects, it is necessary to understand exactly how they fit into the account of how powers produce their effects. The fourth way, which considers the role of habits more closely in terms of exactly where and how they intervene in the production of an operation by a self-moving power, would thus have suggested itself.

Even so, in the *Ordinatio* version, Scotus does not simply fail to come to an answer, but says explicitly that the third and fourth ways are both probable accounts. This forbearance from deciding between the two probable solutions is similar to his reconsideration elsewhere of the role of the object of the will. As was discussed in chapter 4, Scotus seems to have changed his views over the course of his career. In his earlier discussion in the *Lectura*, he unambiguously adopts the view that the object is a partial active cause of the act of volition. In his later Paris lectures, on the other hand, he is more circumspect: even if he does not decisively change his position, he at least considers (and does not reject) the view that the object is not an active cause of volition, the will alone being the total cause of its own acts. As I suggested in chapter 4, his reason for considering this alternative account of the role of the object of the will may have been that he came to worry that attributing active causality with respect to volition to anything other than the will itself would fail to preserve the will’s freedom. I also proposed above that a similar consideration could be at play in the fourth way of explaining how habits incline their subject. It may therefore be that his views were in flux not in the sense that his texts were simply left in an incomplete state; rather, he may have been in the process of working out particular philosophical positions in terms of broader architectonic concerns.

65 The solution that becomes the first way of the *Ordinatio* version is dealt with at *Lect.* I d. 17 nn. 45-50 (Vat. 17:196-199); the second way is presented at nn. 51-55 (17:199-200), and the third way (broadly speaking, allowing for the focus on merit that is postponed in the *Ordinatio* version) at nn. 56-103 (17:200-213). There is then no equivalent to the fourth way.

66 See sections 4.2.2 and 4.3.1 above.
some of which arise from a more careful consideration of how the freedom of the created will interacts with the naturally determinate world of which it is a part.

I will conclude by suggesting a different reason for leaving the question undecided, namely that it can be argued that there is a sense in which the third way remains a defensible account even if the fourth way is ultimately the more precise one. Of course, the guiding question of Scotus’s discussion is whether a habit should be considered an active principle, and the third and fourth ways are respectively the most plausible positive and negative answers; how then can both be considered somehow correct? The answer arises from the observation above that the third way provides a model for understanding what it means for a habit to be only a secondary active cause, but does not explain how precisely it makes its active contribution. The fourth way provides that explanation: a habit can be said to intensify the act and to cause the various circumstances attributed to habitual inclination, but the explanation of how it does so will have to appeal to the detailed account of how a power moves itself and receives its own operation more easily because of habit. Thus, a habit can be called an active cause because the greater intensity of an act done according to inclination is correctly attributed to the presence of a habit.

Yet if this is the underlying explanation of how a habit is said to actively intensify an operation, it seems that we should conclude that the third way is simply mistaken. For habits will not in fact be active causes, but will only seem to be. As Scotus notes in defence of the third way, we experience in ourselves that when we act according to the inclination of habit, our acts are easier and more intense with the same amount of effort on the part of the will, so it seems plausible that the habit is an active cause of the added intensity. It turns out, however, that this evidence from introspection is not a reliable guide to understanding the underlying causal mechanisms. For what we experience is having an act, that is, we experience the end result of the causation of an act of the will, which is the presence of the operation in the will; we do not, however, experience the underlying causal mechanisms by which this volition was produced. The seemingly active contribution of habit is therefore only an appearance that results from our mistaking what is going on, but what habits actually do is condition the way the act is received as an operation, as the fourth way explains. Strictly speaking, therefore, we should conclude that the third way is simply incorrect.

67 Cf. *Ord.* I d. 17 n. 70 (Vat. 5:171): “Videtur pro ista via [sc. tertia] esse experientia communis, quia quilibet potest experiri, se habituatum, ex aequali conatu posse habere perfectiorem operationem quam possit habere non-habituatus.”
On the other hand, even if the third way does not fully represent the place of habit in the underlying causal mechanisms of powers and inclinations, it may nevertheless be an adequate account of how habits contribute to action considered in terms of outward behaviour. Rather than attempting to explain in detail how a habit intervenes in the underlying causal structure of a power that both elicits and receives its acts, the third describes only the effects that can be observed and experienced. An alternative defense of the third way would thus be that there is implicit in Scotus’s acceptance elsewhere of the third way an attempt to treat habits according to the kind of explanation that is required. In terms of the underlying metaphysics and ontology, the fourth way is the better account, since it explains in a systematically grounded fashion the very same conditions of the operation that the third way explains as an active contribution by the habit. However, if what is wanted is instead an explanation of behaviour, then the third way seems to work better, since it more directly accounts for what is in question: a habit renders its acts more perfect (i.e. more intense and accompanied by the conditions of pleasure, ease, readiness, and promptness). Even if this “perfecting” is not strictly speaking active at the level of explaining the underlying metaphysics of powers and self-motion, the statement is adequate for stating what habits contribute at the level of outward action, where it is not the metaphysics of causation that is in question, but behaviour and morality.

5.4 Conclusion

With the fourth way of explaining how habits contribute to action, Scotus proposes that there is no need to attribute to them any active causality at all in order to explain the circumstances due to habituation. Rather, they condition the power insofar as it passively receives its own operations. This approach has several advantages over treating habits as active. First, the fourth way explains not only the conditions of pleasure, ease, readiness, and promptness that are traditionally attributed to habit, but also the intensification of the act that seems at first glance to be better explained by the third way. Secondly, the fourth way does not compromise a power’s total active causality with respect to its own acts, thus avoiding the possibility that habituation might limit the will’s freedom. Moreover, the fourth way is thoroughly embedded in Scotus’s overall account of the natural functioning of the powers of the soul, whereas the third way appeals to the theoretically more removed and abstract metaphysics of essentially ordered causes and lacks the explanatory power of the fourth way. Nevertheless, Scotus does not decide between the third and fourth ways of explaining the role of habits, but says only that they are both probable.
Scotus also observes that, whichever account is preferred, the account of how moral virtues as such contribute to the moral goodness of action will be unaffected. 68 Thus, the discussion of what habits contribute to action can be seen as not merely laying out what has to be understood about habits in general in order to understand what habits of moral virtues specifically contribute, but also as making clear that the contribution of moral virtues as moral virtues has to be explained differently from their contribution as habits. Thus, with the parameters of what habits contributes laid out, the fifth way addresses whether moral virtues contribute to the moral goodness of action.

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68 *Ord. I d. 17 n. 68* (Vat 5:169-170): “Istam ergo quintam viam, de actione virtutis moralis respectu actus ut est bonus moraliter, non oportet pertractare quasi aliam ab illis quae tangunt de substantia habitus et substantia actus, - et ita breviter, quantum ad totam quintam viam, oportet tenere vel tertiam viam vel quartam, de omni habitu.” Cf. *ibid. n. 98* (5:188-189), where Scotus again suggests that it does not matter for the account of moral virtues as such whether the third or fourth way is adopted to explain the role of habits in general.
6. The Role of Moral Virtue

In the previous two chapters, I discussed the two probable accounts that Scotus proposes in distinction 17 of *Ordinatio* I of how habits contribute to action. With the fifth of the five ways that he there discusses, Scotus turns to a slightly different issue. Rather than examining whether a habit is an active cause with respect to the acts of its subject power, which was the concern of the first four ways, he now asks: “Is a moral habit, insofar as it is a virtue, in any way an active principle with respect to the moral goodness in an act?” He thus shifts his discussion from what habits in general contribute to action (and how they contribute), to whether moral virtues, as moral virtues, contribute anything to action over and above what they contribute as habits in general. In this way, Scotus narrows the focus of his investigation. Since moral virtues are habits, whatever is true of habits will also be true of moral virtues. Thus if a habit (of whatever kind) renders an act done according to its inclination more intense and causes it to be done with pleasure, ease, readiness, and promptness, then so too a moral virtue, as a habit of the will, will contribute these conditions to acts of the will done according to its inclination. The question of the fifth way is whether moral virtues contribute anything more than what can be explained in terms of their general character as habits; and since, as the dictum from Aristotle states, “moral virtue renders the agent and the act good,” it seems natural to ask if this “something extra” is the moral goodness of the act. Since Scotus makes it clear that his investigation will be specifically about whether moral virtues cause moral goodness, two questions immediately arise. First, how exactly does a moral virtue differ from other habits and does it have any causality lacking from other habits that allows it to cause moral goodness? Secondly, what is moral goodness, and how is it caused?

In this chapter, I will discuss in detail Scotus’s answer to these questions. I will show that in the end he concludes that the moral virtues do not cause moral goodness or cause acts to be morally good. As will emerge, however, Scotus’s account of what distinguishes moral virtues from habits in general has to be understood in terms of his account of the moral goodness to which they are supposed to contribute. Accordingly, I will begin by examining his account of moral goodness and how it differs from the natural perfection of action to which habits can contribute. Rather than any intrinsic or

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1 *Ord.* I d. 17 n. 55 (Vat. 5:160-161): “Restat modo inquirere ulterius de bonitate accidentali actus (qualis est bonitas moralis), et de habitu morali, utrum habitus moralis in quantum virtus, sit aliquo modo principium activum respectu bonitatis moralis in actu.”

2 This is the very first argument that Scotus mentions in favour of an affirmative answer to the question of the fifth way. *Ord.* I d. 17 n. 56 (Vat. 5:161): “Secundum Philosophum II Ethicorum, virtus est ‘quae habentem perficit et opus eius bonum reddit’, non reddit autem illud bonum in ratione principii passivi, quia non est ratio recipiendi; ergo in ratione principii activi.” Cf. *NE* II.6, 1106a14-23.
extrinsic perfection characteristic of acts done according to inclination, Scotus maintains that moral goodness understood precisely is the conformity of a voluntary act with a right practical judgment; that is, it is, ontologically speaking, a relation founded on the act itself. In the light of this conception of moral goodness, I will then explain why Scotus denies that moral virtue causes moral goodness, but instead maintains that moral virtue does not contribute anything to action that it does not already contribute under its general character as a habit.

6.1 Natural goodness

In order to answer the question of whether moral virtues causes the moral goodness of an act, a necessary preliminary step is to understand what moral goodness is. For regardless of whether a habit of the will actively intensifies the will’s volitions or only passively disposes the will so that it more readily receives certain acts, the resulting perfection is a merely natural perfection, which is no different from the perfection of which the acts of other powers are equally capable. Yet only free acts of choice – that is, acts of the will – can be morally good or bad; it seems, therefore, that moral goodness must be something more than the natural perfection that results from acting according to inclination. This sort of natural perfection seems moreover to have no necessary connection with whether the act is morally good or not. If one has the vice of cruelty, for example, one might act in more perfectly cruel way than without the vice, inasmuch as by following one’s cruel inclinations one takes pleasure in cruel acts, and does them more easily, readily, and promptly, as well as more intensely. Obviously, the resulting cruel act is not made morally good by having all these conditions; likewise, therefore, a morally good act is not morally good simply because it has all these conditions. Furthermore, as will be discussed further on, Scotus argues that even an act of choice that merely happens to be a good choice can fail to be morally good unless accompanied by and done in accordance with a right judgment. Since the moral goodness of an act seems to be something other than its natural goodness, I will lay the groundwork for explaining how exactly it is distinguished from natural goodness by first explaining Scotus’s conception of what natural goodness is, especially in relation to action.

The most basic point to consider is that goodness, if it is not qualified as moral, is natural goodness. It is a broadly held view in scholastic philosophy that something is good insofar as it has been perfected, that is, insofar as its essence or nature has been realized or actualized. However, natural perfection can itself be distinguished into two kinds. In Aristotelian terms, these are first and second actuality; that is, the one is intrinsic to a being simply insofar as it exists, and the other is extrinsic
and can be acquired in having the activity or activities that are proper to it. In a passage from the Reportatio, Scotus lays out the sense in which these perfections can be said to be forms of goodness:

I say that the good and the perfect are the same according to [Aristotle’s] Metaphysics, book 6. The perfect has a twofold meaning. In one sense, it means that to which nothing is wanting intrinsically. Such a thing is said to be perfect by reason of an essential intrinsic or primary perfection. In another way, a thing is said to be perfect by reason of a secondary perfection. Thus, the good is also twofold and can be taken in the first and second way. 3

Goodness as perfection is thus divided into intrinsic goodness and extrinsic goodness, intrinsic goodness being the perfection of mere existence and extrinsic goodness the further perfection of which a created thing is naturally capable but does not necessarily possess.

6.1.1 Goodness as intrinsic perfection

The goodness of the intrinsic perfection of a thing is not really anything other than the thing’s very existence. Understood this way, Scotus touches on the doctrine of the transcendentals, which was discussed extensively throughout the thirteenth century. 4 Broadly speaking, the theory rests on two theses. First, being as such is the first object of the intellect and pertains equally to items belonging to any of the Aristotelian categories; thus, a substance is a being in itself, but according to Scotus, accidents such as quality, quantity, and relation are also beings. Being as such therefore belongs to no single category of being, but is transcendental. 5 Secondly, there are other transcendentals – namely, unity, truth, and goodness – which are coextensive with being and are convertible with it. 6 The exact nature of the relationship among the transcendentals and their mutual convertibility was the subject of extensive debate: Scotus’s view is that unity, goodness, and truth are “passions” of being that stand to being somewhat as properties do to a substance, but are not really distinct from being but are “unitively contained” in it. Scotus discusses unity and truth as transcendental passions

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3 Rep. II d. 34 q. un. §3 (Wadding 11:390b; English translation from Wolter, The Transcendentals, 121–122.): “Dico quod bonum et perfectum idem sunt 6 Metaph. Perfectum autem dupliciter dicitur: uno modo cui nihil deest, et hoc intrinsece, et illud est perfectum perfectione essentiali intrinseca seu perfectione prima; alio modo dicitur perfectum perfectione secunda. Sic igitur bonum duplex est: primo modo et secundo.” The reference to Aristotle’s Metaphysics should instead be to V.16, 1021b21-23: “Excellence is a perfection, for each thing is perfect and every substance is perfect when in respect of the form of its proper excellence it lacks no part of its proper magnitude.”

4 On the history of the scholastic discussion of the transcendentals see MacDonald, “Goodness as Transcendental: The Early Thirteenth-Century Recovery of an Aristotelian Idea”; Aertsen, Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought. For a detailed study focused on Thomas Aquinas, see Aertsen, Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals. The seminal modern study on Scotus’s theory of the transcendentals is Wolter, The Transcendentals. See also Aertsen, Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought, 371–432.

5 For discussion, see Wolter, The Transcendentals, 58–98.

6 On the possibility of beauty as a fifth transcendental, see Aertsen, Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals, 335–359; Aertsen, Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought, 161–176.
of being in greater detail than he does goodness, but it is clear from various passages that he accepts the doctrine of good as a transcendental.\(^7\) In the *Collationes Oxonienses*, for example, he notes in passing that goodness in the most general sense is convertible with being: “The good is twofold, one which is convertible with being; of the good in that sense, each thing has as much as it has of being [entitate]. The other is the good that is the same as the perfected, which does not admit any defect.”\(^8\) Scotus’s distinction here between good as convertible with being and good as intrinsic perfection is somewhat confusing, since elsewhere he seems to identify them.\(^9\) Regardless of whether or not he maintains this distinction, the important point is that he maintains a general sense of goodness that applies to every being simply in virtue of existing. Such intrinsic goodness is identified with a being’s intrinsic perfection, that is, its actuality, which is simply the degree to which the thing exists at all.\(^10\)

### 6.1.2 Accidental goodness: goodness as extrinsic perfection

As noted above, when Scotus identifies goodness with perfection, he distinguishes two senses of natural perfection. A being is perfect or actual (and thus good) insofar as it has the intrinsic perfection of existence, but it can also have a further natural perfection that is not included in its mere existence. In other words, there is a kind of actuality that a being does not necessarily possess simply in virtue of existing, but can acquire.\(^11\) Such a perfection is thus extrinsic to the existent thing in itself, but it is a good for it insofar as it contributes to the full actualization of the thing’s essential nature. Scotus explains this point most fully at the beginning of question 18 of his *Quodlibet*. He begins by giving a general characterization of an extrinsic good as that which is suitable to a being and thus perfects it not essentially and intrinsically, but accidentally and extrinsically:

> Just as the primary goodness of a being, which is called essential goodness, which is the integrity or perfection of a being in itself, brings in positively the negation of imperfection (and in this way imperfection and diminution are excluded), so a being’s secondary goodness, which is accidental or supervenient on its existence, is the

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\(^7\) For discussion of the convertible transcendentals as passions of being that are unitively contained in it, see Wolter, *The Transcendentals*, 100–127; Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy as Transcendental Thought*, 418–426. On transcendental goodness, see Möhle, *Ethik als scientia practica*, 289–296.

\(^8\) *Coll. Ox.* 7 §5 (=*Coll.* 12, Wadding 3:375a): “Duplex est bonum, unum quod convertitur cum ente, et de illo bono tantum habet unumquodque quantum habet de entitate. Aliud est bonum quod est idem quod perfectum quod non incurrit aliquem defectum.”

\(^9\) This point is briefly discussed at Wolter, *The Transcendentals*, 126.

\(^10\) A more detailed discussion of transcendental goodness according to Scotus can be found in Uscatescu Barrón, “Zu Duns Scotus’ Bestimmung des transzendentalen Guten als Hinsicht.”

The accidental goodness that a being can acquire results from its being united with something else that is suited to it; such an extrinsic thing is suitable to the first insofar as it further perfects it, and is thus good for it. Health, for example, is good for a human being, but as an accident of a human being, it is an extrinsic good. As Scotus notes, this suitedness can go both ways: goodness can be said either of that which is perfected extrinsically or of that which gives the extrinsic perfection. To use his own examples, health is good for a human being because it is suitable for a human being, whereas food is good in virtue of having a flavour that is suited to it. He might have gone on to point out that the first example can be recast in terms of the second: health is good for humans, but a human being is extrinsically perfected, and thus made better, by having health. This point emerges subsequently when he explains his point in more technical terms:

That which is suited to something is called a good for it (that is, a perfection or goodness for it), but it is called good in itself, not denominatively or accidentally. But that to which something is suited is called good denominatively inasmuch as it has that which is suited to itself. And in the first case there is a denomination of the form from the subject, as it were: as a soul is called human, so something is said to be good for a human being because it is a human good. But it is the reverse in the second case, in which there is a denomination of the subject from the form, since it is said that a human being is good in virtue of the good that he possesses.

To put the point more simply, something that is perfective of its subject is good in itself in virtue of the fact that it perfects something else, i.e. makes it good, but that which is perfected is accidentally good (or better) in virtue of being joined with something that is good for it.

For the purpose of explaining the background to Scotus’s account of moral goodness, the most important point in this account is that among the accidental goods by which a being can be perfected are its proper operations:

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12 Quodl. q. 18 §3 (Wadding 12:475): “Sicut enim bonitas primaria entis, quae dicitur bonitas essentialis, quae est integritas vel perfectio entis in se, importat positive negationem imperfectionis, per quod excluditur imperfectio et diminutio; sic bonitas entis secundaria quae est accidentalis sive superveniens entiti, est integritas convenientiae vel integra convenientia eius alteri cui debet convenire, vel alterius sibi.”

13 Quodl. q. 18 §3 (Wadding 12:475): “Exemplum primi, sanitas dicitur bona homini quia sibi conveniens, et cibus dicitur bonus quia habet saporem sibi convenientem.”

14 Quodl. q. 18 §3 (Wadding 12:475-476): “Illud quidem quod conveniens est aliqui dicitur illi bonum, hoc est illi perfectio sive bonitas, sed non dicitur denominative vel accidentaliter in se bonum. Illud autem cui aliquid convenit dicitur denominative bonum eo quod habet illud quod sibi convenit, et est denominatio quasi formae a subjecto, sicut anima dicitur humana, sic aliquid dicitur bonum homini, quia bonum humanum. Sed eonverso est denominatio subjecti a forma, cum homo dicitur bonus secundum illud bonum suum.”
An act is naturally suited to an agent and also to having some condition that is suited to it; therefore, someone who has it in both ways can be called good in virtue of an accidental goodness. This is also true generally of a natural act, and consequently this good in something having that which is suitable to itself is not only an accidental goodness but also a natural one.\(^\text{15}\)

An operation is suited to an agent precisely because it is the proper actualization of the agent or power as such – in Aristotelian terms, an operation is a second actuality. Insofar as a power is naturally ordered to its proper act, that act is the immediate end for that power and its natural good. Moreover, an operation is not an essential part of the agent; rather, Scotus analyses it as an accidental quality that inheres in the agent when it acts.\(^\text{16}\) As a quality, the operation is an absolute being in its own right, and when it is present as an accident of the power to which it pertains, the power is occurrently in act, and thus perfected. However, this is an extrinsic perfection, since, as an absolute being in itself, the operation is not part of the intrinsic being of the agent, but is added to it.\(^\text{17}\)

### 6.1.3 The natural goodness of actions

While an operation is an extrinsic perfection of a power, which is in second act in virtue of the presence of the operation, it is also an absolute being in itself; it thus has its own intrinsic perfection.

\[^\text{15}\text{ Quodl. q. 18 §3 (Wadding 12:476): “Actus autem natus est convenire agenti et etiam habere aliquam conditionem sibi convenientem; utroque igitur modo habens illam potest dici bonus bonitate accidentali. Et hoc verum est generaliter de actu etiam naturali, et per consequens bonitas ista in habendo illud quod sibi convenit non tantum est bonitas accidentalis, sed naturalis.”\}^\]

\[^\text{16}\text{ See chapter 2 above for more detailed discussion of Scotus’s analysis of immanent activity as a power being the subject of an accidental quality which is the act itself. This provides an ontological basis for distinguishing between the bare power and the power in act.\}^\]

\[^\text{17}\text{ It should be noted that Scotus does not always express himself consistently across the various texts in which he distinguishes the kinds of goodness. In one text, for example, he states that the extrinsic good for a thing is its end. Ord. IV d. 31 n. 13 (Vat. 13:404): “Dico secundum Philosophum V Metaphysicæ cap. ‘De perfecto’: Bonum et perfectum idem; duplex est autem perfectio: intrinseca forma, extrinseca finis, – vel prima forma, secunda finis; alieius autem duplex potest esse finis: remotior et propinquior; remotior est regulariter principalior, quia ad illum ordinatur finis propinquior.” Cf. Wolter, The Transcendentals, 123. This seems to contradict his analysis in question 18 of his Quodlibet, where he explains extrinsic goodness as an accidental goodness that is attributed to a subject in virtue of its having that which is suitable to it, such as a proper operation or other perfective circumstances. However, this statement about the end as the extrinsic good appears in the preamble to a discussion of an entirely different topic (viz. the ends of matrimony), and so it should not be taken for granted that Scotus fully endorses it as his considered position on the basis of goodness. While it is true that scholastic philosophers generally agreed that the good has the character of an end, since all finite things naturally tend towards their proper perfection, which is their natural end, Scotus’s analysis of accidental goodness as having that which is suitable is perhaps intended to give a more fine-grained analysis. As he notes elsewhere, the accidental perfection that an operation gives to its subject ultimately depends on the fact that is by an operation that an agent is united with its end. See Rep. II d. 34 §5 (Wadding 11:391a): “Manifestum est quod in eadem specie unum individuum habet perfectionem sibidebitam, aliud non habet, quia unum habet operationem per quam attingit finem, aliud non habet; igitur in alio est carentia perfectionis quae nata est inhaerere.” There is therefore only a difference of emphasis between the two statements, but no basic contradiction.\}^\]
Scotus notes that the perfection of an operation can also be analysed in terms of whether the operation is well ordered with respect to its causes:

An act in the genus of nature naturally has a certain ordering to its own causes, that is, to the efficient cause, and to the end, and to the matter over which it passes; and when it has the due suitedness and ordering to these, and is not suited to those to which it ought not to be suited, then it is an act that is good in the genus of nature. Thus, an act that is elicited by a perfected power and has a more perfect object is more perfect in the genus of nature.\footnote{\textit{Lect.} II d. 40 nn. 7-8 (Vat. 19:390): “Actus igitur in genere naturae natus est habere ordinem ad causas suas: ad efficientem et ad finem et ad materiam super quam transit; et quando habet convenientiam et ordinem debitum ad ista et disconveniat ab illis a quibus debet disconvenire, tune est actus bonus in genere naturae. Unde actus qui elicitur a potentia perfecta et habet objectum perfectius, est perfectior in genere naturae.” \textit{Cf. Ord.} II d. 7 n. 28 (Vat. 8:88), where Scotus takes care to note that the moral goodness of an operation is distinct from its intrinsic goodness as an absolute thing: “Ultra bonitatem naturalem volitionis quae competit sibi in quantum est ens positivum, quae etiam competit cuicumque enti positivo secundum gradum suae entitatis (magis et magis, minus et minus), praeter illam est triplex bonitas moralis.” The way in which an operation is perfected in itself by being properly ordered in its various circumstances will be discussed below.}

This observation has some connection with Scotus’s arguments for why the object of an act of the will must be an essential cause of the act. He argues that if the object were only a \textit{causa sine qua non} and therefore not an essential cause of the act, there would be no reason to say that the act of knowing or loving God is any better than an act of knowing or loving a fly, but knowing and loving God are more perfect acts. The object must therefore be an essential cause that makes the act more or less perfect in itself: the more appropriate the object is to the power, the more perfect the act.\footnote{In \textit{Lect.} II d. 25, Scotus uses the point that the object has to be an essential cause of an act of the will to argue that it must be an efficient cause, but it would still be an essential cause if it were a final cause, a conclusion that can perhaps be drawn from \textit{Rep.} II d. 25. See sections 2.2.1, 4.2.2, and 4.3.1 above for discussion.}

Note also that the operation will be more perfect “in the genus of nature,” that is, if it is considered as a member of a natural kind that has a perfection that is natural and proper to it. The more perfect its essential causes, the better and more perfect the operation will be in itself as an instance of its kind.

The question can also be considered in connection with Scotus’s discussion of how an operation is perfected by being done according to the inclination of habit. As discussed in chapter 4, one way in which the inclination of habit perfects the operations of a power is by rendering the operations more intense: when the power elicits an act in accordance with habitual inclination, the resulting operation has a higher degree of intensity than it would if not for the habit. This degree of intensity is nothing other than the degree to which the operation, considered as a being in the genus of quality, has...
intrinsic existence and therefore has intrinsic natural goodness. There is also another kind of natural goodness possible for an operation, which can also be explained in terms of how the inclination of habit perfects action. As Scotus notes, an operation not only is “naturally suited to an agent,” and thus is an accidental good for it, but also is naturally suited “to having some condition suited to it.” Thus, just as a substance or power can be perfected extrinsically by acquiring what is suitable to it, so too an operation can be perfected by being accompanied by suitable conditions that are extrinsic to it. As Scotus explains in *Ordinatio* I distinction 17, the perfective conditions that habitual inclination can contribute to action are pleasure, ease, readiness, and promptness. Unlike the degree of intensity, these conditions are not intrinsic to the operation considered as an absolute quality, but accompany the act. As discussed in chapter 5, ease, readiness, and promptness have to do with the state of the power insofar as it is well disposed to receiving the operation, but they are not intrinsic aspects of the operation itself. Pleasure, on the other hand, is a passion produced as a distinct quality in an appetitive power when something perfective of the power is present to it. Scotus even states that pleasure is a perfection of the subject that receives it; but whether considered in relation to the agent or to an operation, it can be only an extrinsic and accidental perfection.

It should be noted that these perfections of an operation – both the intrinsic degree of intension and the accidental conditions that can accompany an act – are aspects of the natural goodness of an act. However, they do not form part of the moral goodness of an act. This is evident if one considers how Scotus develops his two probable accounts of the role of habits in *Ordinatio* I distinction 17. There he keeps the solutions at the level of powers and habits by proposing them in terms of the general framework of how a power of the soul elicits its acts and receives its acts. Thus, the same account that is ultimately aimed at explaining the contribution of moral virtues can equally be applied to the sensitive appetite to explain how, when it acts according to the inclination of habit, it acts more intensely and with the conditions of pleasure, ease, readiness, and promptness. It is true that some of the problems that Scotus raises in the course of developing the two probable accounts of habit have to do with the freedom of the will. However, his aim seems not to be to make a special account for the habits of moral virtue that are in the will, but to make an account that is general.

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20 Perhaps this is a reason for the distinction that Scotus draws in *Coll. Ox.* 7 §5 (quoted above) between goodness as the degree of intrinsic being that something has and the goodness of perfection or actuality that does not admit of defect. In the former sense, a quality that can have a greater or lesser degree of intensity, has more or less being, and therefore more or less intrinsic goodness.

21 *Quodl.* q. 18 §3 (Wadding 12:476), quoted above.

22 See *Ord.* III, d. 15, nn. 38–39 (Vat. 9:493), and discussion in Drummond, “John Duns Scotus on the Passions of the Will,” 62. See also section 5.2.1 above.
6. THE ROLE OF MORAL VIRTUE

enough to include the natural contribution of the habits of moral virtue – insofar as they are habits – while not running afoul of the will’s free mode of action. Thus, even if the habit in question is a moral virtue, the intensity and the conditions that it contributes are aspects of the natural goodness of the act, and do not necessarily have any moral character. Therefore, since moral virtues are supposed to have some sort of role in the moral goodness of an act, it has to be asked what moral goodness is and how it differs from natural goodness.

6.2 Moral goodness

While an agent can be perfected by having what is suitable to it (namely, its proper acts, aimed at suitable objects), the act itself can be perfected by having various suitable conditions. Moreover, as will be discussed below, moral goodness pertains only to voluntary acts (primarily to the free acts of the will but also secondarily to acts of the lower powers commanded by the will). It might therefore be thought that moral goodness is simply the accidental goodness of acts especially as they proceed from the will rather than any other power. Such a view might be drawn from Scotus’s initial definition of moral goodness in his discussion of the issue in question 18 of his *Quodlibet*: “The moral goodness of an act is the completeness [integritas] of all those things which the right reason of the agent judges to be what ought to suit the act itself or to suit the agent in its act.”23 This definition is in line with his account of accidental natural goodness: an act can be perfected, and thus good, by having the circumstances that suit it, and can also be good insofar as it is good for the subject that is brought to second actuality by it. Furthermore, since the will is the rational appetite that freely wills what reason presents to it, the goodness of its acts will follow not just from its being naturally suitable and having suitable circumstances, but in being freely elicited with these circumstances according to a dictate of reason, which is the mode of action proper to the will. Described this way, moral goodness appears to be nothing more than the kind of natural goodness proper to the will as a free power that acts according to reason. Ultimately, however, though such natural perfection is necessary for a voluntary act to be morally good, moral goodness in a precise sense is something more than this, and has to do with the will’s capacity to conform its acts to the dictate of reason.24

23 *Quodl.* q. 18 §3 (Wadding 12:475): “Bonitas moralis est integritas eorum omnium quae recta ratio operantis iudicat debere ipsi actui convenire vel ipsi agenti in suo actu convenire.”

24 Up to this point, my account of goodness according to Scotus does not differ significantly from that in Williams, “From Metaethics to Action Theory,” 332–342. Williams emphasizes that one of the significant differences in Scotus’s theory from Aquinas’s is that Aquinas treats moral goodness as “a particular case or further refinement of the goodness that is convertible with being,” whereas Scotus draws a sharp divide between them (Ibid., 339.), as I will discuss below. In my view, however, Williams overemphasizes the connection between morality and the divine will, and does not explore the status of moral goodness as a relation of conformity between an elicited act and a dictate of right reason.
6.2.1 Moral goodness: freely acting according to right reason

More basic to the account of moral action than right reason, however, is the idea that for an act to be morally good, it must be a voluntary act. All scholastic philosophers agree that unless an act is somehow within the power of the agent, it is not imputable to the agent and the agent is not responsible for it. But if the agent is not responsible, there can be no praise or blame, nor moral goodness or badness; the act will instead be a merely natural occurrence, as morally indifferent as a stone falling downwards. It is also uncontroversial that moral goodness is closely connected with reason; for this, scholastic philosophers had the authority of Aristotle, according to whom moral virtue is not just a disposition to act well, but to choosing according to a right judgment of reason. A morally good act is thus one that follows a correct practical judgment about what ought to be done in a particular set of circumstances.

Scotus incorporates this general conception of morally good action into his account of how moral goodness differs from natural goodness. In what follows his initial characterization of accidental goodness in question 18 of his *Quodlibet*, he makes it clear that moral goodness differs from natural goodness in being not just the natural suitability of one thing for another, nor the suitability to an act of all its attendant circumstances; rather it is the act with all its perfective circumstances as judged by reason to be right, and freely executed by the agent. That is, for an act to be morally good, or to have a moral dimension at all, it must be done by a free rational agent in light of the agent’s own practical judgment. Scotus explains the point by contrasting a free rational agent with a non-rational natural agent: “Some agents do not judge about what is suitable to their acts, nor do they have their acts in their own power; such are those agents without intellect and will; and in that case, what is suitable to the act is determined only by causes that are entirely natural, which incline the agent to action.”

The actions of an agent that acts without reason and free will are strictly speaking not morally good or bad at all, because it is not within the power of such an agent to determine its own acts; rather, they are determined entirely by natural causes that are subject neither to the agent’s

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26 See *NE* II.6, 1107a1-2.

27 *Quodl.* q. 18 §4 (Wadding 12:476): “Aliquod agens de eo quod convenit actui suo non iudicat nec illud in suo potestate sua habet, sicut est agens sine intellectu et voluntate; et ibi vel ex solis causis mere naturalibus determinatur quid conveniat actui, et ex eis inclinatur agens ad agendum.” Scotus goes on to clarify that the judgment must be the agent’s own judgment and the determinant of the act must be the agent’s own will, for it might be claimed that such a natural act nevertheless is determined by a will that conform to a right judgment, since it is God who rightly willed that order be arranged this way; however, such an act considered in itself is still merely natural. Ibid.: “Vel si ultra illud sit judicium alicuius intellectus et motio alicuius voluntatis, hoc non est nisi ipsius Dei inquantum est universalis director or motor totius naturae; et ista bonitas in actu agentis sine intellectu non erit nisi mere naturalis.”
judgment nor to its free choice. Thus, moral goodness pertains strictly to the act of an agent who is able to make a rational judgment about what ought to be done and to will freely in conformity with that judgment. As Scotus summarizes, “There is another [kind of] agent [besides those that act merely naturally] that judges about the suitability of its own act and has it in its own power, namely one that acts through intellect and will, and the secondary goodness of such a complete act is called moral goodness.”

Note on the moral goodness of exterior acts

One important qualification in Scotus’s account of moral goodness should be noted. From the preceding account, it might seem reasonable to infer that moral goodness pertains only to acts of the will. This is because only an act that is imputable to an agent can be morally good or bad; and since only the will acts freely, whereas all the other powers of a human being act either by natural determination or by the determination of a higher power, it would seem that only acts of the will are properly voluntary and thus imputable to the agent. Moreover, only the will is able to freely determine itself to act on the basis of a practical judgment of the intellect, whereas all other appetitive powers either are naturally determined to their acts by the presence of a suitable object (presented by the appropriate cognitive power), or are moved to their acts by a higher power. On both counts, the acts of lower powers fail to be free acts: first, because they are not elicited by the power itself on the basis of reason, and secondly, because the power from which they proceed does not determine itself, but acts in the mode of nature. Thus, since the moral goodness of an act depends on its being done voluntarily and in conformity with a dictate of right reason, it seems that moral goodness should pertain only to acts of the will.

Scotus argues, however, that the acts of the lower powers commanded by the will – which are exterior acts in the sense that they are real effects outside the soul itself – can in fact have their own moral goodness or badness that is distinct from that of the volition that commands them. To show this, he distinguishes between what it is for an act to be free and what it is for it to be imputable. Although the acts of the subordinate powers of a free rational agent are not free in themselves, they

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28 Quodl. q. 18 §4 (Wadding 12:476): “Aliud est agens quod de convenientia sui actus iudicat, et illum in potestate sua habet, sicut agens per intellectum et voluntatem, et bonitas secundaria talis actus integra dicitur bonitas moralis.”

29 This is the initial objection against conceding moral goodness or badness to the exterior acts. Quodl. q. 18 §1 (Wadding 12:474): “Quod non habet rationem voluntarii, non habet rationem boni vel mali actus autem exterior, ut distinctus ab actu interiori, non habet rationem voluntarii, quia non habet quod sit voluntarius nisi ab actu interiori: igitur actus exterior secundum se non habet bonitatem vel malitiam.”
are nevertheless imputable to the agent insofar as they are commanded by a free volition. As Scotus explains:

A distinction can be made about what is imputable. One way, taking it in the most proper sense, that which is immediately in the power of the will can be called imputable, and in this way only willing is imputable, because it alone is in the power of the free will. In another way, whatever is unqualifiedly in the power of the will, though not immediately, can be called imputable. And thus the act of another power, which the will can command to be elicited by the mediation of its own act of willing, is imputable to the will, since the whole ordering right up to that act, and including it, is in the power of the will.\footnote{Quodl. q. 18 §10 (Wadding 12:482): “De imputabili tamen distinguere potest: Quod uno modo, propriissime accipiendo, illud potest dici imputabile quod est immediate in potestate voluntatis, et sic solum velle est imputabile, quia ipsum solum est immediate in potestate libera voluntatis. Alio modo ‘imputabile’ potest dici quidquid est simpliciter in potestate voluntatis, licet non immediate. Et sic actus alterius potentiae, quem voluntas mediante actu suo volendi potest imperare ut eliciatur vel impediere ne eliciatur, est imputabilis voluntati, quia tota coordinatio usque ad illum actum, etiam includendo istum actum, est in potestate voluntatis.”}

In other words, acts are imputable to their agent if they are under the agent’s control. While only acts of the will are imputable in themselves to their agent, since they are immediately under the free mastery of the will, the acts of the lower powers are also imputable, though only indirectly in virtue of being commanded by the will. Moreover, as Scotus points out, an act has a moral dimension that follows directly from its being imputable to the agent:

Imputability brings in two relations: one to the power or mastery of the agent, and the other to something that corresponds to the act according to justice or to the agent; this is so on account of the act itself. The second [relation] follows upon the first, for since the agent is master of his own act, for that reason something is owed to the act and the agent on account of the act. The first relation remains unvaried in itself in a good act and a bad one, but the second does vary, though not formally according to good or bad; however, the presupposed difference between good and bad, which is supposed to be according to suitability or unsuitability, varies according to some correspondence of the one to the other. Good of course is imputable such that it deserves praise or reward, whereas bad is imputable such that it deserves blame or punishment.\footnote{Quodl. q. 18 §9 (Wadding 12:482): “‘Imputabile’ igitur duos respectus importat, unum ad potestatem, et dominium agentis, et alium ad aliquid correspondens actui secundum iustitiam vel agenti; et hoc propter ipsum actum. Et secundum sequitur ad primum; quia enim iste est dominus sui actus, ideo actui et agenti debetur aliquid propter actum. Primus respectus manet non variatus per se in actu bono vel malo; secundus autem variatur, non quidem formaliter secundum bonum vel malum, sed praesupposita differentia boni et mali quae attenditur secundum convenientiam vel disconvenientiam, dictam in primo articulo, variatur penes aliquid correspondentia isti et illi. Bonum quippe sic est imputabile quod ad laudem vel praemium; malum autem sic quod ad vituperium vel poenam.”}
The moral dimension of an act whereby it can be morally good or bad thus follows not precisely from its being free, but from its being voluntary and imputable to the agent. Since the exterior acts of subordinate powers are also imputable to an agent if they are elicited at the command of the will (even if they are not voluntary in the primary sense in which volition is voluntary, i.e. freely elicited), they too can have moral goodness of their own insofar as they are commanded by an act of the will that is itself elicited in conformity with a dictate of right reason.

In what follows, I will not be discussing the moral goodness of exterior acts. For although even commanded exterior acts can be conformed to a dictate of right reason, they are conformed only through an act of the will. Accordingly, when I speak of moral goodness in relation only to acts of the will, I do not mean to exclude the commanded acts of the lower powers. However, for the purpose of determining the exact role of the moral virtues, which are habits of the will, it will be clearer to restrict the discussion to moral goodness in the primary instance as pertaining to acts of the will, with the understanding that the conformity to right reason that constitutes moral goodness can also be extended to the exterior acts commanded by the interior act of the will.

6.2.2 Moral goodness as aggregation of suitable circumstances

So far, it has been established that for an act to be morally good, it must be done voluntarily, and it must be done according to some practical judgment of reason about what ought to be done. However, these conditions are merely basic prerequisites for an act to be morally good; it must in addition be done in accordance with a correct practical judgment about what ought to be done, or as Scotus calls it in his discussion of the fifth way in *Ordinatio* I distinction 17, a dictate of right reason. But for a dictate to be right, its content must be right, since an act done following an erroneous dictate of reason would fail to be morally good. What then does a dictate of right reason consist of? As already noted, it includes all those circumstances which “the right reason of the agent judges to be what ought to suit the act itself or to suit the agent in its act.” In other words, for an act to be morally good, it has to follow a practical judgment about action that includes the circumstances that the act should have.

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32 See Scotus’ concluding reply to the initial objection at *Quodl.* q. 18 §21 (Wadding 12:491): “Voluntarium proprie dicitur quod est in potestate voluntatis tertio modo, et sic actus exterior est voluntarius et simpliciter sicut interior, licet non acque primo sed illo praeupposito.”

33 E.g., *Ord.* I d. 17 n. 92 (Vat. 5:184): “Simpliciter ergo necessarium est ad bonitatem moralem actus moralis quod eam praecedat dictamen completum rationis rectae, cui dictamin conformetur.”

34 *Quodl.* q. 18 §3 (Wadding 12:475): “Bonitas moralis est integritas eorum omnium quae recta ratio operantis iudicat debere ipsi actui convenire vel ipsi agenti in suo actu convenire.”
6. The Role of Moral Virtue

What then are these circumstances of right action? Scotus specifies these circumstances in question 18 of his *Quodlibet*, laying them out in a hierarchically ordered list. First, he notes that one circumstance must be presupposed for it even to be possible for an act to be morally good, namely, that it have a suitable object:

>This determination of the object is the first determination that pertains to the genus of morals, not, however, as a differentia determining it to something within that genus, but as something in potency to receiving a moral determination; for when an act has an object that is suited to the agent and the action, then it is capable of moral determination according to ordered circumstances. For this reason, an act is said on account of its object to have generic goodness, since just as a genus is in potency with respect to its differentiae, so goodness from the object is first in the genus of morals, presupposing only the goodness of nature and being capable of every specific goodness in the genus of morals.

A suitable object is thus not strictly part of what constitutes a morally good action as good; however, an act must have a suitable object in order for it to fall within the class of morally determinable acts such that it can then be specified as morally good or bad. Scotus compares the genus of moral acts to the act of eating. Such acts properly have to do with food, and not with inedible things like stones; moreover, only food that is nutritious for human beings is suitable for us, even if it might be suitable for other animals. Likewise in the case of the will, before we can speak of the moral dimension of an act of volition, the object of the act must minimally be an object that is naturally suited to the will. Since the will is the rational appetite and is naturally ordered to the good as rationally apprehended, Scotus seems to mean simply that for an act to be morally good or bad, the object of that act must be one that includes some *ratio boni*, or aspect of goodness, as apprehended by the intellect. If the analogy with eating is followed through, Scotus will mean that the object not only must be good in some respect in order to be willable at all, but also must be good in the way

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35 He gives a similar account of the perfective ordering of circumstances in *Ord. II d.* 7 nn. 28-33 (Vat. 8:88-90).

36 *Quodl.* q. 18 §6 (Wadding 12:479): “Ista determinatio est prima determinatio pertinens ad genus moris, non tamen differentia determinans ad aliquid in illo genere, sed tantum potentiale receptivum determinationis moralis, quia quando actus habens objectum conveniens agenti et actioni, tunc est capax determinationis moralis secundum circumstantias ordinatas; propter quod ex obiecto dictur actus habere bonitatem ex genere, quia sicut genus est potentiale respectu differentiarum, sic bonitas ista ex obiecto est prima in genere moris prae-supponens solam bonitatem naturae, et capax omnis bonitatis specificae in genere moris.”

37 *Quodl.* q. 18 §6 (Wadding 12:479): “concludi potest quid sit objectum conveniens tali actui ut est talis agentis, puta de actu comedendi, quod convenieter transeat super cibum restaurativum depervidit, non autem super illud quod non est natum esse nutrimentum, sicut lapis vel aliquid huiusmodi, quod licet ali animali esset nutrimentum, non tamen homini.”

38 Note that an object need not be truly good to be an appropriate object of the will; it need only be apparently good, i.e. judged good by the intellect of the agent.
that suits the will. His point will therefore be that the object must be one in which reason can discover a ratio boni.\textsuperscript{39}

Next, on the presupposition that an act has the right kind of object such that it falls within the class of morally determinable acts, it can be specified as morally good or bad by the end to which it is directed. Scotus makes clear that the moral goodness of an act is specified first by the agent’s referring the object to the right end:

The first goodness [i.e. the first circumstance that specifies an act as morally good] seems to be the circumstance of the end, since from the nature of the agent, the action, and the object, it is immediately concluded that a certain act should go with a certain [agent] only as it is ordered to a certain end, and should be chosen and sought for the sake of that end. This circumstance does not belong to the act as it is posited in real being, or not precisely as such, but belongs to the act as it is willed and referred to that end through the act of the will.\textsuperscript{40}

Scotus goes on to add that an act that is perfectly good will also have the circumstances of being done in the right way and at the right time and place; however, he has little to say about these circumstances, which he seems to include only because they are part of the traditional account of how a moral act is fully perfected.\textsuperscript{41} Indeed, he notes that at least one of these circumstances, that of place, need not even be part of what goes into the accidental goodness of an act.\textsuperscript{42}

Scotus concludes that the complete moral goodness of an act requires the totality of all the right circumstances, as dictated by reason, which accompany the act when it is elicited:

It is thus clear concerning the plurality of those things that right reason dictates should accompany an act, that in order for it to be perfectly good it must have (according to the description just given) the totality [integritatem] of all these [circumstances]. Thus, Dionysius says in part 4 of On the Divine Names, “The good is

\textsuperscript{39} In this way Scotus leaves room for exterior acts to have their own moral goodness. The lower appetites are capable of their own proper acts seeking that which is naturally good for them, but if this object is determined by the right judgment of the intellect and sought at the command of the will, the act will be not only naturally good (i.e. it perfects the appetite), but also morally good (i.e. done in accordance with a dictate of right reason).

\textsuperscript{40} Quodl. q. 18 §6 (Wadding 12:479): “In ista autem bonitate specifica quae dicitur bonitas ex circumstantia, talis est processus: Prima bonitas videtur esse circumstantia finis, quia ex natura agentis et actioni et obiecti, statim concluditur quod talis actus non debet competere tali nisi in ordine ad talem finem; et ista circumstantia non est ipsius actus ut in esse reali posita, vel non positi praecise sic, sed est ipsius actus ut volit ist actum voluntatis ad talem finem relati.”

\textsuperscript{41} Cf. NE II.3, 1104b25-27, where Aristotle criticizes an account of moral virtue that does not take into account the fact that particular circumstances play an important role in right action.

\textsuperscript{42} Quodl. q. 18 §6 (Wadding 12:479): “Post circumstantiam finis videtur sequi circumstantia modi agendi qui concluditur ex omnibus praedicibus vel ex aliquaibus corum talis vel talis debere esse. Postea conclaudi potest de tempore quod tali agenti talis actio propter talem finem et talem habens modum, non semper debet convenire, si pro tempore pro quo ordinabilis est ad talem finem vel potest talem modum habere. Ultima omnis videtur circumstantia loci; imo multa sunt actus quorum bonitas etiam complete moralis non determinat locum.”
from one total cause, but the bad is from particular defects.” By “total cause,” he means one that is total \( \text{integra} \) from all the circumstances.\(^{43}\)

This summary, however, is somewhat misleading. Scotus begins by reiterating that the right circumstances are those dictated by reason, but he subsequently speaks of the accidental goodness of an operation as being simply identical with the totality of the circumstances. The dictate of reason thus seems to drop out as an essential element in the constitution of moral goodness.

Note that despite Scotus’s stated conclusion that moral goodness is a kind of sum of all the circumstances, the one that is most important is the end. For while it is the object that puts an act within the realm of moral action, an act is first determined as morally good (or morally bad) by its end.\(^{44}\) Moreover, it is in relating an object to an end that the voluntary character of the act first emerges. As Scotus puts it in the passage quoted above, the circumstance of the end in a morally good act is not simply the end in the same way that any act can be said to have an end, whether naturally determined or free. Rather, Scotus specifies that the end that first determines an act morally is the end “as it is willed and referred \( \text{relati} \) to that end through the act of the will.” In other words, when the will acts, it does not merely will an object in light of an end that is presupposed by practical deliberation; rather, since the dictate of reason includes both the end and the object, the will, in following that dictate, wills both of them freely and joins them together in its act of willing.

Scotus considers one aspect of the will’s freedom to be that it is free not just with respect to its immediate object, but also, inasmuch as it freely determines itself, with respect to the end for the sake of which it wills. Just as the intellect is able to join premises together in a syllogism to draw a conclusion, the will too is able to freely relate the object it wills and the end for the sake of which it acts.\(^{45}\)

It is therefore not quite correct to say simply that it is the end that first makes an act morally good, unless it is understood that the act has this end because the will has freely adopted that end and

\(^{43}\) *Quodl.* q. 18 §6 (Wadding 12:479): “Sic igitur patet de pluralitate eorum quae recta ratio dictat debere convenire actui, quia ad hoc ut sit perfecte bonus debet habere, secundum descriptionem istam positam omnium istorum integritatem. Unde Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus*, parte 4: ‘Bonum est ex una et tota causa, malum autem ex particularibus defectibus’. Tota, inquit, causa, hoc est, integra ex omnibus circumstantiis.”

\(^{44}\) The remaining circumstances of manner, time and place thus only further perfect an act that has already been determined as morally good by the end at which it is directed.

\(^{45}\) On the will as \( \text{a vis collativa} \) that joins means to end, see *Ord.* III d. 36 n. 36 (Vat. 10:159): “Voluntas est propria appetitiva rationis, et ita proprie collativa ad finem quem ratio ostendit; ‘uti’ quippe, quod est referre ad finem debitum, non est actus appetitus sensitivi, sed voluntatis.” Cf. *Ord.* II d. 38 n. 15 (Vat. 8:453): “Conferre per modum iudicii est solius intellectus, sicut et intelligere. Utendo autem sive ordinando referre unum amabile ad alium, est voluntatis; sicut enim voluntas est reflexiva, quia immaterialis, ita et collativa, vel potens referre suo modo.” There is a brief discussion of the will as \( \text{a vis collativa} \) in Hoffmann, “Freedom Beyond Practical Reason.”
referred the willed object to it. As Scotus observes in another text, where he addresses the question “whether every act is good from the end,” even the natural goodness of an act is constituted by the right order of all its causes, including the end:

When an act has all [the circumstances] that are fitting to it and they are proportioned to one another, then the act is good; and when it lacks everything that it ought to have, then it is perfectly bad; and when it lacks something, then it is bad though not in the term, since “the good is from a complete cause,” according to Dionysius. Therefore, an act in the genus of nature naturally has an order to its causes: to the efficient cause, to the end, and to the matter on which it acts; and when it has suitability and the due order to these and is not suited to those to which is ought not be suited, then the act is good in the genus of nature.\[46\]

In other words, it is not just acts of the will that are referred to an end; rather, any operation is constituted in natural existence by the circumstances of agent, end, and object, which are respectively the efficient, final, and material causes, and it has these circumstances whether or not it is a voluntary act. Since even the merely natural perfection of an act is constituted in part by the end to which it is directed, simply having a suitable end does not make an act morally good, for such a naturally perfected act “might perhaps be bad in the genus of morals because it is against some precept.”\[47\] The moral dimension of an act depends instead on its being a voluntary act that is elicited according to a correct judgment by the agent’s own intellect. Thus, while having an appropriate object is the condition for an act to fall within the domain of moral action at all, this does not mean that it is immediately distinguished as morally good or bad by the next ordered circumstance of the end, for that end could be a naturally given end; rather, what is needed for an act to qualify as morally good (and not merely naturally perfected) is that it be done for the sake of an end that is included in a dictate of right reason.\[48\]

Of course, the most basic condition for an act to be morally good is that it be freely elicited. For even if an act of the will followed a correct dictate of reason, one might question whether an act is

\[46\] Lect. II d. 40 n. 7 (Vat. 19:390): “Quando actus habet omnia quae habere eum decent et illa sunt sibi proportionata, tunc est actus bonus; et quando caret omnibus quae deberet habere, tunc est perfecte malus; et quando caret aliquo, tunc quidem est malus licet non in termino, quia ‘bonus est ex causa integra’, secundum Dionysium. Actus igitur in genere naturae natus est habere ordinem ad causas suas; ad efficientem et ad finem et ad materiam super quam transit; et quando habet convenientiam et ordinem debet ad ista et disconveniat ab illis a quibus debet disconvenire, tunc est actus bonus in genere naturae.” Cf. Ord. II d. 40 n. 7 (Vat. 8:469): “Actus autem naturalis natus est convenire causae suae efficienti, objecto, fini, et formae: tunc igitur est bonus naturaliter, quando habet omnia convenientia, quantum ad ista quae nata sunt concurrerre ad ‘esse’ eius.”

\[47\] Lect. II d. 40 n. 8 (Vat. 19:390): “Unde actus qui elicitur a potentia perfecta et habet obiectum perfectius, est perfectior in genere naturae, licet forte sit malus in genere moris quia contra praeceptum aliquod.”

\[48\] Lect. II d. 40 n. 9 (Vat. 19:391): “Actus igitur non habet bonitatem moralem ex actu in se, nisi bonitatem naturae, quia, ut naturalis est, habet finem aliquum quam ut moralis est (sicut patet de actu comedendi); habet igitur moralem bonitatem a fine praefixo secundum rationem rectam.”
truly praiseworthy and morally good if the will were naturally determined to act on the presentation of the intellect. Indeed, it is crucial for the very possibility of morality that the agent be able not to do what reason dictates. Thus, in accounting for the moral goodness of an act, an even more basic condition than that the object be such that it makes an act morally determinable is that the act be voluntary, that is, that it proceed (whether immediately or indirectly) from the will. Scotus makes exactly this point in the *Ordinatio* version of the question on whether an act is good in virtue of the end. There he gives an abbreviated account of the circumstances according to which an act is morally good: “The first ground of [the act’s] goodness is from the suitability of the act to the efficient cause, from which the act is called moral because it is freely elicited. And this is common to good and bad acts, for they are not praiseworthy or blameworthy unless they are from the will.” He thus makes clear what is only assumed in *Quodlibet* question 18, where he says, “It is from the end that [an act] has its most important circumstance, not from the circumstance of the object or matter, for it is from the object that an act is generically good and from freedom that it is moral.” That is, while it is the object that makes an act generically good (insofar as it is one that is suitable to be willed), and it is the end to which the object is referred that is the first determinant of the act’s moral goodness or badness, these circumstances (as well as those of manner, time, and place) have moral relevance only on the presupposition that the act to which they pertain is one that is voluntary and imputable to the agent; it must therefore be either a free act of the will or an act commanded by the will.

### 6.2.3 Moral goodness as a real relation

This entire analysis of moral goodness in terms of the right circumstances of the act is presupposed by Scotus when he discusses whether moral virtue causes the moral goodness of acts. He begins his discussion of the fifth way in *Ordinatio* I distinction 17 by summarizing all the circumstances that contribute to the perfection of a moral act:

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49 It is on the basis of such considerations that Scotus finally concludes that the will is essentially able not to elicit an act, even in the face of an absolutely perfective object; see section 2.2.2 above.

50 *Ord.* II d. 40 n. 9 (Vat. 8:469): “Sed prima ratio bonitatis eius est ex convenientia actus ad efficiens, a quo actus dicitur moralis, quia libere elicitus, et hoc est commune actui bono et malo, neque enim actus est laudabilis, nec vituperabilis, nisi sit a voluntate.” Scotus goes on to give the same circumstances as in *Quodli.* q. 18 and *Ord.* II d. 7.

51 *Lect.* II d. 40 n. 9 (Vat. 19:391): “Ex fine igitur habet maximam circumstantiam, non ex illa circumstantia objecti sive materiae, nam ex objecto est actus bonus ex genere, et ex libertate est moralis.” It might be asked why Scotus does not make this more clear in *Quodli.* q. 18. Perhaps it is because he has already made it clear that the only acts that can be morally good or bad are those that the agent wills on the basis of the agent’s own rational judgment; or perhaps he was leaving room for the discussion of the moral goodness of exterior acts, which in themselves are not free, though they are voluntary and imputable inasmuch as they are commanded by a free act of the will.
It can be said that, just as beauty is not some absolute quality in a beautiful body, but is the aggregation of all [the properties] that suit such a body, such as size, shape and colour, and the aggregation as well of all relations (which are relations of these [sc. suitable properties] to the body and in turn to one another); so the moral goodness of an act is like some ornament of that act which includes the aggregation of the proportion it ought to have to everything to which it ought to be proportioned, that is, to the power, to the object, to the end, to the time, to the place and to the manner and this [should be so] specifically as it is dictated by right reason that these ought to suit the act. In this way, we can say for all of them that the suitedness of the act to right reason is such that when it is posited then an act is good, and when it is not posited, no matter what other respects in which it is suited, then it is not good. For however much an act is directed to a certain kind of object, if it is not done according to right reason that is in the agent – that is, if the agent does not have right reason when he acts – then the act is not [morally] good.\footnote{Ord. I d. 17 n. 62 (Vat. 5:163-164): “Dici potest quod sicut pulchritudo non est aliqua qualitas absoluta in corpore pulchro, sed est aggregatio omnium convenientium tali corpori (puta magnitudinis, figurae et coloris), et aggregatio etiam omnium respectuum (qui sunt istorum ad corpus et ad se invicem), ita bonitas moralis actus est quasi quidam decor illius actus, includens aggregationem debita pro ratione debere convenire actu: ita quod pro omnibus possimus dicere quod convenientia actus ad rationem rectam est quae posita actus est bonus, et qua non posita – quibuscumque aliis conveniet – non est bonus, quia quantumcumque actus sit circa obiectum qualemque, si non sit secundum rationem rectam in operante (puta si ille non habeat rationem rectam in operando), actus non est bonus.”}

These circumstances are exactly the same as those in the texts discussed above: an act that is perfectly good morally is one that is rightly suited or proportioned to the power (it is elicited freely and so is open to praise or blame), to the object (it has an object that is generically good), to the end (it is a right end for the sake of which the object is willed and the act is done), and to the time, place, and manner in which the act is elicited. Since the goodness of an act is constituted by an aggregation of circumstances, it can be compared to beauty, which similarly is constituted by all the parts of the beautiful thing being suitable proportioned to one another.

Yet if the account were left there it might seem that the moral goodness of an act is nothing more than the ordered aggregation of all the right circumstances. However, Scotus goes on to point out, as he does in the texts discussed above, that it is not just having all the right circumstances that make an act morally good, but the fact that it has these circumstances because it was willed in conformity with a practical judgment that rightly dictates that the act ought to be done with those circumstances. Scotus here adds an important element to his account that he does not develop in his other discussions. He no longer describes moral goodness simply as the aggregate of all the right circumstances as dictated by reason; instead, these perfective circumstances are all subsumed under a single dictate of reason about how an act of will ought to be elicited. Thus, when the will elicits an
act, its moral goodness does not consist merely in the complex of all the right circumstances. Rather, the act’s moral goodness, considered precisely, is the conformity of the act to a single, though complex, dictate of right reason. It is true that in order for an act to be morally good, it must in fact have a right object, a right end, and so on; however, as Scotus puts it, “the conformity of the act to right reason, fully dictating about all the due circumstances of this act, is principally what moral goodness is.” The various circumstances in themselves thus constitute only the natural goodness of an act of volition, that is, they are naturally appropriate to a voluntary act and they perfect it. However, what makes the act morally good is that the will elicits it in conformity with a correct dictate. When the act of the will is elicited in conformity with the right dictate it is morally good, but an act that has those same circumstances would fail to be morally good if it were not elicited according to the agent’s own judgment.

Scotus thus gives a more precise account of what the moral goodness of an act is: it is not the aggregate of right circumstances, but a relation of conformity between the elicited act of the will and a right dictate of reason. As Scotus puts it, “For the moral goodness of an act, it is necessary that it be preceded by a complete dictate of right reason, to which dictate it is conformed, as that which is measured is conformed to the measure.” With all the circumstances of the possible act subsumed under this dictate, the moral goodness of the actually elicited volition is thus reduced from a complex relation among various circumstances to a single relation with two terms: the elicited volition and the dictate of reason in conformity with which the volition is freely elicited. Strictly speaking, therefore, the moral goodness of an act is reducible to a real relation between the act of volition and the act of the intellect that is the dictate of right reason. Technically, it is a relation of “measured to measure,” that is, it is a non-mutual one-way relation.

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53 Ord. I d. 17 n. 62 (Vat. 5:164): “Principaliter ergo conformitas actus ad rationem rectam plene dictantem de circumstantiis omnibus debitis istius actus est bonitas moralis actus.”

54 In his account of natural goodness in general and of action specifically, Scotus does not much differ from Thomas Aquinas, who likewise identifies natural goodness with perfection according to a thing’s nature. It is on moral goodness where Scotus differs most significantly. Aquinas is careful to establish a continuity from perfection of action generally and the moral perfection of human action, such that both are explicable with reference to a standard of the perfection that is due according to the nature of the thing or power in question, whereas Scotus draws a sharp distinction between natural goodness and moral goodness, such that the natural goodness in an operation is having the due circumstances, and moral goodness is strictly a relation to the dictate of reason. There is a clear explanation of Aquinas’s account of moral goodness in Gallagher, “Aquinas on Goodness and Moral Goodness.” See especially the discussion of evil (both failure in natural perfection and moral evil proper) as failure to conform to the appropriate measure (a thing’s natural inclination in the case of natural evil, the natural law and the order of reason in the case of moral evil); Ibid., 49–52.

55 Ord. I d. 17 n. 92 (Vat. 5:184): “Necessarium est ad bonitatem moralem actus moralis quod eam praeceedat dictamen completum rationis rectae, cui dictamini conformetur, tamquam mensuratum mensurae.”

56 For Scotus’s account of this third-mode kind of relation, see In Met. V qq. 12-14 nn. 94-107 (OPh 3:637-640) and King, “Scotus on Metaphysics,” 36–38. For a general account of Scotus on relations, see Henninger, Relations, 68–97.
relation in a theological context to explain a creature’s relation to God: a creature has a relation of ontological dependence on God, which is a transcendental relation really identical with the creature’s essence, but there is no inverse relation founded on God. Likewise, the act of the will is the foundation of a real relation of conformity that terminates in the dictate of right reason, but there is not a similar real relation founded on the dictate to which the act of will is conformed.

Scotus’s use of the relation of measured to measure to explain moral goodness can be elucidated by comparison with his very similar account of how an act of the intellect represents its object. Scotus develops this account in question 13 of his Quodlibet, where he examines whether acts of knowing and of seeking are essentially relative. Since such acts are necessarily related to the object that is cognized or sought, it might be argued that they must essentially include a relation. However, Scotus maintains that there is a real difference between a bare power and a power in act, namely, the presence of an operation, which, as a being in the genus of quality, is not a relative but an absolute being. How then can a power be said to be related to its object when it acts? Scotus argues that the relevant relations are founded not on the power itself, but on the operation of the power. He says that when there is an act of cognition, which is an absolute quality that inheres in the intellect, there is necessarily a relation to the object that is “annexed” to that operation:

With this distinction of the act of knowing presupposed, it can be said that the first, namely, an act about an existing thing, necessarily has in it an annexed real and actual relation to the object itself. The reason is that there cannot be such an act of cognition unless the knower actually has such a relation [habitudinem] to the object; this relation necessarily requires two extremes that are actually existent and really distinct, and it follows necessarily upon the nature of the extremes.

57 See the discussion in section 3.1 above, where the issue is whether a habit is really identical with a relation.

58 For a more detailed discussion of Scotus’s views on mental representation, see King, “Duns Scotus on Mental Content.” King suggests that Scotus’s views changed in the course of his career, and that at the time of his death he may have been moving away from the theory of the intentional or “diminished” being that an object has insofar as it is an object of knowledge towards the account sketched out in Quodl. q. 13, according to which mental representation is explained in terms of the relation of the mental act to its object. See also Pini, “Two Models of Thinking.” For a broader study of the issue, focused on Durand of St-Pourçain but also dealing generally with the debate in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, see Hartman, “Durand of St.-Pourçain on Cognitive Acts.”

59 Quodl. q. 13 §1 (Wadding 12:301): “Arguitur quod relativi, quia talis actus non potest intelligi nisi cointelligendo terminum; absolutum autem potest intelligi non cointelligendo aliquid in ratione termini; igitur etc.”

60 See chapter 2 above.

61 Quodl. q. 13 §11 (Wadding 12:311): “Ista distinctione actus cognoscendi supposita, potest dici quod primus, scilicet qui est rei existentis, in se necessario habet annexam relationem realem et actuallem ad ipsum objectum; et ratio est quia non potest esse talis cognitio nisi cognoscens habeat actualiter ad objectum talem habitudinem, quae necessario requirit extrema in actu et realiter distincta, et quae etiam naturam extremorum necessario consequitur.”
Scotus thus reconciles the two requirements – that an act of knowing be an absolute quality and that it be necessarily related to the object that the intellect knows by way of that act – by treating the relation to its object as a real relation that is really distinct from the operation itself and that supervenes on it. Moreover, as a real relation, it will necessarily supervene, for when the two real terms that can stand in a relation to each other are both present, the real relation between them necessarily exists. Scotus distinguishes two different relations between an act of knowing and its object:

Specifically, there seems to be a twofold actual relation in this act directed towards an object. One can be called the relation of the measured, or more accurately the relation of the measurable to the measure. The other can be called the relation of that which, in the character of the medium, formally unites to the term to which it unites, and this relation of the unifying medium can be called, by a more specific name, the relation of the attainment [attingentiae] of another as a terminus, or the relation of tending to another as to a terminus.\textsuperscript{62}

The relation of attainment is the relation by which the cognitive power is united with its object through its operation, whereas the relation of conformity serves as an explanation of how an act of cognition is about its object and represents it. This relation is a third-mode relation of measured to measure: the act of the intellect is in a real relation of conformity to the object, and this relation is founded on the act and terminates in the object known, but there is no complementary real relation founded on the object itself.\textsuperscript{63} Scotus thus answers the objection that acts of the intellect are essentially relative by arguing that the relation to the object is really distinct from the operation itself. Nevertheless, since an act of the intellect must have some object that it knows, the relation is necessarily present: whenever the intellect acts, there is a relation that is “necessarily annexed” to the operation and founded on it, but is really distinct from it.

Though Scotus develops this model of a “necessarily annexed” one-way relation to explain how an act of the intellect represents or imitates its object, it applies equally to volition, as he himself points  

\textsuperscript{62} Quodl. q. 13 §11 (Wadding 12:311-312): “In speciali autem videtur esse duplex relatio actualis in isto actu ad objectum. Una potest dici relatio mensurati, vel verius mensurabilis ad mensuram. Alia potest dici relatio unientis formaliter in ratione medii ad terminum ad quem unit, et ista relatio medi in unientis specialiori nomine potest dici relatio attingentiae alterius ut termini, vel tendentiae in alterum ut in terminum.”

\textsuperscript{63} Scotus concedes that there can also be a relation founded on the object and terminating in the act of intellection, but this can only be a relation of reason, which is present only insofar as someone posits it, whereas the relation of conformity of the intellect to the object is a real relation that exists regardless of whether anyone posits it. See Quodl. q. 13 §12 (Wadding 12:312): “Aliquid mensurari est intellectum de eius quantitate determinata per alium certificari, ut aliud mensurari importat respectum ad intellectum, cui fit certitudo, et ad mensuram, per quam fit certitudo. Prima non est realis, sicut nec scibilis ad scientiam. Secunda est causati non in esse sed in cognosci ad causam in cognosci, et haec est relatio realis, quantum est ex parte dependentiae causati ad causam, quae dependentia est ratione extremorum, et non tantum per actum intellectus comparantis hoc ad illud.”
out. Just as the representative content of an act of the intellect is ontologically a relation of measured to measure founded on the operation and terminating in the object that is known, so the moral goodness of an act of the will is also a relation of conformity that is founded on the act of volition and terminates in its proximate object. In this case, however, the proximate object of such an act is the dictate of right reason, that is, a practical judgment by the intellect, which is itself an operation of the intellect, by which a possible action is made available to the will as one that it can will. Scotus states the point succinctly in his recapitulation of his answer concerning the fifth way:

The moral goodness in an act is the totality [integritas] of all its conditions and circumstances, and it is this chiefly [praecipue] insofar as it is dictated by right reason that those conditions ought to be in the act. Therefore, it is unqualifiedly necessary for the moral goodness of a moral act that it be preceded by a complete dictate of right reason, and that it be conformed to this dictate, as the measured is to the measure.

As discussed above, Scotus explains moral goodness first of all in terms of all the conditions that must be met for an act to count as morally good. More importantly, however, it must have these circumstances as reason has (correctly) dictated them. An act is morally good not merely in having these circumstances rightly ordered to one another but more precisely in being elicited in conformity with a dictate of reason that includes the right circumstances. Indeed, the moral goodness of an act of the will consists precisely in that conformity, which is a relation between the freely elicited act of the will and the dictate of right reason to which that act is conformable. Scotus’s position in this text is finally that moral goodness is ontologically a third-mode relation of measured to measure that is founded on the act of volition and terminates in a right dictate of right reason to which the will conforms its act of willing.

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64 Quodl. q. 13 §8 (Wadding 12:309): “Circa secundum in isto articulo distinguo de operatione, et est distinctio manifestior in actu cognoscendi; potest tamen poni forte in actu appetendi.”

65 Ord. I d. 17 n. 92 (Vat. 5:184): “Ad argumenta illa adducta pro quinta via, quae videntur ostendere quod habitus moralis, in quantum est virtus, est principium activum actus in quantum moralis est, respondet quod bonitas moralis (ut praedictum est) in actu, est integritas omnium conditionum et circumstantiarum, et hoc praecipue ut illae condicione dictantur a recta ratione debere inesse actui. Simpliciter ergo necessarium est ad bonitatem moralem actus moralis quod eam praecedat dictamen completum rationis rectae, cui dictamin conformentur, tamquam mensuratum mensurae.”

66 In the text quoted in the previous footnote, the Vatican editors record instead of praecipue an alternate reading of praecise, which would make Scotus’s point even stronger, so that it is not the conformity that most of all or chiefly constitutes moral goodness, but that conformity precisely although a morally good act will have a suitable object and a right end, it is not these that make the act morally good, but only the conformity of the elicited volition to the act of the practical intellect that dictates all the circumstances that an actual volition ought to have.
6.3 Moral virtues and moral goodness

By explaining moral goodness as formally identical to the relation of conformity between a free act and a dictate of right reason, Scotus has prepared the ground for his answer to the question whether moral virtue is an active cause of the moral goodness of an act, and it is precisely because moral goodness is a relation that his answer is that moral virtue does not actively cause the moral goodness of action. But if moral virtues do not cause moral goodness, do they contribute anything to action besides what they already do as habits? And if they do not play any additional role, how can they be distinguished from habits in general? In other words, what are moral virtues if not merely habits? I will suggest that the order of explanation can be turned around from what the question of the fifth way implies: moral virtue does not explain why an act is morally good, but instead the account of moral goodness forms the basis of the account of what moral virtues are qua moral virtues.

6.3.1 The causation of moral goodness

Scotus’s reason for denying that a moral virtue is the active cause of the moral goodness of an act arises directly from his conclusion about the nature of moral goodness. Immediately after explaining that moral goodness consists essentially in the conformity of the act to a dictate of right reason, he explains:

This goodness has no proper active principle, just as no relation does, especially since this relation follows upon the positing of the extremes [of the relation] because of the nature of the extremes. For it is impossible for some act [sc. of the will] to be posited in being and for [a dictate of] right reason to be posited in being without there following in actuality, from the nature of the extremes, such a conformity to reason; but a relation that follows necessarily from the extreme terms does not have a proper cause other than those extreme terms.67

According to Scotus, a relation is brought about by nothing other than the two terms that are the foundation of the relation and its terminus: the mere presence of these both to each other is enough for the relation between them to exist. Since moral goodness is ontologically a relation, it has no cause other than the co-existence of the two absolutes that are related, namely the voluntary act and the dictate of right reason to which it is conformed. Moral goodness, therefore, considered as the relation of conformity between a voluntary act and a dictate of right reason, comes to be simply

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67 Octl. I d. 17 n. 63 (Vat. 5:164): “Haec autem bonitas nullum habet principium proprium activum, sicut nec aliquis respectus, - potissime cum iste respectus consequatur ‘extrema posita’ ex natura extremorum; impossibile enim est aliquem actum poni in esse et rationem rectam poni in esse, quin ex natura extremorum sequatur in actu talis conformitas ad rationem rectam; relatio autem consequens extrema necessario, non habet causam propriam alien ab extremis.”
because the voluntary act (an act of the will) is elicited according to the dictate (an act of the intellect), and has no cause other than those two acts.68

It follows that the moral virtues can have no essential causal role with respect to the moral goodness of the acts to which they incline a power. Scotus makes this point immediately after explaining that moral virtue is the relation of conformity to a dictate of right reason:

As regards the accidental condition of the act, i.e. its moral goodness, a habit need not have any character [ratio] of a proper active principle, except inasmuch as it has the character of an active principle with respect to the substance of an act that is by nature suited to a complete dictate of prudence. A given habit does incline from the nature of a habit to such an act in itself, and for this reason consequently, it inclines to an act that is in conformity with right reason, if right reason is present in the agent.69

Note that Scotus concedes that a moral virtue does have some role with respect to the act itself that is morally good: that is, it inclines the will to acts that would be in conformity with a dictate of right reason if there were such a dictate. However, even if a moral virtue is an active principle with respect to the act (as the third way maintains), it is not active specifically as a moral virtue, but only according to its general character as a habit.

Scotus thus concludes that, as regards moral goodness and the role of moral virtue as such, it does not matter which of the two probable ways of explaining the contribution of habits is adopted:

This fifth way therefore, concerning the action of a moral virtue with respect to an act insofar as it is morally good, does not need to be dealt with like a way other than those which touch on the substance of a habit and the substance of an act, and to put it briefly, as far as the fifth way as a whole is concerned, one ought to hold the third or fourth way about every habit.70

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68 It should also be noted that this relation is really distinct from the voluntary act that is its foundation. Like the “annexed” relation of conformity between an act of the intellect and its object, the relation of moral goodness will arise necessarily when an act is elicited in conformity with a dictate of right reason; however it is naturally posterior to the act, and its coming to be is naturally posterior to the coming to be of its foundation. Cf. Qwdd. q. 13 §18 (Wadding 12:324): “Si in alio ordine vel genere sit aliquid posterius generatione, non oportet aliquem habitum habere aliquam rationem proprii principii activi, nisi in quantum habet rationem principii activi respectu substantiae actus, - qui actus natus est convenire completo dictamini prudentiae: et ad illum actum in se inclinat habitus aliquis ex natura habitus, et ex hoc - ex consequente - inclinat ad actum qui sit conformis rectae rationi, si recta ratio insit operanti.”

69 Ord. I d. 17 n. 64 (Vat. 5:164-166): “Quantum ergo ad istam condicionem accidentalem actus, quae est bonitas moralis, non oportet aliquem habitum habere aliquam rationem proprii principii activi, nisi in quantum habet rationem principii activi respectu substantiae actus, - qui actus natus est convenire completo dictamini prudentiae: et ad illum actum in se inclinat habitus aliquis ex natura habitus, et ex hoc - ex consequente - inclinat ad actum qui sit conformis rectae rationi, si recta ratio insit operanti.”

70 Ord. I d. 17 n. 68 (Vat. 5:169-170): “Istam ergo quintam viam, de actione virtutis moralis respectu actus ut est bonus moraliter, non oportet pertractare quasi alienum ab illis quae sunt de substantia habitus et substantia actus, - et ita breviter, quantum ad totam quintam viam, oportet tenere vel tertiam viam vel quartam, de omni habitu.”
A habit of moral virtue might incline the will to certain acts such that when the will elicits them they are more intense (according to the third way) and accompanied by ease, pleasure, readiness, and promptness (as explained by the fourth way). But since the intensity of an act and its attendant conditions have to do only with its natural perfection as an operation, there is nothing that moral virtue contributes to action that is not reducible to whatever it contributes according to its general character as a habit. Granted, it can be said that a habit of moral virtue is a remote cause of moral goodness, insofar as it contributes to the natural perfection of the voluntary act, which in turn, as the foundation of the relation of conformity to right reason, is one of the causes of the moral goodness of the act. In that case, however, the moral virtue will still be only an accidental cause of the moral goodness. Moreover, whatever causality a moral virtue might transmit to moral goodness through the act to which it inclines the agent will be only in virtue of its general character as a habit; there is no causality it has specifically as a moral virtue.

6.3.2 The contribution of moral virtue qua moral virtue

By limiting the real contribution of moral virtues to whatever they contribute under their general character as habits, Scotus seems to rule out that they have any specifically moral role. Yet it seems that, by definition, they should in some way contribute to morally good acts not just as acts but also insofar as they are morally good; otherwise, the very distinction of moral virtues from habits in general seems to have been eliminated. Scotus’s conclusion that moral virtues do not cause moral goodness therefore seems to endanger the very concept of moral virtue. How then can the moral virtues be vindicated?

One response might be to insist that, as the often-cited Aristotelian dictum claims, moral virtue does render the act good. For an act done according to the inclination of a moral virtue will be perfected in the various ways already discussed, that is, it will be more intense, and will be done with pleasure, ease, readiness, and promptness. Certainly, when a morally good act has these perfections, it seems to be more praiseworthy than without them. However, even though a moral virtue does contribute these perfective conditions to the actions to which it inclines the will, this contribution is no different from what any habit contributes; that is, the perfections that come from acting according to inclination are not due to a moral virtue specifically as a moral virtue, but to its general character as a habit. Likewise, the intensity of an act and its attendant conditions pertain to the act in its

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71 See chapters 4 and 5 above.
72 Scotus cites the dictum in the initial arguments of the fifth way. See *Onl.* I d. 17 n. 56 (Vat. 5:161).
character as an operation that can have a certain sort of perfection natural to it, but they have no intrinsically moral character. Indeed, an act done according to the inclination of vice will be perfected in this way no less than an act done according to virtue, and so it is entirely possible for an act that is “rendered good” by a habit to be a morally bad act. Conversely, since the will is able to act without any inclination or even against inclination, it is also possible for an act to lack the natural perfections that result from the inclination of habit, yet still be morally good. Scotus makes the point as follows:

It is necessary without qualification for the moral goodness of a moral act that it be preceded by a complete dictate of right reason, and that it be conformed to this dictate, as the measured is to the measure. But that dictate does not have to be from some intellectual habit, such as prudence, nor does the act that is conformed to the dictate have to be elicited by some moral appetitive habit. For a right dictate unqualifiedly [simpliciter] precedes prudence, since it is through that the first degree of [the habit of] prudence is generated, and likewise right choice unqualifiedly precedes the moral habit, since moral virtue in the first degree is generated through it. In the very first act, therefore, someone both dictates correctly without prudence having been generated, and chooses in a morally correct way without moral virtue having been generated.73

For example, someone might judge correctly about what she ought to do (even lacking the habit of prudence inclining her to right practical judgment), but lack the inclination to act as right reason dictates (or even be disinclined to act according to right reason).74 However, since the will acts freely, and its act is never determined by its inclination, she could nevertheless choose to act as right reason dictates without being so inclined, or could even choose against a contrary inclination. The act would thus be done without the perfective conditions of pleasure, ease, readiness, promptness, and pleasure (or even with sadness, difficulty, reluctance, and hesitation, if the act goes against

73 Ord. I d. 17 nn. 92-93 (Vat. 5:184-185): “Simpliciter ergo necessarium est ad bonitatem moralem actus moralis quod eam praecedat dictamen completum rationis rectae, cui dictamini conformetur, tamquam mensuratum mensurae. Sed non oportet illud dictamen esse ab habitu aliquo intellectivo, puta prudentia, nec illum actum conformem dictamini elici ab habitu aliquo morali appetitivo; simpliciter enim dictamen rectum praecedat prudentiam, quia per ipsum generatur primus gradus prudentiae, et ita simpliciter recta electio praecedat habitum moralem, quia per ipsam electionem generatur virtus moralis in primo gradu: tunc igitur in primo actu, et recte, quis dictat sine prudentia generata et recte moraliter eligit sine virtute morali generata.”

74 While the very freedom of the will is enough to explain why it is able to conform itself to right reason even without any habit of moral virtue, it is less immediately obvious how the intellect is able to judge rightly without already having the inclination of prudence. But as Scotus argues in his discussion of the decalogue in Ordinatio III distinction 37, there are certain laws of nature, which are practical principles that are per se knowable from their terms, and are therefore necessarily known; for example, that “God is to be loved above all” is immediately knowable if we understand the terms of the proposition. There are further principles that are not knowable merely from their terms, but which are “very much in harmony with” the immediately knowable practical principles, and were, at least in the state of innocence, “written within the heart of everyone.” Since these laws of nature are knowable by the unaided human intellect as principles that ought to guide action, it is in principle possible for it us to recognize what is right and to make correct practical judgments even prior to acquiring any habit of prudence; see Scotus’s discussion in Ord. III d. 37 nn. 16-44 (Vat. 10:279-291). See also Möhle, Ethik als scientia practica, 330–367.
inclination), and with lower intensity; yet since it is done in conformity with right reason, it is nonetheless a morally good act.

Another point that Scotus raises in favour of moral virtues having an active role is their traditional role in moderating the passions. As Aristotle maintains, a virtuous person will take pleasure in what he ought to and to the degree that he ought, and will not take pleasure in what he ought not.⁷⁵ This is one of the initial arguments that Scotus proposes in favour of assigning an active role to moral virtue: since the object of an appetitive act is the active cause of the passion produced in the appetitive power, the role of moral virtue will be to actively suppress the causality of an object that would otherwise produce an excessive passion.⁷⁶ In his response, however, he explains that moral virtue moderates the passions in a more indirect way:

A habit can make the object less suitable to a habituated power than it would be to an unhabituated power; for just as being up is more unsuitable to a heavy body than to a neutral one [i.e. one neither heavy nor light], […] so something pleasant, but excessively so, would be suitable to a power considered in itself, but that pleasant and excessive [object] will be unsuitable (or at any rate not so pleasant and suitable) to the power when the power is habituated through a habit that inclines it to moderate acts. To that extent, as if by a formal or virtual repugnance to the habit, a habit moderates what is unsuitable or excessive, so that the pleasant [object] does not please immoderately; and from this there does not follow any activity of the habit, just as [there does not follow activity of] dampness in wood, even if it moderates so that fire does not immoderately or violently heat it up as it would a dry body.⁷⁷ That is, a virtue moderates the passions not by suppressing them, but by modifying the state of the will so that an object that might otherwise cause pleasure because it is suitable to the will, is no longer suitable when a virtue is present because the will is now disposed differently. This position depends on Scotus’s explanation of how pleasure arises from the mutual “fit” or suitability of an appetitive power and an external object: if the absolute state of either the power or the object is

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⁷⁵ See especially NE II.3, 1104b4-05a16. Peter Nickl focuses in his historical survey of habits on their role in moderating the passions; see Nickl, Ordnung der Gefühle.

⁷⁶ Ord. I d. 17 n. 58 (Vat. 5:162): “Virtus est moderatrix passionum; non moderatur autem passiones per rationem principii passivi, quia objectum, ex quo est naturalis causa, causat actionem secundum ultimum potentiae suae, - ergo quantum potest, si non impediatur per aliquod contra-agens; ergo habitus impediendo objectum sic summe agere, in reprimendo passionem moderatur eam per rationem principii acti.”

⁷⁷ Ord. I d. 17 n 99 (Vat. 5:189): “Habitus potest facere objectum minus conveniens potentiae habituatae quam esset potentiae non-habituatae: sicut enim gravi magis disposcentur quia esset sursum quam corpori neutro (licet gravitas non esset principium activum descensus), ita potentiae secundum se conveniens esset aliquod delectabile excessivum, sibi autem habituatae per habitum inclinament ad actus moderatos, disposcentur esset - vel non ita delectabile et conveniens - illud delectabile excessivum. Et pro tanto, quasi per repugnantiam formalem vel virtualum ad habitum, habitus disposcentur vel excessens moderatur, ne illud delectabile immoderat delectet; et ex hoc non sequitur aliqua activitas habitus, sicut nec humiditatis in ligno, licet ipsa moderetur ne ignis ita immoderate calefaciat vel vehementer, sicut corpus siccum.”
different, the relation of suitability between them will be different, and so the same passion will not necessarily be produced. A moral virtue will thus dispose the will so that it receives the passion of pleasure only from objects that it ought to find pleasant and only in eliciting acts that are right acts, and objects that should not be sought and acts that are wrong will cause not pleasure, but sadness.

Again, however, this explanation is not specific to moral virtue. As was discussed in chapter 5, this account of the moderating role of moral virtue in terms of the state of the power and its inclination or disinclination to certain objects or acts appeals to the general character of the virtue as a habit.\footnote{See section 5.2.1 above.} Certainly, a moral virtue will not dispose the will to taking pleasure where it ought not, since then it would evidently not be a moral virtue. However, this moderating role does not pertain to it specifically as a moral virtue, since one could well imagine a habit that happens to incline someone to feeling pleasure moderately but fails to be a habit of choosing according to reason.\footnote{Cf. the example of a habit of abstinence in section 6.3.3 below.} Rather, the moderating role of moral virtue is fully reducible to its character as a habit, which has no necessarily moral dimension.

Perhaps then what distinguishes moral virtues, as habits of choice, is simply that they incline the will strictly to good choices, that is, to choosing as right reason would dictate. As discussed above, an act of the will is good if it has the right object, end, manner, time, and place; it is perfectly true that for a habit to be a moral virtue it must incline the will to acting with those circumstances – that is, to having good acts – for otherwise it would by definition fail to be a moral virtue. Moreover, if the nature of the elicited act is specified by these circumstances, then it is quite possible for the will to be inclined to such acts when it has a habit of virtue, since that habit will incline the will so that such operations, considered as absolute qualities, will be more suitable to it than otherwise.\footnote{See chapter 5 above for explanation, section 5.1.2 in particular.}

However, although these circumstances are necessary conditions for an act to be morally good, they are not sufficient. The act must also be elicited in conformity with a dictate of right reason that includes these circumstances as part of what is dictated. It could therefore be argued that the function of habits of moral virtue is to incline the will to acts elicited with the circumstances that right reason would dictate, whether or not the agent’s own reason actually does dictate such an act. Such a situation is easily imagined. Imagine a child taught to act according to precepts dictated by his parents, so that until he reaches some level of intellectual maturity, he merely follows an external
dictate. Nevertheless (assuming the parental precepts are right), he will have acquired a habit of acting as right reason would dictate. However, as Scotus notes when explaining moral goodness, for an act to be morally good, it must be conformed to the agent’s own dictate of right reason.81 Therefore, since the child is not judging for himself what he should do, his right acts are not really morally good, despite the fact he has a habit that inclines him to right action. The real contribution of moral virtue to good action will thus be nothing more than what it contributes as a habit to the natural perfection of the right act. This is exactly the point that Scotus makes:

As regards the accidental condition of the act, i.e. its moral goodness, a habit should not have any character of a proper active principle, except inasmuch as it has the character of an active principle with respect to the substance of an act that is naturally in conformity [natus est convenire] to a complete dictate of prudence. To that act in itself a given habit does incline from the nature of a habit, and consequently from this it inclines to an act that is in conformity with right reason, if right reason is present in the agent.82

According to such a view then, what moral virtue contributes to morally good action is to incline the will to acts that are such that they would be morally good if the agent were following his or her own right dictate.

However, if this is Scotus’s conclusion, it looks as if the contribution of moral virtues to an act is only incidental to the fact that the act is morally good. For it is not precisely the right circumstances to which a moral virtue inclines its subject that make the act morally good, but the conformity of the act to right reason. Indeed, since the will always acts freely and determines itself to its acts, it is possible for it to elicit an act in conformity with right reason even when it has no habit of moral virtue at all; moreover, since moral goodness is due primarily to that conformity, such an act will be truly a morally good one. Moreover, since moral goodness results from the will freely conforming its act to a dictate of right reason, there is no need for either the act of willing or the dictate to proceed from a habit; moral virtue is therefore not an essential cause of moral goodness. Since the will is freely self-determining, it is always possible for us to act rightly even if we are not so inclined; even an act done against inclination but in conformity with reason will be morally good. Furthermore, it must be possible for an agent both to make a correct dictate and to follow it even before he or she

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81 See Quodl. q. 18 §4 (Wadding 12:476).
82 Ord. I d. 17 n. 64 (Vat. 5:164-166): “Quantum ergo ad istam conditionem accidentalem actus, quae est bonitas moralis, non oportet aliquem habitum habere aliquam rationem proprii principii activi, nisi in quantum habet rationem principii activi respectu substantiae actus, - qui actus natus est convenire completo dictamini prudentiae: et ad illum actum in se inclinat habitus aliquis ex natura habitus, et ex hoc - ex consequente - inclinat ad actum qui sit conformis rectae rationi, si recta ratio insit operanti.”
has acquired either prudence or moral virtue; otherwise, there would be no way to explain how the virtues were generated in the first place. If a habit is a virtue and not a vice, the acts to which it inclines the will are such that they could be dictated by right reason, but this inclination is nevertheless what is natural to it as a habit; whatever it contributes to the act itself is distinct from the act’s actual conformity to a dictate of right reason. That is, the moral virtues have no specifically moral causal role with respect to morally good acts.

6.3.3 The identity of the moral virtues

Scotus’s conclusion that the moral virtues play no active role in rendering acts morally good has significant implications for the identity of the moral virtues. If they contribute nothing to action other than what any habit does, how are they to be distinguished from other habits? Part of the answer will lie in the fact that moral virtues by definition incline only to right acts and not to wrong acts. Although the inclination of a habit of moral virtue does not render the act morally good, acts done according to this inclination are what right reason would dictate the agent ought to do, and would be morally good acts if they were elicited in conformity with such a dictate. One might therefore call such acts materially good, inasmuch as they are in fact what right reason would dictate; however, they are formally good only when they are conformed to an actual dictate of right reason.

This way of distinguishing between acts that are apt to be morally good and acts that are in fact morally good is the key to Scotus’s conception of what makes a habit of the will a moral virtue. Immediately after explaining that the moral goodness of an act lies in its conformity to right reason, he applies this explanation to his account of what makes a good habit of the will a moral virtue:

Proportionately to what was said about the moral goodness of the act, it should be said that moral virtue does not add anything to the substance of the habit (insofar as it is a form in the genus of quality) other than a habitual conformity to right reason. For the same habit in a nature, which would be generated from acts of abstinence elicited with erroneous reason in the [agent] eliciting them, when it remains afterwards with right reason would be afterward the virtue of abstinence but before would not be a habit of virtue, as long as there was not the right reason for

83 *Ord.* I d. 17 n. 93 (Vat. 5:184-185): “Sed non oportet illud dicta esse ab habitu aliquo intellectivo, puta prudentia, nec illum actum conformem dictamini elici ab habitu aliquo morali appetitivo; simpliciter enim dictam rectum praecedit prudentiam, quia per ipsum generatur primus gradus prudentiae, et ita simpliciter recta electio praecedet habitum moralem, quia per ipsam electionem generatur virtus moralis in primo gradu: tunc igitur in primo actu, et recte, quis dictat sine prudentia generata et recte moraliter eligit sine virtute morali generata. Tamen prudentia, ex primo actu vel ex aliis pluribus rectis dictaminibus generata, magis inclinat ad consimilia dictamina eliciendi, hoc est ad recte concludendum conclusiones syllogismorum practicorum de omnibus circumstantiis quae debent inesse actui eliciendo; similiter virtus moralis, generata post primum actum, magis inclinat ad eliciendos similes illis ex quibus est generata.”
abstaining; and yet nothing has changed about the habit in itself, but only that it is now joined with prudence and before it was not.84

The feature that distinguishes a moral virtue from habits in general is not an intrinsic feature of the moral virtue. Rather, just as the moral goodness of an act is not intrinsic to the act but is a relation founded upon it, so a habit of moral virtue is a moral virtue only because it is the foundation of a certain relation that is exactly parallel to the relation of moral goodness. As an act is morally good because it is in a relation of actual conformity to a dictate of right reason, so a habit is a moral virtue because it is in a relation of “habitual conformity” to a habit of right reason, that is, a habit of prudence in the intellect that inclines the intellect to right practical judgments.

The example of abstinence serves to clarify the point. Someone might have acquired a habit of abstinence that inclines her to acts of abstinence that happen to be right, but the acts that caused that habit in the first place were not in fact accompanied by any dictate of right reason. She might have acted that way because of a strict upbringing, for example, or from growing up in poverty, but not out of any intention to act rightly; she would thus have acquired a habit that happens to be good, but did not acquire a habit of prudence inclining her to judge rightly about why she should be abstinent. The habit of action is therefore not joined to a habit of rightly dictating, and so fails to be a moral virtue, despite the fact that it inclines her to doing what in fact is right. However, if the habit did come to be joined to a habit of prudence, it would become a moral virtue, and yet nothing about the habit in itself would have changed. Scotus concludes:

Being joined with prudence therefore bestows on the habit, insofar as it is a form in the genus of quality, its being a virtue, when that habit from its nature is conformable to prudence; and in this way, a habit that is a moral virtue means nothing in absolute being [entitate] other than something that in its nature is such, but is not a virtue if it is without prudence.85

Thus, even if a habit considered in itself is such that it inclines the will to actions that are what right reason would dictate, it is still not a moral virtue unless there is a corresponding habit of prudence in

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84 *Ord*. I d. 17 n. 65 (Vat. 5:167-168): “Sicut dictum est de bonitate morali actus, proportionaliter est de habitu dicendum, quod virtus moralis non addit super substantiam habitus - ut est forma in genere qualitatis - nisi conformitatem habitualem ad rationem rectam. Idem enim habitus in natura, qui generaretur ex actibus abstinentiae elicitis cum ratione erronea in eliciene, manens post cum ratione recta, esset post virtus abstinentiae et prius non habitus virtutis, quamdui non fuit ratio recta abstimendi; nec tamen aliquid mutatum est circa illum habitum in se, sed tantummodo nunc coniungetur prudentiae et prius non.”

85 *Ord*. I d. 17 n. 66 (Vat. 5:168): “Coniungi ergo ‘prudentiae’ attribuit habitui (ut est forma de genere qualitatis) esse virtutem, quando ille habitus ex natura sua natus est esse conformis prudentiae, - et ita nihil aliud in entitate absoluta dicit habitus qui est virtus moralis, ab illo qui est talis in natura, et non virtus, si sit sine prudentia.”
the intellect of the same agent, and the habit is in a relation of habitual conformity to that habit in the intellect.\textsuperscript{86}

Scotus’s account of how a habit of the will can be a moral virtue is thus modelled on his account of how an act can be morally good. A right habit of the will is one that inclines the will to acts that are what right reason would dictate. Even if they are not elicited in conformity with a dictate of right reason, and so not in fact morally good, they are apt to be morally good, that is, they would be morally good if they were accompanied by and conformed to a rational dictate that that is what ought to be done. Likewise, the right habit is one that is apt to be a moral virtue: it would be a moral virtue if they were a corresponding habit of prudence that inclined the intellect to dictating right action. Just as an act is morally good because of its actual conformity to a right dictate, so a habit of action is a moral virtue because of its habitual conformity to a habit of judging rightly.

Nevertheless, one might question whether this habitual relation is a real relation at all. Even if it is accepted that the conformity of an act of volition to a dictate of reason is a real relation that is distinct from the act, it is not so clear that the same can be said of the supposed habitual relation. For the actual conformity of moral goodness results from the will freely eliciting an act in light of that dictate; thus, insofar as the operation is conformed to an actual dictate, the relation is real. In the case of a habit, by contrast, there is no elicited act, so it is not clear that there is any real conformity between the appetitive habit and the intellective habit. The two habits do share a causal history, since they must have been caused by acts that were themselves in the appropriate relation of conformity; once generated, however, each is just a habit with its own proper nature that gives its respective power a certain inclination. In the case of elicited acts, it is clear that there is a real relation of conformity: since the will freely determines itself to having an act in conformity with the dictate of reason, that dictate in some sense determines the substance of the will’s act. However, this basis for a real relation of conformity is absent between mere habits: the habit of prudence can remain while the habit of moral virtue is lost, or a virtuous habit of the will might have no connection to any habit of good judgment.

\textsuperscript{86} The connection between prudence and the moral virtues and whether they are mutually dependent was a frequent topic of scholastic debate. Scotus’s own view, at least in the \textit{Ordinatio}, is that while it is impossible to acquire a moral virtue without also acquiring the corresponding habit of prudence (there are therefore as many habits of prudence as there are moral virtues), the reverse is not true, since one could judge correctly about what ought to be done but freely refrain from acting on that judgment, and thus acquire the intellectual habit without the corresponding appetitive habit. On this, see Dumont, “The Necessary Connection of Moral Virtue to Prudence According to John Duns Scotus - Revisited.” For a broader overview of Scotus’s account of the connections between prudence and moral virtue, see Müller, “Der Wille und seine Tugenden,” 431–436.
6. The Role of Moral Virtue

Scotus’s account thus renders the status and identity of moral virtues highly attenuated. It is clear enough, under his ontology of relations, that moral goodness is something real, insofar as the conformity between elicited acts is a real relation. However, it is not quite as clear that the “habitual relation” of conformity between a habit of the will and a habit of prudence can likewise be considered a real being. It could be argued instead that attributing to a habit of the will the status of moral virtue – i.e. its habitual relation to a corresponding habit of prudence – has to be read back from the acts to which it gives the will an inclination. The claim that a habit of the will is in habitual conformity to prudence – and is thus a moral virtue – will thus be an encapsulation of a more complicated statement, namely the following: There is in an agent both a habit of prudence that inclines the intellect to certain right dictates about action, and a habit in the will that inclines it to acts that are naturally apt to be conformed to those dictates, and since the acts of volition to which the latter habit inclines the will can be in actual conformity to the dictates of right reason to which the former habit inclines the intellect – in which case the acts of volition are morally good – the habit of the will is in habitual conformity to the habit of prudence in the intellect, which is to say it is a moral virtue.

6.3.4 Are moral virtue and prudence co-causes of moral goodness?

In the course of explaining that a habit is a moral virtue because of its co-existence with and relation to a habit of prudence, Scotus seems to raise a problem for the conclusion he draws about the role of the moral virtues. He writes the following:

The quality which is materially a moral virtue (which has the character of moral virtue in a complete way because it co-exists with prudence) is related to prudence, when prudence is present, as a secondary cause to a primary cause with respect to the same common effect to be elicited by them; for then prudence is, as it were, the prior cause and the moral virtue is, as it were, the posterior cause. These two causes concurring to elicit an act can confer [tribuere] on it moral goodness, which the secondary habit alone could not confer if it were without prudence or right reason.  

Here Scotus seems to say that the habit of prudence and the habit of moral virtue are ordered causes that together produce the moral goodness of the act to which they jointly incline the agent. Without the dictate of right reason to which prudence inclines the intellect, the act to which moral virtue inclines the will cannot be morally good, even if it is apt to be good. Prudence will therefore be the primary cause of moral goodness, and the corresponding moral virtue will be a secondary cause.

87 Ond. I d. 17 n. 95 (Vat. 5:186): “Illa qualitas, quae est materialiter virtus moralis (quae per hoc complevit et rationem virtutis moralis quia coexsistit prudentiae), se habet ad prudentiam – quando inest – sicut causa secunda ad primam, et hoc respectu eiusdem effectus communis eliciendi ab eis; tunc enim prudentia est causa quasi prior et habitus moralis causa quasi posterior. Istae autem duae causae simul concurrentes ad actu eliciendum, possunt ei tribuere bonitatem moralem, quam non posset solus habitus secundus tribuere si esset sine prudentia vel ratione recta.”
ordered to it.⁸⁸ Scotus thus seems to contradict his own stated view that the conformity of a volition to a dictate of right reason – and therefore moral goodness – has no proper causes other than the two acts themselves. Note, however, that he hedges his statement: he does not say outright that prudence and moral virtue are ordered causes of moral goodness, but only that prudence is the primary cause of moral goodness and moral virtue posterior in a manner of speaking [quasi]. He is similarly vague about their exact contribution with respect to the moral goodness of the act: he does not say that they cause moral goodness, but only that they confer or bestow [tribuere] it on the act.

I suggest therefore that Scotus means to acknowledge that prudence and moral virtue have some contributory role in moral goodness, even if not strictly or essentially as active causes. Suppose that an agent elicits an act of volition in conformity with a correct dictate of reason, and it is therefore morally good. If the agent already has a habit of prudence that inclines him or her to judging rightly and a habit of moral virtue in the will that inclines him or her to acting in conformity with the right practical judgment of the intellect, then the fact that the agent acts rightly (i.e. in conformity with the dictates of right reason to which prudence inclines the intellect) and with ease and pleasure (because the acts of the will are elicited according to inclination, not against it) can be ascribed at least in part to those virtuous habits, insofar as they incline the agent to right practical judgment and to action that is such as could be dictated by right judgment.⁹⁰ In the very next paragraph, however, Scotus reiterates his central conclusion about the causal role of moral virtue:

> That habit [of moral virtue] has no causality with respect to the act on account of its coexistence with prudence, but only on account of its nature, because of which it is a particular quality; and so there should in no way be conceded to the habit any special causality, on the basis of which it is a moral [habit], beyond that which is conceded to it on the basis of which it is this particular habit.⁹⁰

Thus, in speaking of prudence and moral virtue as quasi-causes of moral goodness, Scotus is merely acknowledging that prudence by definition inclines the intellect only to right judgments, and moral virtue by definition inclines the will only to acts that are apt to be conformed to a dictate of right

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⁸⁸ Cf. the text added to the initial discussion of the fifth way. *Ord.* I d. 17 n. 64 adnotatio Duns Scoti (Vat. 5:166): “Respectus in effectu est a duabus causis coniunctis in agendo, nec per formam unius ad se, nec alterius, nec ambarum et coniunctarum in subiecto, sed tantum coniunctarum in actualiter agendo, et sic coniunctarum quod ex dictamine prudentiae habitus movet ad appetendum. Coniunctio ergo talis istorum in actualiter agendo est unde est relatio in effectu.”

⁹⁰ Cf. *Ord.* I d. 17 n. 64, adnotatio Duns Scoti (Vat. 5:166): “Coniunctio ergo talis istorum in actualiter agendo est unde est relatio in effectu; non quod unde moraliter (quia hoc habetur a sola prudentia sine habitu allo movente), sed quod unde moraliter et faciliter et delectabiliter.”

⁹⁰ *Ord.* I d. 17 n. 96 (Vat. 5:187): “Habitus ille nullam causalitatem habet respectu actus ex ista ratione quae est coexistencia eius cum prudentia, sed tantum ex ratione suae naturae unde est haec qualitas, et ideo nullo modo concedenda est causalitas aliqua specialis habitui unde moralis, ultra illam quae conceditur sibi unde est habitus iste.”
reason. Prudence and moral virtue can be called causes in a loose sense of the morally good act (or indeed are causes properly speaking, if the third way of explaining habits is adopted), but this does not mean that they are causes of the moral goodness of the act. Therefore, given the broader context within his explanation of the fifth way, I suggest that the apparently contradictory statement about prudence and moral virtue as causes of moral goodness should be understood as merely a loose way of speaking.

6.4 Conclusion: What role is left for the moral virtues?

From the above discussion, it has emerged that Scotus has left little room for the moral virtues to play any special role in his ethical theory. This result arises largely from his understanding of what moral goodness is: rather than a specific kind of natural perfection proper to the voluntary acts of a rational agent, moral goodness is, strictly speaking, the relation of conformity between an act of volition and a dictate of right reason, and is something over and above the act’s natural goodness. Moreover, since the human intellect naturally has access to the practical principles of natural law, it is always capable of issuing a right directive of what action ought to be done, regardless of the presence or absence of any habit of prudence. Likewise, since the will is essentially free and self-determining, it is always capable of eliciting an act that is conformed to a dictate of reason, whether it is inclined to such acts or not, or is even disinclined to them. Thus, when moral goodness is understood as this relation of conformity to right reason, it turns out to have no other proper cause than the will’s free act and the dictate to which it is conformed; therefore, neither prudence nor the moral virtues play any role in the explanation of how and why our acts can be morally good.

Nevertheless, Scotus does not deny that the moral virtues have some role in human action. A moral virtue will give its subject a determinate inclination to a certain kind of choice, and the choices elicited according to such an inclination will have the various perfections traditionally attributed to moral virtue: they will be done more intensely, they will be done more easily, readily, and promptly, and they will be accompanied by the passion of pleasure. However, as was discussed in chapters 4 and 5, the presence of these conditions are not due to the inclination given by moral virtue as such, but are explicable in a merely natural and morally neutral way in terms of the virtue’s general character as a habit. On the other hand, it does seem to be special to moral virtue that it gives the agent an inclination to right action. In Scotus’s analysis, the morally virtuous agent will be inclined to acts that are constituted by having the right object, by being directed to the right end, and by being done at the right time and place and in the right way; these circumstances (or at least the first two)
are necessary conditions for an act to be morally good, and it can be said that they are what perfect an act of choice as an instance of rational action. However, they are not precisely what makes the act \textit{morally} good; what is crucial for the act to be truly praiseworthy and morally good is that it not merely happen to have these circumstances, but that the act be deliberately conformed to a rational judgment dictating these circumstances. Therefore, even the inclination of moral virtue to acts that are such as to be morally good is also explicable in terms of the moral virtue’s natural status as an acquired habit. It is rather the will’s free capacity to choose rightly that makes the act morally good.

But if Scotus holds in the end that moral virtues have no necessary role in bringing about the moral goodness of acts, why does he labour to keep them in place and to explain exactly how a habit of the will is qualified as a moral virtue? One obvious answer is the force of tradition: it is on the authority of Aristotle that we should accept that there are moral virtues and that they somehow “render an act good.” A more compelling reason why one might want to hang on to the concept of moral virtue is the evidence of everyday observation. It seems amply confirmed both by introspection and by one’s experience of others that it is possible to acquire habits that are not part of our innate constitutions. These might be as trivial as the order in which one puts on one’s shoes, but they can also rise to the level of having moral significance: we have various inclinations that make it easier or more difficult to act rightly, and we can become better at acting rightly by repeatedly acting in the right way. In other words, we can become better people by acquiring habits of moral virtue. Even if, as it turns out, we cannot appeal to moral virtues to explain why an act is morally good, they can form part of the explanation of why someone might tend to act in a morally good way and even take pleasure in it.\footnote{Scotus might in addition have an architectonic motive for maintaining a distinct concept of moral virtue. As I observed in section 5.3.3, a significant difference between his account of charity at \textit{Lectura} I d. 17 and the extensive revision in the \textit{Ordinatio} is that he seems to take much greater care in the later version to distinguish between what can be explained through the nature of a habit and what is due to the infused virtue of charity as such. He seems to be striving towards an account in which the different aspects of habit and virtue are set in a unified hierarchical account in which the roles of natural habit, moral virtue, and supernatural charity are clearly distinguished. The specific role of charity in grounding merit and divine acceptance of our acts (to the explanation of which the account of habit and moral virtue in \textit{Ord}, I d. 17 serves as preamble) is discussed in Dettloff, \textit{Die Lehre von der acceptatio divina bei Johannes Duns Scotus}; Nickl, \textit{Ordnung der Gefühle}, 71–77.}

Nevertheless, with Scotus there has been a kind of hollowing out of the concept of moral virtue. While he does give a careful account of what distinguishes moral virtues from habit in general, their identity is very thin. A habit of moral virtue is distinguished as a moral virtue by nothing more than a habitual relation of conformity to a habit of prudence, and the nature of this conformity is understandable only in terms of the moral goodness of the acts to which it inclines the will, that is,
their relation of actual conformity to a dictate of reason. Moral virtue thus does not help explain moral goodness; rather, the identity of a habit as a moral virtue is itself explained by the moral goodness of action. Moreover, since the status of being a moral virtue is nothing more than a relation, any given moral virtue has no real effects that are not fully reducible to its status as a habit.

However, though the concept of moral virtue has been hollowed out in Scotus’s account, the concept of habit has not been. Rather, in trying to understand exactly how moral virtues contribute to action, Scotus gives a detailed account of what habits are and how they can influence and contribute to action that is grounded in his broader moral psychology and natural philosophy. Somewhat counterintuitively, his naturalistic account of habituation is driven in part by the need to preserve the non-natural status of the will as a free self-determining power, which is nevertheless capable of being habituated and having acquired inclinations, yet in such a way that it remains free. The two probable accounts of the role of habit that he proposes are very different from each other, but share the goal of explaining how a habit can make a real contribution to action in a way that is essentially secondary to the agent’s own causality.

It can therefore be argued that Scotus has made a decisive break from Aristotelian virtue ethics. The real contribution of moral virtues to action has been reduced to what they contribute in a determinate and purely natural way in virtue of their ontological status as habits, while their very status as moral virtues depends on an extrinsic relation, which has no causal efficacy. With Scotus, the moral goodness of action arises instead strictly from the will’s capacity to freely conform itself to right reason; and since the will is a free power, it is capable of acting rightly or wrongly, regardless of inclination. Thus, moral virtue no longer plays an essential role in explaining moral action or in making it possible for action to be truly morally good. Nevertheless, we can acquire habits, and thus have a “second nature” of habitual inclination; if our habits are the right ones and are related in the right way to habits of good practical judgment, we will be inclined to acting as we ought to act. Thus, while moral virtues do not make an act morally good, they do make it easier to act rightly.

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92 I therefore think that Peter Nickl somewhat misstates his point when he concludes his brief discussion of Scotus’s account by observing that Scotus has “hollowed out” the concept of habit; see Nickl, Ordnung der Gefühle, 70. It is not the concept of habit that has been hollowed out, but the concept of moral virtue.

93 Moreover, as I argued in chapter 5, the account in the fourth way of habit as passive inclination seems to be the superior account. While the third way provides a way of understanding how a cause can be necessarily secondary, the fourth way explains why habit is secondary by fitting its role into his broader framework of how causal powers cause.

94 See also the interesting discussion of this question in Müller, “Der Wille und seine Tugenden.” See especially his remarks on how Scotus abandons the agent-centred virtue ethics of Aristotle and replaces it with an act-centred ethics; Ibid., 430.
They are neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for morally good action, but for us, as free rational agents who nevertheless exist as finite natural beings, it is better to have them than not.
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