

## QUESTION 50

### The Subject of Habits

Next we have to consider the subject of habits. And on this topic there are six questions: (1) Are there any habits in the body? (2) Is the soul the subject of habits with respect to its essence or with respect to its power (*secundum suam essentiam vel secundum suam potentiam*)? (3) Can there be any habits in the powers of the sentient part of the soul? (4) Are there any habits in the intellect itself? (5) Are there any habits in the will? (6) Are there any habits in separated substances?

#### Article 1

##### Are there any habits in the body?

It seems that there are no habits in the body:

**Objection 1:** In *De Anima* 3 the Commentator says, “A habit is that by which someone acts when he wills to.” But corporeal actions are not subject to the will, since they are natural actions. Therefore, there cannot be any habits in the body.

**Objection 2:** All corporeal dispositions are easy to change. But a habit is a quality that is hard to change. Therefore, no corporeal disposition can be a habit.

**Objection 3:** All corporeal dispositions are subject to alteration. But *alteration* is only in the third species of quality, which is divided off from *habit*. Therefore, there are no habits in the body.

**But contrary to this:** In the *Categories* the Philosopher says that bodily health and incurable illnesses are called habits.

**I respond:** As was explained above (q. 49. a. 2), a habit is a disposition of a subject that is in potentiality with respect to a *form* or with respect to an *operation*.

Thus, insofar as *habit* implies a disposition with respect to an *operation*, no habit is principally in the body as in a subject. For every operation that belongs to the body stems either (a) from a *natural quality* that belongs to the body or (b) from the *soul* moving the body.

Therefore, as regards the operations that stem from *nature*, the body is not disposed toward them by any habit, since the natural powers are determined to a single effect, whereas it was explained above (q. 49, a. 4) that a habitual disposition is required where the subject is in potentiality with respect to many effects.

By contrast, the operations that are from the *soul* through the body belong principally to the soul itself, though secondarily to the body itself. Now habits are proportioned to their operations; this is why, as *Ethics* 2 points out, similar habits are caused by similar actions. And so the dispositions toward operations of this sort are principally in the soul. On the other hand, they can exist secondarily in the body insofar as the body is disposed and rendered fit to assist promptly in the soul’s operations (*disponitur et habilitatur ad prompte deservendum operationibus animae*).

On the other hand, if we are talking about the subject’s disposition to a *form*, then there can be a habitual disposition in the body, which is related to the soul as a subject is related to a form. And it is in this way that health and comeliness and other things of this sort are called habitual dispositions. Yet they do not have the character of habits completely (*perfecte*), since their causes are easily changeable by their nature.

By contrast, as Simplicius notes in his commentary on the *Categories*, Alexander claimed that there is no way in which a habit or disposition of the first species [of quality] exists in the body. Instead, he claimed that the first species of quality belongs only to the soul. And what Aristotle said in the *Categories* about health and sickness was not said in the sense that these things belong to the first species of quality; rather, it was said by way of example, so that its meaning is that just as sickness and health can be easy to change or hard to change, so too it is with the qualities of the first species, which are

called habits and dispositions.

However, this is clearly contrary to what Aristotle meant. For (a) he uses the same way of speaking in giving health and sickness as examples as in giving virtue and knowledge as examples, and (b) in *Physics* 7 he explicitly posits comeliness and health among the habits.

**Reply to objection 1:** This objection is talking about (a) *habit* insofar as a habit is a disposition toward *an operation* and about (b) those acts of the body that stem from *nature*, but not about © those acts of the body that stem from the *soul* and whose principle is the will.

**Reply to objection 2:** Corporeal dispositions are not, absolutely speaking, hard to change, and this because of the mutability of corporeal causes. However, these dispositions can be hard to change relative to such-and-such a subject—viz., because, for as long as that subject perdures, they cannot be done away with (*non possunt amoveri*), or because they are hard to change in comparison with other dispositions.

By contrast, the soul's qualities are, absolutely speaking, hard to change because of the subject's unchangeableness. And this is why he does not say that health is a habit that is, absolutely speaking, hard to change. Rather, he says that it is "like a habit (*ut habitus*)," as it has it in the Greek. By contrast, he says that the qualities of the soul are habits absolutely speaking.

**Reply to objection 3:** Some have claimed that the corporeal dispositions that are in the *first* species of quality differ from the qualities in the *third* species in that the qualities of the third species are, as it were, coming-to-be or in-motion (*ut in fieri et ut in motu*); this is why they are called *passions* or *passive qualities*. And when they have attained completion, arriving, as it were, at their species, they will then be in the first species of quality (*quando iam pervenerint ad perfectum, quasi ad speciem, tunc iam sunt in prima specie qualitatis*).

However, Simplicius disproves this claim in his commentary on the *Categories*. For on this view the action of heating would be in the third species of quality, whereas heat would be in the first species, whereas Aristotle puts heat in the third species.

Again, as Simplicius reports, Porphyry claims that in bodies a passion or passive quality differs from a disposition or habit with respect to intensification and remission. For when a thing is receiving heat only in the sense of being-heated and so is not able to effect heat, then there is either a *passion* (if it passes quickly) or a *passive quality* (if it perdures). But once it has arrived at the point where it is able to effect heat in another, then there is a *disposition*, whereas if the disposition is strengthened to the point of being hard to change, then it will be a habit—so that a disposition is a certain intensification or perfection of a passion or passive quality, and a habit is a certain intensification of a disposition.

However, Simplicius disproves this claim by the fact that intensification and remission of this sort imply not a diversity on the part of the form itself, but instead a diversity in the subject's participation [in the form]. And so the species of quality are not diversified in this way.

Therefore, one must reply in another way, viz., that, as was explained above (q. 49, a. 2), it is the commensuration of the passive qualities themselves, in relation to their agreement with the nature, that has the character of a disposition. And so when an alteration is made in those passive qualities themselves, viz., *hot* and *cold* and *moist* and *dry*, an alteration takes place *as a result* with respect to sickness and health. But the alteration does not primarily and *per se* have to do with these sorts of habits and dispositions.

## Article 2

### Are habits in the soul with respect to its essence rather than with respect to its power?

It seems that habits are in the soul with respect to its essence rather than with respect to its power:

**Objection 1:** As has been explained (q. 49, a. 2), things are called dispositions and habits in

relation to the *nature*. But the nature has to do with the soul's essence more than with its powers, since it is by its essence that the soul is the nature of such-and-such a body and its form. Therefore, habits are in the soul with respect to its essence and not with respect to its power.

**Objection 2:** An accident does not belong to an accident (*accidentis non est accidens*). Now a habit is a certain accident. But as was established in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 77, a. 1), the powers of the soul belong to the genus *accident*. Therefore, a habit is not in the soul by reason of its power.

**Objection 3:** A subject is prior to what exists in that subject. But since *habit* belongs to the *first* species of quality, it is prior to *power*, which belongs to the *second* species. Therefore, a habit is not in a power of the soul as in its subject.

**But contrary to this:** In *Ethics* 1, the Philosopher posits diverse habits in the diverse parts of the soul.

**I respond:** As was explained above (q. 49, aa. 2 and 3), *habit* implies a sort of disposition in relation to a *nature* or in relation to an *operation*.

Therefore, if *habit* is taken insofar as a habit has a relation to a *nature*, then it cannot exist in the soul if we are speaking about human nature, since the soul is itself the form that completes human nature (*ipsa anima est forma completiva humanae naturae*); hence, on this score there can be a habit or disposition in the body in relation to the soul rather than a habit in the soul in relation to the body. However, if we are speaking instead about some higher nature in which a man is able to participate (*de aliqua superiori natura, cuius homo potest esse particeps*)—this according to 2 Peter 1:4 (“... that we might be partakers of the divine nature”)—then, as will be explained below (q. 110, a. 4), nothing prevents a habit, viz., grace, from existing in the soul with respect to its essence.

On the other hand, if *habit* is taken in relation to an *operation*, then habits are especially found in the soul insofar as the soul is not determined to a single operation but is instead related to many operations—and this, as was explained above (q. 49, a. 4), is what is required for a habit. And since the soul is a principle of operations through its powers, it follows accordingly that habits exist in the soul with respect to its powers.

**Reply to objection 1:** The soul's essence belongs to human nature not as a subject to be disposed toward something else, but as a form and nature toward which someone is disposed.

**Reply to objection 2:** An accident cannot *per se* be the subject of an accident. But since there is likewise an ordering among accidents themselves, a subject insofar as it underlies one accident is understood to be the subject of another accident. And in this sense one accident is said to be the subject of another, in the way that a surface is said to be the subject of a color. And it is in this way that a power is able to be the subject of a habit.

**Reply to objection 3:** *Habit* precedes *power* to the extent that a given habit involves a disposition toward a *nature*, while *power* always implies an ordering toward an *operation*, which is posterior [to the nature], since a nature is a principle of operation. By contrast, a habit that has a power as its subject implies an ordering not toward a nature, but toward an operation. Hence, it is posterior to the power.

An alternative reply is that *habit* precedes *power* as the complete precedes the incomplete and as actuality precedes potentiality. For as *Metaphysics* 7 and 9 say, actuality is naturally prior, even though potentiality is prior in the order of generation and in the order of time.

### Article 3

#### Can there be a habit in the powers of the sentient part of the soul?

It seems that there cannot be any habits in the powers of the sentient part of the soul:

**Objection 1:** Just as the nutritive part is non-rational, so too is the sentient part. But no habits are

posited in the powers of the nutritive part. Therefore, neither should any habits be posited in the powers of the sentient part.

**Objection 2:** The sentient parts are common to us and brute animals. But there are no habits in brute animals, since there is no will in them, and, as was explained above (q. 49, a. 3), the will is posited in the definition of a habit. Therefore, there are no habits in the sentient powers.

**Objection 3:** The soul's habits are the virtues and types of scientific knowledge (*scientiae et virtutes*), and just as scientific knowledge is related to the apprehensive power, so virtue is related to the appetitive power. But there is no scientific knowledge in the sentient powers; for scientific knowledge is about universals, which the sentient powers cannot apprehend. Therefore, the habits of the virtues likewise cannot exist in the sentient parts.

**But contrary to this:** In *Ethics* 3 the Philosopher says that some virtues, viz., temperance and fortitude, belong to the non-rational parts of the soul.

**I respond:** The sentient powers can be thought of in two ways: (a) insofar as they operate from an instinct of nature, and (b) insofar as they operate at the command of reason.

Thus, insofar as they operate from an instinct of nature, they are ordered toward a single effect, just as nature likewise is. And so just as there are no habits in natural powers, so too there are no habits in the sentient powers insofar as they are operating from an instinct of nature.

However, insofar as the sentient powers operate at the command of reason, they are ordered toward diverse effects. And in this way habits can exist in those powers by which the powers are well or badly disposed toward something.

**Reply to objection 1:** The powers of the nutritive part are not apt by their nature to obey reason's command, and so no habits exist in them. By contrast, the sentient powers are apt by their nature to obey reason's command, and so habits can exist in them. For as *Ethics* 1 says, they are called rational to the extent that they obey reason.

**Reply to objection 2:** In brute animals the sentient powers do not operate at reason's command; instead, if brute animals are left to themselves, they operate from an instinct of nature. And so in brute animals there are no habits ordered toward *operations*. Yet certain dispositions in relation to *nature*, such as health and comeliness, do exist in them.

However, since brute animals are disposed by *man's* reason through a certain sort of habituation (*per quamdam consuetudinem*) to do something in one way or another, in this way habits can in a certain sense be posited in brute animals. Hence, in *83 Quaestiones* Augustine says, "We see that the most untamed beasts are deterred from the greatest pleasures by the fear of pain, and that when they have become accustomed to this, they are said to be tame and gentle." Yet the character of a habit is lacking as far as the will's use is concerned, since the beasts do not have control over using or not using [the disposition in question]—something that seems to belong to the character of a habit. And so, properly speaking, habits cannot exist in them.

**Reply to objection 3:** As *De Anima* 3 says, the sentient appetite is apt by nature *to be moved by* the rational appetite, whereas the rational apprehensive powers are apt by nature *to receive from* the sentient [apprehensive] powers. And so it is more fitting that habits should exist in the sentient appetitive powers than in the sentient apprehensive powers, since habits exist in the sentient appetitive powers only insofar as they operate at reason's command.

On the other hand, certain habits can be posited in the *interior* sentient apprehensive powers themselves, insofar as a man becomes good at remembering or thinking or imagining (*homo fit bene memorativus vel cogitativus vel imaginativus*); this is why, in the chapter on memory, the Philosopher says, "Habituation contributes greatly to having a good memory." For these powers are likewise moved to operate by reason's command. By contrast, the *exterior* apprehensive powers such as seeing and hearing, etc., are not susceptible to any habits, but instead are ordered by the disposition of their nature toward their own determinate acts—just like the members of the body, which do not themselves have

habits but instead are such that the habits are in the powers that command their movements.

#### Article 4

##### Are there any habits in the intellect?

It seems that there are no habits in the intellect:

**Objection 1:** As has been explained (a. 1), habits are conformed to operations. But as *De Anima* 1 explains, a man's operations are common to the soul and the body. Therefore, so are his habits. But as *De Anima* 3 explains, intellectual understanding is not an act of the body. Therefore, the intellect is not the subject of any habits.

**Objection 2:** Whatever exists in a thing, exists in it according to the mode of what it exists in. But that which is a form without matter is actuality only, whereas what is composed of form and matter has potentiality and actuality together. Therefore, in what is just a form there cannot be anything that simultaneously exists both in actuality and in potentiality; instead, something like that exists only in what is composed of form and matter. Therefore, a habit, which has potentiality along with actuality and is, as it were, midway between the two of them, cannot exist in the intellect; rather, a habit can exist only in the conjoined entity, which is composed of the soul and the body.

**Objection 3:** As is explained in *Metaphysics* 5, a habit is a disposition by which someone is disposed well or badly toward something. But the fact that someone is disposed well or badly toward an act of intellectual understanding stems from a bodily disposition; hence, *De Anima* 2 even says, "We observe that those who have soft flesh are very adept mentally." Therefore, cognitive habits exist not in the intellect, which is separated, but in a power that is the actuality of some part of the body.

**But contrary to this:** In *Ethics* 6 the Philosopher posits wisdom and understanding, which is the habit with respect to principles, in the intellectual part itself of the soul.

**I respond:** There have been diverse opinions about cognitive habits (*circa habitus cognoscitivos diversimode sunt aliqui opinati*).

There have been those who, claiming that there is a single passive intellect in all men, were forced to claim that cognitive habits exist not in the intellect itself, but in the interior sentient powers. For it is obvious that men differ in their habits, and so cognitive habits cannot be placed directly in that which, being one in number, is common to all men. Hence, if the passive intellect is numerically one in all men, the habits of scientific knowledge, according to which men are diversified, will not be able to exist in the passive intellect as in a subject, but will instead exist in the sentient powers, which are diverse in diverse men.

However, this position is, first of all, contrary to what Aristotle meant. For as *Ethics* 1 explains, it is clear that the sentient powers are rational not by their essence, but only through participation. But the Philosopher places the intellectual virtues—viz., wisdom, knowledge, and understanding—in that which is rational through its essence. Hence, they exist not in the sentient powers, but in the intellect itself. Again, in *De Anima* 3 he explicitly says that when the passive intellect becomes singular things, i.e., when it is brought into actuality with respect to singular things through their intelligible species, "it is then in act in the way that someone who knows is said to be in act," which happens when one is able to operate on his own, viz. by considering something; and "at that time it is in potentiality in a certain way, but not in the same way as before it learned or discovered." Therefore, the passive intellect is itself that in which exists the habit of scientific knowledge by which one is *able to* consider a thing even when he is not actually considering it.

Second, the position in question is contrary to the truth of the matter. For just as the power belongs to what the operation belongs to, so too the habit belongs to what the operation belongs to. But to

understand intellectually and to consider are proper acts of the intellect. Therefore, it is likewise the case that a habit by which one considers exists properly in the intellect itself.

**Reply to objection 1:** As Simplicius reports in his commentary on the *Categories*, some have claimed that since, as the Philosopher says in *De Anima* 1, every one of a man's operations belong in some sense to the conjoined entity, it follows that no habit is in the soul alone, but that every habit is in the conjoined entity. And from this it follows that no habit exists in the intellect, since, as the argument in question continues, the intellect is separated.

But this argument is not cogent. For a habit is not a disposition on the part of an object toward a power, but rather a disposition on the part of the power toward the object. Hence, a habit has to exist in the power that is the principle of the act and not in that which is related to the power as its object. But as *De Anima* 1 says, intellectual understanding is not said to be common to the soul and the body except by reason of the phantasm, and, as *De Anima* 3 says, it is clear that the phantasm is related to the passive intellect as an object. Hence, it follows that an intellectual habit exists principally on the side of the intellect itself, and not on the side of the phantasm, which is common to the soul and the body.

And so one should reply that the passive intellect is the subject of the habit, since the subject of a habit belongs to what is in potentiality with respect to many things, and this feature belongs especially to the passive intellect. Hence, the passive intellect is the subject of intellectual habits.

**Reply to objection 2:** Just as potentiality with respect to sensible *esse* belongs to a material body, so potentiality with respect to intelligible *esse* belongs to the passive intellect. Hence, nothing prevents a habit, which lies in the middle between pure potentiality and perfect act, from existing in the passive intellect.

**Reply to objection 3:** Since the apprehensive powers interiorly prepare a proper object for the passive intellect, a man is rendered capable of understanding by those powers' good disposition, which the good disposition of the body contributes to. And so an intellectual habit can exist secondarily in those powers. However, it exists principally in the passive intellect.

## Article 5

### Are there any habits in the will?

It seems that no habits exist in the will:

**Objection 1:** Habits that exist in the intellect are intelligible species by which one has intellectual understanding in actuality. But the will does not operate by means of any species. Therefore, the will is not the subject of any habits.

**Objection 2:** Because the active intellect is an active power, no habits are posited in it in the way that they are in the passive intellect. But the will is an especially active power, because, as was explained above (q. 9, a. 1), it moves all the powers to their acts. Therefore, there are no habits in the will.

**Objection 3:** There are no habits in natural powers, since they are determined to something by their nature. But the will is ordered by its nature to tending toward a good ordained by reason. Therefore, there are no habits in the will.

**But contrary to this:** Justice is a certain habit. But justice exists in the will, since, as *Ethics* 5 says, justice is a habit according which men will and do just things. Therefore, the will is the subject of some habit.

**I respond:** Every power that can be ordered in diverse ways toward acting needs a habit by which it is well disposed toward its act. But since the will is a rational power, it can be ordered in diverse ways toward acting. And so one has to posit in the will a habit by which it is well disposed toward its act.

Again, by the very notion of a habit it is clear that a habit has a sort of primary relation to the will

(*quendam principalem ordinem ad voluntatem*), since a habit, as was explained above (a. 1), is something one uses when he so wills.

**Reply to objection 1:** Just as in the intellect there is a species that is a likeness of the object, so in the will, and in every appetitive power, there has to be something by which it is inclined toward its object, since, as was explained above (q. 22, a. 2), the act of an appetitive power is nothing other than a certain inclination. Therefore, with respect to those things toward which the will is sufficiently inclined through the nature of the power itself, it does not need any inclining quality. But since it is necessary for the end of human life that the appetitive power be inclined to something determinate toward which the will is not inclined by the nature of the power, which relates to many and diverse things, it follows that it is necessary that there be certain inclining qualities in the will and in the other appetitive powers.

**Reply to objection 2:** The active intellect is only an agent and in no way a patient. But as *De Anima* 3 says, the will, and every appetitive power, is a moved mover (*movens motum*). And so the explanation is not the same in the two cases, since being susceptible to a habit belongs to what is in some way in potentiality.

**Reply to objection 3:** The will is, by the very nature of the power, inclined toward the good of reason. But since this good is diversified in many ways, it is necessary for the will to be inclined to some determinate good of reason through a habit in order for a more prompt operation to follow.

## Article 6

### Are there habits in angels?

It seems that there are no habits in angels:

**Objection 1:** Maximus, in commenting on Dionysius, *De Caelestis Hierarchibus*, chap. 7, says, “It is not fitting to think that intellectual, i.e., spiritual, powers exist in the godly intellects, i.e., the angels, in the manner of accidents, as they do in us and as one thing is in another as in a subject; for any sort of accident is driven away from there.” But every habit is an accident. Therefore, there are no habits in angels.”

**Objection 2:** In *De Caelestis Hierarchibus*, chap. 4, Dionysius says, “The holy dispositions of the celestial essences participate in God’s goodness more than all other things.” But what is *per se* is always prior to and better than what is *per aliud*. Therefore, the essences of the angels are perfected through their very selves (*per seipsas*) with respect to their conformity to God. Therefore, they are not perfected through any habits. And this seems to be Maximus’s argument, when he adds, “For if that were the case, then their essence would not abide in itself, nor would it have been able to be deified *per se* as much as was possible.”

**Objection 3:** As *Metaphysics* 5 says, a habit is a sort of disposition. But as it says in the same place, a disposition is an ordering within a thing that has parts. Therefore, since angels are simple substances, it seems that there are no dispositions or habits in them.

**But contrary to this:** In *De Caelestis Hierarchibus*, chap. 7, Dionysius says, “The angels of the first hierarchy are called Fire-bearers (*calefacientes*) and Thrones and the Outpouring of Wisdom, a godlike manifestation of their habits.”

**I respond:** Some have claimed that there are no habits in angels, but that instead whatever is predicated of them is predicated with respect to their essence (*essentialiter dicuntur*). Hence, Maximus, after the passage that we quoted above, says, “Their dispositions, and the powers that are in them, are of their essence (*essentiales sunt*) because of their immateriality.” And, likewise, in his commentary on the *Categories* Simplicius says, “The wisdom that exists in the soul is a habit, whereas the wisdom that exists in an intellect is its substance, since all things that are divine are sufficient *per se* and exist in their

own right (*in seipsis*).”

This position is partly true and partly false (*partim habet veritatem et partim continet falsitatem*).

For it is clear from what has gone before (q. 49, a. 4) that the subject of a habit is none other than a being in potentiality. The commentators just cited, taking into consideration that angels are immaterial substances and that the potentiality of matter does not exist in them, on this basis excluded habits from them, along with every accident. However, even though there is no potentiality of matter in angels, since there is nonetheless something of potentiality in them (for it is proper to God to be pure actuality), it follows that habits can be found in them to the extent that potentiality is found in them.

Still, since the potentiality of matter is not of the same character (*non est unius rationis*) as the potentiality of an intellectual substance, it follows as a result that habits are not of the same character in the two cases. Hence, in his commentary on the *Categories* Simplicius says, “The habits of an intellectual substance are dissimilar to those which exist here below, but are more like the simple and immaterial species which they contain within themselves.”

However, the angelic intellect is related to habits of this sort in a different way from the way in which the human intellect is related to them. For since the human intellect is the lowest in the order of intellects, it is in potentiality with respect to all intelligible things, just as primary matter is in potentiality with respect to all sensible forms, and so it needs habits in order to understand anything (*ideo ad omnia intelligenda indiget aliquo habitu*). By contrast, the angelic intellect does not stand as a pure potentiality in the genus of intelligible things, but instead as a certain sort of actuality—not, to be sure, as a pure actuality (for this belongs to God alone), but as an actuality with an admixture of potentiality; and the less potentiality an angelic intellect has, the higher it is. And so, as was explained in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 55, a. 1), insofar as an angelic intellect is in potentiality, it needs to be perfected habitually by certain intelligible species for its proper operation, whereas insofar as it is in actuality, it is able to understand certain things—at least, itself—through its own essence and other things in the mode of its substance, as is explained in the *Liber de Causis*; and the more perfectly it understands, the more perfect it is. But since no angel reaches God’s perfection and every angel is infinitely distant from God, it follows that in order to attain to God Himself through their intellect and will, the angels need certain habits; for they are in potentiality with respect to that pure actuality. This is why Dionysius says that their habits are godlike, viz., those habits by which they are conformed to God.

On the other hand, habits that are dispositions with respect to natural *esse* do not exist in angels, because angels are immaterial.

**Reply to objection 1:** This passage from Maximus should be interpreted to be about material habits and accidents.

**Reply to objection 2:** As regards what belongs to angels through their essence, they do not need habits. But since they are not through themselves beings who participate in God’s wisdom and goodness, it is necessary to posit habits in them to the extent that they need to participate in something from the outside.

**Reply to objection 3:** In angels there are no parts of their essence, but there are parts with respect to potentiality insofar as their intellect is perfected through many species and their will is related to many things.