

QUESTION 52

The Growth of Habits

Next we have to consider the growth or increase of habits (*de augmento habituum*). And on this topic there are three questions: (1) Do habits grow? (2) Do they grow by addition? (3) Does each act make a habit grow?

Article 1

Can habits grow?

It seems that habits cannot grow (*augeri non possint*):

Objection 1: As *Physics 5* says, growth has to do with quantity. But habits are in the genus *quality* and not in the genus *quantity*. Therefore, there cannot be any growth with respect to them.

Objection 2: As *Physics 7* says, a habit is a certain sort of perfection. But since perfection implies an end and terminus, it seems that it cannot admit of more and less. Therefore, habits cannot grow.

Objection 3: Alteration can occur in things that admit of more and less; for instance, what becomes more hot from having been less hot is said to be altered. But as *Physics 7* proves, there is no alteration in the case of habits. Therefore, habits cannot grow.

But contrary to this: Faith is a habit and yet it grows. Hence, as Luke 17:5 has it, the disciples say to our Lord, “Lord, increase our faith.” Therefore, habits grow.

I respond: Growth, like other things pertaining to quantity, is transferred from corporeal quantities to intelligible spiritual realities—and this because of our intellect’s connaturality with corporeal realities, which fall under the imagination.

Now in the case of corporeal quantities, something is called large insofar as it attains the appropriate completion of its quantity (*ad debitam perfectionem quantitatis perducitur*), and this is why some quantities are thought of as large in a man which are not thought of as large in an elephant. Hence, in the case of forms we likewise say that something is large from the fact that it is perfect or complete (*perfectum*). And since *good* has the character of what is perfect, it follows that, as Augustine says in *De Trinitate 6*, “In things which are not great in quantity, to be bigger is the same as being better.”

Now there are two ways in which the perfection or completion (*perfectio*) of a form can be thought of: in one way, with respect to the *form itself*, and, in the second way, with respect to the *subject’s participation in the form* (*secundum quod subiectum participat formam*).

Thus, as regards the perfection of the form with respect to the *form itself*, the form itself is said to be *little* or *great* (*parva vel magna*), e.g., little or great health or scientific knowledge. On the other hand, as regards the perfection of the form with respect to the *subject’s participation*, it is said to be *more* or *less*, e.g., a thing is more or less white or more or less healthy. Now the basis for this distinction is not that the form has *esse* outside of its matter or subject, but rather that it is one thing to think of the form with respect to *the character of its species* (*secundum rationem speciei suae*) and another to think of it insofar as it is *participated in by a subject* (*secundum quod participatur in subiecto*).

Accordingly, as Simplicius reports in his commentary on the *Categories*, philosophers have held four opinions regarding the intensification and remission of habits and forms (*circa intensionem et remissionem habituum et formarum*).

Plotinus and other Platonists claimed that the qualities and habits themselves admit of more and less, since they are material, and on this score they possess a certain indeterminacy because of the limitlessness of matter.

By contrast, others claimed to the contrary that the qualities and habits do not in their own right (*secundum se*) admit of more and less, but are such that they are called more or less because of the diverse participations; for instance, it is not justice but the just thing that is said to be more just or less

just. Aristotle touches on this opinion in the *Categories*.

The third opinion was that of the Stoics, and it lies between the first two. For they claimed that some habits, e.g., the arts, admit of more and less in their own right, whereas others, e.g., the virtues, do not.

The fourth opinion belonged to those who claimed that immaterial qualities and forms do not admit of more and less, whereas material qualities and forms do.

Therefore, in order for the truth of the matter to be made clear, notice that what a thing receives its species from must be fixed and stable and, as it were, indivisible (*fixum et stans et quasi indivisibile*); for whatever attains to it is contained under the species, whereas whatever departs from it—whether by going beyond it or by falling short of it (*vel in plus vel in minus*)—belongs to some other species, either a more perfect species or a less perfect species. This is why the Philosopher says in *Metaphysics* 8 that the species of things are like numbers, in which addition or subtraction varies the species. Therefore, if a form, or anything whatsoever, whether in its own right or because of something that belongs to it (*secundum seipsam vel secundum aliquid sui*), receives the nature of a species, then it must, considered in its own right, have a determinate nature (*habeat determinatam rationem*), which it cannot go beyond or fall short of. Things of this sort include (a) heat and whiteness and other such qualities that are not said in relation to anything else, and (b), all the more, substance, which is a being *per se*.

By contrast, things that receive their species from something to which they are ordered or related (*ad quod ordinantur*) can in their own right be diversified with respect to going beyond or falling short (*in plus vel in minus*) and yet remain the same in species—and this because of the oneness of that to which they are ordered and from which they receive their species. For instance, a movement is in its own right more intense or less intense (*intensior et remissior*) and yet it remains the same in species because of the oneness of its terminus, from which it receives its species. And the same thing can be seen in the case of health. For a body attains the nature of health insofar as it has a disposition that is fitting for an animal's nature, for which diverse dispositions can be fitting. Hence, the disposition can vary with respect to going beyond and falling short (*potest variari in plus vel in minus*), and yet all the while the nature of health remains. This is why, in *Ethics* 10, the Philosopher says, "Health itself admits of more and less (*recipit magis et minus*), since the measure is not the same in all individuals, nor is it always the same in one and the same individual; but even when it diminishes (*remissa*), it remains health up to a certain point." Now the diverse dispositions or measures of health are related as what goes beyond and what is gone beyond; hence, if the name 'health' were imposed only on the most perfect balance (*soli perfectissimae commensurationi*), then health itself would not be said to be more or less.

So, then, it is clear how some qualities or forms can grow or diminish in their own right (*secundum seipsam*) and some cannot.

On the other hand, if we think of a quality or form with respect to the *subject's participation*, then we again find that some qualities and forms admit of more and less (*magis et minus*) and some do not. Now Simplicius gives as the reason for this diversity the fact that a substance cannot in its own right admit of more and less, because it is a being *per se*. And so every form that a subject participates in substantively (*substantialiter participatur in subiecto*) lacks growth and diminution (*caret intensione et remissione*); hence, in the genus *substance* there is nothing predicated as more and less (*secundum magis et minus*). And since *quantity* is close to *substance* and *shape (figura)* likewise follows upon *quantity*, it follows that nothing is said as more or less (*secundum magis et minus*) in the case of these things, either. This is why the Philosopher says in *Physics* 7 that when something receives form and shape, it is said not to be altered but rather to come to be (*non dicitur alterari sed magis fieri*).

By contrast, other qualities which are more distant from *substance* and which are associated with actions and passions admit of more and less (*magis et minus*) with respect to the subject's participation. The reason for this diversity can be explained still further. For as has been said, that from which a thing has its species must remain fixed and stable in what is indivisible.

Therefore, there are two ways in which it can happen that a form is not more and less participated in:

First, because that which participates has the species in its own right (*secundum seipsam*). And this is why no substantial form is more or less participated in. It is for this reason that the Philosopher says in *Metaphysics* 8 that just as a number does not admit of more and less, so neither does a substance taken with respect to its species, i.e., with respect to its participation in the form of its species. On the other hand, if it is taken with respect to its matter, i.e., with respect to its material dispositions, then more and less is found in a substance.

Second, it can happen because indivisibility is itself part of the nature of the form, and hence it has to be the case that if something participates in that form, it participates in it with the character of indivisibility. And this is why the species of *number* are not predicated according to more and less; for each of the species in *number* is constituted by an indivisible unity. And the same explanation holds in the case of (a) the species of *continuous quantity* which are taken from numbers, such as *two-cubit* and *three-cubit*, and (b) *relations* such as *double* and *triple*, and (c) *shapes* such as *three-sided* and *four-sided*. And this is the explanation that Aristotle gives in the *Categories*, when, explaining why *shape* does not admit of more and less, he says, “Things that receive the natures *three-sided* and *circular* are, likewise, *three-sided* and *circles*,” viz., because indivisibility belongs to their very nature, and so whatever participates in their nature has to participate in it in an indivisible way.

So, then, it is clear that since, as *Physics* 7 says, habits and dispositions are said in relation to something, there are two sorts of growth and diminution to be considered in the case of habits and dispositions. The first way is *in their own right* (*secundum se*), in the way that there is said to be greater or lesser health (*maior vel minor sanitas*), or greater or lesser scientific knowledge (*maior vel minor scientia*) in the sense that it extends to more or fewer things. The second way is *in accord with the subject's participation*, viz., in the way that an equal health or knowledge is received in one individual to a greater degree (*magis*) than in another, corresponding to their aptitudes, which are diverse either by nature or because of habituation. For habits and dispositions do not give a species to their subject; nor, again, do they include indivisibility in their nature.

It will be explained below (q. 66, a. 1) how this applies to the case of the virtues.

Reply to objection 1: Just as the name ‘magnitude’ is transferred from corporeal quantities to the intelligible perfections of forms, so, too, with the name ‘growth’ or ‘increase’ (*nomen augmenti*), whose terminus is ‘great’ or ‘big’ (*magnum*).

Reply to objection 2: A habit is a certain perfection, but not a perfection of the sort that is its subject's terminus, i.e., that gives its subject the *esse* of a species (*esse specificum*). Nor does a habit include a terminus in its notion, in the way that the species of numbers do. Hence, nothing prevents a habit from admitting of more and less.

Reply to objection 3: Alteration is, to be sure, included among the qualities of the third species. But there can be alteration in qualities of the first species in a derivative way (*per posterius*). For instance, when an alteration occurs in heat and coldness, what results is that an animal is altered with respect to being healthy and being sick. Similarly, when an alteration takes place in the passions of the sentient appetite, or in the sentient apprehensive powers, then, as *Physics* 7 says, what follows is an alteration in the virtues and in scientific knowledge.

Article 2

Is the growth of a habit effected by addition?

It seems that the increase of a habit is effected by addition:

Objection 1: As has been explained (a. 1), the name ‘growth’ or ‘increase’ (*augmentum*) is transferred from corporeal quantities to forms. But in corporeal quantities there is no growth without addition; hence, *De Generatione et Corruptione* 1 it says. “Growth is an addition to a pre-existing magnitude.” Therefore, with habits it is likewise the case that there is no growth except through addition.

Objection 2: A habit is increased only by an agent. But every agent brings something about in a subject that is acted upon (*in subiecto patiente*), in the way that what effects heat brings about heat in the very thing that is heated. Therefore, there cannot be growth or increase unless some addition is made.

Objection 3: Just as what is not white is in potentiality to being white, so, too, what is less white is in potentiality to being more white. But what is not white becomes white only by the advent of whiteness. Therefore, what is less white does not become more white unless another whiteness is added to it (*nisi per aliquam albedinem supervenientem*).

But contrary to this: In *Physics* 4 the Philosopher says, “What is more hot comes from what is hot, without any hot thing being made in the matter that was not hot when the thing was less hot.” Therefore, by parity of reasoning, there is no addition in other forms that grow or increase, either.

I respond: The reply to this question depends on what was said above. For it was explained above (a. 1) that there is one way in which growth and diminution in forms that grow and diminution does not occur on the part of the form itself considered in its own right, but instead occurs because of diverse participations on the part of the subject. And so growth of this sort in habits and other forms does not occur through the addition of one form to another form, but instead occurs through the subject’s participating more or less perfectly in one and the same form. And just as, through an agent that is acting (*per agens quod est actu*), something becomes actually hot—not in the sense that it becomes the form itself, but in the sense that, as *Metaphysics* 7 proves, it begins to participate *de novo* in the form—so, too, through the agent’s increased action (*per intensam actionem*), that thing becomes more hot—not in the sense that something is added to the form, but in the sense that the thing participates in the form more perfectly.

For if it were through addition that one understood growth of this sort in the forms, then the addition would not be possible except (a) on the part of the form itself or (b) on the part of the subject. But if the addition were on the part of the form itself, then it has already been explained that such an addition or subtraction would vary the species, in the way that the species of color varies when something becomes white from having been pale. On the other hand, if this addition were understood to be on the part of the subject, then this would be possible only because either (a) some part of the subject which previously did not have the form now receives the form, as when coldness is said to increase in a man who was cold in one part beforehand when he now becomes cold in more parts, or (b) some other subject that participates in the same form is added, as when something hot is added to what is hot, or something white is added to what is white. However, in each of these two modes, the thing in question would not be called *more white* or *more hot*, but would instead be called a *bigger white thing* or a *bigger hot thing* (*non dicitur magis album vel calidum, sed maius*).

Still, because, as has been explained (a. 1), certain accidents grow or increase in their own right, increase can take place in some of them through addition. For instance, a movement is increased by something’s being added to it, either with respect to the temporal interval in which it exists or with respect to the path it exists in, and yet its species remains the same because of the oneness of its terminus. However, movements are likewise increased because of the subject’s participation, viz., insofar as the same movement can be done either more or less quickly or promptly. Similarly, scientific knowledge can likewise grow in its own right through addition; for instance, when someone learns more conclusions in geometry, what grows in him is a habit of the same knowledge in species. However, the knowledge likewise grows in an individual with respect to the subject’s participation, through intensity (*per intensionem*), viz., insofar as one man thinks about the same conclusions more quickly and more clearly than another.

Now in the case of corporeal habits, it does not much seem that they grow through addition. For an animal is not said to be healthy or beautiful, absolutely speaking, unless it is healthy or beautiful with respect to all its parts. And the fact that it reaches a more perfect commensuration is due to changes in its simple qualities, which grow increased only through intensity on the part of the subject that is participating in them.

Now it will be explained below (q. 66, a. 1) how this applies to the case of the virtues.

Reply to objection 1: Even in the case of corporeal magnitude, there are two ways in which growth can occur. In one way, through the addition of one subject to another, as is the case with growth in living things. In a second way, solely through intensification without any addition, as occurs in things subject to rarefaction (*in his quae rarefiunt*), according to *Physics* 4.

Reply to objection 2: A cause that increases a habit always effects something in the subject, but not a new form. Rather, it brings it about that the subject participates more perfectly in a pre-existing form or that the subject extends itself more fully.

Reply to objection 3: What is not yet white is in potentiality with respect to the form itself insofar as it does not yet have the form, and so the agent causes a new form in the subject. By contrast, what is less hot or less white is not in potentiality with respect to the form, since it already has the form in actuality; instead, it is in potentiality with respect to a perfect mode of participation. And this is what follows upon the agent's action.

Article 3

Does each act make a habit grow?

It seems that each act make a habit grow:

Objection 1: When a cause is multiplied, its effect is multiplied. But as was explained above (q. 51, a. 2), acts are the cause of some habits. Therefore, a habit is increased whenever the acts are multiplied.

Objection 2: The same judgment is made about similar things. But as *Ethics* 2 explains, all the acts that proceed from the same habit are similar. Therefore, if some of the acts make the habit grow, then each of the acts makes the habit grow.

Objection 3: What is similar is made to grow by what is similar. But each act is similar to the habit from which it proceeds. Therefore, each act makes the habit grow.

But contrary to this: The same thing is not a cause of contrary effects. But as *Ethics* 2 says, some acts that proceed from a habit diminish the habit, because they are done carelessly (*negligenter*). Therefore, it is not the case that each act increases the habit.

I respond: As *Ethics* 2 says, similar acts cause similar habits. However, similarity and dissimilarity have to do not only with the same or diverse qualities, but also with the same or diverse modes of participation. For instance, not only is *black* dissimilar to *white*, but *less white* is also dissimilar to *more white*; for as *Physics* 5 points out, the movement from *less white* to *more white* is also like a movement from one opposite to another.

However, since, as was explained above (q. 50, a. 5), the *use* of habits consists in a man's act of willing (*in voluntate hominis consistit*), it follows that just as it is possible for someone who has a habit not to use that habit or even to do an act contrary to it, so, too, it is likewise possible for him to use the habit with an act that does not correspond proportionately to the habit's intensity. Therefore, if the act's intensity proportionately equals the habit's intensity or even exceeds its intensity, then each such act either makes the habit grow or disposes one toward its growing. The result is that we speak of the growth of habits in a way similar to an animal's growth. For not every instance of food that is actually

taken makes the animal grow, just as not every drop of water hollows out a rock; instead, as the food is multiplied, the growth comes in the end. So, too, as the acts are multiplied, the habit grows.

However, if the act's intensity falls proportionately short of the habit's intensity, then such an act does not dispose one toward the growth of the habit, but rather disposes one toward a diminution in the habit.

Reply to objection 1 and objection 2 and objection 3: The replies to the objections are clear from this.