

## QUESTION 54

### The Distinctions among Habits

Next we have to consider the distinctions among habits (*de distinctione habituum*). And on this topic there are four questions: (1) Can there be many habits in a single power? (2) Are habits distinguished by their objects? (3) Are habits distinguished by *good* and *bad*? (4) Is one habit constituted from many habits?

#### Article 1

##### Can there be many habits in a single power?

It seems that there cannot be many habits in a single power:

**Objection 1:** Things that are distinguished by the same thing (*secundum idem distinguuntur*) are such that when the one is multiplied, the other is likewise multiplied. But powers and habits are distinguished by same thing, viz., by their acts and objects. Therefore, they are multiplied in similar ways. Therefore, there cannot be many habits in a single power.

**Objection 2:** A power (*potentia*) is a certain simple capacity (*virtus quaedam simplex*). But there cannot be a diversity of accidents in a single simple subject; for the subject is a cause of its accident, and it seems that only one thing can proceed from a single simple thing. Therefore, there cannot be many habits in a single power.

**Objection 3:** Just as a body is formed by its shape (*formatur per figuram*), so a power is formed by its habit. But a single body cannot be formed by diverse shapes at the same time. Therefore, neither can a single power be formed by diverse habits at the same time. Therefore, it is impossible that many habits should exist in a single power at the same time.

**But contrary to this:** The intellect is a single power, and yet habits with respect to diverse sciences exist in it (*in qua sunt diversarum scientiarum habitus*).

**I respond:** As was explained above (q. 49, a. 4), habits are certain dispositions of that which exists in potentiality with respect to something, either a *nature* or else an *operation* or *end*.

As regards those habits that are dispositions with respect to a *nature*, it is clear that many habits can exist in a single subject because the parts of the single subject can be thought of in different ways, and the habits are defined by the disposition of those parts. For instance, if one thinks of those parts of the human body that are humors, then, insofar as they are disposed in accord with human nature, there is the habit or disposition of *health*, whereas if one thinks of the parts that are similar, such as nerves and bones and flesh, then their disposition in relation to the nature is *physical strength* or *leanness* (*fortitudo aut macies*), and if one thinks of the limbs such as the hands and the feet and others of this sort, then their being disposed in a way appropriate to the nature is handsomeness or beauty (*pulchritudo*).

On the other hand, if we are talking about those habits which are dispositions with respect to *actions* (*ad opera*) and which properly belong to powers, then it is likewise possible for many habits to belong to a single power. The reason for this is that, as was explained above (q. 51, a. 2), the subject of a habit is a passive power, since, as is clear from what was said above (q. 51, a. 2), a power that is exclusively active (*activa tantum*) is not the subject of any habit. But a passive power is related to a determinate act of a single species in the way that matter is related to form, since just as matter is determined to a single form by a single agent, so, too, a passive power is determined by the nature of a single object of action (*a ratione unius obiecti activi*) to acts that are one in species (*ad unum actum secundum speciem*). Hence, just as many objects can move a passive power, so a single passive power can be the subject of acts and perfections that are diverse in species. But habits are certain qualities or forms which inhere in a power and by which the power is inclined toward acts that are determinate in species (*ad determinatos actus secundum speciem*). Hence, many habits can belong to a single power,

just as many acts that differ in species can belong to a single power.

**Reply to objection 1:** Just as in natural things, according to *Metaphysics* 5, the diversity of species corresponds to form whereas the diversity of genera corresponds to matter (for things that are diverse in genus are such that their matter is diverse), so, too, the diversity of objects with respect to *genus* makes for a distinction among *powers* (which is why the Philosopher says in *Ethics* 6, “Things that differ in genus likewise belong to different parts of the soul”), whereas the diversity of objects with respect to *species* makes for diverse species of *acts* and, consequently, of *habits*.

Now if things are diverse in genus, then they are also diverse in species, but not vice versa. And so diverse powers have acts that are diverse in species and habits that are diverse in species, but it is not necessary for diverse habits to belong to diverse powers; instead, many habits can belong to a single power. And just as there are genera of genera and species of species, so, too, there can be diverse species of habits and powers.

**Reply to objection 2:** Even if a power is simple with respect to its essence, it is nonetheless virtually multiple (*multiplex virtute*) insofar as it extends itself to many acts that differ in species. And so nothing prevents a single power from having many habits that differ in species.

**Reply to objection 3:** A body is formed by a shape in the sense that the shape properly terminates it, whereas a habit is not the termination of a power, but is instead a disposition toward an act, which is the ultimate terminus. And so it is impossible for many acts to belong to a single power at the same time, except insofar as the one is included under the other, just as it is impossible for many shapes to belong to a single body, except insofar as the one exists within the other, in the way that a three-sided figure exists within a four-sided figure. For the intellect cannot have actual intellectual understanding of many things at the same time (cf. *ST* 1, q. 85, a.4), and yet it can know many things habitually at the same time.

## Article 2

### Are habits distinguished by their objects?

It seems that habits are not distinguished by their objects (*non distinguantur secundum obiecta*):

**Objection 1:** Contraries differ in species. But contraries fall under the same habit of scientific knowledge; for instance, health and sickness fall under medicine (*medicina est sani et aegri*). Therefore, habits are not distinguished by objects that differ in species.

**Objection 2:** Diverse sorts of scientific knowledge (*diversae scientiae*) are diverse habits. But the same knowable thing belongs to diverse sciences, in the way that, as *Physics* 2 says, both the natural philosopher (*naturalis*) and the astronomer (*astrologus*) demonstrate that the earth is round. Therefore, habits are not distinguished by their objects.

**Objection 3:** The same act has the same object. But the same act can belong to diverse habits of the virtues if it is related to diverse ends; for instance, if an act of giving money to someone is for the sake of God, then it belongs to charity, whereas if it is for the sake of paying a debt, then it belongs to justice. Therefore, it can likewise be the case that the same object belongs to diverse habits. Therefore, the diversity of habits does not correspond to the diversity of objects.

**But contrary to this:** As was explained above (q. 18, a. 5), acts differ in species because of the diversity of their objects. But habits are dispositions with respect to acts. Therefore, habits are likewise distinguished by diverse objects.

**I respond:** A habit is both a certain form and also a habit. Therefore, the distinction in species among habits can be looked at either (a) in the common manner in which forms are distinguished in species or (b) in a manner proper to the distinction among habits.

Now *forms* are distinguished from one another by their diverse *active principles*, because every

agent effects what is similar to it in species.

On the other hand, *habit* implies a relation to something. But all things that are predicated (*dicuntur*) with an ordering toward something are distinguished according to the distinction among the things with respect to which they are predicated. Now a habit is a certain disposition ordered toward two things, viz., a *nature* and an *operation* that follows upon the nature.

So, then, there are three things by which habits are distinguished in species. In one way, they are distinguished by the *active principles* of dispositions of this sort. In a second way, they are distinguished with respect to a *nature*. And in a third way, they are distinguished by their *objects*, which differ in species. This be explained in what follows

**Reply to objection 1:** In distinguishing powers, or even habits, what needs to be thought about is not the object taken materially (*non est considerandum ipsum obiectum materialiter*), but the notion (*ratio*) of the object as differing in species or even in genus.

Now even though contraries differ in species by a diversity among *things* (*differant diversitate rerum*), it is the same *notion* (*ratio*) by which one has cognition of the two of them, since the one contrary is known through the other. And so insofar as contraries agree in a single notion by which one has cognition of them (*in una ratione cognoscibilis*), they belong to the same cognitive habit.

**Reply to objection 2:** The natural philosopher demonstrates that the earth is round through one middle term and the astronomer demonstrates it through another middle term. For the astronomer demonstrates it through a mathematical middle term, e.g., through the shapes of eclipses or something else of this sort, whereas the natural philosopher demonstrates it through a natural middle term, e.g., through the movement of heavy things toward the middle [of the earth] or something else of this sort. Now as *Posterior Analytics* 1 says, the whole power of a demonstration, which is “a syllogism producing scientific knowledge (*sylogismus faciens scire*),” depends on the middle term. And so diverse middle terms are like diverse active principles by which the habits of scientific knowledge are diversified.

**Reply to objection 3:** As the Philosopher says in *Physics* 2 and *Ethics* 7, in practical matters the end is like a principle in demonstrative matters. And so a diversity of ends diversifies the virtues in the same way that a diversity of active principles does. Again, as is clear from what was said above (q. 18, a. 6 and q. 19, a. 2, and q. 34, a. 4), the ends themselves are objects of interior acts, which are especially relevant to the virtues.

### Article 3

#### Are habits distinguished by *good* and *bad*?

It seems that habits are not distinguished by *good* (*bonum*) and *bad* (*malum*):

**Objection 1:** *Good* and *bad* are contraries. But as was established above (a. 2), contraries fall under the same habit (*idem habitus est contrariorum*). Therefore, habits are not distinguished by *good* and *bad*.

**Objection 2:** *Good* is convertible with *being* (*ens*), and so, as is clear from the Philosopher in *Topics* 4, since *good* is common to all things, it cannot be taken as the difference of any species. Similarly, since *bad* is a privation and a non-being, it cannot be the difference of any being. Therefore, habits cannot be distinguished in species by *good* and *bad*.

**Objection 3:** There can be diverse bad habits with respect to the same object, e.g., intemperance and insensibility with respect to sense desires (*circa concupiscentias*) and, similarly, as is clear from the Philosopher in *Ethics* 7, there can be many good habits with respect to the same object, e.g., human virtue and heroic or divine virtue. Therefore, habits are not distinguished by *good* and *bad*.

**But contrary to this:** A good habit is contrary to a bad habit in the sense that virtue is contrary to

vice. But contraries are diverse in species. Therefore, habits differ in species with respect to the differences *good* and *bad*.

**I respond:** As has been explained (a. 2), habits are distinguished in species not only with respect to their objects and active principles, but also in relation to a nature. This happens in two ways:

In one way, according to the habit's appropriateness for a nature (*secundum convenientiam ad naturam*) or according to its inappropriateness for it as well. And it is in this way that good and bad habits are distinguished in species. For a habit is called good when it disposes one to an act that is appropriate for the agent's nature, whereas a habit is called bad when it disposes one to an act that is inappropriate for the nature. For instance, acts of the virtues are appropriate for human nature because they are in accord with reason, whereas acts of the vices are discordant with human nature because they are contrary to reason. And so it is clear that habits are distinguished in species by the differences *good* and *bad*.

In the second way, habits are distinguished with respect to nature by the fact that the one habit disposes one to an act that is appropriate for a lower nature, whereas another habit disposes one to an act that is appropriate for a higher nature. And it is in this way that human virtue, which disposes one to an act appropriate for human nature, is distinguished from divine or heroic virtue, which disposes one to an act appropriate for some higher nature.

**Reply to objection 1:** There can be a single habit with respect to contraries to the extent that the contraries agree in a single notion, and yet it never happens that habits belonging to contraries are one in species. For contrariety among habits corresponds to contrary notions (*est secundum contrarias rationes*). And so habits are distinguished with respect to *good* and *bad* insofar as the one habit is good and the other is bad, but not because the one is a habit with respect to something good and the other is a habit with respect to something bad.

**Reply to objection 2:** It is not *good* insofar as it is common to every entity that is the difference constituting a species of habit, but rather a certain determinate *good*, which has to do with appropriateness for a determinate nature, viz., human nature. Similarly, *bad* as a difference constitutive of a habit is not a pure privation, but is instead something determinate that conflicts with a determinate nature (*repugnans determinatae naturae*).

**Reply to objection 3:** As has been explained, the many good habits that relate to the same thing in species are distinguished from one another by their appropriateness for diverse natures. On the other hand, the many bad habits with respect to doing the same thing are distinguished by their diverse types of conflict with what accords with the nature, just as many diverse vices with respect to the same matter are contrary to a single virtue.

#### Article 4

##### Is one habit constituted from many habits?

It seems that one habit is constituted from many habits:

**Objection 1:** If a thing's generation is completed successively, and not all at once, then it seems to be constituted from many parts. But as was established above (q. 51, a. 3), the generation of a habit takes place successively through many acts and not all at once. Therefore, one habit is constituted from many habits.

**Objection 2:** A whole is constituted from its parts. But many parts are assigned to a single habit, in the way that Tully posits many parts of fortitude and temperance and the other virtues. Therefore, one habit is constituted from many habits.

**Objection 3:** Scientific knowledge can be had, both actually and habitually, with respect to just a

single conclusion. But there are many conclusions that belong to an entire science, e.g., to geometry or arithmetic. Therefore, one habit is constituted from many habits.

**But contrary to this:** Since a habit is a simple quality, it is a simple form. But no simple form is constituted from many forms. Therefore, it is not the case that one habit is constituted from many habits.

**I respond:** A habit that is ordered toward an operation (which is the sort of habit we mainly have in mind here) is the perfection of a power. But every perfection is proportioned to the thing perfected. Hence, just as a power, even though it is one, extends itself to many things insofar as those things agree in some one thing, i.e., in some generic type of object (*in generali quadam ratione obiecti*), so, too, as is clear from what was said above (aa. 2 and 3), a habit extends itself to many things insofar as it is ordered toward some one thing, e.g., to one specific type of object, or one nature, or one principle.

Thus, if we consider a habit with respect to the things to which it extends itself, then we find a certain multiplicity in it. But because this multiplicity is ordered toward some one thing to which the habit is principally related, it follows that the habit is a simple quality and not constituted from many habits, even if it does extend itself to many things. For a single habit extends itself to many things only in relation to some one thing, from which it has its oneness.

**Reply to objection 1:** Successiveness in the generation of a habit occurs not because one part of the habit is generated after another part, but because the subject does not immediately attain to a disposition that is firm and hard to change, and because at first the disposition begins to exist in the subject in an incomplete way (*imperfecte*) and then is gradually brought to completion (*paulatim perficitur*)—just as is the case with other qualities as well.

**Reply to objection 2:** As will be explained below (q. 57, a. 6 and *ST* 2-2, q. 48), the parts that are assigned to the individual cardinal virtues are not *integral* parts, from which a whole is constituted, but *subjective* parts or *potential* parts.

**Reply to objection 3:** Someone who, through a demonstration, acquires the scientific knowledge of a single conclusion in a given science does, to be sure, have a habit, though he has it in an incomplete way. On the other hand, when he acquires through a demonstration the scientific knowledge of another conclusion, it is not the case that an additional habit is generated in him; instead, the habit which previously existed in him becomes more complete (*perfectior*) in the sense that it extends itself to more things. For the conclusions and demonstrations of a single science are ordered, and one is derived from another.