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Pratical Ignorance in Moral Actions

INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM

In the third book of his *Ethics* Aristotle writes: " Now every wicked man is ignorant of what he ought to do and what he ought to abstain from, and it is by reason of error of this kind that men become unjust and in general bad." [1] By this statement he seems to agree with Socrates who identified virtue with science and held that ignorance was the sole cause of sin in man.[2] Yet later on in the seventh book, [3] after relating Socrates's opinion that no one acts contrary to what is best knowingly, but through ignorance, he rejects it on the ground that it is at variance with plain facts. And so it is obviously, for as a general rule men who sin through passion know they are doing wrong, and more so when they sin from malice. And for that matter the law holds them to be blameworthy and punishable.

Besides, he himself defines the incontinent man as one who " knowing that what he does is bad, does it as a result of passion, " [4] and the intemperate man as one who " is led on in accordance with his own choice. " [5]

Furthermore, if all sins were due to ignorance, there would be no point in distinguishing, as Aristotle himself and all the Scholastics do, between sins committed through ignorance on the one hand, and sins caused by passion or habit on the other hand. As Saint Thomas remarks in his *De Malo:* " . . . It is commonly held by all that some sins are committed out of weakness; these would not be distinguished from sins of ignorance unless it happened that someone knowingly sin from weakness." [6]

Again, it is not easy to see how the above statement of Aristotle fits in with his doctrine on the voluntary, a property of human actions. According to him " the voluntary would seem to be that of which the moving principle is in the agent himself, he being aware of the particular circumstances of the action, " as opposed to the involuntary, " which is done under compulsion or by reason of ignorance. " [7] If, then, sin is voluntary, as is commonly admitted, and if knowledge belongs to the very definition of the voluntary, there would appear to be no escaping the fact that Aristotle contradicts both himself and the truth when

1. ARISTOTLE, *The Works of Aristotle*, trans. into English under the editorship of W. D. Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), Vol. IX, *Ethica Nicomachea*, III, chap.1, 1110b28-30.
2. This is the opinion of Plato as voiced by Socrates. *The Dialogues of Plato*, trans. B. JEWETT (New York, Random House), Vol. I, *Laches* 190. In his *Ethics* Aristotle always ascribes it to the real Socrates and not to Plato.
3. Chap.2, 1145b26-29.
4. *Ethics*, VII, chap.1, 1145b12-13.
5. *Ibid.*, chap.3, 1146b23.
6. SAINT THOMAS, *Quaestiones disputatae*, Turin: Marietti, 1942). *De Malo*, q.3, a.9. The translation is ours.
7. *Ethics*, III, chap.1, 1111a21-23.

asserting universally that " every wicked man is ignorant of what he ought to do and what he ought to abstain from. "

One might object here that this contradiction is solely of our own making and cannot be honestly laid at Aristotle's door. Indeed, in the very chapter from which we extracted the text cited at the beginning, he expressly distinguishes between acting evilly *through* ignorance and *in* ignorance. In the first case the evil action is due to ignorance as its cause, and hence " is not voluntary, " [1] whereas in the second case it is caused not by ignorance, but by some passion or the will, ignorance being somehow only concomitant with it. To quote his own words:

> Acting by reason of ignorance seems also to be different from acting in ignorance; for the man who is drunk or in a rage is thought to act as a result not of ignorance but of one of the causes mentioned, yet not knowingly, but *in* ignorance.[2]

And it is then, and only then, that he refers to all wicked men as being ignorant of what they ought to do and refrain from doing. Therefore, one must not interpret this statement as meaning that all wicked men act *through* ignorance, but that all wicked men, while acting through passion or malice, are ignorant of what they are doing. As Saint Thomas's comment runs: " . . . Every wicked man acts not on account of his ignorance, but not knowing in particular what good he ought to do, and from what evils he ought to refrain. " [3]

However, this distinction seems entirely beside the point, for the fact still remains that Aristotle holds here, in the third book, that a man who is drunk or in a rage acts " not knowingly, " whereas in the seventh book, as has been previously remarked, he says that the incontinent man does things " knowing that which he does is evil, " and the intemperate man yields to his desires " in accordance with his own choice. " Moreover, if knowledge is of the very nature of the voluntary, it would not seem to matter much, so far as the voluntariness of the act is concerned, whether a man does wrong through or in ignorance, since in both cases he actually does not know what he is doing.

Aristotle also distinguishes, in the same chapter of the third book, between not knowing what ought to be done or avoided, and not knowing the circumstances of the act.[4] For instance, one who does not know that fornication, as such, or this particular act of fornication, is evil and must be avoided, cannot be said to commit fornication involuntarily, and is, therefore, blameworthy. On the other hand, if one, actually knowing that fornication in general and in particular is evil and must be avoided, is only ignorant of the particular circumstances of the act, he is said to commit fornication involuntarily. But this distinction, far from being an adequate answer to our problem, rather makes it more difficult. Indeed, the one who does not know that fornication in general and in particular

1. *Ibid.*, 1110b16.
2. *Ibid.*, 1110b24-27.
3. Saint Thomas, *In decem libros Ethicorum Aristotelis ad Nicomachum expositio*, (ed. Pirotta, Turin: Marietti, 1934). Bk.III, lect.3, n.410. The translation is ours.
4. Chap.1, 1110b30-1111a2.

is evil and must be avoided, would seem to be more ignorant than the one who, though not knowing the circumstances of the act, nevertheless knows in general and in particular that fornication is evil and must be avoided. And yet the former is said to sin voluntarily, but not the latter.

However, the truth of the matter is that every sinner *is ignorant* of what he ought to do or refrain from doing, and yet *knows* what he does to be evil. In the seventh book of the *Ethics* Aristotle shows how this is possible with regard to sins of passion or incontinence. But sins of malice are no exception, as we shall prove later on with texts from Saint Thomas and his commentators. And our intention is precisely to inquire into the nature of ignorance common to all sins, usually called practical ignorance or ignorance of choice, and to show how it can exist in the sinner together with the knowledge required by sin as a voluntary act.

For that purpose, we think it well to proceed as follows. With regard to the nature of practical ignorance in general, we shall endeavour first to make good the statement of Aristotle by showing that all sin *necessarily* implies some ignorance. Secondly, we shall prove that this ignorance is a practical, not a speculative one. And thirdly, that it is the effect of sin, rather than its cause.

Then, in the second part, we shall consider sin as it arises from passion, malice, and negligence, in order to show the compatibility of practical ignorance with the voluntariness of evil actions.

A. NATURE OF IGNORANCE FOUND IN ALL SIN

I. ALL SIN NECESSARILY IMPLIES SOME IGNORANCE

As pointed out in the Introduction, our purpose is to inquire into the nature of ignorance found in all sin. But, since the statement of Aristotle, that all sinners are ignorant of what they ought to do or avoid, seems contrary to the general opinion which holds that no man can sin unless he knows that what he is doing is wrong, it is necessary to prove first of all that all sin actually implies some ignorance, for the knowledge of the existence of any subject must precede all inquiry concerning its nature.

Man Cannot Will Evil Except Through an Error of Reason

To achieve this purpose requires a knowledge of the nature of a human act. Therefore, we recall the doctrine of Aristotle [1] that the end is the principle in man's operations. Man, then, and for that matter every agent, acts for a good. For all agents, in acting for an end, tend to that end in a determinate manner, whether the determination comes from himself or from some other source. In any case the tendency is to some object in accord with the agent, for he would not act for some determined object unless there were a concordance between this object

1. *Physics*, II, chap.9, 200a34.

and himself. Since, then, that which is suitable, and agreeable, and according to the nature of the agent is good, every agent in acting for an end acts for a good. Saint Thomas draws such a conclusion from the nature of the agent's action: " Now that to which an agent tends definitely must needs be befitting to that agent: since the latter would not tend to it save on account of some fittingness thereto. But that which is befitting to a thing is good for it. " [1]

Man, however, moves and directs himself to his own end, and in this way differs from those who are led to their end with no knowledge on their part, or even from those who know the end absolutely speaking, yet fail to discern the relation and proportion of the means to that end. Thus, Saint Thomas [2] states that it is proper for a rational creature to move and direct himself to his end; and this implies the apprehension of the end *sub formali ratione finis*, that is, from the apprehension and attraction of the end he is able to direct and order the means by which the end may be attained.

This self-direction to an end supposes two conditions, namely, the apprehension of the end and an indetermination on the part of the agent. For man could not direct himself to an end which he did not know, nor could he determine himself to those things to which he is already determined.

Thus, in man's self directing to an end two faculties are involved, and each exercises causality in a human action in its own manner. For in order to move the will the end must be apprehended by reason, hence the latter is said to move the will in the order of final causality. However, the very movement of the will to the end requires an efficient cause, and this is the will itself. The following text of Saint Thomas manifests this order of the intellect and the will in man's actions: " . . . The intellect moves the will in the manner in which the end is said to move, that is, inasmuch as it preconceives the nature of the end, and proposes it to the will, but to move in the manner of an efficient cause belongs to the will and not to the intellect. "[3]

Now, since the will is an appetite, its object is the good. This idea is fundamental to Aristotle's moral doctrine, for in the very beginning of the *Ethics* [4] he writes that good is " that at which all things aim. " The reason for this is that any inclination by its very nature tends to something suitable to itself and retracts from that which is repugnant. For, whatever is in accord with the appetite, and therefore good, serves to perfect the appetite, and, as such, inclines the appetite to it. On the other hand, that which is defective is in itself an imperfection, and as such, repels the appetite.

Therefore, man being an *agens per intellectum* cannot determine by

1. Saint Thomas, *Contra Gentiles*, trans. by the English Dominicans. (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1923), III, cap.3.
2. Saint Thomas, *Summa theologica*, trans. by the English Dominicans. (New York: Benziger Bros., 1947), Ia IIae, q.1, a.2.
3. *Q. D. de Veritate*, q.22, a.12. The translation is ours.
4. Bk.I, chap.1, 1094a1.

and for himself the end of his operation unless he apprehend it *sub ratione boni*, that is, as convenient and suitable to him, for as Saint Thomas states, " the intelligible object does not move except it be considered as a good, which is the object of the will. " [1]

From this it is apparent that evil, as such, since it is opposed to the good which every agent intends, cannot pertain directly to the object of the will. For the intention of the will follows the apprehension of the good, and that which is not apprehended as good is outside the intention of the agent. Any evil, therefore, that comes about in the actions of man is outside his primary purpose. As Saint Thomas points out, " that which acts by intelligence does not work evil except unintentionally. " [2] And John of Saint Thomas states that the will is so ordered to the good that " in no manner can it be moved to something under the aspect of evil. " [3]

However, the good which is the object of the will is the good as apprehended by reason. It is not necessary, therefore, that the will tend to an object good in itself, but only perceived as such by the reason. In discussing the inclination of the will to the good Saint Thomas states this point: " . . . In order that the will tend to anything, it is requisite, not that this be a good in very truth, but that it be apprehended as a good. " [4]

Therefore, since the inclination of the will is only to the good, and since the apprehension of the good is according to the judgement of reason, it is evident that man cannot will anything evil except under the aspect of good and this entails some error of reason.

The Root of Ignorance of Sin Lies in the Imperfection of Reason

Since it is the good as apprehended by the reason that moves the will, and since that which is actually evil can be apprehended as good, we can see how the sinner, while doing wrong, still intends a good by his actions. And this opposition between the apprehension of good and the reality of evil is explained by the operation of reason, which can base its judgement on a full consideration or a partial consideration, and in this way can attain a true knowledge or an imperfect knowledge. If it fails to acquire a true knowledge, and errs in the apprehension of the true good, it is evident that evil is chosen under the aspect of good, and that this decision involves some ignorance due to which the choice is made.

Every action, then, that is morally wrong and opposed to the true perfection of man may still be an object of the will, but only because of some appearance of good which is apprehended, and this incongruity between what is truly good and what only appears to be so cannot exist without some ignorance on the part of our apprehension.

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1. *Contra Gent.*, III, cap.3.
2. *Ibid.*, cap.4.
3. John of Saint Thomas, *Cursus theologicus*, (ed. Vivès, Paris: 1885), T.V. disp.V, p.461. The translation is ours.
4. *Ia IIae*, q.8, a.1.

The fact is that if there were no ignorance there could be no sin. Both Aristotle and Saint Thomas are clear in their insistence on the existence of some defect in the reason before the will can sin. We have Aristotle's statement from the third book of the *Ethics* [1] that every evil person is ignorant of what he should do and of what he should avoid. That this is also the teaching of Saint Thomas is evident from the following texts:

> . . . Because there cannot be sin in the will, unless in some manner there be deception in the reason.[2]
>
> . . . The reason, although a cognitive potency, nevertheless is directive of the will; so that sin cannot be in the will, unless it be in some way in the reason, especially since the will is only of the good or apparent good; so that a false estimation in some manner precedes a bad will.[3]
>
> . . . Since the object of the will is a good or an apparent good, it is never moved to an evil, unless that which is not good appear good in some respect to the reason; so that the will would never tend to evil, unless there were ignorance or error in the reason.[4]
>
> Where there is no defect in apprehending and comparing, the will cannot be evil in those things which are to the end.[5]

John of Saint Thomas, too, places the root of sin in the defect of reason when he writes, " the root of sinning is taken from a defective proposal and inconsideration of the intellect. " [6]

From this it is evident that a completely perfect knowledge on the part of the reason would destroy the potency to sin. This knowledge, however, would have to extend to the use of reason in particular cases, as Saint Thomas explains in his statement that there is no sin in the presence of knowledge. " So long as man is in possession of knowledge he does not sin: provided, however, that this knowledge is made to include the use of reason in this individual act of choice. " [7]

In regard to this point John of Saint Thomas places the impeccability of the Blessed in their inability to form a defective judgement, for their possession of the Absolute Good renders them incapable of placing any other good in opposition to it. As he writes:

> From this it follows that the Beatific Vision, per se, immediately and formally destroys every defective proposal, that is every offering of a created good, apart from, in opposition to, or not subordinated to the Divine good: because such a proposal cannot stand with the proposing and presentation of the highest good, as it is the highest good. So that formally and immediately it destroys all potency to sin.[8]

If there is no possibility of the intellect proposing something to the will in a deficient manner, there is no possibility of a deficient action on the part of the will. This is likewise shown by John of Saint Thomas:

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1. Bk.III, chap.1, 1110b28-30.
2. SAINT THOMAS, *Scriptum super libros sententiarum, magistri Petri Lombardi*, (ed. MANDONNET, Paris: Lethielleux, 1929). Bk.II, dist.5, q.1, a.1. The translation is ours.
3. *Ibid.*, dist.24, q.3, a.3, ad 1.
4. *Ia IIae*, q.77, a.2.
5. *De Ver.*, q.22, a.6.
6. *Curs. theol.*, T.V. disp.2, a.5, p.252.
7. *Ia IIae*, q.58, a.2.
8. *Curs. theol.*, T.V, disp.2, p.252.

. . . Because the will cannot be defective and sin, unless the reason be practically ignorant and deficient, and this defect and ignorance consist in this, that it propose something to the will notwithstanding its contrariety, and its failure from the right end. Therefore, if it is impossible that there be such a deficiency in proposing, it is impossible for sin to be in the will.[1]

Given the possibility to sin, then, there is also given the possibility of a defect on the part of the reason, or, as Saint Thomas has expressed it, " there cannot be sin in the will unless in some manner there be deception in the reason. "

What then is this defect in the reason's proposal of the apparent good to the will? Here we note an imperfection that exists in the created intellect, for, unlike the Divine intellect which knows all things comprehensively, the created intellect cannot know all things at once, and as a consequence of this is able to form a defective judgement. The manner in which this happens is explained by Saint Thomas in discussing the sin of the angels: " . . . The created intellect, since it is not of all things at once, is able to fail, in that it judges a thing as suitable according to some condition of the thing considered, but which is not suitable according to other conditions which are not considered. " [2]

In this sense Saint Thomas calls the reason bound, " inasmuch as in considering one thing it is prevented from the consideration of another. " [3]

If we keep in mind this imperfection of the reason, in that it has to consider the different conditions of a thing successively, and that the apprehension of any good is sufficient to move the will, we have the basis of practical ignorance. For as Saint Thomas points out there is no object completely devoid of goodness: " nothing is so evil that it cannot have some aspect of good. " [4] Now, if we consider that even this limited good is sufficient to move the will we have the reason for the completion of the quotation: " and by reason of this goodness it is in a condition to be able to move the appetite. "

In other words, the will is specified by the good as such, and cannot be moved by evil as such, which would be the case if that towards which it tended were completely devoid of all goodness. A thing cannot possibly be attractive to the will unless it be good under some aspect. Now if this goodness, however limited, actually pleases the will, the latter will bring the reason to limit its consideration to it, and to ignore the other aspects of the thing which are evil. Consequently, reason will judge the thing to be a good simpliciter, although in reality it is a good only *secundum quid.*

This sufficiently explains the statement of Saint Thomas: " There cannot be sin in the will unless in some manner there be deception in the

1. *Ibid.*, p.251.
2. *In II Sent.*, dist.5, q.1, a.1, ad 4. Here Saint Thomas speaks of the ability to sin, absolutely speaking, without reference to any particular state of the angel. For a further discussion of practical ignorance in the sin of the angels see the conclusion of the next section.
3. *Ibid.*, c.
4. *De Ver.*, q.22, a.6, ad 6.

reason." The inconsideration of those things which should be considered in performing any action explains the ignorance that is in every sin. According to the statement of Cajetan: "... The will itself diverts the judgement, but not unless there concur with this diversion some other defect of the intellect, at least the non-consideration of all that should be considered, which is sufficient for this that all wicked men be ignorant." [1]

In other words because the reason is limited in its consideration, there exists the possibility of the appetite's interference with the proposal of the practical intellect. Not that the reason is so completely overcome that it loses its ability to perform its functions, but that the interference of the appetite impedes it from reasoning rightly.

This omission or inconsideration which makes for the defective proposition is common to all sin. For if the sinner actually knew that the good proposed is in reality an evil for him he could not be attracted by it, and therefore, could not sin. This is in accord with the teaching of Saint Thomas that one who knows perfectly the singular in act would not sin. And in the *Sentences* he again points out the omission common to all sin: "... For in every sin this is common, that one does not do that which in itself is for the sake of resisting sin; if he were to do this he would not sin." [2]

From what we have said it is evident that every sinner is ignorant, in that he fails to make a proper rational evaluation in regard to the action he is to perform. As Saint Thomas has pointed out in the passage just quoted, he does not take the proper measures to avoid sin. For every action should be according to reason, and those actions that are according to reason are without sin. It is only when the evaluation of reason is interfered with, and an imperfect judgement is made, that sin exists. Thus, it is not difficult to understand the words of Saint Thomas that the sinner does not take the means to resist sin and that this failure is a common characteristic of sin.

II. IGNORANCE COMMON TO ALL SINS IS A PRACTICAL IGNORANCE

Speculative and Practical Knowledge

Once we have established the fact that some ignorance exists in every sin, we naturally proceed to inquire what kind of ignorance this is. Since ignorance is known from the types of knowledge to which it is opposed, we will review the divisions of knowledge given in the *Summa theologica*.[3] We recall that Saint Thomas divides knowledge into that which is speculative only, that which is partly speculative and partly practical, and that which is purely practical.

Knowledge may be considered speculative from three points of view;

1. CAJETAN, TH., *Commentarium in Summam theologicam.* Contained in *Opera omnia Sancti Thomae*, (ed. LEONINE, Rome: 1882—). Vol.VIII, Ia IIae, q.77, a.2. The translation is ours.
2. *In II Sent.*, dist.22, q.1, a.2, ad 6.
3. *Ia*, q.14, a.16.

that of the thing considered, the manner of knowing, and the end. From the first point of view knowledge is speculative when it has for its object something not operable by the knower, for example, the study of natural science is speculative only. If science proceeds in a speculative manner, that is, by analysis, defining, and dividing, it is speculative in its manner of knowing. If the end considered is truth alone, it is speculative from its end.

Knowledge may also be considered practical from the thing considered, the manner of knowing, and the end. When the object is something the knower can make, it is practical from the first point of view. If the consideration of an operable proceeds by synthesis and composition, it is practical in its mode of knowing. When the knowledge is used in the attainment of the end, it is practical from the third point of view.

For our purpose it is important to note the different kinds of practical knowledge. And, since we are here concerned with moral actions, we can limit our observations to ignorance as related to the operable considered in its order to operation. Here we note that the operable may be considered as such without actually advancing to execution. In this consideration the reason is concerned with the speculative truth of the operable based on the reality of the thing considered. Consequently, the truth or falsity of such knowledge is taken from whether the thing is or is not. If the knowledge conforms to reality there is speculative truth; if there is no conformity there is speculative error or ignorance.

The intellect that considers the operable only according to its speculative truth is evidently not the proximate principle of operation. For, in this sense, the understanding of what is good or bad remains within the limits of the intellect, and is concerned with the knowledge of the operable without advancing to execution. It is, therefore, removed from the action itself, and concerns only speculative truth and not the prescribing of some action to be done or avoided. Saint Thomas points this out in the *De Anima:*

> At times, however, the intellect considers something that can be done, not however practically, but speculatively, because it considers it in general and not as it is the principle of a particular work. And therefore, regarding this he says that the intellect when it has made its observation, that is, when it has considered speculatively something like this, in other words, something that can be done, does not yet command to pursue or avoid.[1]

To actually pass to execution requires the judgement that something is good and to be done, since the will would not make its choice without such a judgement on the part of the reason. From the above we know that such a judgement does not belong to the speculative intellect; it does, however, belong to the practical intellect which is immediately related to action, and which is concerned with the proposal of the good to the will. Therefore, not any kind of judgement is sufficient to move the will, but only one which is concerned with something to be actually

1. Saint Thomas, *In Aristotelis librum de Anima commentarium*, (ed. Pirotta, Turin: Marietti, 1936). Bk.III, lect.14, n.914. The translation is ours.

done or avoided, and this pertains only to the perfectly practical intellect, as is pointed out by Cajetan:

> . . . The apprehension required for this that the will desire something (for it can be inclined only to the apprehended), is not any kind of knowledge, otherwise a speculative understanding would be sufficient, the contrary view of which is expressed in the III *de Anima*: but it is a knowledge judging and commanding that this is to be desired.[1]

Since it is true that the practical intellect proposes the good to the will, it is evident that any appearance of good, or any defect in the object of the will must first pertain to the practical intellect. We may conclude, then, that the ignorance common to all sin is an ignorance of the practical intellect, proposing an apparent good to the will.

If there is a true judgement on the part of the practical intellect, there will follow a good election on the part of the will. On the other hand, if the judgement is defective, the will also will be defective in its choice of the good. Since this brings us to the question of truth or falsity in the practical intellect let us now attempt to determine in what this truth or falsity consists.

Practical Truth and Right Appetite

For, now that we have established that some ignorance exists in every sin, and that this ignorance is in the practical reason proposing the apparent good to the will, we wish to inquire further into this subject. And since ignorance is a defect of the reason, we naturally start from the point of view of the reason, and inquire whether this defect in the practical intellect depends on the reason alone.

Cajetan [2] points out that Saint Thomas places an intellectual virtue in the practical intellect in regard to contingent things, and yet does not indicate such a virtue in the speculative intellect. With the latter there is no difficulty since the contingent is variable and remains outside the certain judgement of the intellect. Saint Thomas states this in the *Ethics:*

> . . . It should be noted, however, that insofar as the knowledge of the contingent cannot have the certitude of truth which excludes falsity, therefore, with regard to mere knowledge, contingent things are omitted from the intellect which is perfected through the knowledge of truth.[3]

With the practical intellect, however, Saint Thomas joins these elements which seem contrary; namely, that it is in regard to contingent things and yet the subject of an intellectual virtue, and therefore, always true.

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1. *In Iam IIae*, q.77, a.2. But, since the knowledge "judging and commanding" is itself subject to the will it may seem that there is a *processus in infinitum* in the relationship between the intellect and the will. The fact is, however, that there are some truths which the intellect naturally knows, as well as a natural inclination on the part of the appetite. For example, the intellect first knows that good is to be done and evil avoided, and the will naturally tends to the good and shuns the evil. As a result of this we note here that the first judgement presented to the will is not completely practical, but only initially so.
2. *Ibid.*, q.57, a.5.
3. Bk.VI, lect.3, n.1152.

Those who attempt to place the rectification of the practical intellect in the line of cognition alone cannot avoid a dilemma. For no matter how far our intellect proceeds in the judgement of contingent things, it cannot conform to them infallibly, since the contingent is variable. Therefore, the judgement they have in mind is either of contingent things, and consequently not always true and not an intellectual virtue; or it is a virtue, but not of the contingent.

To ascertain in what the truth or falsity of the practical intellect consists and how it is the subject of virtue, we recall the operation of practical reason as it differs from the operation of the speculative reason. For the end of the speculative reason is knowledge only, while the practical reason is concerned with directing man's actions. The former, therefore, rests in the acquisition of knowledge, while the latter not only acquires knowledge but uses it in ordering man's actions toward an end. The perfection of the practical intellect, therefore, does not consist in knowing, but in ordering that which is to be put into act. Saint Thomas makes the following comparison between the speculative and practical reason:

> In evidence of this there should be noted that in speculative matters, in which there is no action, there is only a twofold work of the reason, namely, to find by inquiring and to judge of the findings. And indeed, these two works are also of the practical reason, whose work of inquiry is counsel, which pertains to *eubulia*, whereas the judgement of things counseled pertains to *synesis*. For they are called discerning who are able to judge well of what is to be done. However, the practical intellect does not stop here but proceeds further to action. Therefore, a third act is necessary, as it were final and completing, namely to command that there be a procedure to action: and this properly pertains to prudence.[1]

Since reason in this case is concerned with actually directing and ordering the action, it is with reference to this that the truth of the practical reason is taken. In comparing the truth of the speculative intellect with that of the practical intellect, Cajetan writes: "... The truth of the speculative intellect consists in this, that knowledge conform to the thing known; however the truth of the practical intellect consists in this, that the direction conform to the directive principle."[2]

The directing principle of every moral action is that which the subject intends, for our deliberation concerning any action presupposes an end toward which that action is directed. Therefore, the intention or the end is the principle of the practical intellect, and since it occupies such a primary place we must investigate more closely what this end is, and its relation to the practical intellect.

In regard to the ends of moral actions, Saint Thomas points out that they exist in man in a twofold manner, first on the part of the reason knowing these ends, and then on the part of the appetite's affection for them. The first of these man has by his natural knowledge, just as he attains the principles of speculative knowledge. In other words, just as there is a habit of first principles in the speculative order, so there is a similar habit in the operative order. The affection for the ends offered

1. *Ibid.*, lect.9, n.1239.
2. *In Iam IIae*, q.57, a.5.

by this natural knowledge is through moral virtue, by which man is attracted to these ends, so that he not only knows he should live justly and temperately, etc., but also wishes to do so. Saint Thomas shows both of these elements:

> The end of things that can be done pre-exists in us in a twofold manner; namely, through a natural knowledge of the end of man, and indeed, this natural knowledge pertains to understanding, according to the Philosopher in the sixth book of the *Ethics* (chap. IX). And this is of operable principles as well as speculative ones; however, the principles of operables are the ends, as is declared in the same book. In another manner, the end pre-exists in us as regards attraction; and in this way the ends of things which can be done are in us through the moral virtues, by which man is drawn to living justly, or bravely, or temperately, which is as it were the proximate end of things that can be done.[1]

The rectitude of the practical intellect hinges on the right appetite of the end, as Aristotle and Saint Thomas show in defining the good of the practical intellect, not as something absolute, but as conforming to a right appetite. If the appetite is rectified with regard to the end, then the practical intellect will be true by conforming itself to the inclination of the appetite to the end. However, as Saint Thomas points out, the truth of the practical intellect is destroyed by the destruction of its principle: " . . . For there cannot be right reason unless the principles of reason are preserved; and so for prudence there is required both understanding of the ends, and moral virtues, by means of which the disposition is rightly directed to the end. "[2]

A good moral action, then, demands a right intention of the end, and the direction of prudence in those things which are performed for the end. " *Right reason demands principles from which reason proceeds,* "[3] as Saint Thomas says. The principle from which the temperate man proceeds is his attachment to a moderate use of sensible goods, but such an end seems good only to a virtuous man, one whose appetite is rightly inclined by the virtue of temperance.

One cannot form a correct syllogism if he errs in regard to the principles; nor can one be prudent if the principles of prudence are destroyed. Virtue makes a right intention in regard to the end, which is the principle of reason, so that without virtue and without a right intention of the will we cannot reason rightly in moral matters. As Saint Thomas shows:

> Therefore, since it pertains to prudence to reason rightly regarding things operable, it is evident that it is impossible for one to be prudent who is not virtuous, just as one who errs about the principles of demonstration cannot have science.[4]

In arriving at a conclusion in the practical order the reason uses two premises, one of which is universal, the other particular. For example, the major of a practical syllogism will be similar to this: " temperance is to be observed, " and since this proposition is of the practical order, its object is a practical truth. From this proposition and the movement of the appetite comes the truth of the minor premise showing what is to

1. *De Ver.*, q.5, a.1.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ia IIae*, q. 59, a.5.
4. *In VI Ethic*, lect.10, n.1274.

be observed as regards temperance in this particular case, and the practical truth of the conclusion follows regarding the means conforming to the intention of the appetite. Cajetan shows this relation between the propositions in the practical syllogism:

> However, from the first premise to the second there is not an immediate order in these, as there is in speculative matters. But from the proposition which is the first premise there results in the appetite its right movement to the end. And thus from the appetite and this premise there comes about the truth of the second premise which is a most particular one: since from my disposition according to appetite, it comes about that to me such an end should be agreeable in particular; for example, such a good, now, here, etc. And with reference to this premise is understood that saying in the third book of the *Ethics: as each one is, so does the end seem to him.* And, there follows a conclusion conforming to the minor proposition, that is, consisting in an act of the intellect from the appetite: namely, a judgement of those things which are for the end; for example, so much anger, now, commanding it. And then an act of the appetite in relation to the intellect, that is, election.[1]

The minor proposition depends on the major in the same measure that the means conform to the end intended. If the end is desired according to reason and subordinated to its proper place by a rational consideration, the means in accord with such an intention will be practically true, or in other words they will conform to a right appetite. If the end is desired immoderately, in that the will is attached to something outside the right order of reason, the primary fault is the inordinate intention of the will, and this causes a lack of rectitude in those actions which conform to such an intention. The universal proposition, however, can exercise its force on an action only through the application to a particular proposition, since actions are in particular and look to a particular as their proximate cause.

Saint Thomas voices a possible objection to his own doctrine when he discusses the truth of the practical reason.[2] For the truth of the practical reason is taken from its conformity to the right appetite, and the appetite is right by its conformity to true reason. The answer to this apparent circular proof presents a summary of his doctrine, for he states that the end of man is determined by nature; that is, the order of action begins with first principles naturally known. By this natural knowledge the ends are presented to the moral virtues, but the adherence to this end, that is, the intention of the end, stems from the moral virtues themselves. This right intention of the end is presupposed by the practical reason which concerns itself with directing and ordering the means to the end. Thus it is that moral virtue is the principle of right intention, while prudence is a principle from which the particular choice is made.

We have seen that practical truth is measured by a conformity to a right appetite, in that the intention of the will is the cause of the actions that are performed for the intention, and, since this intention is the cause of eliciting the action, it is the reason and measure of whatever is done

1. *In Iam IIae*, q.58, a.5.
2. *In VI Ethic.*, lect.2.

in reference to it. Through the practical syllogism the choice of some actions is related to the primary intention of the agent, as John of Saint Thomas writes:

> The end, however, is attained by intention, and thus upon a right intention as upon a measure depends the goodness of the act in respect to the means, because the end is the measure in order to which the means derive proportion, regulation, and therefore, goodness.[1]

There is no difficulty, then, in joining the truth and certitude of the practical intellect even though it be concerned with contingent things. For its truth and certitude come, not from its adequation to reality considered in itself, but from its conformity to the right appetite. In referring to the practical intellect Cajetan says:

> . . . Its perfection and truth consists in the act of directing, which direction is infallibly true in regard to contingent things, if it is in accord with a preceding right appetite. And thus because of the conformity to right appetite the author keeps an intellectual virtue as always true with reference to contingent things, not insofar as they are known, but insofar as they are attainable by human operation.[2]

Ignorance of the Practical Intellect

Ignorance in the practical intellect begins with the intention; that is, when the appetite, in failing to follow the reason, is disposed to some good outside the order of reason, with the consequent error in the conclusion of the practical syllogism.

Just as the virtue of temperance developed according to reason results in a firm attachment to the moderate use of sensible goods, so that actions in accord with this intention seem pleasing to the temperate man; so a failure in the appetite's affection for the ends of moral virtue will result in a tendency of the will toward goods which are divergent from the dictates of right reason. What is appetible here and now depends on the disposition of the appetite, for the reason in presenting some good offers it as an object to the appetite. When the appetite is rightly disposed there is no difficulty with the proposal of the practical intellect; when, however, the will is disposed to follow certain goods which are contrary to the order of reason there results a conflict between reason and the will, and it may happen that the will leaves aside the reason to attain the sensible good.

An example of this is found in the contrast of the liberal and the prodigal man in their common intention to give money. The former intends the giving of money in a rational manner, all due circumstances being observed. The actions that are in accord with his intention will be good, since the intention concerns an end to be acquired, not in any manner, but according to reason. The prodigal, on the other hand, intends to give money without being restricted by the limitations of reason, with the result that he fails in the proper manner of giving. While the liberal man performs a good moral action in giving to whom he ought, and when he ought, the prodigal man, in his inordinate giving, departs from what is morally good.

1. *Curs. theol.*, T.VI, disp.11, a.2, p.24.
2. *In Iam IIae*, q.57, a.5.

We would say that the prodigal man is disposed to giving away money in an inordinate manner; at times, places, and conditions, contrary to right reason. It seems good to the prodigal man that he give away money under these conditions, because his appetite is inclined to such giving and he chooses to follow his appetite rather than his reason. He is still acting for a good, but one which appeals to his appetite without the consideration and evaluation of reason.

It is evident, then, that a good moral action demands the perfection of all the potencies involved, and here we must consider not only the reason's part in proposing the good to the appetite, but also the disposition of the appetite to which the proposal is made. Aristotle states that the perfection of both elements is required for a good election, for " both the reasoning must be true and the desire right, if the choice is to be good. " [1]

This position concerning the truth of the practical intellect clarifies an important point in moral matters. Once we know that a man with a right intention is determined to seek the mean between excess and defect, as long as his intention lasts, we have the basis for distinguishing between *peccatum* and *culpa*. The former is any action opposed to the moral law, whether or not culpability is imputed to the subject; the latter is an action imputed as culpable.

For example, the man who is temperate will seek the mean of sensible delectations. If he uses all the means which are at his disposal to determine this mean in a particular case (which he will do if he is truly temperate), his action will be prudent and practically true even though it be wrong from a speculative consideration. Thus there is no difficulty with the same action being practically true and speculatively false, or with the notion of peccatum without the notion of culpa.

On the other hand, an action may be objectively good according to the right interpretation of the moral law, and yet the performance of such an action may be a moral fault due to the erroneous conscience of the subject. For such actions are not committed without practical ignorance and the departure from what the subject believes to be an estimation according to right reason.

It seems impossible to give any solution to these problems unless we define the truth of the practical reason, not as an adequation of reason to reality, but as a conformity to a right appetite. In his commentary on the question already referred to, Cajetan seems unusually insistent on this point, constantly warning his readers against the error of placing the truth of the practical intellect in the reason alone.

The Error in the Practical Intellect Does Not Depend on an Error in the Speculative Intellect

In treating of the practical intellect, and the ignorance found therein, we stated that the will tends to a good without the consideration of reason.

1. *Ethics*, VI, chap.2, 1139a24-25.

In this manner the will inclines to that good as to an ultimate end. It seems, therefore, that there necessarily precede the judgement, at least practically, that this is the ultimate end. A practical judgement, however, seems to presuppose a speculative judgement, namely, that some particular good is an ultimate end. As this judgement is itself erroneous it appears necessary that a speculative error precede practical ignorance, and that all moral fault is based on speculative error.

The basis for the answer has already been given, and from what has been established we may readily see that an erroneous speculative judgement need not precede practical ignorance. For a speculative error supposes an inadequation between the mind and reality, while a practical judgement is based on the apprehension of something as good and pleasing to the appetite. For example, the practical judgement that fornication here and now is a good does not depend on the speculative judgement that fornication in itself is a good, but only on the apprehension of fornication as agreeable to the appetite.

In other words, all that is necessary for the movement of the will is the apprehension of a good, even though that apprehension be limited to a very narrow aspect. In the case of fornication, the intellect apprehends the conformity of the sensitive appetite with the sense object, and the sensible good of fornication is sufficient to move the will, despite the knowledge that in itself and according to reason fornication is evil. For with this apprehension is formed the false practical judgement that fornication is to be followed, which is a judgement made according to the appetite leaving aside the true judgement of reason.

For, if the subject is actually or habitually inclined to sensible goods as such, more so than to sensible goods as ordered by right reason, he will choose to pursue them for themselves regardless of the exigencies of right reason. His appetite is so disposed that he judges the sensible goods to be, *hic et nunc*, more connatural and convenient than the good of reason.

It is evident, then, that the error in the practical intellect does not depend on a speculative error. In fact there is no contradiction between the judgement of a thing in itself, and the judgement of its conformity to an inordinate appetite. John of Saint Thomas shows there is no necessity of speculative error preceding practical error:

> In order to form a practical judgement it is not required that a speculative judgement precede with positive reference to its suitability, namely, that this is so in reality. For example, to form the judgement that it is good and fitting to commit fornication here and now, it is not required that a speculative judgement precede, to wit, that fornication in itself and in reality is good; but it suffices that the apprehension of the terms precede, and the judgement concerning the matter itself, that fornication is not in conformity with reason, yet it is pleasing and agreeable to the appetite; and then is formed the fallacious practical judgement, which follows absolutely the good pleasing to the appetite, leaving aside the judgement of reason.[1]

From what we have said on this question it is evident that even if

1. *Curs. theol.*, T.V, disp.1, a.7, p.147.

man attained a complete knowledge of moral matters he would not remove himself from the possibility of sin. For, despite this knowledge, there still remains the possibility of the appetite interfering with the particular judgement.

This point, as well as the entire doctrine of practical ignorance, is well illustrated in the sin of the angels. In this we must recall the manner in which the angels know things, that is, without "discursus," but by attaining a knowledge of things in their principles. Since it belonged to the angelic nature that it possessed in act a knowledge of all those things which it could know naturally, there could be no error, and thus no sin in these matters, because of the impossibility of the reason presenting a proposition in a defective manner. Saint Thomas writes:

> Now, this belongs to the angelic nature, that they have a knowledge in act of all things that they are naturally able to know... And, because the will is proportioned to the intellect, it follows that their will also is naturally immutable with regard to those things that pertain to the order of nature.[1]

The angels did sin, however, not in regard to their natural end taken in itself, but in reference to a supernatural good. Since in this latter sphere they proceeded somewhat obscurely, failing to attain a perfect knowledge, some defect was possible. As Saint Thomas points out:

> It is true, however, that they are in potency as regards the movement toward supernatural things, either by turning toward or by turning away; hence only this change can be in them that from the level of their own nature they be moved toward that which is above their nature, either turning themselves to or away from it.[2]

The appetite, therefore, was unable to influence the judgement of the practical reason in regard to the natural knowledge of the angels. However, if the object did not concern the proper knowledge of the angels, the appetite was free to exercise its influence on the practical judgement. This they did when the supernatural end was offered to them by God, and they attached themselves to their own good in opposition to the supernatural good. In this instance the angels could have referred this supernatural end to the law of their own nature, which would have shown them that their natural order should be subjected to a superior order; but they were also free to reject such a reference and to choose according to their appetite. John of Saint Thomas points out the practical error in the sin of the angels:

> In the affective or practical part, however, he sometimes judges that to be desired which should not be desired. And this whole matter happens because the sinning angel does not retain in his action the mode connatural to him, and does not wish to confine himself to it. Now, his connatural mode is that he proceed always in an indivisible and comprehensive mode, and that he keep within this mode. For, if the angel observed this, he certainly would not sin: for he would see that the natural law should be observed in all things, and that he ought to apply himself to all things in the very principles, attaining by intellect and will everything contained in them. Now, one of the things included is that

1. *De Malo*, q.16, a.5.
2. *Ibid.*

dictate of the natural law, that he ought to be subjected to every superior rule, even to a supernatural one.[1]

Practical ignorance is most clearly illustrated here, since the angels could not err speculatively, and therefore in their sin the only error involved was practical. As Saint Thomas teaches: " For we are not compelled to say that there was an error in the intellect of the separated substance in judging something good that is not good, but in not considering the higher good, to which their own good should have been referred. " [2]

The sinning angels desired their natural happiness in preference to a supernatural end, even though they knew that absolutely speaking, and taken in itself, the supernatural end was superior to their natural state. In recognizing the relative merits of the two orders involved there was no speculative error. They were also right in their knowledge that if they accepted the supernatural end they would depend on another for their happiness, and would share it in common with other inferior creatures. Since they had their own state by right of creation, and because as angels they enjoyed a certain pre-eminence in the created order, they disdained an end that involved dependence on another and community with creatures inferior to themselves. John of Saint Thomas relates how these elements are responsible for practical error in the angels:

> He erred practically, however, because, covetous of his own singularity, and intolerant of dependence on another's favor, and unwilling to have anything obtained by entreaty, he preferred an inferior excellence as his own, and not from a special grace, to a superior excellence, to be given by grace. And in this he erred practically to the extent that he was proud.[3]

Here again we find the inconsideration common to all sin, as stated by John of Saint Thomas: " . . . And there was no speculative error, although a practical error was not lacking, which is the inconsideration and imprudence common to all sin. " [4]

We notice here that they knew their own natural excellence was a lesser good than the superior supernatural beatitude. The angels in this case chose a lesser good, not because they were unaware of the relative merits of the goods proposed (this they knew very well), but because of their appetite, which led them to reject the greater good for the lesser.

We have now seen that every moral action entails the proposal of an object to the will by the practical reason. The fact that such an action is evil does not depend on speculative error, but rather on the ability of the appetite to influence the judgement of the practical reason. For we have defined practical truth or falsity according to the appetite, and have shown that in every morally bad action the appetite has destroyed the principle of prudence. We may conclude, therefore, that in every sin there exists this defect in the proposal of the practical reason, which is the ignorance common to sin.

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1. *Curs. theol.*, T.IV, disp.23, a.1, p.886.
2. *Contra Gent.*, III, cap.110.
3. *Curs. theol*, T.IV, disp.23, a.3, p.956.
4. *Ibid.*, p.948.

III. IGNORANCE OF SIN IS AN EFFECT, RATHER THAN A CAUSE, OF SIN

We have already seen that every good action must be directed by reason, and that in every sin there exists the failure of the reason to present the object to the will according to a proper rational evaluation. In this sense, it seems that practical ignorance is a deficient principle in sin. But, although this ignorance is necessary for the existence of a bad moral action, we still have to determine the exact relation of this deficiency in the reason to the cause of sin. From the previous sections, it is evident that a defect exists in the reason's presentation of the object, but whether this defect is a cause or an effect of sin has still to be determined.

The Cause of Moral Evil

To understand this, we must recall that sin is an inordinate action. On the part of the action it has a cause *per se*, as every action has a cause; on the part of the inordination it has a cause, not *per se*, but as a negation or privation has a cause. This in a twofold manner. In the first place, the negation of the effect follows the negation of the cause: for example, darkness is caused by the absence of the sun. In the second place, the privation is attached to something primarily intended and follows accidentally from the intention of the agent. The first of these, although sufficient for a simple negation, is insufficient for sin, since the disorder in sin is the privation of that which the act should have, and this must be effected by some cause impeding the proper perfection of the act. This disorder in the effect that the agent produces is due to a deficient cause, or follows accidentally from the intention of the agent. As noted by Saint Thomas: " . . . And accordingly we are wont to say that evil, which consists in a certain privation, has a deficient cause or an accidental efficient cause. " [1]

In referring to the above text Cajetan states a difficulty about the phrase, " deficient cause or an accidental efficient cause, " namely, whether these words should be taken disjunctively or not. And he writes: " The Author concludes this disjunction according to the truth of a disjunction. And therefore, he means that when the proper cause of evil is assigned, either a deficient cause is assigned, or an accidental cause. " [2]

The doctrine of Saint Thomas in regard to the cause of evil clearly supports his interpretation: " There is, therefore, a twofold manner by which evil is caused from good. In one manner good is the cause of evil inasmuch as it is deficient; in another manner inasmuch as it is a cause *per accidens*. " [3]

This is illustrated by a comparison with natural things, for in natural phenomena evil results when the cause itself is deficient or when the evil

1. *Ia IIae*, q.75, a.1.
2. *In Iam IIae*, q.75, a.1.
3. *De Malo*, q.1, a.3.

follows in an accidental manner. The first is exemplified by the presence of some foreign principle in the cause, which is responsible for the deficient effect, as when a deficient seed is the cause of an abnormal product. The second is exemplified in the displacement of one form by another, since that which is *per se* intended is the introduction of the new form; the fact that this necessitates the privation of another form is intended only accidentally.

Sin as a voluntary action has the will as its proper and immediate cause. All causes exterior to the will may affect the will and even lessen the voluntary character of the action, but as long as sin remains a human act, it remains subject to the will, and the will is the principal cause from which the action proceeds. Since it is the cause of the action it is also the accidental cause of the evil in the action, and from this it follows that the will accidentally causes the disorder in the act. Furthermore, we have already observed that the will in tending to some inordinate object disregards the estimation of reason, and acting with this deficiency it is the cause of evil as a deficient cause. Thus the will is the cause of evil in both senses mentioned above, as is evident from the words of Saint Thomas regarding the will's causality of evil.

> This indeed is the cause of evil according to both of the aforesaid modes, namely, both *per accidens*, and inasmuch as it is a deficient cause; *per accidens*, inasmuch as the will is moved to something which is good according to a certain aspect, but to which something that is absolutely evil is conjoined; as a deficient cause, on the other hand, inasmuch as it is necessary to presuppose some defect in the will prior to the deficient choice, through which it chooses that which is good in a certain aspect but which is simply evil.[1]

The will, then, tends to a good as it is represented by the reason. This representation may be according to an evaluation that measures and regulates the good according to the moral law, or it may be according to some aspect that is pleasing to a bad will. When the will tends to an object in the first manner, a good action results; in the second case, however, the will tends to an object that is only good *secundum quid*, and in acting thus, without the full consideration of reason, it causes a bad action. In the following text Saint Thomas shows how the will is the cause of sin.

> Accordingly, then, the will lacking the direction of the rule of reason and of the Divine law, and intent on some mutable good, causes the act of sin directly, and the inordinateness of the act indirectly, and beside the intention: for the lack of order in the act results from the lack of direction in the will.[2]

This movement of the will to its object without the regulation of reason may be compared to a carpenter, who would proceed to cut a board without using the available instruments of measuring. If the cut is not made as it should be, he is responsible for it, because his disregard of the measure is voluntary.

Similarly, whatever is appetible should be regulated by reason. Yet the will has the potency to receive the appetible with or without the

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ia IIae*, q.75, a.1.

consideration of right reason. And here we must note that the appetible, whatever the force of its attraction, does not necessarily move the will in a human act, since the cause of the motion to the object is primarily on the part of the will. Thus it is that the will, in tending to an object properly evaluated by reason, causes a good action, while the departure from such evaluation causes a bad action. In the latter case, that is when a bad choice is made, there is a want of application of the rule of reason prior to the choice itself. As Saint Thomas states, "the lack of use of the rule of reason and of the Divine law is seen in the will prior to the inordinate election." [1]

In itself inattention on the part of the will is nothing culpable, since it is not obligatory or possible that every good be actually under the consideration of reason. Saint Thomas remarks: "The defect which is first noted in the will prior to sin is neither fault nor punishment, but a pure negation." [2]

Culpability arises when the will applies itself to an object without consideration of reason. In the words of Saint Thomas: "But from this first arises the notion of blame, that the will proceed to an election of this kind without the actual consideration of the rule." [3]

To locate the responsibility for the failure to consider the good according to reason we need look no further than the will itself, which is free and has the power to act either according to reason or to depart from it, as Saint Thomas points out: "It is not necessary to seek a cause for not using the aforesaid rule, since for this, the liberty of the will, by means of which it can act or not act, is sufficient." [4]

In saying that the will is defective in its failure to adhere to the rule of reason and that this deficient principle is the cause of sin, we must be careful to determine the meaning of a deficient principle, for it may be argued that this deficiency is voluntary and a sin in itself, the cause of which must in turn be sought, and so on to infinity.

This objection is similar to the rejection of a deficient cause since this would entail a defect in the will before the defect of sin.

In answer to this it must be said that, though a lack of relation to the reason exists in the will before the sin, this is not morally evil; for moral evil only occurs when the will moves to its object with this lack of order. Thus Cajetan points out that there is no contradiction in saying that this defect exists before the inordinate action, provided that such a defect is understood as a negation and not as a morally culpable fault.

There would be a defect before the first defect in the act of sin: the response is clear, that it is not incompatible that there be, prior to such a first defect, another defect without the nature of the evil of guilt or punishment.[5]

This position is expressed by Saint Thomas in the summary of his teaching on this point:

1. *De Malo*, q.1, a.3.
2. *Ibid.*, ad 13.
3. *Ibid.*, a.3.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *In Iam IIae*, q.75, a.1.

. . . The will in failing to apply the rule of reason or of the Divine law, is the cause of sin: Now the fact of not applying the rule of reason or of the Divine law, has not in itself the nature of evil, whether of punishment or of guilt, before it is applied to the act.[1]

Man, then, cannot at once attend to a consideration of all objects, as is perfectly natural for him; he fails however, and sins when he moves to an object apart from the evaluation of reason, and in so doing his will becomes a deficient principle and the accidental cause of evil.

Relation of Practical Ignorance to the Cause of Moral Evil

Practical ignorance occurs with the movement of the will to the inordinate object. As we have seen above, the reason cannot apprehend all the aspects of an object at once, while the apprehension of anything under a particular and limited state of goodness is sufficient to attract the will. Sin exists with this movement of the will to a good viewed under these limited conditions, that is, without the right consideration of reason.

Saint Thomas states that the perfection of the act of sin pertains to the will, with the conditions we have many times mentioned: namely, the proposal of the object without due consideration:

. . . The cause of sin is some apparent good as motive, yet lacking the due motive, viz., the rule of reason or the Divine law; this motive which is an apparent good appertains to the apprehension of the sense and to the appetite; while the lack of the due rule appertains to the reason, whose nature it is to consider the rule; and the completeness of the voluntary sinful act appertains to the will, so that the act of the will, given the considerations we have just mentioned, is already a sin.[2]

Although this ignorance that arises with the movement of the will to an inordinate object is quite evident, there may remain a doubt as to whether this ignorance is naturally prior to the movement of the appetite, or whether the appetite precedes the ignorance. For, on one hand, the erring judgement of what is to be done presents an object to the will, and as such seems prior to that potency; on the other hand, the ignorance in this judgement, as an effect of the will deterring the intellect, appears posterior to the will.

In this difficulty we may consider the entire practical judgement as dependent on the will, since the judgement of what is to be done is controlled by the will; or we may resolve the practical judgement into its various components. And in this latter case, as proposing something to the will, the judgement is naturally prior, as is the ignorance contained therein; as something accepted by the will it is naturally posterior to it. In the former aspect the ignorance itself follows the sin, as noted by Saint Thomas:

. . . The error from which all sin proceeds is the error of election, as one chooses what should not be chosen, according to which all wicked men are called ignorant

1. *Ibid.*, ad 3.
2. *Ibid.*, a.2.

by the Philosopher in the third book of the *Ethics* (chap. 1). However this error presupposes disorder in the appetitive part. For, from the fact that the sensible appetite is attracted to its own delectable object, and the superior appetite is not opposed to it, the reason is prevented from applying to the election that which it has in habit. And thus it is clear that this error does not at all precede sin, but follows.[1]

In this respect the inconsideration in the reason is consequent to the movement of the will, and as such is a circumstance under which sin occurs, rather than a cause of sin. For sin is an act of the will tending to an inordinate object, and as such it is primarily and formally constituted by its relation to this object. However, there follows upon this relation the privation of rectitude in the act of the will, and it is in this manner that sin is completed as an evil. We may say, therefore, that ignorance in sin is a formality of sin, but one which is caused by the will, and which is consecutive to the will's tending to a sinful object.

Therefore, while we say that nothing is willed unless it be known, and that a defective operation of the will necessarily demands a defective proposition on the part of the practical reason, we do not lose sight of the fact that such a defective proposition is due to the will itself. For it is proposed as such because of the will's mastery of the practical intellect in securing the considerations of those aspects which please the will, and the withdrawal of those that are displeasing. The reason for this is that the will is the principle of human action, and although it is true that its movement can only be through reason, this extends only to the presentation of the object. As John of Saint Thomas states, " the intellect moves by presenting an object to the will; therefore, it moves only inasmuch as the object presented moves. "[2] And, since the presentation of particular goods do not of necessity move the will, it remains for this faculty to determine the judgement of the practical intellect with regard to those objects toward which the will moves. It is true that passion or habit may influence the judgement of the practical intellect, but this is accidental to the determination of the judgement which comes from the will. In speaking of this matter Cajetan remarks:

> . . . When the determination of the intellect to one part in moral matters, since they are contingent, results from passion, manifestly it precedes the election as is clear from what has been said above. But, since this is accidental, speaking absolutely of the determination of the intellect, it must be said simply that the will determines the intellect to the judgement that one of the opposites is to be done.[3]

In this determination of the intellect the will may prevent a true evaluation and force the reason to an imperfect appraisal of the object in question. The resultant ignorance, therefore, or the lack of consideration, according to which what is good under a certain aspect is regarded as *simpliciter* good, is the error from which sin proceeds. And because this ignorance is caused by the will as endowed with freedom of choice, it is voluntary. As Saint Thomas writes:

1. *De Ver.*, q.13, a.6, ad 1.
2. *Curs. theol.*, T.V, disp.5, p.493.
3. *Op. cit.*, q.77, a.2.

. . . That error from which all sin proceeds is the error of election, according to which the Philosopher in a previous place calls every wicked man ignorant; however, this ignorance does not render the act involuntary, on the contrary it is caused by the will, since from the very inclination of the corrupt will to sin, which exists through habit or passion, it follows that a man chooses as good that which pleases the will.[1]

In this manner practical ignorance is exemplified in the sin of Eve, as it followed upon her inordinate appetite. For Eve could have avoided all error if she had chosen to consider; for her knowledge was perfect, not comprehensively, but by reason. She required deliberation to avoid falling into error, but by deliberation she could have avoided all error. Since she had to deliberate, however, she could not avoid the consideration of things according to successive aspects, and since her will was not infallibly attached to the true good, there was the possibility of an inclination to an imperfect good, and the interference of the appetite with the reason. In this way she was affected by the words of the serpent and immediately inclined to the promise he made to her, turning away from the consideration of reason which would have shown her the error in the serpent's statement. Therefore, her error presupposed an inordination in her appetite, and this may be seen from the words of Saint Thomas, showing the character of Eve's knowledge and the error that followed her sin.

. . . The intellect of man in the state of innocence needed deliberation in order not to fall into error, just as he needed to eat in order that his body be not weakened. He was possessed, however, of such right deliberation, that by deliberating he could avoid all error, just as by eating he would avoid all bodily defect. Whence, just as he could sin by omission if he had not eaten, so too, would he if he did not deliberate when it was time for deliberating; and in this way the error would follow the sin.[2]

In his discussion of the relation of ignorance to the will Saint Thomas lists this inconsideration as an ignorance consequent to the will; for he writes that ignorance of this kind happens, " when one does not actually consider what one can and ought to consider; this is ignorance of evil choice. " [3]

In his commentary on this article, Cajetan draws a distinction between ignorance of the law and ignorance of election, noting that both are quasi objects of the will, but that the former is an habitual privation of knowledge, while the latter is an actual inconsideration of what ought to be considered and applied to the particular case or instance: " . . . Now the difference between these two is that ignorance of election consists in the voluntary actual inconsideration, while the ignorance of the law consists in the voluntary habitual privation of knowledge. " [4]

The ignorance that is common to sin, then, is based on the imperfection of the reason, and in the ability of the appetite to attach itself to some good, whether it is truly good or not. Those who attribute all

1. *In II Sent.*, dist.43, q.1, a.1, ad 3.
2. *De Ver.*, q.18, a.6, ad 6.
3. *Ia IIae*, q.6, a.8.
4. *Op. cit.*, q.6, a.8.

sin to ignorance are willing to concede the first point, but they are mistaken concerning the nature of the will. For they suppose that the will is entirely subjected to the reason, that it could follow no good except a rational good, and that there is no possibility of its interfering with the proposal of reason. We have shown that the will may incline to any good, and therefore the defect in the practical intellect is due primarily to the will, as Saint Thomas shows:

> And, therefore, when someone is inordinately attracted to something, by reason of the inordinate attraction the judgement of the intellect is hindered in the particular thing to be chosen. And thus vice is principally in appetite and not in knowledge.[1]

As long as the will remains free in the choice of its object, and as long as the intellect has to consider things successively, there remains the possibility of the appetite's interference with the evaluation of reason. The various goods of man should be regulated and subordinated according to reason, that is, by preferring one thing to another, and making the right ordination to the end. But, as we have seen, the will may be attracted to one of these goods outside the order of reason, and tend to it apart from the appraisal of right reason. Since this action on the part of the will involves the choice of a lesser good, as is evident in the angel's choice of their own excellence, there seems to be a contradiction between such a choice and the words of Aristotle, " and we choose what we best know to be good. "

In treating this problem, we may note that in an election there are two things to be considered, the thing chosen, and the motive or the reason for the choice. In regard to the thing itself, absolutey considered, it may be a better good, and even judged as better by the speculative reason; and yet the opposing good may be more efficacious in moving the will because it is judged practically as better, that is, as more in accord with the appetite: " As each one is, so does the end seem to him. " And in this sense the will always chooses the greater good, that is, one that is better, practically considered.

We do not mean that the will of itself can immediately change the nature of the good, but that this is done through the medium of the intellect which proposes the good to the will, so that the intellect proposes the lesser good as more convenient or with some condition that makes it preferable to the greater good. The good proposed in this manner is due to the will, for the lesser good is clothed in a more attractive mode because of the will's influence on the reason, since it is the reason which makes the proposition according to the pattern dictated by the will. The foundation of this is that the will can only be aroused by the attraction of the good presented by the intellect, and when the will is moved to a lesser good at the expense of a greater good, it is because of a greater attraction in what the intellect proposes. As John of Saint Thomas notes:

1. *De Malo*, q.2, a.3, ad 9.

But whatever the charm and attraction of the object, it has to be made through the medium of a proposition, and a judgement or decision of the intellect. Therefore, the will is free so that it may be moved to a lesser good, leaving aside a greater good, in the sense that this necessarily has to be done through the greater attraction and charm of one thing over another thing, because of the fact that the will cannot be understood to be moved and attracted unless there be objective attraction and allurement and it is necessary that this attraction be evident and proposed through the medium of the intellect.[1]

We may conclude, therefore, that in sin the will always acts for the greater good, practically speaking, but the fact that the good is considered greater depends on the will.

What has been said is sufficient for the explanation of the relation between the will, as the cause of sin, and the ignorance that is common to sin. However, since Saint Thomas [2] states that ignorance is the cause of sin, it might serve our purpose to review what he means by this statement, and to determine what kind of ignorance this is, and how it is the cause of sin.

Practical Ignorance and the Ignorance Which Causes Sin

It is evident that ignorance cannot be a *per se* cause of any action, since ignorance is a privation and cannot of itself produce any action. *Per accidens*, however, it may be a cause, that is, " *removens prohibens.* " In the case of morals ignorance is a *removens prohibens* insofar as it excludes knowledge by which human actions are directed.

In this direction of action there is a twofold knowledge: one universal, the other singular, and the privation of either is sufficient to cause sin. Sometimes, too, man is prevented from a bad action by his universal knowledge; for example, because he knows that fornication is wrong he will not commit such an action. However, even if he has universal knowledge he still may not know the particular, and since our actions are in regard to particulars, a man may sin through such ignorance. For example, a man may know that it is wrong to kill a man, but in particular may not be aware of his action, as in the case of the hunter who kills a man thinking he is a deer.

Ignorance which causes sin, then, is the ignorance which would prevent the action if it were known to be evil. This seems also to apply to practical ignorance, since practical ignorance is an omission of those things which should be considered in the commission of an action, and the consideration of which would prevent the evil action. As Saint Thomas writes, " in every sin this is common, that one does not do that which in itself is for the sake of resisting sin; if he were to do this, he would not sin. " [3] It seems, therefore, that practical ignorance may be considered a cause on the part of the object, which is deprived of the considerations of reason which are due to it, and which would prevent the sin if they were present.

1. *Curs. theol.*, T.V, disp.6, a.2, p.560.
2. *Ia IIae*, q.76, a.1.
3. *In II Sent.*, dist.22, q.1, a.1, ad 6.

However, when Saint Thomas speaks of ignorance as the cause of sin, as an ignorance which deprives the subject of a knowledge that would prevent sin, he does not seem to mean practical ignorance. For, according to his statement, " not every kind of ignorance is the cause of sin, but that alone which removes the knowledge which would prevent the sinful act. " [1]

Therefore, if the subject were willing to commit the action even if he were not ignorant, it could not be said that ignorance is the cause of his action. As in the case of the hunter, if he were willing to kill a man, while being unaware that he is actually killing one, his action could not be said to be caused by ignorance. The supposition in cases of this kind is that he would commit the action even if he were aware of it.

Therefore, since evidently one can do evil without ignorance as its cause, there must be a difference between the ignorance that causes sin and the practical ignorance which is in all sin.

Furthermore, only the ignorance that is the cause of sin excuses or diminishes sin, as Saint Thomas states in the *Sentences*. By ignorance as the cause of sin he means an ignorance which is the reason why the sin is committed, and which is capable of lessening or removing the voluntariness. This is evident from the words of Saint Thomas:

> Ignorance which is not the cause of the act, does not cause an act to be involuntary as the Philosopher says in the third book of the *Ethics*, chap. 2; whence, this ignorance in no manner excuses or diminishes sin; but only that which is the cause of sin.[2]

Practical ignorance, however, follows the will, and neither excuses nor diminishes sin. Therefore, it cannot be said to be a cause of sin as being the reason why the subject commits the sin. The difference between practical ignorance and the ignorance which causes sin is evident from the words of Saint Thomas. " The ignorance which follows every sin is not the cause of sin, as has been said; and, therefore, it neither excuses nor diminishes sin. " [3]

We may say, therefore, that the ignorance common to sin is an ignorance caused by an inordinate will. For the will is the cause of sin in tending toward an object without the full consideration of reason. In this way it is also the cause of the ignorance which occurs with its choice. We must conclude, therefore, that such ignorance follows the motion of the will, and is an effect rather than a cause of sin.

This brings us to the end of the first part of our work in which we have shown that every sinner is ignorant, at least to the extent of choosing without the full consideration of reason. Since the act of choice must include the proposal of the practical intellect, we concluded that such ignorance belonged to the practical reason. And then in our examination of the operations of the practical reason we saw that its truth or falsity depends on the appetite. Therefore, in those acts that are morally bad,

1. *Ia IIae*, q.76, a.1.
2. *In II Sent.*, dist.22, q.2, a.2.
3. *Ibid.*, ad 4.

an inordinate appetite exercises its influence on the practical reason so that an imperfect good is proposed to the will. From this it follows that the ignorance occurring with the proposal of the imperfect good is caused by the appetite; and in our treatment of the will as the cause of sin in its tendency to an object without the consideration of the reason, we showed that it is also the cause of the ignorance which follows upon its choice.

B. PRACTICAL IGNORANCE AND THE VOLUNTARY

I. IGNORANCE WHICH IS CONTRARY TO SIN AS A VOLUNTARY ACT

Nature of a Voluntary Act

In order to prove that ignorance exists in all sin we had to recount the nature of a human act, and the manner in which the intellect and the will are the principles in those actions which are properly human. We stated, therefore, that man acts with a knowledge of his end, moving himself to that end by his own free will. This manner of acting is evidently voluntary as it proceeds from an interior principle with a knowledge of the end, and this is the nature of a voluntary action as defined by Aristotle in the third book of the *Ethics.* [1]

The fact is, that man in apprehending the end *sub formali ratione finis*, acts for that end in a more perfect manner than those creatures who attain the end by sense apprehension and natural estimation. Because of this Saint Thomas states that a perfect *voluntarium* is found in a rational creature, while an imperfect one exists also in brutes. " Wherefore the voluntary in its perfection befits none but the rational nature: whereas the imperfect voluntary is within the competency of even irrational animals. " [2]

Since the voluntary character of man's actions necessarily includes the motion of the will, and since this motion of the will presupposes a knowledge of the good, a deficiency in apprehension results in an involuntary action on the part of the will following such knowledge. On this account, ignorance is cited by Aristotle [3] as the cause of an *involuntarium*, and Saint Thomas in his commentary on this passage explains his doctrine in this manner:

> The voluntary, however, implies the movement of the appetitive faculty, which presupposes a knowledge on the part of the perceiving faculty, from the fact that the perceived good moves the appetitive faculty. In a twofold manner, however, something is involuntary. . . in another manner because there is excluded the knowledge of the perceiving faculty.[4]

Both Aristotle and Saint Thomas, therefore, agree on the fact that ignorance causes an involuntary action. In fact, since it is of the very nature of sin to be voluntary, we might conclude from the above that in

1. Chap.1, 1111a23.
2. *Ia IIae*, q.6, a.2.
3. *Ethics*, III, chap.1, 1110a1.
4. *In III Ethic.*, lect.1, n.386.

the presence of ignorance no sin can exist. And yet we know from Aristotle's own teaching [1] that many things which men do wrongly are imputed to them because of ignorance, and this certainly implies that such actions are voluntary.

Differences to Be Observed Regarding the Relation of Ignorance to Voluntary Actions

As the difficulty mentioned above obviously points to differences in ignorance itself, we will use the distinctions Aristotle makes in the third book of the *Ethics*,[3] where he states that in regard to ignorance there are three differences to be observed. The first of these concerns the relation of ignorance to the will, for at times ignorance is responsible for actions which are contrary to the will, and these actions are properly called involuntary. Sometimes, however, actions done in ignorance are not contrary to the will, but only outside the will in the fact that they are unknown. Actions such as these are not called involuntary, for they are attributed to an agent willing to perform such actions even outside his ignorance. They are, therefore, called nonvoluntary actions, which does not signify opposition to the will, but the mere removal of the will from the object unknown. However, those actions which are done through ignorance, and which are attributed to an agent unwilling to perform such action in the presence of knowledge are properly speaking involuntary.

The second difference concerns the relation of ignorance to action, for, of those actions done in ignorance, some are caused by ignorance itself and some have another cause. For example, a drunken man acts in ignorance and yet his actions are attributed to drunkenness rather than to ignorance. In reference to this Aristotle states: "Acting by reason of ignorance seems also to be different from acting *in* ignorance." [2] And he concludes that every sinner acts not by reason of ignorance, but ignoring in particular what he should do or avoid. Therefore, whoever acts in ignorance and not because of ignorance does not act involuntarily, for no one is judged evil because of what he does involuntarily.

The third difference refers to what is unknown, and under such an aspect ignorance is twofold. For, in one manner the subject may be ignorant of what he should do or avoid, and an ignorance of this kind concerns those things which are necessary to know for one's own operations. Ignorance of this nature, therefore, occurring as it does through negligence does not cause an involuntary action, for each one is bound to use sufficient care in order to learn what he should do or avoid. Since the ignorance itself is voluntary, it follows that any action proceeding from such ignorance is likewise voluntary.

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1. *Ethics*, III, chap.1, 1110b30.
2. Chap.1, 1110b18 - 1111a2.
3. *Ibid.*, 1110b24.

In this manner we may be ignorant of the particular action to be performed, for example, one who supposes that fornication is to be committed because of concupiscence. Or he may be ignorant in his universal knowledge in thinking that fornication is a licit action. In either case it is an ignorance of what one should know, and does not render the act involuntary: for in the first instance, concupiscence rather than ignorance, is the cause of the action, and in the second, blame is attached to those actions which proceed from a universal ignorance of what one is supposed to know.

Another ignorance is that of the particular circumstances involved in an action, and through a justifiable ignorance in those matters pardon is given to those who transgress. For this reason ignorance of particular circumstances may cause an involuntary action, not, however, an ignorance of what one is supposed to know.

Effect of Ignorance on the Voluntary Character of an Action

In view of these differences, let us return to the position of Aristotle that ignorance causes an involuntary action in bearing away the knowledge required for a voluntary act. It is now evident, however, that not every kind of ignorance deprives the subject of knowledge and makes his action involuntary. Saint Thomas explains it in these words: "Because the following act, from the very fact that it proceeds from an ignorance which is voluntary, is in some manner voluntary." [1] Therefore, in order to determine the effect of ignorance on the voluntary nature of an action, we must take account of its relation to the will. This relation is threefold, depending on whether the ignorance is concomitant, consequent, or antecedent to the action of the will.

Ignorance is concomitant when it concerns that which is done, but nevertheless would still be done if the ignorance were not present. Thus this ignorance does not affect the actions, but merely coexists with the actions of the will. For example, a hunter may be willing to kill his enemy, but unknowingly kills him, thinking he is a deer. Such ignorance does not cause an involuntary action, as pointed out by Aristotle in the first difference given above. For it does not make an action involuntary, but only nonvoluntary.

Consequent ignorance is that which follows the action of the will, and this may be directly voluntary, when the subject wills the ignorance with a view to sinning more easily. Or it may be indirectly willed when through negligence one fails to apply himself to the acquisition of knowledge which he can and should have for his ordinary actions. Needless to say, one is not held accountable for what he should not know or cannot know. Ignorance may also be voluntary *per accidens* when someone either directly or indirectly wills something and the ignorance follows. This may be direct as in the case of drunkenness which deprives one

1. *De Malo*, q.3, a.8.

of the use of reason, or indirect when through concupiscence one fails to consider what should be considered in order to avoid sin, and this is the ignorance of election resulting from passion or habit. Since each of these types of ignorance is voluntary they cannot cause a totally involuntary action. However, if the voluntary ignorance is of such a nature that it precedes the motion of the will in reference to some action which would not be done in the presence of knowledge, then such ignorance is said to cause an involuntary action *secundum quid*.

Antecedent ignorance is that which is not voluntary, and is the cause of the action which otherwise would not be performed, as when one does not know some circumstance of an action, which he is not obliged to know, and which he would not perform except for his ignorance. An example of this is found in the case of a hunter who uses sufficient care to ascertain that no one is within the known range of his rifle, yet due to some accidental cause shoots someone. Since ignorance such as this totally precedes the will, and is in no way voluntary, it causes a totally involuntary action. Thus, Saint Thomas, after citing the types of ignorance which follow the will, remarks that any ignorance not included in any of these voluntary modes, and existing without any disorder on the part of the will, causes the following act to be entirely involuntary. "However, if ignorance in none of the aforesaid manners is voluntary, for example, when it is invincible, and still is without any inordinateness on the part of the will, then it makes the following act totally involuntary." [1]

Antecedent ignorance is, therefore, the only ignorance that entirely precedes any action on the part of the will, and due to its involuntary character it is inculpable and the actions which follow from it are involuntary.

Thus, when Saint Thomas takes up the question whether ignorance totally excuses from sin, his affirmative reply extends only to the ignorance which is the cause of the action. In this way he eliminates concomitant and consequent ignorance which are not the cause of the action, and which do not cause an involuntary action.

> And suchlike ignorance which is not the cause of the sinful act, as already stated, since it does not make the act to be involuntary, does not excuse from sin. The same applies to any ignorance that does not cause, but follows or accompanies the sinful act. On the other hand, ignorance which is the cause of the act, since it makes it to be involuntary, of its very nature excuses from sin, because voluntariness is essential to sin.[2]

However, ignorance that is the cause of the action may excuse from sin either totally or in part, depending on the nature of such ignorance. Therefore, Saint Thomas states that only ignorance which is totally involuntary entirely excuses from sin. "If, however, the ignorance be such as to be entirely involuntary, either through being invincible, or through being of matters one is not bound to know, then suchlike ignorance excuses from sin altogether." [3]

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Ia IIae*, q.76, a.3.
3. *Ibid.*

From what has been said it should be apparent in what manner ignorance is contrary to sin as a voluntary act. For we have reviewed the relation of ignorance to the voluntary character of moral actions and have determined how ignorance which is entirely voluntary excuses from fault in the action that flows from it. There now remains to be studied another type of ignorance which does not cause a totally involuntary action, and we proceed, therefore, to the ignorance caused by negligence.

II. IGNORANCE IN SINS OF NEGLIGENCE

The Ignorance that Results from Negligence

In treating of the manner in which ignorance is voluntary Saint Thomas writes: " Ignorance is called indirectly voluntary because one does not employ diligence in learning, and this is the ignorance of negligence. " [1] In other words, an ignorance results from the failure to use sufficient care in learning the things which one can and should know for the direction of moral actions. It is our purpose at present to examine further ignorance of this kind.

Now, since the knowledge that man uses in directing his actions is universal and particular, the neglect of either one of these may cause a sinful action. For, by his universal knowledge man is sometimes retracted from sin; for example, one who knows that fornication is evil may on that account abstain from such an action. Knowledge of particulars may also prevent man from sinning, as in the case of the hunter who would not shoot if he knew a man was passing by, but in the absence of such knowledge due to his own neglect kills the passerby. Such ignorance is said to be willed indirectly since it is not a direct object of the will, but is caused by some preoccupation on the part of the subject. Saint Thomas states that ignorance of this kind occurs, " when a man, through stress of work or other occupations, neglects to acquire the knowledge which would restrain him from sin. " [2]

This ignorance which results from the neglect of learning what we can and should know for the exercise of our own moral activities is itself a moral fault. As Saint Thomas states: " Now it is evident that whoever neglects to have or do what he ought to have or do commits a sin of omission. Wherefore, through negligence, ignorance of what one is bound to know is a sin. " [3]

Since the ignorance of negligence applies only to what one can and should know, it does not refer to those matters which do not concern the actions of the subject, nor to those things which he cannot know. For the former is a case of pure nescience to which no blame is attached, and the latter by its very nature is involuntary.

1. *De Malo*, q.3, a.8.
2. *Ia IIae*, q.76, a.3.
3. *Ibid.*, a.2.

In the ignorance rising from negligence, however, there can be no question of its voluntary character, since the neglect is on the part of the subject himself, and it is absurd to suppose that an ignorance of those things which one can and should know is entirely involuntary.

The Voluntary Character of Actions that Flow from Such Ignorance

Therefore, since the ignorance is itself voluntary, the actions that flow from this ignorance are likewise voluntary in some degree. For the subject in this case knows his own ignorance, which he has willed indirectly, and since he is the cause of such ignorance he is also the cause of those actions which flow from it. For to be voluntary *in causa* is to be voluntary in some manner, as Cajetan remarks:

> And the reason is because these are voluntary only in their causes. For from the fact that they are voluntary in some manner (for to be voluntary in cause is to be voluntary in some manner), they are in the class of human and moral actions, and not in the class of actions excusing from all blame.[1]

However, as this ignorance is indirectly willed, it differs from affected ignorance which is directly willed with a view to sinning more easily. In the latter case the bad will rather than the ignorance is the cause of sin, and therefore such ignorance in no manner excuses or diminishes sin. For the act of sin is pleasing to the will and as such its voluntary character is in no way lessened. When the ignorance is caused by negligence, however, such ignorance is itself the cause of those actions which result from it, since in this case the subject acts because of his ignorance and would not act if the knowledge of the evil were present to him. Therefore, his actions are voluntary in the sense that he is the cause of the ignorance which is responsible for such actions, but in a certain sense they are involuntary in that they would not be done in the presence of knowledge. Saint Thomas in referring to this type of ignorance says that it causes an *involuntarium secundum quid.* " . . . Nevertheless it causes involuntariness in a certain respect, inasmuch as it precedes the movement of the will toward the act, which movement would not be, if there were knowledge. "[2]

Since it is the cause of the action, the negligence has a certain similarity to antecedent ignorance which is also the cause of the action. However, as we stated above the ignorance of negligence is listed by Saint Thomas as a consequent ignorance. Therefore, while antecedent ignorance precedes all action of the will and is thus entirely involuntary, the ignorance of negligence precedes the will with reference to the action which it causes, but follows the action of the will with reference to the ignorance itself as caused by the will.

On this account antecedent ignorance renders the act which it causes totally involuntary. The ignorance of negligence, however, since it is the cause of the action, and the cause of an *involuntarium secundum quid,*

1. *Op. cit.*, q.76, a.4.
2. *Ia IIae*, q.6, a.8

lessens the sin in the action that it causes. For according to the statement of Saint Thomas, " since every sin is voluntary, ignorance can diminish sin insofar as it diminishes its voluntariness. " [1]

The ignorance of negligence, then, since it precedes the will with reference to the action which it causes, diminishes the voluntary character of this action. For an action that is caused by ignorance must be judged less voluntary than one that is committed knowingly. Saint Thomas states, therefore, that the ignorance arising from the neglect of knowledge diminishes the following sin.

> Sometimes, however, the ignorance which is the cause of a sin being committed, is not directly voluntary, but indirectly or accidentally, as when a man is unwilling to work hard at his studies, the result being that he is ignorant. . . and this ignorance diminishes voluntariness and consequently alleviates the sin.[2]

However, in saying that the ignorance of negligence diminishes the following sin we are faced with an obvious difficulty. For this ignorance is itself a sin, and one who sins through such ignorance adds sin to sin. Due to such an addition it seems that ignorance does not diminish sin, and our conclusion to that effect cannot be true.

In answer to this we admit that the ignorance of negligence adds sin to sin, and because of this, one sinning through negligence commits a double fault. However, this does not prevent the following sin from being lessened by his ignorance. In fact, Saint Thomas [3] points out that this does not always result in a greater sin; for, if the first lessens the second it may happen that the two together may be less serious than a single sin, just as homicide is a more serious sin if it is committed by a sober man, than by a drunken one, even though in the latter case there are two sins. For drunkenness diminishes the following sin to a degree that the gravity of both together are less than willful murder. In view of these considerations we may say that sins committed through negligence, even though such negligence is itself a sin and the cause of other sins, are still less serious than those committed knowingly.

Therefore, one who neglects to acquire a sufficient knowledge for his own moral actions is morally guilty for the ignorance he possesses. Furthermore, since he has in a manner willed the ignorance it cannot be supposed that he is totally opposed to the actions which follow such ignorance. As we have pointed out, his ignorance does not excuse from sin, as he is willing in a way that such actions should come about, and allows those actions when he causes his ignorance. However, he is opposed in the degree mentioned above, and in this way the voluntary nature of the following action is lessened and the sin diminished.

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1. *Ibid.*, q.76, a.4.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, ad 2.

III. IGNORANCE IN SINS OF PASSION

Problem of Knowledge and Ignorance in Actions Which Proceed From Passion

There is no doubt that man is influenced by passion toward certain actions which normally he would not do, and that when passion passes he is sorry for those things he has committed under its influence. It is our task to inquire into the relation between passion and the actions that proceed from passion, and to determine whether passion has an effect on the knowledge of the subject.

Daily experience will attest that the force of passion influences man to judge things in a different manner than he would usually do, and the reason for such judgement and the actions that flow from them are assigned to passion. For example, man may hold certain acts as bad, and yet at times commit those very actions which ordinarily seem evil to him. Passion in the sensitive appetite seems to be the cause of the change in judgement, for by a more vehement and forceful presentation of the object, the outlook of the subject undergoes a change with reference to the object, and what was previously regarded as evil is now regarded as a good.

But, though passion may be responsible for the actions that are committed, we may inquire whether or not it is the cause of a formal sin. For if passion overcomes the reason there is no sin, since sin requires a knowledge of the evilness of the action. If, on the other hand, passion fails to overcome the reason, then the reason and the will are capable of performing their functions and man would sin knowingly.

To say that passion overcomes the reason supposes that in some way the reason so departs from its knowledge that it presents the good of the sensitive appetite to the will. This, then, makes the certitude of reason a very fragile thing, and it was for this reason that Socrates was opposed to such an admission, for the stronger and more certain should never be under the command of the inferior.

And it cannot be argued that passion overcomes the particular reason and not the universal. For example, if man knows in his universal knowledge that no fornication should be committed, he could not have a particular opinion that this particular act of fornication should be committed. For these opinions are contrary, since they are of contradictories,— that is, a universal negative and a particular affirmative. And, since no one can hold contrary opinions at the same time, it is impossible for any one to suppose that no fornication should be committed, and at the same time to think that this particular act of fornication should be committed.

Furthermore, one who knows the universal also knows the singular contained under the universal, just as one who knows that all Scandinavians have blue eyes also knows this particular person has blue eyes, once he apprehends him as a Scandinavian. Similarly, one who knows

that no fornication should be committed, once he apprehends this act as fornication also knows it should not be committed. If he knows only the universal and not the singular, the bad action is attributed to ignorance, just as one may fail to know that this particular person has blue eyes because of his ignorance in apprehending him as a Scandinavian, even though universally he may know that all Scandinavians have blue eyes. Sins of passion, however, are not attributed to ignorance, and if the sinner does not sin through ignorance it seems that he has knowledge in universal and in particular.

This is evident from the words of the sinner himself, who, though influenced by passion, will often admit that he should not be following the delectable good. Since his own admission is that he is doing wrong, this seems evident proof that he is acting with full knowledge in universal and in particular.

In answer to these questions, Saint Thomas[1] quickly dismisses the opinion of Socrates, that man could not act against the knowledge he has. For experience demonstrates the contrary, namely, that man sometimes acts in opposition to his knowledge and that knowledge is no guarantee against moral evil. This is evident in the case of passion, which somehow influences man against his rational judgement so that he supposes some action should be performed while habitually holding to the opposite opinion. We now wish to inquire in what manner this error of judgement is caused by the sensitive appetite and how passion effects a judgement contrary to the judgement of reason.

There are some who are unwilling to say that man could act against what he knows to be true, and therefore offer a solution to this problem by proposing that passion could overcome opinion, but not knowledge. But this is really no solution, for opinion is either strong or weak. If weak, as happens to one in doubt, it is quite easily understood how one could act against it, since the reason clings to such an opinion with only a slight margin of preference and could quickly change. In the case of strong opinion, however, the situation is no different from knowledge, for man adheres to a strong opinion as he does to knowledge, and to a false one no less than to a true one. Experience establishes that man acts against the knowledge he has, not only in doubtful matters, but even against that knowledge which he holds as most certain.

The Different Senses in Which Knowledge is Taken

To understand the solution of the difficulty involved in stating that man, under the influence of passion, acts against his knowledge, Saint Thomas considers the different senses in which knowledge is taken.

First of all, one may be said to know in habit; for example, when someone possesses a knowledge of geometry but at present is not considering it. Or the knowledge may be in act, when actually here and now

1. *In VII Ethic.*, lect.2, n.1314.

use is being made of knowledge one has. There is a great deal of difference between an action performed with knowledge in act, and one performed with knowledge in habit. For, in the case of actual knowledge, it is difficult to see how anyone could act against what he is actually thinking. On the other hand, it is easy to understand how an action could be against knowledge that existed only in habit.

Secondarily, there are two modes of propositions in the practical reason, the universal, and the singular. One may know both the universal and the singular in habit, but in act consider only the universal proposition. If one does not consider the singular about which actions are concerned, it is not difficult to understand how the action can be contrary to universal knowledge. However, we can understand the universal in two senses, as it exists in itself, and as it exists in the singular. For example, one may have universal knowledge that fire is made from combustible material and not know that this is combustible material. The universal in itself, then, can be known in habit and in act; in the singular, however, it can be unknown either in habit or in act. Knowledge in universal only, or of the singular in habit, offers no obstacle to ignorance in a particular actual case. It seems unreasonable, however, to suppose that one could act against his knowledge if he knew the singular in act.

The third division of knowledge under consideration has to do with the passage of habitual knowledge to act. Sometimes this can happen as man wishes, that is, his knowledge is free and no impediment is offered to its actual realization. Sometimes, however, the habit is restricted in its passage to act by some cause that prevents the normal actions of reason.

A vehement passion on the part of the sensitive appetite may prevent the application of what is habitually known to this judgement, so that man judges not according to reason, but outside reason.

Nature of the Ignorance Existing in a Sin of Passion

If we apply the above to the practical syllogism we may more easily see how a man acting in passion does not know that what he is doing is evil, in that he suffers a voluntary ignorance in which he supposes that this act which is evil should be done.

In every act of virtue or vice there is a kind of syllogistic reasoning, but men reason differently according to the different states of temperance, intemperance, continence, or incontinence. The temperate man, since he is moved according to reason, syllogizes in this manner:

No fornication is to be committed.

This is fornication.

Therefore, it is not to be committed.

The intemperate man, who is habitually inclined to evil, reasons according to his habitual inclination, as follows:

Delectable things are to be pursued.

This is delectable.

Therefore, it is to be pursued.

Continent and incontinent men are not habitually inclined to evil, neither are they strong in virtue as is a temperate man, with the result that they are influenced by both reason and concupiscence. For the continent man will judge that no sin is to be committed, which is according to right reason, but because he is inclined to the concupiscible good, there will also be proposed to him the following of delectable things. The question hinges on the minor proposition, and the continent man, being able to master his passions, will assume as the minor the particular proposition that this act of fornication is evil and must be avoided, thus concluding under the first major.

The incontinent man has the same major premises, but averts from the right judgement of reason in particular; and instead of rightly reasoning that this particular is a sin, he departs from right reason in favor of its consideration as a delectable, and so concludes under the second proposition that it is delectable and should be done.

Thus it is evident that one who knows universally may fail to apply that universal knowledge to this particular case, just as the incontinent man withdraws from a rational consideration of this particular act and instead considers it as a delectable, and in this manner still retains his universal knowledge, but makes it inoperative. This is the ignorance proper to a sin of passion: that only the particular reason is overcome. The universal knowledge remains as most certain, but is impeded by passion from an application to the particular.

From the division of knowledge and the practical syllogism it is also apparent that one cannot have in act a particular affirmative and a universal negative or *e converso*, since these would be contrary opinions; but it is possible to have a knowledge of one contradictory in habit and the other in act, for act is not contrary to habit but to act.

However, if the universal and the particular are not in regard to the same thing, the appetite may follow the particular while the universal knowledge is retained — as in the case of one who knows in his universal reason that no fornication should be committed, yet in a particular case judges that fornication is a good and to be done. In the latter case, the choice is made under concrete conditions as added aspects which appeal to the appetite, so that fornication is judged to be a good as a particular operable, not, however, in its universal consideration. Thus the universal judgement may be contrary to the appetite, not, however, the particular judgement. As Saint Thomas shows:

> . . . At times the appetite seems not to follow knowledge; this is, therefore, because the appetite and the judgement of knowledge are not taken with reference to the same thing; for the appetite concerns the particular operable, at a time when the judgement of reason concerns a universal, and this judgement is sometimes contrary to the appetite. But the judgement of this particular operable, as now, can never be contrary to the appetite. For, he who wishes to commit fornication, even though he knows in his universal knowledge that fornication is evil, yet he judges for himself that at this time the act of fornication is good, and chooses it under the aspect of good.[1]

1. *De Ver.*, q.24, a.2.

It should also be noted that a man may suppose that a particular action, considered in itself, should not be performed, and yet suppose that it should be done because of the circumstances involved. That these propositions are not contradictory is shown by Cajetan:

> . . . The propositions known and unknown in particular in the practical act are not contradictory. For, although a man in passion believes that this act of fornication in itself should not now be done, he believes, nevertheless, in the presence of all concurrent circumstances, that this act of fornication should now be committed: for, unless he felt this in his heart, he would not do it. It is evident, however, that those things which are not in reference to the same thing, in the same way, etc., are not contradictory. And if one in malice or passion says that he knows in his heart contradictories in act, he lies.[1]

This manifests two ways of considering the moral act, i.e., either in itself or with reference to the conditions which actually affect the subject choosing the good. A man in passion suffers no defective knowledge in the first sense since he knows that considered in itself this act is wrong. However, in the second sense he does suffer a defective knowledge since he supposes that under these conditions such an act is to be chosen. Thus it happens that this act, viewed under the particular circumstances that encompass it, is judged as a good and presented as such to the will.

There is no contradiction then in the possession of actual knowledge in universal and in particular that fornication in itself should not be done, and in the judgement that this particular act of fornication should be done, since the latter is considered with the attraction that the pleasure in the act has on the subject disposed by passion. In this case the judgement is made according to the appetite and not according to reason, for fornication is chosen because it is judged suitable to a subject disposed by passion or who judges according to passion, rather than weighing the object under a rational consideration according to which fornication would not be chosen.

In sins that occur from passion, then, the subject suffers a voluntary ignorance. For he voluntarily impedes the application of knowledge which would make known the evil of the action. It should be noted, however, that ignorance resulting from passion applies only to the particular judgement, since it is the particular judgement of reason that is set aside in favor of the judgement according to passion. And because of his willful refusal to consider, the subject supposes that the action is good for him and should be done.

The Role of the Sensitive Appetite in Sins of Passion

To further this inquiry as to how passion overcomes the particular reason and is the cause of the judgement being concluded according to concupiscence, we must take account of the sensitive potency and its relation to the superior faculties.

It is according to the natural order that the inferior should be subjected to the superior, and that the inferior appetite should be moved

1. *Op. cit.*, q.77, a.2.

according to the reason and the will. At times, however, the converse may happen, when the inclination of the sensitive appetite is to some particular good in accord with man's inferior nature but repugnant to his superior nature, and the sensitive appetite succeeds in having reason propose its own good to the detriment of the rational good.

Saint Thomas gives the natural order of procedure, pointing out that moral fault occurs when the process is reversed.

> And this is the natural order, that the superior appetite move the inferior. . . And even though the inferior appetite retains something of its own movement, yet it is moved in the natural order by the movement of the superior appetite and the deliberating reason. If, however, the reverse happens, namely, that the superior appetite is moved by the inferior, it is outside the natural order. And then this makes a sin in morals, just as monsters are sins in nature.[1]

The reason for this is that the sensitive appetite is not totally subordinated to the higher faculties, but sometimes seeks its own good outside the order of reason. Aristotle compares this to the dominion of a ruler over free subjects who retain their own right to accept or reject his legislation.

Since the sensitive appetite may be attracted to a particular good in accord with man's inferior nature, it has a strong influence in moving man to action even if its object is contrary to the rational good. For man has a strong tendency to those goods which are immediate to him, or, as Saint Thomas states, " sensible goods are more known to many than are the goods of reason. " [2]

Furthermore, man's actions are in regard to singulars and for a singular good, and it is the particular reason that is concerned with singulars. In other words the particular reason is the proximate mover in human actions. The universal can be said to be a cause of the movement only as it is applied to the particular, and is then a remote cause.

Saint Thomas points this out in stating that the practical reason is universal and particular, but that it is the latter that is applied to the motion.

> The practical reason, however, is in one way universal and in another way particular. It is universal when it declares that it is necessary to do such and such a thing, as for example, a son to honor his parents. The particular reason, however, declares that this indeed is such, and I am such; for example, that I am a son and that I should now show this honor to a parent. Now, the latter opinion does indeed move, but not that which is universal. Or if both move, the one that is universal moves as a first and quiescent cause, but the particular as a proximate cause and in some manner applied to the movement. For actions and movements are in particular things; hence it is necessary, in order for movement to follow, that the universal opinion be applied to the particulars.[3]

For the universal to effect its causality in an action it must be applied to the singular, but the universal judgement of the reason may not be applied in certain cases; for example, in the case of the incontinent man, the universal judgement that no fornication is to be committed fails to

1. *In III de Anima*, lect.16, n.844.
2. *De Malo*, q.1, a.3, ad 17.
3. *In III de Anima*, lect.16, nn.845-846.

exercise any effect. To be applied effectively to actions, even as a remote cause, the universal needs the particular proposition. Saint Thomas states that a sin occurs with the corruption of the particular judgement, even without the corruption of the universal judgement. " And because of this, too, sin occurs in actions, when opinion is corrupted in a particular operable because of some delectation or because of some other passion, which does not corrupt such universal opinion. " [1]

The universal reason remains uncorrupted, yet does not exert any influence on the act, and that is why a man may judge that no fornication is to be committed and yet commits this act which is fornication. For in this case he averts from a rational consideration of the act, which would be a participation of the universal reason and would force a rational conclusion, and turns to this act as delectable, and, choosing it as such, still retains his universal knowledge that no fornication should be committed. Thus it is when the sensitive appetite is in rebellion against reason, forcing the consideration of this object as delectable rather than under its true aspect and preventing the application of the universal knowledge according to which the delectable would not be chosen.

There is no doubt that man under the influence of passion has taken on a new disposition according to which things are judged in a different light than they would be if he lacked that disposition. In inquiring how the sensitive appetite affects the will we recall that Saint Thomas [2] states that an object may seem good and agreeable in a twofold manner; first from the condition of that which is proposed, and secondly, on the part of the one to whom the proposal is made. In the commentary Cajetan explains this by showing that the sensitive appetite may be supposed to move the will in two senses. First, directly and immediately, and this cannot be since the sensitive appetite is not in immediate contact with the will. Secondly, through the medium of the object, just as warmth is suitable to a body growing cold, and from the apprehension of warmth as something proper, there follows its presentation to the will as desirable. Or, in the case of anger, revenge seems agreeable, so that the practical intellect apprehends some harm to the enemy and it is presented as a suitable object to the angry appetite.

There is a difficulty here, however, for if the sensitive appetite cannot act directly on the will, the reason being that the material cannot act directly on the immaterial, then for the same reason the sense appetite cannot act on the reason, and therefore cannot move the will through the medium of its object, since this must be presented by the reason. This is the objection John of Saint Thomas [3] brings against the position stated above: namely, that the will is moved on the part of the object. He answers it by showing that the sensitive appetite and its object act not directly on the intellect, but on the phantasm. It is the phantasm which regulates and directs the appetite in representing a good proportionate

1. *Ibid.*, n. 846.
2. *Ia IIae*, q.9, a.2.
3. *Curs. theol.*, T.V, disp.5, a.4, pp.493-494.

to it, and in turn the affection of the appetite for its object is represented in the phantasm in much the same way that the intellect knows the affections of the will. The phantasm moves the intellect by means of the agent intellect and the passive intellect understands by returning to the phantasm. The intellect then sees in the phantasm the affection of the sensitive appetite for its object and, impressed by this representation, presents it as such to the will.

The effect that passion exerts on the higher faculties may be considered on the part of the soul itself. Since all potencies are rooted in one soul, when one of them is intent on its action, another is impeded or averted in its operation. This is similar to intense concentration, which often is responsible for failing to see or hear something, or to the effect that anger would have on the normal functions of the other faculties. In the case of strong passion in regard to some particular good there is a corresponding impediment to the function of reason, with the result that its operation is hindered in reference to such a particular act.

Another consideration is taken from the contrariety that exists between passion and knowledge, in that passion is in regard to singular things, and it is the singular to which the universal knowledge is applied. Both passion and knowledge, therefore, are concerned with the singular, but in a contrary fashion, for passion attempts to eliminate the application of knowledge to the particular case, and knowledge on its part attemps to make the application, to the destruction of passion.

Since there is this impediment to the reason, passion which precedes the will lessens the culpability of the following act, when because of passion the will is inclined to the sensible good. Saint Thomas explains that the more the reason is unaffected and the purer its judgement, so will the following act be regarded as more meritorious or not: " Passion, however, clouds or even binds the judgement of reason. However, insofar as the judgement of reason be purer, so the election is more susceptible to meriting or demeriting. " [1]

As long as the reason remains bound in its inability to apply its knowledge to a particular case there will follow a perverse election, but it is within the power of the will to remove the impediment or not, as Saint Thomas shows:

> . . . The reason is bound on this account, that the intention of the soul is strongly applied to the act of the sensitive appetite; so it is turned away from considering in particular that which it knows universally in habit. However, to apply or not to apply the intention to something remains within the power of the will. Hence it is in the power of the will to exclude the binding of reason.[2]

The actions, then, that are committed under passion are voluntary when passion does not completely absorb the reason, for in this case, even though the object of the sensitive appetite has a strong appeal for the will, yet that potency still retains the controlling influence in accepting or rejecting the proposed object. Saint Thomas states that it is not from

1. *De Malo*, q.3, a.11.
2. *Ibid.*, a.10.

necessity that the will tends to the object of passion. "Accordingly, insofar as the reason remains free, and not subject to the passion, the will's movement which also remains, does not tend of necessity to that whereto the passion inclines it." [1]

So it is that although passion is the cause of sin, this must be interpreted as urging the will rather than forcing it, by presenting the object in a more favorable light, as Saint Thomas shows: "... The disorder of the sensible appetite is in some manner the cause of the sin which is in the will, but certainly not as a compelling force, but as a persuading one." [2]

It is evident, then, that one who sins from passion is somewhat impeded in his normal rational judgement, but it remains for the will itself to accept the good as delectable or to follow a rational consideration which would manifest this good as truly an evil. For example, the incontinent man as illustrated in the syllogism above knows he should not commit fornication considered in its universality, and yet he is led by concupiscence to desire the delectation contained in this act. It is the will which applies or withholds the consideration of reason so that if the particular is received as delectable the conclusion will be according to concupiscence, while if it is rightly viewed as a sin it will be concluded according to reason.

Passion, therefore, overcomes the particular judgement of reason, leaving the universal reason unaffected but inoperative; and because man wills to judge the particular as delectable instead of subjecting it to a rational consideration, the incontinent man suffers a voluntary ignorance under which he supposes the good of the sensitive appetite should be attained. Thus it is true that a man in passion may claim that he knows what he is doing is evil, yet he does not really believe this; as Saint Thomas points out:

> For even if he says that it is not good for him to pursue such a delectation at the present time, yet he does not feel so in his heart. Hence a judgement must be made in this manner, that incontinent men are as liars when they speak words of this kind, for the reason that they feel one thing in their hearts, and profess another in speech.[3]

A disorder in this sensitive appetite may be more easily understood by comparing it to the appetite when it is controlled by the virtue of temperance, and consequently under the control of reason. In the case of temperance, the principle and the end, as it seems to the temperate man, will be the attaining of the medium in the sense of touch. His sensitive appetite will be so formed by the repeated impressions of reason as to present no interference with the rational procedure, so that he will judge in particular according to the habit instilled by reason.

On the other hand, due to the lack of this virtue of temperance, man is not well disposed on the part of his sensitive appetite, which may

1. *Ia IIae*, q.10, a.3.
2. *In II Sent.*, dist.39, q.1, a.1, ad 5.
3. *In VII Ethic.*, lect.3, n.1344.

rebel against his reason. Due to a forceful and vehement representation of the sensible good, the will may choose to follow this rather than the judgement of reason.

The continent man whose reason remains right in the presence of passion and the incontinent man who gives in to passion have the same universal knowledge, and outside of passion would view things in the same manner. How is it, then, that one chooses according to right reason and the other according to passion, since in neither case is the sensitive appetite regulated by virtue? The answer is that the will of the continent man is more firmly attached to the good of the reason, and hence can resist the impulse of passion. And it is this firmness of the will which we call continence, which is a virtue in the will strengthening the resistance to concupiscence and enabling man to make his choice according to reason rather than according to passion.

On the other hand, the incontinent man lacks the firmness of the will, and yields to the impulse of passion. It must not be supposed, however, that he is totally subjected to passion, for, despite the weakness of his will he still has the ability to choose according to right reason.

In our study of the manner in which he departs from right reason, we began by pointing out the impediment passion exerts on the particular judgement, and how this results from the attraction of the sensitive appetite to its own particular good. We then reviewed the voluntary nature of the sins committed under passion, and found that when passion does not completely absorb the reason the will still remains free to accept or reject its object, and in this way the acts committed under the influence of passion are voluntary. However, since passion precedes the will and influences it in the manner explained above, it affects the will as an exterior agent, and therefore lessens the gravity of sin. On this account one who sins from passion is not blamed to the same extent as one who sins without passion, as will be more evident when we compare sins of passion with sins of habit.

IV. IGNORANCE IN SINS OF HABIT

The Inordinate Will as a Principle of Moral Evil

Saint Thomas [1] tells us that sin results from a disorder in some principle of human actions. Since the principles of action are the reason and the appetites, evil may result from a defect of the reason, when one sins from ignorance; from a defect in the sensitive appetite, as in a sin of passion; or from a disorder in the will itself. We are now concerned with the last case, when the will itself is the cause of evil in tending to a bad object from its own habitual inclination, and not from passion.

In sins that proceed from passion, because man is disturbed by the movements of his sensitive appetite, he willfully fails to apply his habitual knowledge to his particular actions, and as a consequence is not aware

1. *Ia IIae*, q.78, a.1.

that they are evil and should not be done. There comes a time, however, as Saint Thomas notes in the second book of the *Ethics*,[1] that repeated actions with regard to the same good generate in the appetite an inclination " in the manner of nature, just as even many drops falling hollow out a stone. " So also when one continually fails to resist and repress the repeated assaults of his passions, one will eventually acquire an habitual disposition toward sensible goods, so as to be inclined to choose them in preference to the good of reason even where one is not moved by passion. For this reason Saint Thomas states that sins of habit and of passion differ as perfect from imperfect.[2]

In this way man proceeds to a state in which he is habitually inclined to the sensible good, not from passion interfering with his reason, but from an acquired interior disposition of the will inclining him to the delectable. In a sin of this kind the bad will is the first principle of sin, as Saint Thomas states:

> However, in the man who sins from weakness the will to evil is not the first principle of sin, but this is caused from passion; but in the man who sins from malice the will of evil is the first principle of sin, because he is inclined to sin from his very self and from his own habit, and not from some exterior principle.[3]

Once the subject has developed this propensity for the delectable good, he tends toward the latter as if impelled by a second nature, since one who possesses a habit tends to whatever is in accord with his habit. Thus it happens that because of an habitual inclination of the will a lesser good is more loved. For example, riches or pleasure are more loved than the order of reason or even God.

Although inclined to a lesser good absolutely speaking, the will has as its object a greater good practically considered.

We have already treated this point in a previous section in our discussion of practical ignorance and the choice of a lesser good. We mention it now in connection with an habitual inclination of the will, when the good proposed by the practical intellect is in accord with a will disposed by such an inclination.

Knowledge and Ignorance in a Sin of Habit

In passion we have seen how a man has habitually a right estimation of what is to be done or avoided, and how his judgement is corrupted in particular. In habit, however, the corruption of the appetite proceeds to such an extent that it dominates the reason, and man follows this inclination of the appetite thinking that its good is his best end. As Saint Thomas states: " But if the perversity of the sensitive appetite becomes so strong that it masters the reason, the reason follows as its principle that to which the corrupt appetite inclines, and thinks of it as its best good. " [4]

1. *In II Ethic.*, lect.1, n.249.
2. *Ia IIae*, q.78, a.2, ad 2.
3. *De Malo*, q.3, a.12, ad 5.
4. *In VII Ethic.*, lect.1, n.1294.

It is because of the attachment of the will to its object that the reason proposes it as an end. For example, a man habitually inclined to delectation has an appetite that is warped in its love for such a good, and in accord with this inclination the reason proposes that delectation should be followed, and this meets with the approval of the will. Just as all things taste bitter to an ailing tongue, so delectation seems good to an appetite prone to pleasure.

In judging according to this habitual inclination, man's knowledge is corrupted in regard to the right end of his actions. Just as we have seen how moral virtue saves the principle of prudence, so malice corrupts the principle. As Saint Thomas writes, " virtue and vice have a bearing on the principles of operables; malice corrupts them; virtue, however, preserves them. " [1]

Since man has this false estimation of the end, actions that are in accord with such an end will be chosen by him, and he sins *ex electione*, since he knows that his action is wrong, but chooses it to attain his perverse end. Saint Thomas states: " A man sins from election, however, when he adheres to sin in an intentional manner, not as if he were overcome by temptation, but because that sin in itself is pleasing to him on account of the corrupt appetite that he has. " [2]

Although a bad election is common to all sin, those which proceed from habit have an election as their principle, and it is proper to an habitual sinner that he knowingly chooses evil. Saint Thomas shows the difference between choosing *ex electione* in a sin of habit and the choice in a sin of passion: " . . . Even in a sin of weakness there can be an election, yet this is not the first principle of sin, since it is caused from passion; and therefore, such a one is not said to sin from choice, even though he sins choosing. " [3]

Although the incontinent man chooses the delectable good offered to him, he does not reason that delectation is an end to be pursued, but follows his concupiscence which presents such an aim. The intemperate man, on the contrary, always supposes that the delectable is to be followed, and accepts the particular delectation offered to him even though he knows it as evil. Saint Thomas points out this difference in the judgement of the incontinent and intemperate man.

> Because this man, namely the intemperate, is led to sinning from choice, as one who supposes that at all times he ought to pursue something, that is, to accept the delectable presently offered to him. But the incontinent man does not think this, but nevertheless pursues the delectable when it is offered to him.[4]

It is evident then that those who sin from habit speak the truth when they say they know they are choosing evil, which is not so in one who sins from passion. As Cajetan remarks:

> Hence, those who are habitually disposed speak the truth when they say that they know that they are doing evil, and that they want to do so nevertheless:

1. *Ibid.*, lect.8, n.1431.
2. *In II Sent.*, dist.43, q.1, a.1.
3. *De Malo*, q.3, a.12, ad 11.
4. *In VII Ethic.*, lect.3, n.1336.

for they know in act that this is now evil. But those who are in passion are lying when they say that they know.[1]

There is, then, this difference in the ignorance that exists in a sin of passion and a sin of habit; in passion the knowledge is excluded by which man knows this act is now evil, while in a sin of habit man knowingly chooses evil that he might attain the end that is in accord with his inordinate will. Saint Thomas points out that such a man knowingly chooses evil and that his ignorance excludes the knowledge that he should not sustain this evil to attain the good he has in mind:

> Ignorance sometimes excludes the knowledge that a particular evil is not to be suffered for the sake of possessing a particular good, but not the simple knowledge that it is an evil: it is thus that a man is ignorant when he sins through acertain mlice.[2]

For example, a man commits adultery either from passion or habit; if from passion, he knows that adultery is wrong, but passion interferes with his reason, so that what is habitually known is not applied to this particular action, and under these circumstances he considers this action as a good and pursues it. If from habit, he recognizes this particular act of adultery as evil and as an unjust action, yet he is ignorant of the fact that he should choose the good of justice rather than the delectable. On the contrary, because of his corrupt will he judges that the delectable good is to be preferred to justice, and he is willing to sustain what he considers an evil in order to attain what he considers a greater good.

A doubt may arise here whether the evil is actually willed only *per accidens*, since it seems that what is primarily intended is the delectation and that the evil is attached to this *per accidens*. The fact is that all evil is *per accidens* in that it is outside the intention of the agent. However, evil sometimes occurs unknown and unforeseen, as in the case of ignorance, and then the evil is involuntary. Sometimes the evil is known and actually willed in some manner, and since this evil is voluntary it is not only *per accidens*. This seems to be the meaning of Saint Thomas in the following quotation:

> . . . That which is joined to a good principally desired, if it be unforeseen and unknown, is not willed except *per accidens;* just as when someone sinning from ignorance wills something which he does not know is a sin, and yet in the truth of the matter it is a sin; for such a man does not will evil except *per accidens*. But if he knows it is evil, then as a logical consequence he wishes that evil, as has been said, and not only *per accidens*.[3]

There is no doubt that the subject chooses a good as primarily intended, as is necessary from the nature of the will. But that which is chosen is in accord with his inclination to some good outside the rational order, and choosing according to this inclination, rather than according to reason a man supposes that this good is to be followed.

Although he chooses evil to attain this good, a man may wish that he could attain his end without the privation of any good: for example,

1. *Op. cit.*, q.78, a.2.
2. *Ia IIae*, q.78, a.1, ad 1.
3. *De Malo*, q.3, a.12, ad 4.

he might wish that he could attain delectation without violating the order of reason or the law of God, but, faced with a choice of either one or the other, he chooses spiritual evil rather than the privation of delectation.

It may also be argued that one who sins from passion does knowingly choose evil, and that, therefore, this is not proper to sins of habit. If we answer that one man sins from passion because of the greater attraction of the sensitive appetite, while one who sins from habit does so from a disposition of the will, the reply seems insufficient. For passion and habit have the same potency as their subject: for example, a man may sin against temperance either from incontinence or intemperance, both of which are in the sensitive appetite. Since both are in this one potency, why in one case do we say that passion in the sensitive appetite is the cause of sin, and in the other claim that the inordinate will is the cause of sin? Since in either case the sensitive appetite is affected, it seems that the will is inclined to the good of that potency as it is so affected, and therefore it is not correct to say that the will of itself is disposed to evil.

The answer to this difficulty requires that we first determine how habit in the sensitive appetite implies a disorder on the part of the will. Saint Thomas points out that habit, unlike passion, is a stable disposition of the sensitive appetite. A disposition of this kind influences the subject who possesses it: for example, a man is inclined to delectation when his sensitive appetite is so inclined. The result is that the sensitive appetite influences the will, for the will is the inclination of the subject, and those things which are pleasing to the subject will be pleasing to the will. In other words, the appetite of the subject depends on the disposition of the subject, and the will, inasmuch as it is an appetite of a badly disposed subject, is inclined to the evil objects which are in accord with such dispositions.

We may say, therefore, that the habit of vice in the sensitive appetite includes the inclination of the will to evil, so that in acting from habit the will itself is said to move to evil.

It might be asked whether this is true of passion as well as habit, and in reply to this we must recall that the formation of the habit was under the power of the will, so that the acts that help form the habit were in accord with the will. It follows from this that what is in accord with the habit is also in accord with the will. Passion, however, precedes the will, making something appear good which ordinarily would not attract the will; and even if the will moves toward the object of passion, there is not the immediate concordance that there is when the will is habitually inclined to its object. If the passion itself were excited by the will, the object would be immediately pleasing, but the sin would primarily proceed from the will rather than from passion.

Banez presents an answer to this difficulty by explaining how the habit acquired from actions which are in accord with the will is a voluntary effect of the will itself. Therefore, the acts that flow from such a habit are immediately pleasing to the will; this is not so in the case of passion.

. . . Since the habit acquired from acts done with the consent of the will is a voluntary effect of the will itself. For from this it follows that a choice made from this habit is in itself agreeable to the will. But the passion of the sensitive appetite is previous to the will, and makes appear good that which is not yet pleasing to the will, but on the contrary is in itself displeasing to it.[1]

This seems to answer the difficulty how one who acts from a habit in the sensitive appetite is said to possess an inordinate will, while the man who acts from passion is attracted to sin not from the will itself, but from the good of the sensitive appetite which is chosen by the will because of man's passion.

Habit and the Free Will

Because the intemperate man sins *ex habitu*, it may seem that he necessarily chooses evil, for habit inclines *ad modum naturae*, and nature is determined *ad unum.* In fact one would gather as much from the *Ethics*,[2] where Aristotle states that virtue and vice bear upon principles, and Saint Thomas remarks that such principles may not be taught:

. . . In actions, however, the principle is the end for the sake of which something is done: and in operables this holds a place in the manner held by suppositions, that is, the first principles in mathematical demonstrations. For just as in mathematics the principles are not taught by reason, so neither in operables is the end taught by reason.[3]

In the same lesson Saint Thomas calls such men *insanabiles;* and all this seems to indicate that he is too deeply rooted in evil to extricate himself.

Saint Thomas makes note of this point in reference to the habit of synderesis. At this point he states an objection which shows the force of the argument just stated, namely, that a habit of vice corrupts the knowledge of the end, and on that account seems to extinguish the principle of synderesis. We quote his objection:

Likewise, according to the Philosopher in the seventh book of the *Ethics*, he who has a habit of vice is corrupted in reference to the principles of things to be done. But the principles of things to be done pertain to synderesis. Therefore, in the one possessing a habit of some sin synderesis is destroyed. [4]

In answer Saint Thomas writes:

. . . He who has a habit of some vice is certainly corrupted as regards the principles of things to be done, not indeed in universal, but in a particular operable; that is, inasmuch as the reason in choosing is restrained from applying the universal judgement to its particular operable on account of the habit of vice.[5]

In this manner one who sins from habit allows his habitual inclination to influence him in his choice.

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1. Banez, Domingo, *Comentarios ineditos a la Prima Secundae de Santo Tomas.* (ed. by Vincente Beltran de Heredia), Madrid: 1942; q.78, a.4. The translation is ours.
2. Bk.VII, chap.8, 1151a15.
3. *In VII Ethic.*, lect.8, n.1431.
4. *De Ver.*, q.16, a.3, obj.3.
5. *Ibid.*, ad 3.

However, one who has a habit need not necessarily act from such a habit, since to use a habit falls under the power of the will. This is so since the reason is not totally ineffective because of habit, but still retains the power of not acting in accordance with it, and of determining the good according to reason. Even with an habitual inclination it remains within the power of the will to reject the good proposed in accordance with the perverse appetite, since neither the habit of virtue nor vice moves the will of necessity — that is, they do not remove the possibility of the will's acting against the habit. This fact, as well as the difficulty involved in acting against a habit, is pointed out by Saint Thomas in the *De Malo*.

> The habit of virtue or of vice is a form of the rational soul. Every form, however, is in something according to the mode of the receiver. However, it is of the nature of a rational creature that he have a free will; for a habit of virtue or of vice does not necessarily incline the will in a manner that one could not act against the nature of the habit, but it is difficult to act against that to which habit inclines.[1]

Habit, then, is a stable disposition acquired with the consent of the will, or in other words, it is with the approval of the will that the inclination to evil is developed. When one has such a habit, he need not necessarily act according to it, as is evident from the words of Saint Thomas. However, when one acts according to such a habit, his appetite is so perverse that it dominates the reason, so that he suffers a voluntary ignorance that extends to the judgement of reason; for example, he judges that delectation is to be followed. Moreover, he may know that a particular action is evil and yet perform that action for the sake of the end he has in view. The ignorance in this case is quite different from the ignorance that results from passion. We will have a further opportunity for comparing them when we discuss the gravity of sins of habit and sins of passion.

It should also be noted that the ignorance which results from habit does not exclude a true speculative knowledge of moral matters. For one can have a true speculative knowledge of moral matters and yet not use it. This is why Aristotle excludes the followers of passion as students of moral science, for the end of moral science is not only knowledge, but right actions. Even though those who follow their passions could possibly attain this knowledge of the moral law, it would be useless and ineffective in their life. A man who loves delectation may still have a true evaluation of delectation according to the moral law, but because he chooses according to his inclinations rather than according to reason, the final end for him consists in what is in accord with his desires.

The Gravity of Sins of Habit and Sins of Passion

A study of the relative gravity of sin which proceeds from habit, as compared to a sin of passion, may serve to illustrate some characteristics of these two causes of moral evil. The gravity may be judged from several aspects, but we will consider only those which relate to ignorance.

1. *De Malo*, q.3, a.13, ad 6.

Let us inquire whether the man in passion suffers a greater ignorance than the man who acts from habit, and what is the effect of this ignorance on the gravity of the sin.

In his commentary on this question regarding the gravity of sins of habit and sins of passion Cajetan [1] distinguishes between the ignorance in the sin itself and in the reason for sinning. He then points out that as regards the sin itself, the ignorance in passion is greater since it extends to the act, which is not true in habit. For, as pointed out above, the man who sins from habit knowingly chooses evil, which is not so in one who sins from passion.

From the viewpoint of the reason for the sin, however, the ignorance of habit is greater since here the sin proceeds from the inordinate attachment of the will to the lesser good, and from the judgement that this lesser good is to be followed. For example, a man habitually inclined to sensible delectation judges according to his corrupt appetite: all delectation is to be followed. Therefore, the actions which he places in order to attain delectation proceed from this erroneous judgement, and as such entail greater ignorance than an action which proceeds from passion and corrupts only the particular reason.

Secondly, the ignorance in a sin of habit extends to both principles and conclusions, since the subject believes that delectation should be followed, and supposes that this particular act should be done for the sake of attaining his end. Thus the ignorance of habit is greater formally, because both principles and conclusion are formally not known; which is not so in the case of passion, where the ignorance concerns only the particular reason.

Thirdly, ignorance of habit is greater because it is more permanent than the transient ignorance that characterizes a sin of passion. For passion is a transient thing, and the restriction lasts only as long as the passion. As it passes quickly, the reason returns to its normal state, and one is grieved for the actions he has done. Habit, on the contrary, is a permanent form, and he who sins from habit is more steeped in evil, and his actions will continue as long as the habit lasts. He is not sorry for what he has done, but on the contrary is pleased with his evil actions. That is why, in the comparison of these two to physical deformity, one sinning from habit is likened to one suffering from a permanent disability, while the subject of passion is likened to someone with a chronic illness.

Furthermore, one who has a will inclined to some delectation outside the order of reason is not so easily led to a true conviction. For the disorder of the will is responsible for an error in regard to principles, and the closer his error is to the more universal principles the more difficult it is to retract from such a condition, since general principles are not deduced from some prior knowledge, but are accepted, or are arrived at, with little reason. In passion, the will follows the reason as it is restricted in its judgement, but once the passion passes man no longer adheres to

1. *Op. cit.*, q.78, a.4.

these delectations as a *per se* good. However, in the case of habit he does just this and regards such a good as his ultimate end, loving nothing else better than it.

A comparison is made by Aristotle [1] between those who do not make good use of the reason they have and who fail in the face of passion, and those whose reason is perverse owing to a perverse appetite. The former are like people who have good laws to guide them, but have no concern for obeying the law. The latter are like those who have bad laws and obey them.

From one point of view, it may seem that he who sins from passion is in as bad a state as one who sins from an inclination of the will. For he also is incapable of improvement by knowledge, since he has the knowledge and disregards it. It is true that while he is sinning the passionate man is not helped by knowledge; nevertheless, little by little he is able to bring his sensitive appetite under control and make himself better able to resist passions. For unlike the habitual sinner his reason is not corrupted, and when not under the influence of passion he judges and acts rightly, and thereby is better able to develop control over his appetites. He who sins from habit, on the other hand, is corrected with more difficulty, as has been already pointed out.

However, the ignorance of the habitual sinner, since it extends to both principle and conclusions, seems to lessen the gravity of his sin, and if ignorance is an excuse of sin, he is less culpable than the man who sins from passion and retains a true universal reason.

On this point, Saint Thomas states that such ignorance follows the inclination of the appetite, and the greater the corruption of the appetite, the greater the ignorance.

> Ignorance, however, of the incontinent man as well as of the intemperate one comes from the fact that the appetite is inclined to something, either by passion as in the incontinent man, or by habit as in the intemperate one. However, the greater ignorance is caused from the state in the intemperate man, rather than the state in the incontinent one.[2]

Not any kind of ignorance excuses from sin, however, as we have already seen, and since the ignorance in the sins of passion and habit follows the will there is no reason to suppose that they exclude or diminish sin.

According to what we have just said, it is evident that an habitual inclination gives a greater impulse to sin than does passion. Now, as the impulse is greater it should lessen the culpability of sin, for what impels one to action diminishes the voluntary character of the act. However, the impulse on the part of the sensitive appetite is extrinsic to the will, and hence passion, if not rectified, bears on the will like *quoddam violentum;* and to the extent it does offer violence to it, the act that follows is not voluntary. But if the impulse is on the part of the will itself, that is intrinsic to it, the greater the impulse the more voluntary the act, for

1. *Ethics*, VII, chap.11, 1152a20-25.
2. *IIa IIae*, q.156, a.3, ad 1.

the voluntary is " that of which the moving principle is in the agent himself. " [1] On this point Saint Thomas states:

> The impulse which is from passion diminishes the sin, because it is as it were from the outside; however, the impulse which is from the will increases sin. For, insofar as the movement of the will is stronger for sinning, so does a man sin more grievously. Habit, however, makes the movement of the will stronger, and therefore he who sins from habit sins more grievously.[2]

We have seen now the type of ignorance that occurs in a sin of habit when the will itself is the cause of the defect in the practical reason. In treating this subject we explained that an acquired interior disposition of the will affects the judgement of the reason itself, and, therefore, this ignorance differs from that caused by passion, since the latter extends only to the particular judgement. Since this habit does not necessarily move the will, we judged as voluntary those actions which proceed from it. In fact, since the sins that proceed from an interior inclination are more voluntary and more serious than those which are caused by an exterior agent, we said that sins of habit have greater gravity than sins of passion.

Thus we have completed the task set for ourselves in the introduction. For, we have explained the nature of ignorance found in all sin by first proving that every sinner is ignorant in choosing without the consideration of reason. We then showed that such ignorance is on the part of the practical intellect proposing the object to the will. And, since the will is the cause of sin, it is also the cause of the ignorance in the practical reason which occurs with the will's movement to the inordinate object. As such, the ignorance common to sin is consequent to the constitution of the sin, and an effect rather than a cause of sin. This was the third and last point we started out to prove in the first part of this article, and its treatment concluded our consideration of the nature of the ignorance found in all sin.

Then, in order to show that this ignorance exists in the sinner together with the knowledge necessary for a voluntary act, we first explained how ignorance that was totally involuntary rendered the following acts involuntary. In negligence, however, where the ignorance is indirectly willed, we explained that such a voluntary ignorance is the cause of actions that are voluntary, but, since the actions occur through ignorance, their voluntary character is reduced and their gravity diminished. Then in treating the ignorance in sins of passion we explained that it extends to the particular judgement, and is caused by a disorder in the sensitive appetite preventing the application of what is habitually known to the practical judgement. In this case one chooses not according to reason, but outside reason. That this ignorance is voluntary is evident from the nature of the will which is not moved of necessity by the object of the sensitive appetite, and is left free to make the application according to knowledge or not. Then, as we have just explained, the ignorance occurring in sins of habit extends to the judgement of reason itself. But,

1. *Ethics*, III, chap.1, 1111a21.
2. *De Malo*, q.3, a.13, ad 5.

as habit does not destroy the nature of man, his will is left free to act according to habit or not, and as the use of the habit depends on the will, the actions that proceed from habit are still voluntary.

In this manner we have explained the nature of ignorance found in sin, and how this exists together with the knowledge required for a voluntary action. Since this was our aim in this work we may now judge it as concluded.

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