

Virtual Ordering and the *Affectiones* in Aquinas

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St. Thomas Aquinas distinguishes between the passions of the soul (*passiones animae*) and the affections (*affectiones*).¹ The passions are appetites that belong to the sensitive part of the soul and depend upon sensory apprehension. The affections belong to the rational part, as rooted in the will as rational appetite. Both the passions and affections involve conscious experiences, and both have positive roles to play in the life of virtue and pursuit of sanctified perfection. However, the affections precede the passions in the order of perfection and are to be found in the angels and God, while the sensitive passions are not.

In this essay, I will argue that a further distinguishing mark of the affections versus the passions is that the former have a direct connection to what Aquinas terms “virtual” ordering of acts to ends. The passions have only an indirect connection to virtual ordering, as mediated by the affections themselves. The role of virtual ordering to the affections finds its fullest expression in a person’s friendship with God. While there is some direct textual evidence in Aquinas to support this argument, I recognize it is not conclusive. Nonetheless, I contend it is an interpretation consistent with and suggested by the key aspects that he does fully lay out.

I will begin with an overview of Aquinas’s account of the sensitive appetites in terms of both his key texts and the current scholarship addressing them. From there, I will address Aquinas’s notions of the will, love, union, and the affections. I will then turn to the order of the affections and their place in the context of the fullest expression of love found in friendship. The next section will turn to the notion of virtual ordering, particularly as

¹ I thank Thomas Osborne for comments on an earlier draft of this essay.

informed by the work of Thomas Osborne and Steven Jensen. The final section will defend and illustrate how virtual ordering relates to the affections through the examples of penitential sorrow and joy as found in the friendship with God as established by the virtue of charity.

The Passions²

Aquinas's hylomorphic anthropology views the human person as a unity composed of corporeal and incorporeal aspects. The first category of feeling states he treats are the bodily passions (*passiones corporalis*), inclusive of itches, cramps, and the like.³ Bodily passions do not involve sensory apprehension. In contrast, sensory apprehension provides the foundation for the passions of the soul, the *passiones animae*. These latter passions depend upon and are responses to the apprehension of some sense good or evil.⁴ Nicholas Lombardo notes that intentionality makes the difference between a bodily urge and a passion of the soul. "The dependence of the

² There have been several monographs written on Aquinas's view of the passions and affections in the last several years, all of which defend an interpretation of Aquinas inclusive of a robust affirmation of them as central to human nature. See: Diana Fritz Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions: A Religious-Ethical Inquiry* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009); Paul Gondreau, *The Passions of Christ's Soul in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2009); Nicholas Kahm, *Aquinas: On Emotion's Participation in Reason* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2019); Nicholas E. Lombardo, O.P., *The Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011); Robert Miner, *Thomas Aquinas on the Passions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Servais Pinckaers, O.P., *Passions and Virtue*, trans. Benedict M. Guevin, O.S.B., foreword by Michael Sherwin, O.P. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2015).

³ "In his earlier writings, such as *De Veritate* q. 26, Aquinas distinguishes between passions of the body (*passiones corporalis*) and the passions of the soul (*passiones animalis*). Simply put, the passions of the body begin in the body and end in the soul, while the passions of the soul begin in the soul and end in the body" (Lombardo, *Logic of Desire*, 45).

⁴ Aquinas quotes Damascene in defense of his view: "Passion is a movement of the sensitive appetite when we imagine good or evil: in other words, passion is a movement of the irrational soul, when we think of good or evil" (*Summa theologiae* [ST] I-II, q. 22, a. 3, sc; trans. Fr. Laurence Shapcote, O.P., ed. John Mortensen and Enrique Alarcon [Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012]). Peter King notes, "Aquinas's account of the nature of the passions rules out classifying 'objectless' psychological experiences as passions: nonspecific emotions such as angst or dread on the one hand, and moods on the other hand" ("Aquinas on the Passions," in *Aquinas's Moral Theory*:

passions on the apprehension of intentions means that the passions themselves are intentional.”⁵ Of note, sensory apprehension includes things such as memory, imagination, and the cogitative power, all of which expand passionate responses beyond the apprehension of a given sensible object in real time.⁶

The passions of the soul (simply “passions” from this point forward) or “animate emotions”⁷ are experienced in the incorporeal aspects of the person but also necessarily involve corporeality—particularly the sense organs and the sense appetites. Aquinas offers a succinct overview of the generative order of the passions in the following passage:

And if we wish to know the order of all the passions in the way of generation, love [*amor*] and hatred [*odium*] are first; desire [*desiderium*] and aversion [*fuga*], second; hope [*spes*] and despair [*desperatio*], third; fear [*timor*] and daring [*adacia*], fourth; anger [*ira*], fifth; sixth and last, joy [*gadium*] and sadness [*tristia*], which follow from all the passions.⁸

Essays in Honor of Norman Kretzmann, ed. Scott MacDonald and Eleonore Stump [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008], 101–32, at 109).

⁵ Lombardo, *Logic of Desire*, 43.

⁶ Aquinas also connects the passions to the cogitative power or particular reason (*ST* I, q. 78, a. 4), which is a sense power but in human beings naturally operates in connection with the higher intellectual powers. Miner notes: “Aquinas does not reduce the passions to instinctive reactions that are impermeable to rational apprehension. King rightly concludes that for Aquinas ‘the passions are not, after all, similar to our reactions to hot peppers. They can be affected by reasons and beliefs,’ while remaining motions of the sensible appetite” (*Thomas Aquinas on the Passions*, 38; citing King, “Aquinas on the Passions,” 131).

⁷ Kahm’s term in *Aquinas*.

⁸ *ST* I-II, q. 25, a. 3. In addition to *Logic of Desire*, Lombardo gives a clear and concise overview of the eleven passions in “Emotion and Desire in the *Summa Theologiae*,” in *Aquinas’s Summa Theologiae: A Critical Guide*, ed. Jeffrey Hause (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 111–30, at 118–19. King contends that Aquinas should be commended for giving a taxonomy that is pragmatic versus strict: “But the taxonomy of the passions is not the strict taxonomic division ideally given in biology; the passions are not divided into parts of coordinate species that are exclusive and exhaustive, defined by opposite differentiae. Instead, the different passions are specified by a multiplicity of criteria that allow several coordinate kinds at the same level and different modes of opposition between different pairs of pairs of passions, which are traditionally arranged in pairs (each of which is called a ‘conjunction’) at the same level—except for anger, which has no contrary. All in all, things are fairly messy, and a good deal the more interesting for it” (“Aquinas on the Passions,” 110).

Love is the first passion on the list. In fact, throughout his remarks on love, he insists on the principle “love is the root and cause of every emotion.”⁹ However, Aquinas uses the term “love” both generically and specifically. The striving of the sensible appetites, both in the natural world and in human nature, rightfully fall under the category of love, but these are not love in the fully human sense as an act of the rational appetite.

Aquinas further divides the sensitive appetites into the irascible and concupiscible, both of which tend toward or away from sensible goods and evils. The concupiscible appetite concerns the sensible good simply considered. This appetite is home to sensitive love and hate, with their associated movements of desire and aversion, and end resting states of joy and sorrow.¹⁰ The irascible appetite pertains to the sensible good under the aspect of the arduous—the preservation of oneself and others in a dangerous world, dangers and evils both found in nature and caused by human beings. Fear and anger reside here, but also what precedes them, namely hope.¹¹

Aquinas identifies joy, sadness, hope, and fear as the four principal passions, which further define an order to the passions in general.

[Joy and sadness] are said to be principal because in them all the other passions have their completion and end. . . . Fear and hope are principal passions, not because they complete the others simply, but because they complete them as regards the movement of the appetite towards something. . . . Hence it is customary to distinguish these four passions in relation to the present and the future; for movement regards the future, while rest is in something present: so that joy relates to present good, sadness relates to present evil; hope regards future good, and fear, future evil.¹²

All the other passions have their completion in these four. Thus, in terms of the ordering of the passions, love (and derivatively hatred) comes first as the moving principle, joy and sadness as the simple completion of concupiscible love, with joy constituting the desired outcome. Hope and

⁹ *ST* I-II, q. 62, a. 2, ad 3.

¹⁰ *ST* I-II, q. 63, a. 1.

¹¹ *ST* I-II, q. 25, a. 3: “Since then in the order of generation or execution, proportion or aptitude to the end precedes the achievement of the end; it follows that, of all the irascible passions, anger is the last in the order of generation. And among the other passions of the irascible faculty, which imply a movement arising from love of the good or hatred of evil, those whose object is good, viz., hope and despair, must naturally precede those whose object is evil, viz., daring and fear.”

¹² *ST* I-II, q. 25, a. 4. Cf. *De veritate*, q. 26, a. 5.

fear as indexed to future good and evil serve as the completion of the irascible appetite.

For a well-ordered life, the irascible and concupiscible appetites must be cultivated by virtue. Several virtues, such as temperance and fortitude, are both seated in and perfective of the sensitive appetite in question.¹³ The virtues serve to increase the participation of the sense appetites in reason.¹⁴ As the participation in reason progresses, the animate emotions become ever more rational. Thus, even in the realm of the sensitive appetites, the passions can have a close connection to the higher operations of the will and reason, but they remain by their nature inextricably tied to corporeality. The *affectiones*, on the other hand, occur within the spiritual powers themselves. As we will discuss, they can overflow into the passions but need not. Moreover, many of the key terms found in the realm of the passions apply to the context of the affections, as there is an analogous relation between them.

Love, concupiscence, and the like can be understood in two ways. Sometimes they are taken as passions—arising, that is, with a certain commotion of the soul. And thus they are commonly understood, and in this sense they are only in the sensitive appetite. They may, however, be taken in another way, as far as they are simple affections without passion or commotion of the soul, and thus they are acts of the will.¹⁵

To, then, the affections themselves.

Affectiones, Love, and Union

Aquinas is not as consistent as one would like with respect to the term *affectiones*. For the most part, it is a term that applies to feeling states that do not, of their nature, involve sense powers. However, there are other instances where the terminology is more blurred. For instance, in a *sed*

¹³ Aquinas speaks to ten virtues in connection with the passions and some of which admit of various species: temperance, fortitude, liberality, magnificence, love of honor, magnanimity, gentleness, affability, truthfulness, playfulness; justice is connected by operation as well (*ST* I-II, q. 60, a. 5).

¹⁴ As Miner notes, it is only because the sensitive appetites can participate in reason that virtues are applicable to them: “Though non-rational animals have sensitive appetites (and thus the irascible and concupiscible), these powers are not in them the subjects of virtue, because they are not amenable to perfection. . . . But in human beings, the irascible and concupiscible can be perfected, according to their capacity to participate in reason (*Thomas Aquinas on the Passions*, 288).

¹⁵ *ST* I, q. 82, a. 5, ad 1.

contra citing Augustine, Aquinas notes, "From this it is evident that the passions of the soul are the same as affections."¹⁶ However, in tandem with his other texts on the matter, there is a scholarly consensus of the rightful distinction between the sensitive passions and volitional affections. Moreover, both the passions and affections manifest themselves in the person's conscious experience, but Aquinas is far more concerned with giving an analysis of the powers and operations at play than giving a phenomenological description of the felt aspects.¹⁷

In terms of this non-passionate affectivity connected to the activity of the will, Aquinas contends that it is twofold in a manner analogous to the passions. There is an initial complacency in the form of the will's response to an apprehended good and then a principal affection constitutive of the completion of the act. The simple or spiritual affections¹⁸ stem from any good as apprehended by the intellect, but Aquinas places considerable emphasis on the highest realization of them as responses to the goodness of another person and ultimately God. While the good plays the essential objective role in the generation of affections, love as the proper act of the will performs the essential role on the side of the subject.

The basic genus of love is love as *amor*, with love as *dilectio* as the species of fully human love involving an act of the will.¹⁹ The rational appetite or

¹⁶ *ST* I-II, q. 22, a. 2, sc. Addressing this passage in relation to the *Summa contra gentiles* [SCG], Norman Kretzmann notes: "The SCG passage that concerns me can be illuminated by the ST conclusion if we read the conclusion as claiming only generic sameness between the passions and *affectiones*, as we can do without obliterating its point. In that case there are *affectiones*, belonging to the *sensory* appetite, and they are the passions; but there are also *affectiones* belonging to the *intellectual* appetite—i.e., *affectiones* belonging to the will—and they could not be passions" ("Aquinas on God's Joy, Love, and Liberality," *The Modern Schoolman* 72, no. 2–3 [1995]: 125–48, at 128).

¹⁷ Lombardo notes: "Although the internal logic of Aquinas's system is fundamentally sound, there are some notable omissions and lacunae. The most striking is that he does not describe the subjective experience of emotion: his primary interest is the *metaphysics* of affectivity, and not the *experience* of affectivity" (*Logic of Desire* 247).

¹⁸ Aquinas often uses "simple," as in the passage above, to describe the affections. He also frequently uses the adjective "spiritual," e.g., in *ST* II-II, q. 28, a. 1: "Therefore spiritual joy, which is about God, is caused by charity." He also refers to joyful affectivity and the affectivity of intellectual operations as "spiritual" versus bodily or sensitive pleasures (e.g., *ST* I-II, q. 31, a. 5). Pinckaers gives a practical overview of the differences between passionate pleasure and affective joy in *Passions and Virtue*, 42–45.

¹⁹ Miner argues against the notion that Aquinas marginalizes sensitive love in favor of rational love: "[For Aquinas] love in its most proper sense is sensitive love,

will strives after the good as apprehended not by the senses but by the intellect. The will naturally seeks through its immediate act the good as good, and through its commanded acts, it chooses this or that good. The *simplex voluntas* is the continual response of the will to the presence of good in the world, particularly good as apprehended by the intellect. The active part of love is command—the choice to seek the good.

Like with the passions, Aquinas begins with the basic tendency of the appetite, its essential movement, and then the principal affective end state of resting with the good (or sorrowing over its absence). The will's simple tendency is the love of the good, a love which is activated by a good by means of *complacentia*: "Accordingly, the first change wrought in the appetite by the appetible object is called *love*, and is nothing else than complacency in that object."²⁰ Complacency is a felt attractiveness for an object. Michael Sherwin translates the term as a "pleasing affective affinity."²¹ Christopher Malloy offers the definitional description "an affective 'acceptance of' or 'conformation to' some good."²²

Sherwin notes that the complacency of properly human love is love of the good, employing Aquinas's "the proper object of love is the good."²³ While objects can be good as useful or good as pleasant, paradigmatically, the good is *bonum honestum*—that which is good in itself. Love is first passive because the will undergoes the affective pull from the good acting upon it. Love's active dimension arises from the commanded act toward the good. Commenting on the connection between the attractiveness wrought in sensible appetites and the complacency specific to the will, Sherwin notes:

This definition is the summation of a fuller account that explicitly distinguishes between the emotional love proper to the passions and

because sensitive love is most passive. Allowing oneself to be passively helped by God is the precondition of *dilectio*, of inclining oneself toward God by rational means. *Amor sensitivus* turns out to be the seed out of which the highest *amor rationalis* grows. This particular teaching of Aquinas may surprise us. . . . The power of God to draw creatures to himself by sensible means exceeds the power of human reason. *Amor sensitivus* cannot be neglected by the rational creature in its motion toward God" (*Thomas Aquinas on the Passions*, 121–22).

²⁰ *ST* I-II, q. 26, a. 2.

²¹ Michael S. Sherwin, O.P., *By Knowledge and By Love: Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 64.

²² Christopher J. Malloy, "Thomas on the Order of Love and Desire," *The Thomist* 71, no. 1 (2007): 65–87, at 67.

²³ Sherwin, *By Knowledge and By Love*, 156. See *ST* I-II, q. 27, a. 1.

the spiritual or rational love proper to the will. In both cases, love is the principle of all subsequent motion—whether of the emotions or of the actions that flow from our rational decisions—and is nothing other than a certain pleasing affective affinity for the good [*complacentia boni*].²⁴

Aquinas addresses two key unions intertwined with love that both further specify these dimensions of love and account for the culmination of love. Dionysius speaks of love as a unitive force, a principle Aquinas cites and employs throughout this account.²⁵ Love effects the union between lover and beloved; more to the point, love is the formal bond itself. Addressing the question of whether union is an effect of love, Aquinas states:

The union of lover and beloved is twofold. The first is real union; for instance, when the beloved is present with the lover. The second union is union of affection: and this union must be considered in relation to the preceding apprehension: since movement of the appetite follows apprehension. . . . The first of these unions is caused *effectively* by love. . . . The second union is caused *formally* by love.²⁶

The union of affection draws a person toward the good, and the natural term of the movement of love is the real union of person with the good.

Real union, and its privation, effect the most acute spiritual affections. For Aquinas, real union causes a pleasant experience, which differs from bodily delight. When the sense appetite achieves real union with an object desired, it produces pleasure and delight. Delight, in this sense, would fall under the passions. On the other hand, when the rational appetite achieves real union, it produces joy, which is a non-corporeal, non-sensible, affective state.

A certain delight arises from the apprehension of the reason. Now on the reason apprehending something, not only the sensitive appetite is moved, as regards its application to some particular thing, but also the intellectual appetite, which is called the will. And accordingly, in the intellectual appetite or will there is that delight which is called joy [*gaudium*], but not bodily delight [*delectatio corporalis*].²⁷

²⁴ Michael S. Sherwin, O.P., *On Love and Virtue: Theological Essays* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic, 2018), 52.

²⁵ See, e.g., *ST* II-II, q. 25, a. 4.

²⁶ *ST* I-II, q. 28, a. 1.

²⁷ *ST* I-II, q. 31, a. 4.

As if to dispel any doubts that joy is essentially non-corporeal, Aquinas ascribes it to God and the angels.

When love and joy and the like are ascribed to God or the angels, or to man in respect of his intellectual appetite, they signify simple acts of the will having like effects, but without the passions.²⁸

As hylomorphic unities, human beings tend to experience things with both aspects engaged, but nonetheless, the non-corporeal will is itself home to its own affective dimension.

Aquinas extends his analysis of joy in speaking of its contrary, sorrow, and offering some nuances in both:

Joy and sorrow proceed from love, but in contrary ways. For joy is caused by love, either through the presence of the thing loved, or because the proper good of the thing loved exists and endures in it; and the latter is the case chiefly in the love of benevolence, whereby a man rejoices in the well-being of his friend, though he be absent. On the other hand sorrow arises from love, either through the absence of the thing loved, or because the loved object to which we wish well, is deprived of its good or afflicted with some evil.²⁹

Sorrow is the spiritual affection caused by the absence of real union with the beloved or the absence of a due good in the beloved. It can also be elicited immanently in relation to analogous absences, such as with the contrite sorrow for one's sins. Love is the cause in any event, and love persists as that by which sorrow transforms to joy, such as with the arrival of the beloved or her betterment, or in the joy experienced over the forgiveness of one's sins.

Moreover, there are times when one might experience both affections simultaneously, though not in the same respect. When discussing the need to have a habitual sorrow for one's sins, Aquinas clarifies that such a dispo-

²⁸ *ST* I-II, q. 22, a. 3, ad 3. Daniel Westberg offers a compelling explanation for why Aquinas's clearly non-metaphorical attribution of emotion to God is sometimes missed or explained away: "I think the fundamental reason for our difficulties in understanding the problems of divine emotion and the relation of emotion and reason in human action, and why Thomas did not devote any special treatment to the term *affectus* (which would have helped a great deal), is that the modern view of the will has shifted from the biblical and Augustinian view that incorporated affect, to a mere decision-making faculty independent of and often opposed to emotion" ("Emotion and God: A Reply to Marcel Sarot," *The Thomist* 60, no. 1 [1996]: 109–21, at 121).

²⁹ *ST* II-II, q. 28, a. 1.

sition does not preclude joy. “Nothing hinders a man from being joyful and sorrowful at the same time—for instance, if we see a good man suffer, we both rejoice at his goodness and at the same time grieve for his suffering.”³⁰ This occurs frequently in friendship, as one experiences joy in the presence of the beloved while also sorrowing over any evils afflicting him.

In terms of the interplay between the passions and affections, while they are different things, as hylomorphic unities, human beings can and do seamlessly experience both. Love, both sensible and rational, is the cause of all the other passions and affections. As a person increases in virtue and the will plays a more dominant role in his life, the passions fall under the sway of rational love. In the context of discussing the passions in relation to the will, Aquinas notes three ways how the former connects to the latter: as object, principle, and effect. The will can love (or not love) given sense passions. The passions can intensify (though never fully cause) an act of the will as a contributing principle to an act.³¹ Lastly, acts of will can effect passions by way of an overflow.³² In terms of this last relation, he notes:

In the powers of the soul there is an overflow from the higher to the lower powers: and accordingly, the pleasure of contemplation, which is in the higher part, overflows so as to mitigate even that pain which is in the senses.³³

The activity of the spiritual powers, in the case of intellectual contemplation, provides a salve to unpleasant passions.

The will can cause passions by overflow in a more straightforward

³⁰ *ST* III, q. 84, a. 9, ad 2.

³¹ Kahm offers a nice analysis showing that the virtuously cultivated passions assist good choice by following the judgment of prudence by also “mildly” orienting a person even prior to the judgment. He thinks some scholars overestimate the role of the latter, but it is still present (*Aquinas*, 256–66).

³² He treats these notions both in *De veritate*, (particularly q. 26, a. 6) and the *ST*. Commenting on this section, Richard R. Baker notes: “The passions, however, can also be related to the will as effects of its own volition. According to St. Thomas, the will can be the cause of these consequent passions in three ways: (a) As directly arousing them as objects of its volition; (b) As indirectly willing them by permitting them to persist after they have arisen from their natural sources; (c) As causing them to arise by reason of a certain redundancy from its own acts in the sense appetite. In each of these cases, the passions are said to be voluntary, and the man is responsible for any act resulting from them. As a matter of fact, these consequent passions actually increase the voluntariness of the will’s act” (“The Thomistic Theory of the Passions and Their Influence upon the Will” [PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 1941], 127).

³³ *ST* I-II, q. 38, a. 4, ad 3.

manner by way of intensification of them. Aquinas speaks to how this occurs in the following passage:

Those moral virtues, however, which are not about the passions, but about operations, can be without passions. Such a virtue is justice: because it applies the will to its proper act, which is not a passion. Nevertheless, joy results from the act of justice; at least in the will, in which case it is not a passion. And if this joy be increased through the perfection of justice, it will overflow into the sensitive appetite; insofar as the lower powers follow the movement of the higher, as stated above. Wherefore by reason of this kind of overflow, the more perfect a virtue, the more does it cause passion.³⁴

Further, he refers to the overflow effect as a “redundance.”

First, by way of redundance: because, to wit, when the higher part of the soul is intensely moved to anything, the lower part also follows that movement; and thus the passion that results in consequence, in the sensitive appetite, is a sign of the intensity of the will, and so indicates greater moral goodness.³⁵

The experience of the spiritual affections can be inclusive of the experience of the passions. In ordinary life, of course, one would have a unified experience, but the activity of the will would be the dominant cause.

Order of the Affections and Friendship

While Aquinas does not address an order of the affections as systematically as he does the passions, he consistently uses the latter as guiding blueprint for the former. For instance, we have seen how rational love forms the foundational moving principle for the rest of the affections in the manner analogous to how *amor* moves the remaining passions. In terms of a further ordering of the affections, we can again look to the passions. Aquinas states the following:

Now higher appetite has certain acts similar to those of lower

³⁴ *ST* I-II, q. 59, a. 5.

³⁵ *ST* I-II, q. 24, a. 3, ad 1. Aquinas continues addressing another positive moral benefit of the passions resulting from a choice to consent with the passions: “Secondly, by way of choice; when, to wit, a man, by the judgment of his reason, chooses to be affected by a passion in order to work more promptly with the co-operation of the sensitive appetite.” On the notion of consent, see Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions*, 227.

appetite, though without any passion. The operations of higher appetite are accordingly sometimes given the names of the passions. Thus the will for revenge is called “anger,” and the repose of the will in some object of spiritual affection is called “love.” By the same process the will itself which produces these acts is sometimes called “irascible” or “concupiscible,” not properly but by a figure of speech; and even so there is no implication in this that there are in the will two distinct powers corresponding to the irascible and the concupiscible.³⁶

Accordingly, by analogy, joy and sorrow are the principal affections connected to the simple presence of good or evil, while hope and fear are the principal affections concerning the future presence of either. Like with the passions, the desired completion of *dilectio* love is joy versus sorrow.

In terms of the other affections of the will, Aquinas follows the analogy with the passions further by relating them to the principal passions. For instance, in terms of the passions, anger, the desire for vengeance over an inflicted evil, arises from daring, which results from hope “since it is in the hope of overcoming the threatening object of fear, that one attacks it boldly.”³⁷ We can infer that in passages like the above where Aquinas describes the affection of anger as the “will for revenge,” it would follow the same analogous order. The affection of hope would be the source of the affection of anger, not as deriving from a literal irascible part of the will, but activity of the will which resembles the irascible sense appetite. Treating supernatural hope, Aquinas draws the analogy in this fashion: “The object of the irascible is an arduous sensible: whereas the object of the virtue of hope is the arduous intelligible, or rather superintelligible.”³⁸ The object is

³⁶ *De veritate*, q. 25, a. 3 (trans. Robert W. Schmidt, S.J. [Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1994]). Aquinas follows this same analogical reference to the passions in his overview of joy in charity in *ST* II-II, q. 28, a. 1: “When we were treating the passions, joy and sorrow proceed from love, but in contrary ways. For joy is caused by love, either through the presence of the thing loved, or because the proper good of the thing loved exists and endures in it; and the latter is the case chiefly in the love of benevolence, whereby a man rejoices in the well-being of his friend, though he be absent. On the other hand, sorrow arises from love, either through the absence of the thing loved, or because the loved object to which we wish well, is deprived of its good or afflicted with some evil. Now charity is love of God, Whose good is unchangeable, since He is His goodness, and from the very fact that He is loved, He is in those who love Him by His most excellent effect. . . . Therefore spiritual joy, which is about God, is caused by charity.”

³⁷ *ST* I-II, q. 45, a. 2.

³⁸ *ST* II-II, q. 18, a. 1, ad 1.

“superintelligible” in this context due to the supernatural nature of virtue, but “arduous intelligible” for the natural affection itself.

We have already encountered examples in which Aquinas uses the context of friendship to discuss the affectiones. This makes sense, given that love as *amor* is the root of the passions and love as *dilectio*, itself an affection, is the root of the rest of the affectiones, and love’s fullest expression is friendship. Accordingly, I want to expand on his account of friendship a bit to show the place of the affectiones within it, which in turn will lay the groundwork for the final section on love as *caritas* serving as the basis for ordering actions to God.

Aquinas characterizes friendship in general as making “one heart of two,”³⁹ where the heart is understood as the highest operations of the spiritual powers.⁴⁰ He calls attention to several essential properties of friendship:

Every friend wishes his friend to be and to live; secondly, he desires good things for him; thirdly, he does good things to him; fourthly, he takes pleasure in his company; fifthly, he is of one mind with him, rejoicing and sorrowing in almost the same things.⁴¹

To this list, he adds the mutual indwelling of entering into each other’s heart. What is noteworthy about this very robust view of friendship is that, first and foremost, it is a kind of love and thus resides most fully in

³⁹ See *SCG* IV, ch. 21: “For, since charity unites affectiones and makes, as it were, one heart of two, one seems not to have dismissed from his heart that which he reveals to a friend” (trans. Charles J. O’Neil [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975]).

⁴⁰ *Super Ioan* 13, lec. 2 (no. 1762), trans. Fabian R. Larcher, O.P., ed. The Aquinas Institute (Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2013). Throughout his scriptural commentaries, he tends to interpret passages having to do with the interior life as referring to the heart. For instance, commenting in *Super Matt* 6, lec. 2 (no. 576), on Jesus’s words that prayer should be done privately by withdrawing to one’s chamber, Aquinas states, “by chamber can be understood the secret interior of the heart” (trans. Jeremy Holmes, ed. The Aquinas Institute [Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2013]). Also, speaking in *Super Ioan* 5, lec. 2 (no. 730), of Christ finding a man he cured of infirmity in the temple, he notes: “We see from this that this man was not cured in vain, but having been converted to a religious way of life, he visited the temple and found Christ: because if we desire to come to the knowledge of the Creator, we must run from the tumult of sinful affectiones, leave the company of evil men, and flee to the temple of the heart, where God condescends to visit and live.”

⁴¹ *ST* I-II, q. 25, a. 7.

the will.⁴² While friendship obviously involves knowledge of the beloved, its root is the will, and that root is the willing of goods to the beloved for her own sake.

Aquinas distinguishes between the love of concupiscence and the love of friendship. The love of concupiscence is the desire for the good being willed. For instance, the lover wills the delightful experience afforded by drinking wine, but that love must be directed to someone—the “someone” is that to which the love of friendship refers. The object of the love of friendship is the person to whom one wills the good. As Jensen puts it, “It is incoherent, then, to want the good without loving the subject for whom it is good.”⁴³ In friendship, the person is the beloved. A person wills the delightful experience of drinking wine with a love of concupiscence, but he wills it for the sake of his friend. Every act of love includes both dimensions, but often the person to whom one wills the good is oneself through the love of self.

Not every relationship called “friendship” involves the love of the other for his own sake in an unqualified sense. Aquinas adopts and adapts Aristotle’s account of the three levels of friendship, based on what is principally loved. As discussed previously, “goods,” or that which is loved, admits of the threefold distinction of use, pleasure, and the *bonum honestum*.

When friendship is based on usefulness or pleasure, a man does indeed wish his friend some good; and in this respect the character of friendship is preserved. But since he refers this good further to his own pleasure or use, the result is that friendship of the useful or pleasant, insofar as it is connected with love of concupiscence, loses the character of true friendship.⁴⁴

The distinction between the three kinds of friendship relates to the distinction between passions and affections. A friendship of utility or pleasure engages the passions much more so than the affections. Pleasure and use connect most properly to the concupiscible and irascible appetites; in other words, they are passions. On the other hand, true friendship involves the love of friendship for the other—the other recognized and responded to as a *bonum honestum*. As true friendship connects most properly to the will, it directly engages the affections.

The love of friendship is the same as benevolence and beneficence—

⁴² ST I-II, q. 26, a. 3.

⁴³ Steven J. Jensen. *Sin: A Thomistic Psychology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2018), 104.

⁴⁴ ST I-II, q. 26, a. 4, ad 3.

willing and seeking goods for the other's sake. The love of friendship, while necessary, is still not sufficient for true friendship. Friendship is interpersonal, and accordingly, requires both that the love toward the beloved become habitual and a reciprocation of the same kind of love from the beloved. "For a true and firm friendship the friends need a mutual love for each other; for this duplication makes it true and firm."⁴⁵ The mutual love allows for culmination of love's real union. "[Friends] seek a suitable and becoming union—to live together, speak together, and be united together in other like things."⁴⁶ The love of friendship forms the root and driving principle that seeks the real union with the other.

Mutual indwelling forms the interpersonal nexus of friendship proper. Aquinas characterizes indwelling as the entering into the hearts of each other and, thereby, that by which one heart is made of two. Like the ecstasy which is essential to it, it involves both knowing (apprehensive power) and willing (appetitive power).⁴⁷ Regarding the former, the lover is "not satisfied with a superficial apprehension of the beloved but strives to gain an intimate knowledge of everything pertaining to the beloved."⁴⁸ With respect to the will and thereby the spiritual affections, the lover experiences the beloved with full complacency—she is something that causes a strong affective affinity. Here "the complacency in the beloved is rooted in the lover's heart."⁴⁹ The lover, though, is also in the beloved's heart, but not just by way of reciprocation of complacency. Rather, the lover identifies with the will of the beloved. "Consequently insofar as he reckons what affects his friend as affecting himself, the lover seems to be in the beloved,

⁴⁵ *Super Ioan* 13, lec. 7 (no. 1837).

⁴⁶ *ST* I-II, q. 28, a. 1, ad 2.

⁴⁷ Miner provides an excellent gloss on ecstasy and friendship: "Aquinas does not want a notion of ecstasy that opposes self-love and the love of the other. Yet he does not dispense with the notion of *exstasis*. Rather, he applies it to the apprehensive as well as the appetitive power. If reason can be raised above its connatural apprehension, it can equally fall beneath it, as when overcome (*passus*) by *furtia* or *amentia*. I would hazard that Thomas's deepest intention in the *ST* is to produce a rational ecstasy, an elevation of the reason beyond its connatural apprehension that does not destroy its rational character, but perfects it. Such elevation is legitimately described as ecstasy, perhaps even as divine madness, but it does not entail a loss of self. It leads to another kind of occurrence, one that Aquinas (no less than Socrates) was attested to exemplify in his own life: 'intense meditation on one thing draws the mind away (*abstrahit*) from other things' (28.3.co)" (*Thomas Aquinas on the Passions*, 136).

⁴⁸ *ST* I-II, q. 28, a. 2.

⁴⁹ *ST* I-II, q. 28, a. 2.

as though he were become one with him.”⁵⁰ This is why friends sorrow and rejoice in the same things. The will is the source of spiritual affections; as the wills become as one as possible, so do the affections—thereby effecting the full (natural) realization of love’s union of affection.

Virtual Ordering

Affections are features of acts of the will. I am going to make the case that due to this, the different ways that those acts can be ordered to a good, particularly the ultimate good, have a bearing on how a person experiences the affections. In other words, if affections are constitutive of the acts of the will itself, different sorts of ordering of the acts will have a direct impact on the affections themselves.

Osborne frames his study on Aquinas’s distinction between habitual, virtual, and actual ordering of acts to ends in terms of charity.

The relationship between individual acts and God as the ultimate end is especially problematic with respect to the command to love God from one’s whole heart, which Thomas and his contemporaries understand to mean not only that God must be loved above everything else, but also that every action must be referred to God. This aspect of the command is especially brought out in a dictum of St. Paul: Do everything for the glory of God (*Omnia in gloriam dei facite*). Although Thomas gives slightly different interpretations of this dictum during his career, he consistently states that it does not oblige someone to think of God in each act. In these interpretations he contrasts actual referral with either virtual or habitual referral.⁵¹

Aquinas thinks the dictum to love God can be perfectly followed in terms of all acts actually referred to God only in heaven. In this life, it is just not possible. However, he also thinks a habitual ordering alone is insufficient to fulfill it. Accordingly, he suggests a virtual ordering as an acceptable middle way.

To define and characterize these terms, then, a person *actually* refers or orders his act to an end when he deliberately and consciously directs his act to the end. I will use Jensen’s example. “Anna consciously directs her act of driving to the end of getting milk.”⁵² She is actively thinking about the

⁵⁰ *ST* I-II, q. 28, a. 2.

⁵¹ Thomas Osborne, “The Threefold Referral of Acts to the Ultimate End in Thomas Aquinas and His Commentators,” *Angelicum* 85, no. 3 (2008): 715–36, at 717.

⁵² Jensen, *Sin*, 18.

end while performing the means to it. To *virtually* order an act to an end requires a previous actual ordering but not an ongoing explicit thinking about it. As long as the ordering to that end is maintained, other acts along the way are virtually ordered to the end in question. Modifying his example to reflect virtual ordering, Jensen notes that, “while driving, Anna need not be thinking about the milk.”⁵³ Even though she is not actively thinking about the end, her action itself will preserve its direction and maintain its character to that end. The term “virtual” is taken from virtue; “According to Thomas, the virtue or power (*virtus*) of the ultimate end remains in the acts that follow it.”⁵⁴ *Habitual* ordering is the weakest of the three. As long as the person does not act contrary to an end, a generalized ordering to the end remains. A mother, even while sleeping, still loves her child, even though she is not actually or even virtually referring any act to the child at that time.

Both Osborne and Jensen draw out the implications of these distinctions for sin. Mortal sin destroys the habitual ordering to God, which entails the destruction of the virtual and actual ordering as well. Venial sin does not destroy the habitual ordering to God, which is why the habit of charity remains intact. However, venial sin is neither actually nor virtually ordered to God. Expanding on the context of mortal sin, it is possible to perform good acts even in this state, but such acts will not be meritorious. The reason for this is the acts are neither actually nor virtually referred to God. In contrast to this, with charity, all good acts are meritorious.

For such agents who possess charity, all good acts are meritorious because they are at least virtually referred to God. Agents who venially sin but have charity do not merit through their venial sin. A mere habitual ordering of acts to God is not enough for merit because merit comes from acts rather than habits. The virtual ordering depends on an actual ordering and is thereby meritorious.⁵⁵

Habitual ordering to God preserves charity, but a habit alone does not suffice for merit. Merit requires action. Both virtual and actual ordering go beyond mere habit to involve acts. This is particularly important to

⁵³ Jensen, *Sin*, 19.

⁵⁴ Thomas Osborne, “Thomas Aquinas and John Duns Scotus on Individual Acts and the Ultimate End,” in *Philosophy and Theology in the Long Middle Ages: A Tribute to Stephen F. Brown*, ed. Kent Emery Jr., Russell L. Friedman, and Andreas Speer (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 351–74, at 357.

⁵⁵ Osborne, “Threefold Referral,” 721.

my interpretation of the influence that these three orderings have on the affections.

A habitual order by itself will not engage the affections.⁵⁶ The person may very well be disposed to joy, sorrow, and so on, but the affections themselves are constitutive of acts. Conversely, in terms of actual ordering, actual acts do involve affections. I contend that a person whose acts are virtually ordered to an end will experience some share of affectivity even in those acts that might not, in and of themselves, effect affectivity. Analogous to how driving the car is virtually connected to getting the milk and thereby characterized by the act of getting milk, a person's whose actions are virtually connected to God might experience joy even in acts not actually ordered to God. By virtue of the power of the ordering to God, acts along the way to God, so to speak, can elicit the affections. For instance, a person might experience joy in God while doing the dishes, not because dishwashing is the possession of some greatly desirable good nor even because he is consciously directing the act to God. Rather, a previous actual referral and ongoing virtual referral accounts for the joy. The same structure appears in cases of ordering to non-ultimate ends. For instance, the mother, while buying milk for her children, might experience joy over her children even if the milk-buying is only virtually ordered to them. In other words, she need not be explicitly thinking about them to experience a joy due to them.

⁵⁶ Aquinas thinks that the composite nature of man precludes any feeling state, passion or affection, from being guaranteed by a given good or activity. I am speaking of those occasions where the possession or privation of a good would likely elicit a given affection. Aquinas speaks to the inconstancy of the passions and affections in his commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*: "The first observation is that the same object is not always pleasurable to man. He says that the reason is that our nature is not simple but composite, and is changeable from one thing to another inasmuch as it is subject to deterioration. For this reason if man performs an action pleasurable to him according to one element, this pleasure is unnatural to him according to a different element. Thus contemplation is nature to man by reason of his intellect but beyond the natural scope of the powers of imagination which try to take an active part in the work of contemplation. Therefore contemplation is not always delightful to man. It is the same with the taking of food, which is natural to man who needs it but not natural to a body already surfeited. But when a man approaches the opposite condition, then what was pleasurable in his previous condition seems to be neither distressing, because the opposite condition has not yet been reached, nor still pleasurable because the other condition has now almost been passed" (*In VII eth.*, lec. 14, no. 1534; trans. C. I. Litzinger, O.P. [Notre Dame, IN: Dumb Ox, 1993]). For commentary on this passage, see Kretzmann, "Aquinas on God's Joy, Love, and Liberty," 134.

In the case of love, I think my interpretation of Aquinas on virtual ordering is un-contentious. He identifies rational love itself as an affection. Rational love simply is the act of the will he treats in relation to virtual ordering. This is part of the reason why it is the context of friendship where love is the strongest. While friends cannot actually love one another continually, their love is stronger than being merely habitual. Friends virtually order their loving acts toward each other. I maintain that due to the structure and ordering of the affections, particularly the principal affections as the completion of love, virtual ordering of acts directly engages the remaining affections. I will further defend and illustrate this claim in the next section with the affections of sorrow and joy as found in acts virtually ordered to God. Prior to doing that, one more note is in order on how the possibility of virtual ordering also serves to further distinguish the affections from the passions.

The affections derive from the will. Since the actions of the will can be virtually ordered to an end, the affections associated with those kinds of actions can be experienced in some sort of “virtual manner.”⁵⁷ This is not the case with the passions, at least not directly. The passions arise from sense apprehension and sense appetites. Insofar as those appetites can be habituated by the will, a person can cultivate strong, passionate aversions away from sense evils and delight in sense goods. However, the passions themselves remain either habitual or actual. There is no virtual order because they are not directly constitutive of deliberately willed acts. The key connection between the affections and passions with respect to virtual ordering is Aquinas’s notion of “redundant” overflow. Intense activity of the will with its strong affections can (but need not) spill over into the body and stir up the passions. An oppressive sorrow can effect a passionate despair, but also an affective joy can elicit bodily pleasure. To the degree that the virtual order of acts of the will serves to sustain the affections, the more likely a person will experience the associated passions.

Charity and the Affections

It is within the context of friendship that Aquinas speaks to the deep and abiding nature of affections going beyond discrete, explicit acts, which I think are best characterized as affections rooted in virtual ordering. On the natural level, it is true friendship, with the full engagement of the loving will, in which the affections are present in the sustained, abid-

⁵⁷ Experiencing something in a “virtual manner” is not the best literal description, but it distinguishes an affection experienced in an act actually ordered versus one virtually ordered.

ing manner connected with one's virtual love for the friend. However, as Aquinas focuses on the context of God as the ultimate end while discussing virtual ordering, it is charity as friendship with God⁵⁸ in which he discusses the affections most frequently, particularly the principal affections of sorrow and joy.

Through charity, God supernaturally communicates a share of his life to human beings, thus establishing a sufficient basis for friendship with him.⁵⁹ This allows for a friendship of greater intensity relative to mere human relationships, which in turn entails the possibility of more intense affections than those experienced in human friendships. We see this most clearly in the case of the principal affections joy and sorrow. In the case of the latter, Aquinas speaks to the penitential sorrow for one's sins before God and sorrowing over offenses by others toward God. Like in human friendships, where we rejoice and sorrow over the same things, friendship with God involves rejoicing and sorrowing in accord with what God holds dear.

While friendship with God can elicit the most intense affection of joy, Aquinas makes it clear that the person must tend toward loving God for his own sake and not for the sake of consolation and joy; otherwise, God would be reduced to a mere means for the person to have joy. This point is already clear in his account of human friendships, whereby a true friendship must be directed to the other as other versus as a means for use or pleasure. Nonetheless, Aquinas thinks the self-directed desire for divine delight serves as a step in the ladder toward spiritual perfection.

To articulate this, he speaks of the virtue of hope that prepares the way for charity. In the order of perfection, charity precedes hope (though in the order of generation, it is the reverse) as representing perfect love and friendship. Hope pertains to the love of God with a love of concupiscence and as a future good to be obtained, while charity pertains to love of God with a love of friendship.⁶⁰

Hope presupposes love of that which a man hopes to obtain; and such love is love of concupiscence, whereby he who desires good,

⁵⁸ *ST* II-II, q. 23, a. 1.

⁵⁹ *ST* II-II, q. 23, a. 1. Also, see Joseph Bobik, "Aquinas on *Communicatio*: The Foundation of Friendship and *Caritas*," *Modern Schoolman* 64 (1986): 1–18. More recently, Reinhard Hütter points to the foundational role *communicatio* performs in Aquinas's understanding of charity (*Bound for Beatitude: A Thomistic Study of Eschatology and Ethics* [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2019], 249).

⁶⁰ On this point, I am indebted to Sherwin, *On Love and Virtue*, 103.

loves himself rather than something else. On the other hand, charity implies love of friendship.⁶¹

Aquinas emphasizes that only charity pertains to the perfect love of God.

Now there is a perfect, and an imperfect love. Perfect love is that whereby a man is loved in himself, as when someone wishes a person some good for his own sake; thus a man loves his friend. Imperfect love is that whereby a man loves something, not for its own sake, but that he may obtain that good for himself; thus a man loves what he desires. The first love of God pertains to charity, which adheres to God for His own sake; while hope pertains to the second love, since he that hopes, intends to obtain possession of something for himself.⁶²

Friendship with God brings about the experience of the highest affections, but analogous to human friendships, these affections arise most vigorously when the beloved is loved for his own sake.⁶³

Aquinas's remarks on sorrow most directly and strongly support my interpretation of him as affirming a virtual manner of experiencing the affections. He treats both the negative sorrow of relating to God as an evil but also the positive sorrow of contrition. Also, Aquinas's comments on joy in God indicate to me something deeper than just a habitual disposition to the experience of joy. I will begin with sorrow and conclude with joy.

Contrition grieves over one's past sins and the prospect of future sinning. Aquinas treats penance as both a sacrament and a virtue, as the material side of the former entails the human acts of contrition, confession, and satisfaction.⁶⁴ Contrition is the grief or sorrow for one's sins.

[Sorrow for one's sins] denotes an act of the will, and in this way it

⁶¹ *ST I-II*, q. 66, a. 6, ad 2.

⁶² *ST II-II*, q. 17, a. 8. In terms of the affection of fear in relation to God, Aquinas specifies that God cannot be feared as an evil object, but he can be and should be feared as a source of evil coming "from Him or in relation to Him." God can be feared as a source of punishment and as an object from which one can be separated (*ST II-II*, q. 19, a. 1).

⁶³ See *ST II-II*, q. 28, a. 1, ad 3: "There can be spiritual joy about God in two ways. First, when we rejoice in the Divine good considered in itself; second, when we rejoice in the Divine good as participated by us. The former joy is the better, and proceeds from charity chiefly: while the latter joy proceeds from hope also, whereby we look forward to enjoy the Divine good, although the enjoyment itself, whether perfect or imperfect, is obtained according to the measure of one's charity."

⁶⁴ *ST III*, q. 84, a. 2.

implies choice. . . . Now it belongs to right reason that one should grieve for a proper object of grief as one ought to grieve, and for an end for which one ought to grieve. And this is observed in the penance of which we are speaking now; since the penitent assumes a moderated grief for his past sins, with the intention of removing them.⁶⁵

The sorrow of contrition is a clear affection, as it is not reducible to a sense appetite. It performs an essential role in the restoration of the proper relation to God consequent to sin's disordering. Interestingly, Aquinas suggests that the sorrow of contrition can counter a very different, and sinful, affective sorrow.

Concerning sinful sorrow, Aquinas defines the mortal sin and capital vice of sloth as an "oppressive sorrow" over the divine good.⁶⁶ This form of sorrow causes an aversion to God. "Sloth is not an aversion of the mind from any spiritual good, but from the Divine good, to which the mind is obliged to adhere. . . . He is sorry to have to do something for God's sake."⁶⁷ Contrition reverses this movement:

Now, the first damage which man sustains from sin is the disordering of the mind; in that man is turned away from the incommutable good—namely, God—and is turned toward sin. . . . Therefore, the first thing required in penance is the ordering of the mind; namely, that the mind be turned toward God, and turned away from sin, grieving at its commission, and proposing not to commit it; and this belongs essentially to *contrition*.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ *ST* III, q. 85, a. 1. Gilles Emery offers a succinct definition of Thomistic contrition as the "sorrow or remorse for sins committed with, under the impulse of charity, the intention of removing the consequence of sin, which is the offense committed against God" ("Reconciliation with the Church and Interior Penance: The Contribution of Thomas Aquinas on the Question of the *Res et Sacramentum* of Penance," *Nova et Vetera* [English] 1, no. 2 [2003]: 283–302, at 294).

⁶⁶ *ST* II-II, q. 35, a. 1. Rebecca Konyonkyk DeYoung has several works on the subject of Aquinas's account of sloth that have informed my thinking on the matter: "Resistance to the Demands of Love: Aquinas on the Vice of *Acedia*," *The Thomist* 68, no. 2 (2004): 173–204; "Aquinas on the Vice of Sloth: Three Interpretive Issues," *The Thomist* 75, no. 1 (2011): 43–64; "Sloth: Some Historical Reflections on Laziness, Effort, and the Resistance to the Demands of Love," in *Virtues and Their Vices*, eds. Kevin Timpe and Craig A. Boyd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 177–98.

⁶⁷ *ST* II-II, q. 35, a. 2, ad 2.

⁶⁸ *SCG* IV, ch. 72.

Sloth sorrows over the divine good as an evil to be shunned, while contrition involves the right willed relation to the divine good as good. Consequently, the sorrow of contrition involves a proper relation to God and grieves over the sinful separation of oneself from that good.

I think it is clear that the *oppressive* sorrow of sloth exceeds that which is merely habitual. It is an actual, deeply abiding, and sustained weighing down of the mind and will in relation to the divine good. Yet, it does not seem quite accurate to say it is actual in the sense of the person continually deliberately and consciously acting to generate the affection. Virtual ordering makes much more sense. The slothful person commits the actual mortal sin of sloth and sustains that orientation and the associated affection of sorrow by not deliberately acting contrary to it. Moreover, all the subsequent acts, even if not conscious acts of sloth, are informed and colored by the now virtual ordering away from the divine good.

Contrite sorrow operates in a similar way but with a different end to which it is ordered, namely God as the ultimate end. A person is not merely disposed by habit to grieve over sin but rather is marked by an ongoing affective aversion permeating and encompassing all sorts of other actions. Aquinas calls this a “virtual displeasure,” and speaks to its superiority over a mere habitual displeasure in the context of protecting one from sin.

But this [remembering each sin individually] is not required for the forgiveness of venial sins; although it does not suffice to have habitual displeasure [*habitualis displicentia*], which is included in the habit of charity or of penance as a virtue, since then venial sin would be incompatible with charity, which is evidently untrue. Consequently it is necessary to have a certain virtual displeasure [*virtualis displicentia*], so that, for instance, a man’s affections so tend to God and Divine things, that whatever might happen to him to hamper that tendency would be displeasing to him, and would grieve him, were he to commit it, even though he were not to think of it actually.⁶⁹

Once appropriately directed to the divine good through an actual act of contrition, a contrite sorrow will be virtually present in all a person does. This need not make a person morose. Recall that Aquinas thinks multiple affections are possible at the same time. “Nothing hinders a man from being joyful and sorrowful at the same time—for instance, if we see a good

⁶⁹ ST III, q. 87, a. 1.

man suffer, we both rejoice at his goodness and at the same time grieve for his suffering.⁷⁰ A contrite sorrow is compatible with joy.

The virtuous character and desirable nature of contrite sorrow are not absolute. Because human beings fell from God through sin, contrite sorrow became necessary as a restorative principle and safeguard from future sins. But in the order of nature, had human beings not fallen, there would be no reason to desire penance or contrition. Joy, on the other hand, is simply good, and as we have addressed, it represents the most straightforward and desirable completion of the rational appetite—in this case the rational appetite as supernaturally transformed by charity.

In terms of the joy found in relating to God as the ultimate end, it is only partial now due, not to the good itself, but to the limited ability to possess the good.

Our Lord wants us to become sharers of his joy by observing his commandments. . . . The goods in which we rejoice are either imperfect or imperfectly possessed; and so in this life our joy cannot be full. But it will be full when perfect goods are perfectly possessed.⁷¹

Moreover, throughout his commentaries on Scripture, Aquinas consistently notes that when Scripture speaks to joy, it is predominately as a spiritual affection versus passion; “*fill you with all joy*, i.e., spiritual, which is concerned with God.”⁷² It is also the chief affection found in relation to God; “But the ultimate end that perfects man inwardly is *joy*, which proceeds from the presence of the thing loved.”⁷³

In addition, spiritual joy, while partial, has a great consoling effect relative to the trials of this life; “And [Paul] says, *for I have had great joy and consolation*. . . . For this joy alleviates anxiety.”⁷⁴ Aquinas expands upon this last point in relation to friendship with God.

It is also a property of friendship that one take delight in a friend’s

⁷⁰ *ST III*, q. 84, a. 9, ad 2.

⁷¹ *Super Ioan* (no. 2004).

⁷² *Super Rom* 15, lec. 1 (no. 1162), trans. Fabian R. Larcher, O.P., ed. J. Mortensen and E. Alarcon (Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012).

⁷³ *Super Gal* 5, lec. 6 (no. 330), trans. Fabian R. Larcher, O.P., and M. L. Lamb, ed. by J. Mortensen and E. Alarcon (Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012).

⁷⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Super Phlm* 1, lec. 1 (no. 11), trans. Fabian R. Larcher, O.P., ed. J. Mortensen and E. Alarcon (Lander, WY: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012).

presence, rejoice in his words and deeds, and find in him security against all anxieties; and so it is especially in our sorrows that we hasten to our friends for consolation. Since, then, the Holy Spirit constitutes us God's friends, and makes Him dwell in us, and us dwell in Him, it follows that through the Holy Spirit we have joy in God and security against all the world's adversities and assaults.⁷⁵

Joy has a stable presence that is maintained even through other acts, even those involving hardship. Such joy is best characterized not as limited to discrete acts of relating to God, but rather as a sustained, deeply abiding affective state rooted in the mutual indwelling of divine friendship. If the person's acts are virtually ordered to God, then this accounts for how all the acts making up a person's conscious life sustain the joy in question. Moments of actually ordering an act to God no doubt serve to reinvigorate the affection, but the affection tends to remain beyond even those deliberate acts.

In summary, to have a perfect friendship with God, one must love God for his own sake. Through charity, that is exactly what occurs, replete with the spiritual affections experienced through making "one heart of two." Actions actually ordered to God elicit the affections, especially joy. What accounts for the sustained, deep, and abiding character of them is their connection to virtual ordering. The virtual joy of friendship with God, in turn, serves to draw a person into an ever-deeper relationship with God. "We draw near to God by no corporeal steps, since He is everywhere, but by the affections of our soul, and by the actions of that same soul do we withdraw from Him."⁷⁶ Moreover, Aquinas notes that joy effects "the *dilatation* of the heart."⁷⁷ The more joy one experiences in relation to God, the more one's heart is open to a greater and greater intimacy with him.

In conclusion, Aquinas affirms the Pauline exhortation to "do everything for the glory of God." However, the limitations inherent to the life of the wayfarer prevent an actual ordering of all acts to God, but the possibility of a virtual ordering remains. Just as the virtual ordering orients all that a person does to God, so too does it promote the possibility of deep and abiding, though still only partial, experience of joy. Once a person passes into the state of blessedness, then the virtual ordering will give way to an

⁷⁵ SCG IV, ch. 22.

⁷⁶ ST I, q. 3, a. 1, ad 5.

⁷⁷ ST I-II, q. 33, a. 3, ad 3. Miner comments: "According to Aquinas, the most powerful agent for opening the heart's doors is *gaudium*. By expanding the affections, spiritual joys from this life prepare the heart to receive still greater pleasures in the next" (*Thomas Aquinas on the Passions*, 179).

actual ordering and, thereby, the deep and abiding joyful experience will give way to the perfect experience of joy: “Hence desire will be at rest, not only our desire for God, but all our desires: so that the joy of the blessed is full of perfection—indeed over-full, since they will obtain more than they were capable of desiring.”⁷⁸

N.V

⁷⁸ *ST* II-II, q. 28, a. 3.