The Ontology, Psychology and Axiology of Habits (Habitus) in Medieval Philosophy
Historical-Analytical Studies on Nature, Mind and Action

Volume 7

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The Ontology, Psychology and Axiology of Habits (*Habitus*) in Medieval Philosophy
Preface

The present volume constitutes the proceedings of two colloquia we organized on the subject of *habitus* in medieval philosophy. The first consisted of two panels which took place at Fordham University, New York, in October 2014, as part of the annual meeting of the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy, to which we are grateful for welcoming us.

The interest sparked on the topic seemed enthusiastic enough that we decided to organize a follow-up international conference in Paris, which took place in October 2015 at the École Pratique des Hautes Études. In organizing this conference, we benefited from generous funding from the Laboratoire d’Excellence Histoire et Anthropologie des Savoirs, des Techniques et des Croyances (EPHE, PSL, Paris), the European Union through the Dahlem Research School (Freie Universität Berlin), the Laboratoire d’Études sur les Monothéismes (UMR 8584, Paris), the Centre d’Études Supérieures sur la Renaissance (UMR 7323, Tours), as well as the ERC-THESIS Project n° 313339, through the Institut de Recherche et d’Histoire des Textes. We would like to express our utmost gratitude to Olivier Boulnois, Joël Biard, and Monica Brinzei, without whose advice and support this second conference could not have happened.

In New York, we had the amazing opportunity to meet and hear Gyula Klima. He agreed to publish the proceedings of our events in his book series *Historical-Analytical Studies in Nature, Mind, and Action*. He also gave us ongoing help and valuable advice both on the organization of the conference and the editing of the book. For this, we are deeply grateful.

We would also like to thank all the contributors to the present volume. We learned a great deal from their impeccable scholarship and the many recommendations they had the kindness to give us.

We are most grateful to Ian Drummond for his excellent and careful work in translating two of the chapters from French, reviewing the English for several others, and copyediting the volume as a whole, as well as for the many fruitful discussions we shared on the book’s topic.

Nicolas Faucher would like to thank the Academy of Finland’s Centre of Excellence in Reason and Religious Recognition at the University of Helsinki for its
financial support. The project matured during his time as a PhD student under the supervision of Olivier Boulnois and Pasquale Porro. For nurturing his interest in medieval philosophy and inspiring him, he is profoundly grateful to them, as well as to many others.

Magali Roques would like to thank the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies; the EURIAS Fellowship Programme co-funded by the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, under the Seventh Framework Programme; and the Fondation des Treilles for their financial support. She also benefited from the generous support of the Dahlem Research School while she held a postdoctoral position at the Excellence Cluster Topoi (Berlin) and from intense discussions on the topic with her colleagues in Dominik Perler’s research group.

Helsinki, Finland             Nicolas Faucher
Hamburg, Germany             Magali Roques
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Abbreviations

art. articulus, article
AL Aristoteles Latinus (Bruges, Brussels, and Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1953–)
CCL Corpus Christianorum, series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols, 1953–)
com. commentarium
CSEL Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (Vienna: Tempsky (etc.), 1865–)
d./dd. Distinction(s)
fol./fols. folio/folios
lect. Lectio
Lect. Lectura
Leonina Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Doctoris Angelici Opera Omnia Iussu Impensaque Leonis XIII P.M. edita (Rome: Commissio Leonina; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1882–)
Ord. Ordinatio
PL Patrologiae Cursus Completus, series Latina (Paris: Migne, then Garnier, 1844–1865)
q./qq. Quaestio(nes)/question(s)
Quodl. Quodlibet
Rep. Reportatio
SCG Summa contra Gentiles (of Thomas Aquinas)
ST Summa Theologiae (of Thomas Aquinas)
Chapter 1
The Many Virtues of Second Nature: Habitus in Latin Medieval Philosophy

Nicolas Faucher and Magali Roques

Abstract This chapter consists of a systematic introduction to the nature and function of habitus in Latin medieval philosophy. Over the course of this introduction, several topics are treated: the theoretical necessity to posit habitus; their nature; their causal contribution to the production of internal and external acts; how and why habitus can grow and decay; what makes their unity when they can have multiple objects and work in clusters. Finally, we examine two specific questions: why intellectual habitus represent a special case that triggered considerable debate; how human beings can be said to be free if their actions are determined by moral habitus.

Keywords Habitus · Disposition · Philosophical psychology · Metaphysics of the soul · Moral philosophy · Medieval philosophy

1.1 Introduction

The present volume is dedicated to the concept of habitus in medieval philosophy. Its purpose is to assess the actual importance of this notion for medieval thinkers, in light of recent advances in medieval cognitive psychology and medieval moral theory, which have been the object of sustained attention in the last 10 years.

To our knowledge, there have been only two extensive studies on the history of the concept of habitus from Aristotle to the twentieth century. The first is the habili-
tation thesis of Peter Nickl (2001). The other is a volume of collected papers edited by Tom Sparrow and Adam Hutchinson (2013). To date, only a few monographs have been published on this notion, focused on specific authors: Oswald Fuchs’s thorough but dated study of the psychology of habitus in William of Ockham (1952); Rolf Darge’s authoritative monograph (1996) on the knowledge of habitus and the function of moral habitus in the structuring of action in Thomas Aquinas; and Bonnie Kent’s classic study on virtues of the will (1995). A handful of articles have also been written on moral habitus in Aquinas. The present volume is thus the first work to deal with the central characteristics and evolution of this notion during the height of Latin medieval scholasticism in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, providing studies of a number of medieval authors, trying to keep a balance between well-known thinkers of the time, such as Bonaventure, Aquinas, John Duns Scotus, and Ockham, and less well-known but crucially important authors such as Henry of Ghent, Peter John Olivi, Thomas of Sutton, Peter Auriol, John Buridan, and Richard Kilvington. Studies of Augustine, Francisco Suárez, and Descartes give insight into both the foundations of medieval conceptions and their subsequent developments, thus bringing to the volume a longue durée perspective. Given the exploratory nature of the volume, an exhaustive treatment was not an attainable goal. Many doctrines remain to be studied, especially before the golden age of scholasticism, such as Gilbert de Poitiers’, and after it, John Capreolus’ and Thomas Cajetan’s. Nevertheless, we believe that this volume provides valuable insights into the foundations of medieval conceptions and shows how Suárez and Descartes summed up the medieval tradition and used it as a starting point for their own thinking.

Habitus is a key feature of the philosophical psychology inherited from both the Aristotelian and Augustinian traditions, Augustine and Aristotle being the key authorities throughout the medieval period. In the Metaphysics, Aristotle defines habitus as dispositions through which something or someone is well disposed or ill-disposed in herself or with regard to something else (Met. 5.20, 1022b12–14). In the Categories, however, he distinguishes dispositions from habitus, the latter being more firmly entrenched than the former (Cat. 8, 8b27). In the same work he defines habitus as absolute qualities (Cat. 7, 6b5) but also as relative to something (Cat. 8, 11a20–32). This led to debate among medieval authors, with some going so far as to deem habitus relations rather than qualities (see part 2 of the present introduction). In the De anima, dealing specifically with intellectual habitus, Aristotle says that they are the result of a change of quality, through the repetition of the corresponding acts (De an. 2.5, 417a32). Finally, in the Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle

1 Nickl deals with the concept of moral habitus in Aristotle and Aquinas, before discussing its progressive disappearance in Scotus and Ockham, as well as Luther and Descartes. He then turns to its renaissance in Schiller and Kierkegaard, before surveying twentieth-century conceptions.
2 The first part of their volume deals with some ancient, medieval and early modern conceptions of habitus, including Aristotle’s and Aquinas, while the second part deals with modern theories, such as Suárez’s and Descartes’s. The third and final part deals with contemporary conceptions.
4 As far as we know, there is no significant Platonic influence on the development of the notion.
defines virtues as praiseworthy habitus (NE 1.13, 1103a9). He also assigns non-intellectual virtues to the irrational parts of the soul. This seems to mean that virtues cannot belong to powers that are capable of opposites, a claim that almost no medieval author shares, since most admit of habitus in the will. As for Augustine, he does not give a single definition of habitus that was systematically adopted by medieval authors, but his treatment of the subject and particularly of virtues is foundational for how medieval authors deal with the theological aspects of the problem, as will emerge in the volume.

The philosophical psychology that medieval thinkers found in Aristotle, his account of habitus in particular, is complex and not entirely consistent throughout the whole corpus. Furthermore, medieval thinkers were mostly theologians. Their efforts were therefore especially focused on producing systematic accounts aimed at solving the various tensions in Aristotle’s works and accounting for a number of theological doctrines, such as the doctrine of the theological virtues, free will, and even the problem of the Incarnation. Despite sharing the same philosophical starting point in Aristotle, however, medieval authors held a great diversity of positions. A habitus is a conceptual tool that no medieval thinker can dispense with when dealing with what makes up a human being and what the determining factors of his actions are, be they virtuous or vicious or morally neutral, or inner mental acts or external acts geared towards the outside world. Widely divergent philosophical options were defended on these topics.

Let us illustrate this with the example of the role of habitus in the decision-making process. The majority view is that habitus play an essential role in the decision-making process and thus also in how external bodily acts occur. But it is usually only derivatively that habitus can be attributed to any other power than the powers of the soul, for habitus are dispositions primarily of rational powers, and of other powers only insofar as they can be commanded by the rational powers. However, not all authors adopt this view. Olivi, for instance, thinks our powers of perception can be habituated even to acts that are not under the command of rational powers (see part 7 of the introduction). This example is fairly typical, as, except for a few core definitional features (see part 1 of the introduction), medieval authors are not in unanimous agreement on many features of habitus. The disagreement can be about virtually anything, from the function of habitus, to their ontological status to their contribution to the morality of voluntary and involuntary acts.

A remark must be made on the vocabulary used. Among our contributors, eleven have chosen to use the Latin word habitus, while nine have chosen the term “habit.” Other terms can of course be used, such as “disposition,” but the most usual translation in English is “habit,” which allows for a better connection of medieval

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5 See, for example, Nielsen (1982) for the so-called habitus theory of the Incarnation, defended by Peter Lombard, who regards “the union in Christ between the two natures or between the human person and divine nature as a habitus” (p. 359). This doctrine enjoyed some success in the school of the Lombard, until it was condemned as heretical in the 1170s.

6 Namely, Olivier Boulnois, Isabelle Bochet, Bonnie Kent, Kristell Trego, Nicolas Faucher, Rolf Darge, Can Laurens Löwe, Juhana Toivanen, Jean-Luc Solère, Pascale Bermon, and Tarek Dika.

7 Namely, Hamid Taieb, Peter J. Hartman, Martin Pickavé, Magali Roques, Jenny Pelletier, Gyula Klima, Jack Zupko, Monika Michalowska, and Dominik Perler.
conceptions to contemporary ones. However, the term brings with it some ambiguity. Indeed, in its most common usage, the word “habit” describes some of our common behaviour which we might not have the power to control; the equivalent Latin term would be *consuetudo*.\(^8\) Though the distinction is not always sharp for medieval thinkers, *habitus*, by contrast, are usually characterized by the fact that (1) they are at our disposal, and (2) they facilitate our actions but do not infringe upon our freedom to do or not to do them. For this reason, and to avoid ambiguity, we have chosen in this introduction to use the term *habitus*; however, given that, as we just explained, arguments can be made in favour of both uses, we have chosen to respect the choice of each contributor to this volume.

In what follows, we will briefly touch upon several issues that are raised by medieval thinkers about *habitus*: the theoretical necessity to posit them; their nature; their causal contribution the production of internal and external acts; how and why *habitus* can grow and decay; what makes their unity when they can have multiple objects and work in clusters. Finally we examine two specific questions: why intellectual *habitus* represent a special case that triggered considerable debate; how human beings can be said to be free if their actions are determined by moral *habitus*. All these issues are dealt with by the articles in this volume, which are organized chronologically according to the authors discussed.

### 1.2 Why Do Medieval Philosophers Posit *Habitus*?

The central place of *habitus* in medieval philosophy has long been recognized, given that the medieval scholastics inherit Aristotle’s definition, from *Nicomachean Ethics* 2.3, of virtue as *habitus*. But *habitus* is a pervasive element of Aristotelian-inspired psychology. Indeed, there are a great many kinds of *habitus*, such as intellectual *habitus*, which constitute our knowledge, *habitus* in our sensitive powers, which allow us to better feel and control our passions, and even *habitus* in the body, by which our organs retain the capacity to do what they frequently perform.

Some general description of the framework within which medieval authors work is required in order to pinpoint the exact function of *habitus* in it.\(^9\) For Aristotle, the soul is the principle of life in the body (*De an.* 2.1). A power or faculty of the soul can be defined as a part of the soul that performs or elicits a certain kind of act. In books 2 and 3 of the *De anima*, Aristotle depicts the soul as having three main faculties that belong to an increasingly narrow range of living beings: nutrition, which concerns all animate creatures; perception, which concerns only animals; and the mind, which performs higher mental functions such as reasoning and understanding, and belongs only to human beings.

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\(^8\) In contrast to the term *habitus*, *consuetudo* is not a concept that was used in addressing theological and philosophical problems in the Middle Ages. Like the term “habit,” it has a broad usage, whereas *habitus* has more precise and specialized meanings.

\(^9\) For a more detailed description, see Perler’s paper in this volume, as well as his article on the faculties in medieval philosophy (2015). On Aquinas, see Pasnau (2002).
Faculties account not only for the cognitive life of the soul but also for its conative dimension. Desire and motion are complex phenomena, for they involve both the representations of objects, desire for them and practical reason telling animals, even non-humans in a primitive form, what needs to be done for the desire to be fulfilled. In the Aristotelian framework, it is unclear which faculty desire and voluntary motion should be attributed to. This is why, in the Middle Ages, under the influence of Augustine, a new faculty emerges: the will, which performs affective and volitive acts that aim at what is good.¹⁰ Medieval thinkers, highly concerned with the freedom of man, admit of free will (liberum arbitrium), usually conceived as an intermediate faculty combining intellect and will in order to perform free acts. Such acts are characterized by intellectual deliberation and unconstrained, voluntary decision upon this deliberation. This decision is the cause of the action, whether it is inner or geared to the outside world.¹¹ Other views, such as that of Duns Scotus, but also those of Peter John Olivi and Henry of Ghent, hold that freedom is present only in the will, the intellect being a power entirely determined by what is outside of it.¹²

In this account of human nature, habitus are defined by their function in the psychological mechanisms that lead to thinking and acting. In a nutshell, they are used to explain how such powers are moved to elicit the kinds of act associated with them. One of the main features of habitus is that they are usually not present before any kind of act has taken place, since by definition habitus are acquired dispositions.¹³ Once an act has been performed, a habitus appears which will influence all subsequent acts of the same kind, making it an overwhelming determining factor of human action. The precise effect of habitus on acts varies according to author and context: some might change the way things appear to us, others make actions easier, more intense, or more pleasurable. Medieval thinking on the subject is extremely rich, as the papers in the present volume demonstrate.

Habitus are not to be confused with other kinds of disposition, such as instincts. Instincts are present in humans whatever they do and orientate their actions from birth. Habitus, by contrast, are acquired over the course of human life and thus represent the fact that the way in which humans live and act progressively determines what they are and what they will do. As instincts are natural, habitus are called by some “connatural,” or “second nature.”¹⁴ This is the origin of their name; just as its Greek equivalent hexis, the term habitus literally means something that is had, possessed, or assumed by the soul, just as clothes are put on. In its original, Aristotelian sense, however, just as in its Augustinian and medieval senses—as Isabelle Bochet’s paper shows—it refers to something that is had in a stable manner, that is, it cannot be easily lost.¹⁵ A habitus of the soul is the lingering trace left by an act in the soul,

¹⁰ On this subject, the reference work is Kent (1995). See also Pink (2012).
¹¹ See Korolec (1982).
¹² See the classic study by Wolter (1990).
¹³ The most notable exception is the class of infused, or God-given, habitus, such as the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, which exist in the baptized subjects before any kind of corresponding act is, or even can be, performed.
¹⁴ See Kent (2002).
¹⁵ See p. 49.
which modifies it from then on. It must be distinguished from weak dispositions, which are acquired and do the same thing as *habitus*, but do not have any stable being in the soul. They incline weakly and can disappear easily.\(^\text{16}\)

The core issue with *habitus* is that, though they are really present in the soul, they cannot be known directly (i.e. without any reasoning) by some form of inner perception; by contrast, acts can be known in this way.\(^\text{17}\) One can know directly that one is reasoning or desiring something at any given moment but one cannot know directly that one has a particular tendency or aptitude toward such reasoning or acting. Instead, *habitus* are posited because certain features of our acts that we can directly perceive must be explained. John Duns Scotus provides a canonical list of these features. Indeed, as Magali Roques and Olivier Boulnois note, *habitus* for Scotus allows a power to operate “delectabiliter, faciliter, expedite et prompte,” (“with pleasure, ease, readiness, and swiftness.”)\(^\text{18}\) Of course, as Magali Roques reminds us in her paper, not all authors accepted all features of *habitus*.\(^\text{19}\) Ockham, for one, did not think pleasure was a necessary feature of *habitus*-inclined acts. Nonetheless, *habitus* served to explain the occurrence of these naturally and empirically observed features, which are the product of the *habitus*’s inclination to certain acts.

Inclination in this sense, however, is not always enough to describe the effect *habitus* have on our acts. Juhana Toivanen’s paper deals directly with another type of *habitus*, put forward in an original way by Peter John Olivi.\(^\text{20}\) Olivi clearly posits *habitus* which function as modifiers of our outlook. *Habitus* can influence the features of our acts by making intentional content receivable under any kind of aspect, i.e., a proposition as true or false, a certain food item as good or bad and so on. For instance, for Olivi, certain *habitus* colour our view of things in such a way that we might assent or dissent to a given proposition according to these *habitus*. Such *habitus* do not make acts easier or quicker but work merely as a kind of filter.

The theological concerns of medieval thinkers also come to the fore, since elements of the Catholic doctrine call for some virtuous or vicious dispositions to be posited in the souls of humans in order to account for the fact that their acts should be deemed to win them merit, which can only occur when these acts are somehow determined by God’s grace.\(^\text{21}\) Now, what we have said up to now applies to naturally acquired *habitus* that are used to account for our observable acts or the observable features of our acts. But, for medieval theologians, there are also supernatural *habitus* given by God. These do not serve to explain any observable fact; indeed, the fact

\(^{16}\) Yet another kind of disposition, stemming from theological developments, is posited by medieval authors, namely what they call innate *habitus*, such as synderesis, which is defined by Aquinas as an innate *habitus* of practical principles (see *De veritate*, q. 16, art. 1). The status of such dispositions and what distinguishes them from instinct is unclear. The classic study of this issue is Lottin (1948a).

\(^{17}\) On the relation between *habitus* and inner experience, see, among others, Spencer (2015a).

\(^{18}\) See p. 39 and p. 272.

\(^{19}\) See idem, p. 270–271.

\(^{20}\) See idem, p. 191–196.

\(^{21}\) On theological virtues in the Middle Ages, see Lottin (1948b), Bullet (1958), and Kent (1995).
that such *habitus* can remain unmanifested is one of their central features. Kent’s paper explains it most clearly: theologians have to solve a problem. They have to show that, even though some central, supremely virtuous figures of the Bible, such as Abraham, did not display the same degree of virtue as others, they were, in fact, just as virtuous. This is why Peter Lombard and his followers, following Augustine, stress the importance of virtues as dispositions that, even though they are not necessarily acted upon, make someone meritorious in the eyes of God. Thus, even though Abraham did not display chastity because it was uncalled for at a time when God wanted his people to grow and multiply, he had it in disposition and would have displayed it if he had had to. For this reason, he had no less merit than would later, chaste Christians.

As Kent also explains, this ties into the problem of baptism and the salvation of children. Catholic dogma holds that, when baptism is performed, the baptized, through a supernatural operation, receives the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. Children, of course, cannot properly exercise virtue; for instance, they cannot, at a young age, believe, or even understand the articles of faith. Infused virtues in children are therefore the paradigmatic example of *habitus* that are not manifested because they cannot be manifested. What then is the use of positing that children have infused virtues? For medieval theologians, it allowed for their salvation. Even though they are not acted upon, infused virtues are enough to justify children and ensure they reach eternal life. As such, unmanifested infused virtues are more akin to *habitus* of being rather than *habitus* of doing, as they represent a kind of spiritual health. In any case, what *habitus* are supposed to explain is always features of acts, whether they be observed or posited according to dogma. As the medieval saying goes: “Habitus per acta cognoscuntur.”

We now have a broad view of what philosophical and theological interest *habitus* have and what kind of function they perform in solving problems pertaining to the two disciplines. But even though they perform the same kind of function, *habitus* can vary widely in their ontological status, the kinds of acts they explain, and the faculties where they are to be posited. We will attempt to sketch a more detailed picture of these variations.

### 1.3 The Ontology of Habitus

Following Aristotle’s remarks in *Categories* (8a25–10a26), medieval thinkers usually define *habitus* as qualities of the soul that belong to it in a stable manner, just as a wall painted red is red in a stable manner and only considerable effort or wear and tear can make it cease to be red. But *habitus* are not just any kind of quality: they are dispositional in nature. Medieval thinkers such as Aquinas capture the dispositional nature of *habitus* by attributing to them a special mode of being. Take a human

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22 See p. 67–85.
23 See Darge (1996).
being without any acquired qualities, such as a child who has experienced and done nothing. When he first plays music, he is performing an act. After he ceases playing, he has acquired the habitus of playing music. The simple fact of having the habitus does not make him play music all the time, but he has nonetheless acquired a quality which informs his faculties. This quality is said to be a first actuality of the power or powers of the child involved in playing music. When he subsequently plays music, this quality is actualized for as long as he plays. This is called a second actuality of the power or powers of the child involved in playing music. Just like the inexperienced child, a power of the soul is by itself in absolute potency, and it can be informed by habitus, which are first actualities. These habitus can then be actualized so that acts, which are also qualities, are realized. These acts are second actualities.

Authors in the fourteenth century such as Ockham begin investigating whether this metaphysical framework is appropriate to account for the dispositional nature of habitus. As Magali Roques explains, Ockham holds that we can experience that we feel that we are inclined to think of something because of a habitus. But when we are asleep we do not feel any such inclination. This means that something must be posited in the soul to account for this phenomenal difference, and the distinction between first and second actuality is without any explanatory relevance: while for Aquinas there is merely a habitus which is in first actuality and which becomes an act when it is actualized in a second actuality, for Ockham a habitus when actualized engenders an inclination which is distinct from it and which itself engenders an act; this act is distinct from both the habitus and the inclination. John Buridan uses a similar argument to prove that occurrent and dispositional thinking must be differentiated at the ontological level. Following the skeptical worries raised by John of Mirecourt and condemned by the faculty of theology at the University of Paris, authors from the fourteenth century went further and asked whether a metaphysics of the soul based on the distinction between substance and accident was the only possible one with which to explain the activity of the soul. Gyula Klima and Jack Zupko show that Buridan defends the majority view and argues that it is better to keep the distinction between habitus and the other dispositional aspects of the soul, such as its faculties.

The ontological status of habitus in this metaphysical framework was the subject of a debate in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, which is well documented in the present volume. Certain types of habitus, some authors say, cannot be considered as mere qualities. This stems from the fact that habitus is also considered by Aristotle as a separate category, among the other minor categories, also known in the Middle Ages as the sex principia, namely actio, passio, ubi, quando, situs, and habitus. Moreover, in Categories 15, 15b21, habitus is also considered as a post-predicament, that is, as a predicate said in multiple senses.

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24 See p. 273–274.
25 For how this fits with Ockham’s ontological parsimony, see Roques’s paper in the present volume, p. 268–270.
each of which belongs to a different category. In both cases, Aristotle stresses the relational aspect of habitus. As Martin Pickavé shows,28 talking about Giles of Rome, some habitus in the category of quality also need the mode of another category, namely relation: the habitual knowledge of something, for instance, is related to what is known and exists because of it. This habitual knowledge is a quality of the soul that possesses the mode of a relation. Similarly, a virtuous habitus possesses the mode of a relation to a given moral norm. In other words, if one wants to attribute to habitus the property of having intentional content, then it cannot be considered as a mere quality but must include a relation to this content or to the cause of this content.

This idea was further developed in the fourteenth century. Some authors defend what Peter J. Hartman calls in his paper a “Novel Theory of Habit,” at least as regards intellective habitus.29 According to this theory, as exemplified by the doctrines of Durand of Saint-Pourçain and Prosper of Reggio Emilia, habitus are not absolute qualities but relations that do not inhere in the intellect but in an “ostensive” power that shows its objects to the intellect. Habitus dispose the ostensive power to show objects to the intellect with more or less ease. Thus, intellectual acts, though they exist in the intellect, are merely relations, the terms of which are the intellect and its objects. Intellect, on this view, is entirely passive: the ostensive power does all the work and the habitus merely accounts for how easy it is for it to put certain objects into relation with the intellect. Just as, on the standard theory, a habitus is a quality that disposes its subject towards another quality, the corresponding act, in the novel theory a habitus is a relation that disposes its subject towards another relation.

This theory rests upon the idea that simple acts of intellection are not active but passive causes of habitus. This is not, however, the only model by which habitual causation is explained, as we will now see.

1.4 How Habitus Cause

Habitus shapes actions and thoughts. What are its precise contributions to their production? If significant causal efficacy is attributed to it, then one runs the risk of depriving the powers of the soul of their causal relevance, making it redundant and departing from the Aristotelian claim that powers, at least the higher ones, are active, a view to which medieval authors are attached. What is at stake is the distribution of causal power between power and habitus.

The volume presents five different positions, which shows that this was a highly debated topic. According to the first one, which is the most common, habitus (or, in Ockham’s case, the clusters of habitus and inclinations) function as partial causes of

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27 On this subject, see Spencer (2015b).
28 See p. 247.
29 See p. 229–231.
acts. They have in themselves causal power, and when an act is accomplished this power is exerted concurrently with that of the powers of the soul, in such a way that the act is performed more or less easily, swiftly, etc. Inasmuch as *habitus* have causal power and exert it, they can be called an active principle of the act.

One might want to refine this model and explain the plasticity of faculties working together in the production of an act. On a second view, which is more modular, *habitus* are not partial causes of acts but independent causes of partial acts. Suppose for example that the intellect is to assent to a given proposition. On the first view, the intellect would by itself form the proposition and accomplish an act of assent regarding it. The *habitus* would facilitate this operation, but the operation could occur without it. On the second view, by contrast, the intellect would merely form the proposition and the *habitus* would, by itself and without any contribution from the causal power of the intellect, produce the act of assent to the proposition. As Dominik Perler shows, this is the position of Francisco Suárez: intellect and *habitus* are both seen as qualities of the soul that can be called respectively primary and secondary principles of acts. As Perler puts it, the soul comes to be seen as a network of a myriad producers of different acts or aspects of acts.

Some authors develop a completely different view of the inner workings of the intellect. Habitus in it are active all the time, except when they are obstructed in their activity. More precisely, according to this third view, which is that of Thomas of Sutton, as presented by Jean-Luc Solère, a *habitus* is merely the trace left in a power of an external principle which remains active in it. Nothing in the arrow makes it move in a certain direction: thus, it is not an active principle of its movement, even though it retains in itself the force of the active principle, which is the bow. Similarly, *habitus* do not have in themselves any causal power, but are that which has been left in the soul by the external active principle. This implies that *habitus* are always actively inclining the intellect in a certain direction: indeed, just as an arrow, once it becomes inert, has no capacity to move again if it is not shot again from a bow, so a *habitus*, if it were to stop inclining, could never by itself incline again. Thus, if *habitus* are to be kept in the soul, they must always incline, and the only reason why their corresponding acts are not always realized is because of impediments that prevent the actualization of more than one *habitus* at any given time. As regards the intellect, for instance, an impediment to the consideration of a given intelligible species might be another intelligible species currently being considered, or the will refusing to consider a given species. Conversely, when a given *habitus* is actualized, it is because it corresponds to the phantasm engendered by a current sensory stimulus, or simply because the will wills the intellect to consider this particular species.

Yet other views completely deprive *habitus* of any causal influence in the production of acts. This can be because *habitus* influence only the subject of acts and not the acts themselves. On this fourth view, which is that of Peter Auriol, as put

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31 See idem, p. 367–372.
32 See idem, p. 217–221.
forward by Martin Pickavé, *habitus* have no direct causal role in the accomplish-
ment of the act itself. They do, however, change the circumstances of the act on the
side of the agent. On this view, the ease and pleasure an agent has and feels when
acting derive from the effect of *habitus* on him, and not on his acts. Alternatively,
*habitus* might have simply no causal influence. On this fifth and final view, *habitus*
are merely *sine qua non* causes, such as in the case of what Peter Hartman calls the
Novel Theory of Habitus, as seen above. Though they exert no causal power what-
ever, they must nevertheless be really present in the soul for acts to be accom-
plished in a particular way.

Some of these different views seem to have important implications for the way
in which human nature is understood. The first and second view allow for the
*habitus* in the soul to be seen as parts of a kind of toolbox containing automatic
tools. They do not do anything by themselves, but when the will wants it and cir-
cumstances are appropriate, they can be fired up to improve and accelerate our
acts. Man is in control and can elect, or not, to make use of his *habitus*. The third
view presents an entirely different account: *habitus*, which are not active by them-
selves are always exerting their causality on the soul. Our role, and the role of
circumstances, is merely to determine which of them will, so to speak, emerge
victorious in the race to actualization, or to inhibit their effect by an act of the
will. On this view, we are constantly on the receiving end of countless influences
and all we can do is resist them or and grant privilege to one over the others. This
does not necessarily change anything to our freedom to choose what we want, but
it does entail a different view of our activity and our relationship to the world as a
whole.

1.5 The Growth and Decay of *Habitus*

As we have seen, *habitus* grow in strength as acts are accomplished. *Habitus*, be
they natural or supernatural in origin, can also wane or even disappear if they are not
used for a long time. The strength of a *habitus* can be known on the phenomenal
level through our own acts, which we perceive as easier or harder, and more or less
swift and pleasurable. Authors such as Buridan, according to Jack Zupko, or
Suárez, according to Dominik Perler, insist on the idea that, as regards disposi-
tions, growth can be a transformative process, inasmuch as a weak disposition,
which can be thought of as a weak and unstable *habitus*, grows with each corre-
spoding act until it actually becomes a *habitus*. Thus, acts do not directly produce
*habitus*, but reinforce weak dispositions until they are *habitus* properly speaking,
which are different in nature.

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33 See p. 253–260.
34 See p. 230.
36 See p. 375–379.
On the ontological level, this happens through a process of intension and remission of forms. Like any quality, a *habitus* can be intensified.37 Paradigmatic examples of the intension and remission of forms for medieval authors are intensifying moral qualities, such as God-given charity, whose intensity quite literally determines the moral value of acts. This is why, at the end of the thirteenth century and during the fourteenth century, medieval authors developed ways to conceive the precise measurement of such an intensity. This move is most visible in *Sentences* commentaries, but as Monika Michalowska’s paper innovatively demonstrates, this also happens in fourteenth-century commentaries on the *Nicomachean Ethics* written by the Oxford Calculators.38 Those commentaries not only are interesting for the mathematization of moral philosophy, but also illuminate core concepts of Aristotelian ethics, such as *habitus* and disposition.

Indeed, as Michałowska explains, Richard Kilvington claims that an individual always starts with what he calls a *dispositio*, be it *mala* or *bona*, which inclines him, to a greater or lesser degree, towards vicious or virtuous actions. But such an individual cannot be called virtuous or vicious: only when he has acted can he be said to be virtuous of vicious. A natural *dispositio* is also inalienable, in such a way that even the most vicious person, if he had a natural inclination to virtue, will remain inclined to it throughout his life.

It is also interesting to note, as Michałowska does, that Kilvington thinks *habitus* in the soul do not decrease exactly as qualities in material things.39 Such qualities, he believes, decrease only when exposed to the opposite quality: heat decreases only when a hot thing is exposed to cold. But a *habitus* is not a standard quality: it can decrease even when its opposite is not present, in such a way that a virtue can waste away until what remains is only the natural disposition, without the individual ever having done anything vicious that would cause him to lose that virtue.

### 1.6 The Unity of Habitus

It is hard to determine how *habitus* can be considered as united, single things. A *habitus* can help explain why it is with the same proficiency that a given series of seemingly heterogeneous actions is repeatedly performed by an agent. Is it possible to posit a single proficiency when many actions of many different faculties are accomplished? Learning to play the guitar, for instance, can easily be thought of as

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37 See Jung (2011). See also Sylla (1973), Murdoch and Sylla (1978), Solère (2000), Roques (2016). The two dominant models of interpretation of the intensification and remission of forms are the “succession” theory (a stronger or weaker form succeeds another of the same species at every instant of the intensification or remission) and the “addition” theory (degrees of forms of the same species are added or subtracted to each other at every instant of the intensification or remission). Another model is Aquinas’s, according to which what varies during the change is the degree of participation of the accidental form in the subject. On Aquinas, see Boland (2001).

38 See p. 349–354.

a process of acquisition of the guitar-playing habitus. But playing the guitar is a very complex activity, which involves many acts of different powers: we need our intellect to understand what a guitar is, what is the function of each of its parts, what specific song we want to play, what exactly our fingers must do to play it; we also need our fingers to be able to perform the right moves quickly and exactly; we need our hearing to be able to recognize if we play well or not; and we need our will to command all of these powers to work together towards the same goal.

The same problem can be found at another level, inside a given faculty. When our intellect performs a mathematical demonstration, we form certain premises and derive a conclusion from it. It can be hard to understand how several such demonstrations can be proficiently performed with the same habitus. For instance, demonstrating that a triune God is conceivable and that a certain sin demands a certain penance does not seem to appeal at all to the same notions and reasoning processes. Nonetheless, thirteenth-century theologians usually consider theology to be a single habitus of the soul. At the end of the thirteenth century, as the question of the status of theology as a science became a major point of discussion, the problem became acute, first as regards theology and then science in general.

On this subject, Pascale Bermon shows the historical evolution of the different options chosen by medieval authors regarding the ontological unity of scientific habitus. A habitus can be a single entity in the mind which corresponds to the knowledge of a single discipline (e.g., one can have the habitus of geometry, which facilitates every intellectual operation pertaining to geometry); or there can be an entity in the mind of an individual for every syllogism known by this individual, which allows him to easily and quickly repeat this syllogism in his mind; finally, there can be an entity in the mind for each proposition it knows.

In the late thirteenth century, Aquinas and Henry of Ghent share the view that a habitus corresponds to one discipline, defined by its formal object. For instance, theology has as its formal object what is divinely revealed, whatever that may be. Therefore, any act by which something is known as divinely revealed is an actualization of the habitus of theology. Duns Scotus refines the model and distinguishes two kinds of habitus: one is the “common” habitus, corresponding to a discipline with a formal object, the other is the “proper” habitus, constituting the knowledge of a single proposition. One could say that for Scotus any act of knowing a given proposition reinforces the habitus by which we know it, and all acts of knowing single propositions reinforce the knowledge we have of the discipline to which this proposition belongs. This corresponds to our experience of mathematical knowledge: repeating a single demonstration makes us better able to perform it over and over again but it also increases our mathematical proficiency as a whole. Peter Auriol is rather skeptical about Scotus’s innovation. He examines and takes seriously a great number of criteria, but ends up favouring the view of habitus as corresponding to a discipline. Ockham follows the way opened by Scotus and focuses on “proper” habitus. He develops a radical nominalistic stance and defends the idea that a given habitus is nothing more than the knowledge of a given conclusion; his

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40 See p. 301–319.
position is dealt with in detail just below. Finally, Wodeham comes back to a more moderate position and holds the view that to a habitus there corresponds a syllogism, while Gregory of Rimini is faithful to Ockham and is a staunch proponent of the idea that a habitus is simply the knowledge of a proposition.

A shift clearly occurs with Ockham. His position on scientific habitus is examined in detail by Jenny Pelletier and Magali Roques. Pelletier explains\(^\text{41}\) that his view can be summed up as obeying what she calls a “Principle of Object-Act-Habit-Specification.” According to this principle:

(i) A specific distinction between acts corresponds to a specific distinction between habits and vice versa in case such acts and habits are causally related, and (ii) is determined by a specific distinction between objects, which (iii) is determined by a specific distinction between the subject and predicate terms of these objects.

This basically means that there are as many habitus as there are objects that can be grasped by a given intellect. For instance, knowing the conclusion of a syllogism entails not only having a habitus for each of the premises and one for the conclusion, but also one habitus for each of the terms that make up all of these propositions. This implies that a given science (as a discipline or a given body of knowledge) is not a single habitus in such a way that it could have numerical unity. Ockham claims that it has merely aggregate unity. According to Pelletier,\(^\text{42}\) propositions whose subject terms, predicate terms, or both belong in a given hierarchy (such as the hierarchy which holds between “animal,” which is higher than “bird,” which in turn is higher than “swallow”) are part of the same science.

In her paper, Roques\(^\text{43}\) comes back to the “Principle of Object-Act-Habit-Specification” and examines why Ockham accepts this principle. According to her, Ockham advances only an indispensability argument to defend it: if such a distinction did not hold, then we would have no other criteria to understand how habitus and acts are distinct from each other. The same indispensability argument explains why habitus of a species must be caused by acts of the same species: through efficient causation, the form of the act is transferred to the habitus in such a way that it is of the same species. As Roques puts it: “Efficient causation warrants sameness.”

Tarek Dika’s\(^\text{44}\) paper shows that the debate about the unity of scientific habitus went on at least until Descartes, who provides a highly original solution. In the *Regulae*, Descartes holds that the unity of science is to be found in a certain mode of intentionality, according to which all things appear to us as simple natures or as composed of simple natures, such as shape or extension for material things. Being composed of simple natures is not a trait of the things themselves in virtue of which they could be considered part of the same united set, which would then lend its unity to the science that examines them. On the contrary, this is a property all things have only insofar as they are related to our intellect as it grasps them. For Descartes,

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\(^{41}\) See p. 287–293.

\(^{42}\) See p. 293–297.

\(^{43}\) See idem, p. 278–281.

\(^{44}\) See p. 385–401.
being able to grasp them as such is precisely that to which the *habitus* of science disposes its subject. Basically, then, the *habitus* of science is the same for all of its objects, because it is simply a certain mode of apprehension that can be applied to any object, material as well as spiritual. Its unity, then, comes from its function, not its objects, which are really all possible objects of science. Of course, for Descartes, the problem is not the same as for the medieval scholastics, given that the objects of science are not necessarily propositions or syllogisms. Nonetheless, Dika convincingly shows, contrary to the commonly held interpretation, that the scholastic concept of *habitus* that Descartes inherits is at the heart of his account of science, at least in the *Regulae*.

What applies to scientific *habitus* applies just as well to moral *habitus*. Martin Pickavé, for instance, gives us some staggering numbers: for Peter Auriol, there are “eighteen virtues falling under prudence, twenty-two forms of justice, fifteen of courage, and twenty-five of moderation.” These four main categories are determined according to their formal objects: all forms of moderation for instance, concern “things which attract us excessively.” Such a phrase describes the formal object of moderation, though, as can be seen, having a single formal object does not warrant, for Auriol, an ontological unity of virtues. This is not surprising given his position (indicated above) on scientific *habitus*. From this example, we can conjecture that authors use the same model to account for the unity of all kinds of *habitus*, though this requires further confirmation.

As regards the challenge posed by the number of faculties involved in a single act, the study of moral *habitus* is of particular relevance. Indeed, they are often more complex than intellectual ones, in that, in the medieval view, they frequently unite several powers of the soul in a single purpose: at the very least, to accomplish a morally good act one has to know what good is, and have the desire to act upon this knowledge.

Nicolas Faucher shows that the *habitus* of faith, in the view of Bonaventure, Olivi, and Scotus, requires several kinds of act to be fully actualized: at least one in the intellect, which is the act of believing objects, and one in the will, which is the act by which the will causes the intellectual act of believing. This is necessary both because the act of faith is supposed to be virtuous and free, and thus to involve the will, and because objects of faith are not by themselves evident enough to produce an immediate intellectual assent. But this begs the question: is the *habitus* of faith a *habitus* of the will, of the intellect, or of both? There are, it seems, as many answers as there are authors. For Bonaventure, the *habitus* of faith facilitates every act leading to the ultimate act of believing: the intellectual judgement that objects of faith ought to be believed, the act of the will by which the intellect is commanded to believe, and the act of believing itself. For Olivi, the first act is that of an instinct, while the act of the will and the act of the intellect are of one or several *habitus*. Scotus seems to think that the *habitus* of faith is merely intellectual and causes the intellect to believe as soon as an act of the will produces it in the intellect. It can be

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45 See p. 252.
46 See idem, p. 107–126.
said that the *habitus* of faith, in all the various models that are supposed to explain its role and proper features, is sometimes a unifying *habitus* facilitating the acts of several powers of the soul in order to accomplish the final act of faith to which it disposes the soul, and sometimes a single entity in a single power of the soul.

A similar example is given by Pickavé regarding Peter Auriol.\(^4\) For Auriol, even if the will of a man is inclined to courageous acts, should nothing prevent his passions from impeding his brave acts, he cannot be said to be virtuous. Thus, in order to be properly said to have a moral *habitus*, an individual must have, according to Pickavé’s formulation, a collection of inclinations, all aimed at inclining to or preventing any move against a given type of act. The unity of such a *habitus* is called a “unity of the whole.” The inclinations that make up such a *habitus* reinforce each other in the same way that a given syllogism in one science improves our knowledge of the other syllogisms that are part of it. Should one inclination be lost, the *habitus* in question could not be said to be the same.

This ends our systematic overview of the nature and function of habitus. We will conclude this introduction by examining two major kinds of *habitus*, which were at the core of the medieval discussion, namely intellectual and moral *habitus*.

### 1.7 Intellectual *Habitus*

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, cognition was conceived following an Aristotelian model according to which a cognitive content is produced on the basis of a process of the transmission of a form (or essential structure) from an external object into the intellect. More precisely, when something is perceived, a representation of it, called a phantasm, is impressed on the faculty of imagination. The agent intellect then abstracts from this phantasm the concept of the thing, and this concept is imprinted in the patient intellect. This impression constitutes the act of intellection: the form of a certain intentional content shapes the intellect. Intellectual habitus are central to such a view of cognition. This is why a strong and long-lived interest in their specificity was sparked among medieval thinkers. The main question raised is the following: is the same entity in the soul responsible for both dispositional thinking and occurrent thinking? In other words, are *habitus* responsible merely for the way in which acts of cognition are accomplished, or do they also contain the intentional contents of these acts when they are not currently happening?

For most medieval authors, such as Aquinas and Thomas of Sutton, *habitus* must function as a kind of intellectual storage: for them, an intellectual *habitus* is a species when it is stored in memory, capable of being reactivated at will. If one follows Aristotle, such a reactivation is an immanent, non-productive act.

This model underwent many elaborations. For instance, as Hamid Taib’s paper shows, Aquinas defends the idea that the reactivation of an intelligible species in the

\(^{4}\) See p. 249–253.
intellect so that it is present in it is only the first moment of intellection, the second being a focusing of the intellect’s attention on that species. In his later works, however, Aquinas also thinks that the reactivation of a species can give rise to an act that is not immanent, but productive of what he calls, following Augustine, a word (verbum). This word is that by which something is known distinctly: for instance, one can have the concept of man, but only through the corresponding word can one know that man is a rational animal, in other words, know its definitional properties. A word is present in the intellect only when it is grasped in act, and it is not stored in it afterwards. The capacity to produce a word, however, is part of the intellectual habitus. Thus, according to Taieb, Aquinas holds that intellectual habitus are made up of stored intelligible species and the capacity to produce words from these species. According to this account, then, intellectual habitus are mixed in their function: they are partly constituted by the stored species that serve as a kind of intellectual memory, but they also facilitate operations accomplished on the basis of the species.

This is, of course, not the only possible account of the role of intellectual habitus. Henry of Ghent, as Jean-Luc Solère shows, does not hold that there exist any intelligible species stored in the intellect. Intelligible species are in the intellect only when it actually intelligizes them. But such an intellection occurs only when the agent intellect illuminates a phantasm in the imagination. This illuminated phantasm is then grasped as an object by the patient intellect: this is intellection. Such a view is quite similar to that expressed later by Durand of Saint-Pourçain and Prosper de Reggio Emilia, according to Peter Hartman. Contrary to these authors, however, Henry does think that there are habitus in the intellect, but considers them to be intellectual dispositions towards the acts of the intellect that do not store their objects.

Another feature of intellectual habitus is that they are responsible for the organization of the species when they come to be actualized. Suppose for instance that I have the habitus of botany. This means that I hold in my intellect all or most of the intelligible species without which I could not be said to be a botanist. But these species are not merely piled upon each other in a disorderly manner: they are structured according to the relations that obtain among the botanical species. The order in which species are organized does not always proceed from the same power, for different authors. Thomas of Sutton, for instance, according to Solère, thinks it is the intellect that orders the species, since this requires operations of comparison between species that can be performed only by the intellect. The authors studied by Hartman, however, deny that the intellect could be active in any way in its own acts, and so also reject the idea that it could perform any operation on species.

48 See p. 127–141.
49 See p. 215.
50 See p. 231–239.
52 See p. 237–239.
Rather, the only order to be found is between phantasms in the imagination, and it depends entirely on teaching and chance discovery through trial and error.

### 1.8 Moral Habitus

We come to the last element we will discuss in the introduction: freedom. It can be easy to think the possession of *habitus* infringes on the freedom of the agent. Her actions are characterized by a kind of path-dependence. In economic theory, this notion describes the behaviour of an agent whose preferences are determined in part, all things being equal, by the choices she has made in the past, so that the goods she has chosen before appear more desirable to her than if she had not chosen them previously, even though her reasons for the previous choice might not hold anymore.\(^{53}\) It seems a medieval author could use the notion of *habitus* to account for such a phenomenon: an acquired tendency to choose something that depends exclusively on our past choices. Such a tendency could be seen as diminishing the autonomy of a subject because of actions she has done in the past.

But medieval authors have a different view. For them, having a *habitus* is not to be determined to do one thing rather than another; rather, it is to have certain means at one’s disposal. This of course applies particularly well to intellectual *habitus*. Indeed, having an intellectual *habitus* is simply to have a tool through which one can more easily grasp something or reach conclusions one has attained less easily before. As such, *habitus* can be seen as accelerators of action, but not to the detriment of one’s freedom. Using *habitus* is under the command of the will: it is only when the will has chosen to produce the act that the *habitus* produces its effect on it, making it easier, swifter, etc. Having *habitus* in the will, which most authors think possible, does not change anything in this picture: though an act of the will might be more pleasant and easier, the choice to perform it rather than another is by no means necessary. Of course, the fact that some acts are easier and more pleasant for some people will clearly have an influence on them when they deliberate about what to do, because they will take this fact into account. However, there is no reason to think that this deliberation and the choice that follows will be any less free than if there had been no *habitus*.

On this subject, Aquinas and Scotus occupy a central place, the former because he provides the most extensive effort to make Aristotle’s view compatible with the free will defended by Church doctrine, and the latter because he introduces an innovative new conception of the freedom of the will as a synchronic capacity for opposites. Several papers in the volume are dedicated to their views and investigate whether they could be closer to each other than usually thought.

Olivier Boulnois brings to the fore Aquinas’s innovations with respect to Aristotle’s doctrines.\(^{54}\) In *Nicomachean Ethics* 2.1, Aristotle, according to

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\(^{53}\) See Liebowitz and Margolis (2000).

\(^{54}\) See p. 35–39.
Boulnois, distinguishes the notion of *habitus (hexis)* from the common concept of habit (*ethos*). *Ethos* bears a deterministic connotation: a creature of habit is one who is incapable of shedding its usual behaviours. By contrast, though a *habitus*, like an *ethos*, is a product of the repetition of similar acts, it does not necessarily force us to act. It is an intermediary between power and act, a durable disposition by which we are related to certain acts, through which we have at our disposal the performance of these acts, and that makes them easier and better. *Habitus* opens up new avenues of action, just as a musician, when he practises, becomes better at playing his instrument and can play more difficult pieces at will. Thus, for Aristotle, *habitus*, since they improve our capacity to act, are an essential part of being free, in the sense of being capable of performing a broad range of actions. *Habitus* are also an essential part of our capacity to act morally, for they determine the way in which we accomplish our acts: it is impossible to act justly when one does not have the virtue of justice. Thus, *habitus* make us accountable for our actions. And even though, for Aristotle, they might be strong enough to force us to act in a certain way, it is always up to us to begin acquiring them, and thus to become just or unjust.

Now, this conception of free action is not sufficient for a thinker attached to the theological idea of personal merit, which requires the agent to be able to choose to act viciously when he could have acted virtuously. As Boulnois explains, the need to take into account Augustine’s theory of free will leads Aquinas to emphasize the freedom of the habituated agent: though *habitus* incline us towards acts, it is always in the power of the will to act in accordance with them or against them. Furthermore, *habitus* allow us to act pleasurably and spontaneously when performing certain acts that, without *habitus*, we would have to force ourselves to perform: thus, *habitus* increase our freedom to accomplish such acts.55

Rolf Darge and Can Laurens Löwe56 give us further insight into Aquinas’s view. They sharply distinguish two roles of moral *habitus*. One has to do with goal orientation: *habitus* make something appear good or bad to us according to a certain moral principle. It is through a moral *habitus* that we judge some goal has to be reached—such as being faithful here and now—according to a certain moral principle—that adultery must never be committed. But *habitus* do not merely present a particular goal as having to be reached in the abstract. As Löwe puts it, it has a conative aspect, since it actually inclines us to reach it, meaning that it makes it easier and more pleasurable for us to reach it. The cognitive aspect is not under our control: we see some action as good whether we want it or not. But the conative aspect is such that, although we are inclined to a certain act, actually doing it remains under our control, as we have seen.

In Aquinas’s view, moral *habitus* are primarily attributed to the intellect inasmuch as it acquires moral knowledge, and the will inasmuch as it acquires the tendency to act upon the moral judgement of the intellect. But *habitus* can also be in the sensitive appetites insofar as they can be controlled by the rational powers of

55 On this topic, see Porter (2013).
intellect and will, that is, those powers by which one might act one way or another way. They are entirely determined in their action and thus cannot be inclined, or rather are totally inclined by nature in only one direction. As Juhana Toivanen shows, Olivi disagrees, since for him the senses, both internal and external, can also be habituated in such a way that one’s perceptions become clearer and easier.\footnote{See p. 196–202.} Thus, \textit{habitus} can also be attributed to irrational powers. Nonetheless, Aquinas’s view represents a remarkably ample synthesis that brings together two of Aristotle’s opinions on \textit{habitus}, which might appear to be incompatible with each other: that \textit{habitus} have to do with free choice and that they are nonetheless in irrational powers that are incapable of it.

Löwe departs from this consensus reading and claims that a strong form of “character control” should be attributed to Aquinas.\footnote{See p. 174–182.} For Aquinas, Löwe contends, choices are synchronically contingent: at any given time, whatever our past history, we can choose among alternatives. This position must be attributed to Aquinas, since he accepts that there can be sudden changes in one’s preferences and choices that could hardly be explained otherwise. Thus, on this view, Aquinas believes that our moral character is determined by the myriad choices we make every day. Through each one of them, we progressively reinforce or weaken our \textit{habitus}.

This interpretation is not unanimously agreed upon, but it has the merit of closely connecting, in a new light, Aquinas and Scotus, who are usually presented as sharply opposed to each other. Indeed, as Boulnois and Trego clearly demonstrate, Scotus is firmly attached to the freedom of the will as capable of synchronically contingent choices.\footnote{See p. 39–43 and p. 99–102.}

As this particular view strongly underlines, for medieval authors the will can always go against its own \textit{habitus}. But this does not imply that moral \textit{habitus} become superfluous in making acts virtuous. This is particularly true of infused virtues, which are supernatural \textit{habitus} put in the soul by God. No medieval author thinks that it is possible to act in a truly virtuous manner, deserving of salvation, without these \textit{habitus}.

Are supernatural \textit{habitus} necessary for accomplishing a virtuous action? Or are they needed merely for making virtuous a given action that can be accomplished without them? Faucher uses the example of faith to show that there was a historical evolution in which Scotus occupies a pivotal point.\footnote{See p. 120–124.} While it seems that for authors of the early thirteenth century there could not be any firm, non-evident belief without supernatural faith, from the end of the thirteenth century onwards many authors, following Scotus, contend that such belief can be observed in our daily life regarding objects of any kind, be they facts of history or geography, or objects of faith. Thus, as Scotus affirms, we should posit an acquired \textit{habitus} of faith to account for these observable facts and posit a supernatural \textit{habitus} only when it is absolutely necessary according to dogma. It is necessary only to explain the meritorious character of the act of faith.