

Aquinas on the Sources of Wrongdoing

Themes from McCluskey

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Over the last twenty years or so, philosophers have increasingly recognized the fruitfulness of approaching both the history of philosophy and contested issues in contemporary philosophy by way of an investigation of evil. To take just two examples, Susan Neiman's much-discussed *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy* takes evil as the organizing principle for her historiography of modern philosophy,¹ and Claudia Card explores the notion in a contemporary context in *The Atrocity Paradigm: A Theory of Evil*.² The approach has borne fruit in medieval philosophy as well: a new six-volume history of evil includes *The History of Evil in the Medieval Age: 450–1450 CE*,³ edited by Andrew Pinent, and Bonnie Kent has written on “Evil in Later Medieval Philosophy.”⁴

Colleen McCluskey's *Thomas Aquinas on Moral Wrongdoing*⁵ is a worthy and impressive entry in this literature. McCluskey examines the metaphysical foundations of Aquinas's ethics, his account of evil as a privation, the powers of the soul from which wrongdoing originates, and evil habits, or vices. I shall focus on what I take to be McCluskey's most significant contribution, the three chapters devoted to a careful exploration of the three sources of moral wrongdoing—defects in the

¹ Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002.

² Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. ³ New York: Routledge, 2018.

⁴ *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 45 (2007), 177–205.

⁵ Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

intellect (covered in Chapter 3), defects in the sensory appetite (Chapter 4), and defects in the will (Chapter 5)—and treat the other chapters somewhat briefly.

In Chapter 1, “Metaphysical Foundations,” McCluskey gives an overview of Aquinas’s account of human nature and his theory of human action. She discusses the powers of the soul, including the sensory appetite and its passions, the intellect, and the will. Crucially, she devotes considerable attention to the ways in which the passions can affect the intellect’s judgment and, thereby, the will. For (controversially, though quite correctly in my view) McCluskey insists that “Aquinas argues for a priority of intellect over will in the process of action” (29); on her interpretation, the will has no independent power to shape human action. This interpretation, as McCluskey notes, “raises worries about necessitation in the will” (29). But the will would be necessitated only if the intellect were necessitated, and McCluskey argues that for “much of practical reasoning” (31) there is no necessitation in the intellect on Aquinas’s view. I shall have more to say about this issue when I discuss McCluskey’s account in Chapter 3 of wrongdoing that originates in the intellect.

In Chapter 2, McCluskey explores Aquinas’s account of the ontological status of evil as a privation, “a lack of the goodness that should otherwise be there” (41). At the end of the chapter she acknowledges that “Aquinas’s discussion of wrongdoing does not rest on the privation account in any substantive way” (72), but it is nonetheless illuminating to consider the metaphysics of goodness in Aquinas as a background for his account of moral goodness in particular, and the privation theory is a corollary of that metaphysics of goodness. Everything is good to the extent that it actualizes the potentialities that mark it out as a thing of a particular kind. Nothing can exist at all without actualizing its kind-defining potentialities to some degree, so everything is good to some extent. Evil has no positive reality; it is a deficiency in the actualization of a thing’s potentialities. The human potentialities for moral action, practical intellect and will, are aimed at human flourishing, and so human actions are good to the extent that they lead toward human flourishing, bad to the extent that they lead away from flourishing. As McCluskey puts it, a morally wrong action “lacks the fullness of being that the action ought to have (*ST* I-II.18.1). The privation is located (so to speak)

ultimately in the action's departure from what reason (functioning correctly) dictates is constitutive of or conducive to flourishing" (65).

In a certain sense there is something with positive ontological status that goes into making a bad action bad: "in moral matters something is called 'bad' in a positive sense insofar as the will's act is denominated bad from the object willed, but that bad object can only be willed under the aspect of good" (*De malo* 1.1 ad 12).⁶ So the fact that there is some positive good, or apparent good, willed by the wrongdoer does not mean that wrongdoing itself is a positive reality; the wrongness of a wrong act is the privation of the order of reason in an act. Critics of the privation account who "are looking for a positive account of evil qua evil" (72) will accordingly not find what they want in Aquinas, though other criticisms of the privation theory can be met. McCluskey notes, however, that the privation theory by itself is not enough to "preserve the goodness of God and ensure that God is not responsible for the existence of evil" (49). On McCluskey's account, these theological motivations for the privation theory are not paramount for Aquinas anyway; the privation theory emerges out of his Aristotelian metaphysics of goodness as sketched in the preceding paragraph (45).

As I have said, the centerpiece of *Thomas Aquinas on Wrongdoing* is a careful exploration of Aquinas's understanding of the three sources of moral wrongdoing: defects in the intellect, defects in the sensory appetite, and defects in the will. Here the exposition is particularly acute, textually sensitive, and philosophically adept. It is not easy to make everything Aquinas says about these matters cohere. Indeed, on the face of it, the division looks hopeless. For one thing, every instance of moral wrongdoing has to involve some defect in the will: there is no moral action without willing, and if one's will is not deficient, the willing is not an instance of wrongdoing. For another, every instance of moral wrongdoing likewise has to involve some defect in the intellect, since (again) the will has no independent power to shape human action.

What, then, are we to make of this division? McCluskey gives a helpful overview at the outset, in Chapter 3, "Aquinas's Account of Moral Wrongdoing: General Points and Defects in the Intellect." Although "Aquinas is willing to grant that ignorance plays a role in all forms of

⁶ All translations are mine.

wrongdoing” (84), “the role that knowledge plays in each kind of wrongdoing is importantly different” (85). In sins of ignorance, which derive from a defect in the intellect, the act depends on a simple lack of knowledge. In sins of passion, which derive from a defect in the sensory appetite, “the passions affect one’s access to the knowledge that one possesses” (85). In sins from deliberate wrongdoing (*ex certa malitia*), which derive from a defect in the will, the ignorance is more complex still: “the agent fails to understand that one ought not acquire this particular good because of the evil that necessarily accompanies it” (85).

Because ignorance plays a role in all forms of wrongdoing, McCluskey turns to Aquinas’s account of voluntariness, according to which some, but not all, forms of ignorance are themselves voluntary, so that actions deriving from such ignorance are likewise voluntary and culpable. The discussion is brief, and properly so, since this material is well known (though Aquinas’s puzzling account of concomitant ignorance receives its due). McCluskey then turns to “wrong actions that originate in the intellect,” which Aquinas classifies as “sins of ignorance” (91):

Three conditions must be fulfilled for wrongdoing of this type (*ST* I-II.76.2): the ignorance involved must be of knowledge that one is obligated to obtain (the obligatoriness condition); (2) it must be true of the agent that it is possible for him to acquire the requisite knowledge (the voluntariness condition); and (3) the missing knowledge would have affected what the agent chose to do (the causal condition). (91–2)

The voluntariness condition is the most interesting for McCluskey’s purposes, because it seems to locate the origin of the resulting wrongdoing in the will rather than in the intellect, contrary to Aquinas’s threefold classification. McCluskey asks, “what about the agent who misses a meeting because she is engrossed in her work and fails to notice the entry on her calendar or the time on her clock?” (93) She *could* have remembered the meeting, and it was part of her job that she do so. Her ignorance stems from a negligent failure to consider what she could and should have considered. In *De malo* 1.3, Aquinas attributes such negligence to the will:

Pleasure and everything else in human affairs should be measured and governed in accordance with the rule of reason and of the divine law; accordingly, a disordered choice implies a prior failure on the part of

the will to make use of the rule of reason and of the divine law. Now there is no need to look for some other cause of this failure to make use of the aforementioned rule: the will's very freedom to act or not act is sufficient for it.

McCluskey argues, however, that “the will's activity of use presupposes an activity in the intellect” (94), so “the negligence involved in this case can be traced through the will to a defect in the intellect's judgment, that is, a failure to judge that taking these steps to avoid missing meetings is a good thing to do” (95). Thus wrongdoing attributable to negligent non-consideration does after all stem ultimately from a defect in the intellect.

But is Aquinas right to assimilate all wrongdoing that originates in the intellect to sins of ignorance? What about mistakes of reasoning, McCluskey asks? Here the discussion could have been greatly enriched by considering Aquinas's discussion of the three acts of prudence (*ST* II-II.47.8, with related virtues at II-II.51 and vices at II-II.53–5), which are deliberation (*consilium*: I-II.14), judgment, and command (I-II.17).⁷ Noting that an agent might fail to make dispositional knowledge occurrent (*ST* I-II.74.5, *De malo* 3.9) does not do justice to the intricacies of practical reasoning, the many things that an agent has to get right, and consequently the many ways in which practical reasoning can go awry. It is not clear to me that such an investigation would have changed McCluskey's bottom-line conclusion—that Aquinas does understand mistakes in reasoning as instances (or perhaps causes) of ignorance—but it would certainly have made her account much more thorough and nuanced.

This observation prompts me to make a more general point. *Aquinas on Moral Wrongdoing* is an exceptionally disciplined book. McCluskey keeps tightly to her subject, avoids repeating accounts that she has worked out in detail elsewhere, and declines to get into the weeds of scholarly controversies that don't matter for her project (while giving thorough and spirited attention to those that do). This is all to the good: a lean book is admirable, and far better than a bloated one. But there are certainly places where one might want more. For me, McCluskey's account of errors of practical reasoning is one such place. Her chapter on

⁷ There is a brief discussion of the three acts of prudence in Chapter 6, “The Vices in Aquinas's Moral Psychology.”

the metaphysical foundations of Aquinas's ethics is another: McCluskey herself says there that her "discussion . . . will no doubt feel rather thin" (13). Still, these are matters of judgment, and perhaps McCluskey has come at least very close to the mean between excess and deficiency.

In Chapter 4, McCluskey turns from sins of ignorance to sins of passion—acts of wrongdoing that have their origin in defects of the sensory appetite. One topic that belongs here is incontinence, particularly of the kind that Aquinas calls weakness (*debilitas*), in which "the agent gives in to passion while recognizing the cogency of the intellect's judgment" (108) that the passion should be resisted. She quotes from *De malo* 3.9 ad 7: "Both the continent and the incontinent are moved in two ways: by reason [they are moved] toward avoiding sin, but by desire [they are moved] toward committing it."⁸ According to Aquinas:

both make use of a syllogism with four propositions but arrive at opposite conclusions. The continent person syllogizes as follows: "No sin is to be done"—and he puts forward this premise in accordance with the judgment of reason, but in accordance with the movement of desire his heart is occupied with the thought, "Everything pleasurable is to be pursued." But because the judgment of reason prevails in him, he accepts the first [as his major premise] and derives his conclusion from it: "This is sin; therefore, this is not to be done." In the incontinent person, by contrast, the movement of desire prevails. He accepts the second [as his major premise] and derives his conclusion from it: "This is pleasurable; therefore, this is to be pursued." (*De malo* 3.9 ad 7)

McCluskey rightly comments, "There is, of course, a great puzzle here" (109)—indeed, more than one puzzle, I think. Her puzzle is this: "Why does the judgment of reason prevail in one agent and not in the other?" Her answer is that "Aquinas seems unconcerned about the answer to this question, and perhaps it cannot be answered Ultimately, Aquinas might have to concede that there is no explanation for the difference in

⁸ McCluskey's translation here is mistaken: she has the continent agent being moved in accordance with reason and the incontinent under the influence of concupiscence (109). But Aquinas's point is that both the incontinent and the continent have conflicting motivations; both, as Aquinas goes on to say, possess (in some sense) the proposition "no sin is to be done" as well as the proposition "everything pleasurable is to be pursued." The difference lies in which of these propositions each selects for his practical syllogism. As far as I can see, however, this error does not vitiate her exposition.

choices” (109, 114) between the continent and the incontinent. She quotes Bonnie Kent as saying that agents “have reasons for doing what they did, but not for failing to do what they should have done.”⁹ If I lash out at a colleague because I’m feeling angry, even though I know I shouldn’t behave in such a way, I have a reason for lashing out—in my anger, it seemed good to me to act that way—but no reason for not controlling myself. I could have controlled myself, for I retained the use of my will and intellect; I was not literally out of my mind with anger. I knew, at least dispositionally, that I shouldn’t act that way, but I lashed out nonetheless.

Leaving aside for the moment the issue of dispositional versus occurrent knowledge raised by the previous sentence, I see nothing in this account that is incompatible with Aquinas. That is, I don’t see why Aquinas shouldn’t grant that there is no explanation for the incontinent person’s acting incontinently (and surely, by parity of reasoning, that there is likewise no explanation for the continent person’s acting continently). But it is the sort of conclusion that understandably drives some people to voluntarism. Incontinent actions are blameworthy, and blameworthiness presupposes voluntariness. But (one might argue) if my outburst is truly voluntary, then *I* did it: it was a human action, a product of my intellect and will. To say that I would have acted differently if my reasoning had gone differently suggests, though, that my outburst was something that happened to me (or in me), rather than something I did. Granted, reasoning is something I do just to the extent that I will to think about my alternatives in a particular way; but on Aquinas’s view I will to think about my alternatives in a particular way only in accordance with the intellect’s judgment that I ought to think about them in that way, and it is precisely that kind of judgment for which we are ruling out an explanation. So one might understandably come to think that the only way to secure the conclusion that *I* am responsible for my outburst—that it is something I do—is to ascribe to the will an independent power to shape human action. I willed my outburst, or at least I willed not to entertain the considerations that would have kept me from it.

⁹ Bonnie Kent, “Aquinas and Weakness of Will,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 75 (2007), 70–91, at 89.

Lashing out at my colleague may not be the right sort of example, however, because in a typical case I wouldn't have occurrent knowledge of the right sort of proposition, such as "Anger should be mitigated" or "Colleagues should always be treated with respect." I would act before I had time even to entertain such a thought. Such a case looks more like what Aquinas calls unrestrained or unbridled incontinence (*irrefrenata incontinentia*) (ST II-II.156.1), in which "passion . . . takes the intellect by surprise" (102), rather than *delibitas*, the kind of incontinence that corresponds more closely to weakness of will as we usually talk about it nowadays, and which Aquinas was describing in the passages from *De malo* cited above.¹⁰ *Debilitas* gives rise to the voluntarist worry in just the same way as unrestrained incontinence, and it adds a further puzzle. The "four propositions" account of the practical syllogisms of the continent and the incontinent is very odd. In the standard case of incontinence, the incontinent person "makes use of a syllogism" with four propositions, Aquinas says:

- (1) Sin is not to be done.
- (2) Whatever is pleasurable is to be pursued.
- (3) This is pleasurable.
- (4) This is to be pursued.

Saying that the incontinent person makes use of such a syllogism (or, as at ST I-II.77.2 ad 4, that "the incontinent person's syllogism has four propositions") suggests that the incontinent person has occurrent knowledge of all four, at least at *some* point in his deliberation. But that can't be right. For unless the incontinent person entertains

- (1') This is sin

there would be no reason to entertain (1), any more than some other general proposition unrelated to the situation at hand. (Except for purposes of illustration when doing ethics, I don't entertain "Angry

¹⁰ Crucially, however, Aquinas does not speak of it as weakness of will. Will for Aquinas is basically either on or off: sane people have the use of will and reason, insane people do not. Despite his use of the term *debilitas*, Aquinas does not envision that incontinent people suffer from a lack of will-power (even on a particular occasion, let alone chronically) that continent people enjoy. For him, sinning from *debilitas* is the same thing as sinning from passion. See Kent, "Aquinas and Weakness of Will," 78–81.

people should be mollified with kind words” when there’s no angry person about.) And Aquinas expressly denies that the incontinent person has occurrent knowledge of (1’): “although he does have knowledge regarding the universal, he does not have knowledge regarding the particular, because he takes (*assumit*) his major premise not in accordance with reason but in accordance with desire” (*De malo* 3.9 ad 7). In fact, “passion hinders reason” from entertaining (1) and drawing the appropriate conclusion that the act is not to be done (*STI-II.77.2* ad 4). Hinders, not prevents: it bears repeating that passion prevents the exercise of reason only in those who are insane, and their acts are not voluntary and accordingly not blameworthy. The incontinent has dispositional knowledge of (1), but under the influence of the passion he fails to make that knowledge occurrent, though he retains the power to do so.

These formulations with the Latin gerundive, translated as “to be done” or “to be pursued” and so forth, also involve important ambiguities. “Whatever is pleasurable is to be pursued” (*omne delectabile est prosequendum*) might appear to mean that one ought always to pursue pleasure, but someone entertaining that strong claim would be self-indulgent or intemperate, not incontinent (let alone continent). So it must mean something like “Pleasure is worth pursuing” or “That an action is pleasant counts in favor of performing it.” And the conclusion “This is to be done” need not mean “This is what I ought to do,” or even “This is, all things considered, the best thing for me to do,” but simply “This has some attractive (good) feature that makes it worth doing.” It is often said—I have said it myself—that for Aquinas the will chooses what the intellect judges is *best*; but as McCluskey notes, Aquinas never says this: “agents need not choose what they regard as best, they can choose a lesser good as long as there is something about that alternative that they can describe as good” (111–12).

The most complex sort of wrongdoing is precisely that in which an agent chooses a lesser good, not in ignorance or under the influence of a passion, but knowingly. Such sins have their origin in a defect of the will. Aquinas calls them sins *ex certa malitia*. When she turns to such sins in Chapter 5, McCluskey immediately takes the essential and right step of not translating *malitia* as “malice.” This may sound like a small thing, but a lazy preference for cognates is a bane of scholarship in medieval philosophy, and reading *malitia* as “malice” results in all sorts of

misunderstandings, as indeed McCluskey shows. Malice is “the intention or desire to do evil or cause injury to another person; active ill will or hatred” (OED). Though *malitia* can have that meaning—Cicero defines it in one place as “a cunning and deceitful intention to do harm” (*De natura deorum* 3.75)—in the phrase *ex certa malitia* it is nothing more than the abstract noun from *malus*, “bad,” and thus means “badness.” McCluskey does well, then, to translate *certa malitia* as “deliberate wrongdoing.”

“Deliberate wrongdoing,” she explains, “arises when the agent chooses a lesser good over a greater good and would rather be deprived of the greater good than lose the lesser good” (117). In a sin of passion, the agent chooses something that looks good to him only because the passion colors his judgment; in deliberate wrongdoing, the agent knows he is choosing what is bad in itself, but goes ahead and chooses it anyway. He does not choose it *because* it is bad—Aquinas is quite consistent that we can choose only what appears good to us in some way—but rather for the sake of some other good that he loves more than he loves “the order of reason or of divine law, or God’s charity, or something of that sort” (*ST* I-II.78.1 in corp.). Such choices can spring from a vicious habit, which makes it second nature for someone to “regard what is objectively bad as if it were good and suitable for choice” (123). Aquinas says that all wrongdoing that springs from a vicious habit is deliberate wrongdoing, though there can be deliberate wrongdoing that does not spring from habit.¹¹

Aquinas at least implies (at *ST* I-II.73.6 and 78.3) that deliberate wrongdoing is more serious than sins from ignorance and sins from passion, because “insofar as the agent has become the kind of person who sees what is bad as something desirable, her moral orientation is itself defective” (131):

Someone whose will is inclined to sinning by intending a worse end sins more seriously Causes that diminish the judgment of reason, such as ignorance, or that diminish the free movement of the will, such as weakness, violence, fear, or something of that sort, diminish sin.

(*ST* I-II.73.6 in corp.)

¹¹ McCluskey wrestles astutely with the difficulties posed by Aquinas’s scattered and not altogether consistent remarks about non-habitual deliberate wrongdoing; for the sake of space I will pass by that discussion.

But has Aquinas drawn the category of deliberate wrongdoing too broadly for it to be plausible that sins from deliberate wrongdoing are the most serious? McCluskey offers the example of deciding to eat toaster pastries for breakfast rather than something healthier (135). If I know perfectly well that this is an unhealthy choice but go ahead and make it anyway, I have committed an act of deliberate wrongdoing. But is it really all that serious? Here I think McCluskey is too reluctant to give an unequivocal yes on Aquinas's behalf. For there is something wrong with my will in such a case. I'm not ignorant and I'm not under the sway of passion; my will is simply bent on unhealthy pleasure and does not value health and well-being in the way it should. That, surely, is a very serious matter indeed. We can pity the passionate and instruct the ignorant, but what are we to do with those whose wills are bent on what is, in fact if not in appearance, self-destruction?

Note, however, that the relative seriousness of sins as Aquinas discusses them in *ST I-II.73.6* is a matter of the degree of moral blame we should attach to them.¹² That is, agents are more blameworthy when they sin *ex certa malitia* than when they sin from ignorance or from passion. Moreover, this is a ranking of the blameworthiness of *particular* sins, not of the gravity of *types* of sins. (So one need not say that the deliberate choice of unhealthy breakfast foods is a particularly grave type of sin, though by Aquinas's lights acting out of contempt for bodily health isn't exactly trivial either.) For these reasons the category of deliberate wrongdoing is clearly ill-suited to serve as an account of evil in the sense in which some recent writers distinguish evil from "ordinary garden-variety wrongdoing" (128), and McCluskey argues compellingly against John Langan's reading of Aquinas as attempting (unsuccessfully, in the end) to use the category of sins *ex certa malitia* to explain the "dark and troubling range of moral phenomena . . . among which are malice, hatred of God, envy of others, and attraction to evil itself"¹³ (130).

But she concedes too much, I think, when she says that if Aquinas's moral psychology "cannot distinguish between evil and wrongdoing, that makes his account less plausible" (130). Why would one expect a moral

¹² Bonnie Kent, "Aquinas and Weakness of Will," 74–5, is very good on this point.

¹³ John Langan, "Sins of Malice in the Moral Psychology of Thomas Aquinas," in D. M. Yeager (ed.), *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1987), 179–98, at 180.

psychology—an account of the psychological faculties, mechanisms, and processes that produce voluntary action—to provide a distinction between ordinary wrongdoing and particularly heinous wrongdoing? That seems like a task for a theory of value, perhaps an account of the human good. Moreover, the contrast between evil and wrongdoing in the contemporary discussion seems to be a distinction in search of a rationale: Is the distinction quantitative or qualitative? Are evils particular kinds of harms, or harms perpetrated from particular kinds of motives? The distinction is too nebulous for me to worry much about whether Aquinas has the resources to make it. But McCluskey is not as cavalier as I am about entering the contemporary discussion on Aquinas's behalf, and she notes various ways in which Aquinas can “distinguish between varying degrees of severity among immoral actions,” though in the end she concedes that she has not provided a way “to distinguish evil from ordinary wrongdoing and to determine what would make an action an instance of evil as opposed to something less grave” (134).

In her final chapter McCluskey examines vices, which are habits—more or less firmly rooted dispositions acquired by repeated action—that prompt (but do not necessitate) particular acts of wrongdoing. She provides a helpful overview of Aquinas's treatment of the vices both in *ST II-II*, where the vices are discussed in relation to the virtues to which they are opposed, and in the contemporaneous *De malo*, questions 9–15, in which Gregory the Great's list of seven capital vices provides the structuring principle. What Aquinas says about the vices seems to stand in tension with his claim that all wrongdoing stemming from habit is deliberate wrongdoing, which derives from defects in the will. The problem is easy enough to see: there are vices in the intellect (such as undue haste in deliberation: *praecipitatio* or *temeritas*) and vices in the sensory appetite (such as gluttony in the concupiscible part and excessive daring in the irascible part). So doesn't wrongdoing that stems from a vice in the intellect or the sensory appetite derive from a defect in those powers rather than from a defect in the will?

In the case of intellectual vices, there is an easy solution available. One cannot possess the intellectual virtue of prudence without a correct orientation of the will, and so “a defect in the will (a disordered orientation to the good) gives rise to a vicious habit in the intellect” (173). In the case of vices located in the sensory appetite, however, the story is

more complicated. McCluskey appeals to the fact that although passions are located in the sensory appetite, there are analogues to passions in the intellectual appetite or will. And “whatever stimulates delight in the sensory appetite can also stimulate a concurrent state in the will, a state Aquinas identifies as joy (*gaudium*) rather than delight (*delectatio*)” (172).¹⁴ So over time a vice in the sensory appetite can lead to an analogous vice in the will: “The agent’s character is now deformed with respect to this particular passion The vice might originate in the sensory appetite, but once it involves concomitant habituation in the will, the resulting wrongdoing is no longer a sin of the passions but rather a case of deliberate wrongdoing” (173). But Aquinas doesn’t say that delight in the sensory appetite *must* produce joy in the will, only that it *can*; and he certainly doesn’t say that vices in the sensory appetite must be accompanied by (or even eventually lead to) corresponding vices in the will. So this way of saving the claim that all wrongdoing stemming from habit counts as deliberate wrongdoing, and therefore as wrongdoing that derives from a defect in the will, seems to fail.

I am inclined to think that nothing much hinges on whether Aquinas can make good on the claim that all wrongdoing stemming from habit is sin *ex certa malitia* and therefore derives from a defect in the will. The threefold division of wrongdoing into sins of passion, sins of ignorance, and sins *ex certa malitia* obviously serves a useful purpose, as McCluskey’s work amply shows. But in the end Aquinas’s moral psychology is too complex to permit the distinction to be entirely clean and without ragged edges. All sins will involve ignorance in some way; all sins will involve some disorder, whether transitory or more firmly rooted, in the will. Many sins (not all, but many) will involve passions that affect either our judgments or our orientation to the good or both. The threefold distinction has provided a framework in which McCluskey astutely examines and defends Aquinas’s complex account of wrongdoing; and that is all that we, or Aquinas, could reasonably expect of it.

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¹⁴ This is not quite right, since in the very same sentence Aquinas refers to this analogue to passion as “rational delight” (*delectatio rationis*), but the regimentation of Aquinas’s vocabulary is welcome.

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