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BY

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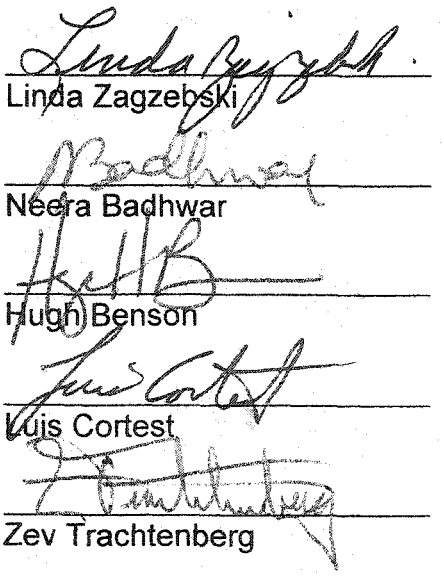
A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

BY



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Introduction

J. B. Schneewind, in his monumental and fascinating work *The Invention of Autonomy* (*IA*), contends that the notion of self-governance did not appear in moral theory prior to the modern period. For Schneewind, "self-governance" refers to the ability to reason out for oneself what ought to be done and to initiate the performance of such action. I disagree with his account of the origin and place of self-governance in the history of moral philosophy. He locates the initial development of the notion in the modern period of philosophy maintaining that previous moral theories were conceived primarily in terms of obedience. In these moralities of obedience the average person is thought to be incapable of governing her life, and consequently morality for her consists in obedience to some authority. I believe that Thomas Aquinas had a fully realized conception of self-governance, and that his conception was not subordinate to some overarching notion of obedience. Rather, his idea of self-governance forms a central component in his overall ethical outlook. I agree that the modern ethicists were reacting to an obedience conception of morality, but this obedience conception was not prominent until after Aquinas.

Schneewind makes clear that his motive for writing *IA* is not purely historical but that he wishes to emphasize the contemporary relevance of the ideas at stake.

> I planned from the beginning to make Kant the focal point of this study because I thought, as I still do, that his conception of morality as autonomy provides a better place to start working out a contemporary

> philosophical understanding than anything we can get from other past philosophers.[1]

I agree with Schneewind that contemporary moral theories can be enriched through close attention to particular historical accounts. However, I disagree with his insistence that the modern period and Kant should be the starting point. I believe that there is a rich pre-modern tradition of thought about self-governance and related notions, and that Aquinas' view provides advantages to us that Kant's understanding does not. My practical aim for treating a pre-modern understanding of self-governance is to show its advantages for contemporary ethics and social thought.

I begin with an overview of Schneewind's project, highlighting issues I wish to challenge. I proceed to offer an overview of the pre-Thomistic history of self-governance. In this overview I emphasize the importance of clarifying various historical conceptions of the person or self, for I maintain that in identifying notions of self-governance, it is helpful first to understand the self that is governing. My proposal is that at least beginning with Socrates, when conflicts over what constitutes the true self and paths to *eudaimonia* erupt, there occur sustained discussions on the nature and role of self-governance. I proceed to follow this thread of self and self-governance up to the time of Aquinas in the work of Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, and Augustine.

I then develop an interpretation of Aquinas' moral theory that shows the centrality of self-governance in his moral philosophy. I initially treat his anthropological and psychological notions with the aims of addressing his

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[1] Schneewind, p. xiv.

notion of the self and showing how self-governance is possible in and shaped by his moral psychology. Having established that a person is psychologically capable of directing or governing his life, I turn to the distinct issue of each person's right to govern himself, for included in Schneewind's interpretation of the pre-moderns is the idea that most individuals do not have a legitimate claim to govern themselves. Here I focus on Aquinas' concept of *prudentia*. I end my interpretation of Aquinas with an analysis of the proper role of obedience in his theory.

I believe Schneewind is right to think that modern moral philosophers were formulating theories of self-governance in response to theories whose overriding concept was obedience. However, he mistakenly characterizes all of pre-modern moral philosophy as obedience-based. I maintain that the obedience tradition originated in the late-medieval period after Aquinas. My dissertation concludes with a defense of my general view concerning these shifts in emphasis and formulation of ethical theory during the medieval and early modern period. Schneewind is correct that self-governance should be given a privileged position in contemporary moral theory, but he is incorrect in thinking that the work of Kant should be the focus in seeking an understanding of the nature of self-governance.

Chapter 1: Schneewind's Analysis

1.1: The Value of Self-Governance

Intuitively, it seems that a basic desire we have as human persons is to have the ability and authority to direct our own lives as we see fit in some substantial way. Part of what makes life worth living is the ability to place one's own stamp on life through the exercise of one's own capacities of self-direction. To paraphrase Socrates, the un-self-governed life is not worth living. Accordingly, a philosophical theory seeking to explain and justify principles and methods pertaining to human behavior should include the role of self-governance. Furthermore, the viability of such a moral theory for contemporary ethics seems to hinge on the inclusion of a positive and central role for self-governance.

In light of the importance of self-governance sensed by our intuitions and confirmed through our experience, we must endeavor to provide the best possible account of its nature and role. Historical analyses of this issue furnish vast conceptual resources for accomplishing the task of articulating and defending a robust conception of self-governance suited for our present situation. Additionally, given that our current theories employ ideas which have been handed down to us from earlier times, it is prudent, if not necessary, to examine the original theories and respective contexts to best understand the ideas in question. We turn to the intellectual past to help render an acceptable account for the present.

I.2: Schneewind's Account

i. Obedience versus Self-Governance

"Kant invented the conception of morality as autonomy."[2] With this bold assertion, Schneewind begins his ambitious study of modern moral philosophy, and for the reasons already mentioned, Kant is the focal point of the study. Schneewind interprets Kant's moral theory as a proposed solution to a large set of issues, concepts, and problems that arose in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Social, political, religious, and other upheavals and changes occurring in the transition from late medieval to the modern period of Europe triggered the reconceptualization of moral theory. Various reconceptualizations and reformulations prompted many thinkers, including Kant, to "invent" new methods and concepts to best account for the changes. *The Invention of Autonomy* closely examines the two hundred year span of social change and accompanying thought preceding Kant in order to clarify the surfacing set of issues, concepts, and problems that Kant's moral theory seeks to address.

Schneewind begins his study by calling attention to the older (pre-modern) conceptions of morality. He mentions without challenge the prevailing view of medieval moral philosophy that revolves around obedience to God as the central tenet.

> On the older conception, morality is to be understood most deeply as one aspect of the obedience we owe to God. In addition, most of us are in a moral position in which we must obey other human beings. God's authority over all of us is made known to us by reason as well as by revelation and the clergy. But we are not all equally able to see for

[2] Schneewind, p. 3.

> ourselves what morality requires. Even if everyone has the most fundamental laws of morality written in their hearts or consciences, most people need to be instructed by some appropriate authority about what is morally required in particular cases. And because most people usually do not understand the reasons for doing what morality directs, threats of punishment as well as offers of reward are necessary in order to assure sufficient compliance to bring about moral order.[3]

Against this backdrop, the story of modern moral philosophy is the gradual whittling away at the obedience conception in favor of a conception of morality as self-governance.

> The new outlook that emerged by the end of the eighteenth century centered on the belief that all normal individuals are equally able to live together in a morality of self-governance. All of us, on this view, have an equal ability to see for ourselves what morality calls for and are in principle equally able to move ourselves to act accordingly, regardless of threats and rewards from others.[4]

Schneewind contends that the conception of morality as obedience was the only viable option for theorists until the thought of Machiavelli and Montaigne. Moreover, it was not until the early eighteenth century that a self-conscious attempt to create a moral theory centered on self-governance began. On this interpretation, in the early modern period, but before the eighteenth century, thinkers sought to integrate self-governance into the dominant obedience conceptions of morality. At the onset of the eighteenth century, a new project began that sought to reformulate the underlying moral framework in order to eliminate the basis of obedience altogether in favor of self-governance.

The reconceived self-governance conception entailed that each normal person has sufficient moral knowledge to understand what to do and a

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[3] Schneewind, p. 4.
[4] Schneewind, p. 4.

sufficient motivational capacity to be able to do it without the assistance or interference of others. Working within this context, Kant invents the concept of autonomy in the strong sense of the term. By autonomy Kant means that human beings themselves legislate to themselves the moral law by the action of the rational will.

ii. Locating Historical Shifts

In the course of my dissertation, I am going to dispute many of Schneewind's contentions in detail. However, at this point, I wish to paint a broad-stroke picture of what I think is wrong with his overview, as well as the main lines of his position that I think are generally correct. Schneewind is right to interpret modern moral philosophers as understanding themselves to be reacting to an obedience-based conception of morality and in turn offering a "new" formulation of morality based on self-governance. Where he is mistaken is in his location of the period where the obedience conception was dominant.

What I propose is that the dominant ethical tradition from the Greeks to at least Aquinas prized self-governance as one of the key elements in an adequate moral theory. Towards the end of the medieval period and on in to the early modern period, the dominant moral theory found in the writings of the most influential thinkers was some form of divine command theory, which did center on obedience as the basic ethical concept, at least relative to the moral agent. During this period, even scholars who understood themselves to be following in the footsteps of Aquinas proffered theories and

interpretations of Aquinas that emphasized obedience at the expense of self-governance.

So, Schneewind rightly senses a revolution of sorts in moral theory occurring in the modern period, but where he errs is in missing the initial revolution that occurred in the midst of the medieval period. The invention of autonomy and self-governance was in part a reinvention of the ancient Greek moral tradition continued by Aquinas and other medieval thinkers. I believe that Schneewind's complete preclusion of the ancient Greek moral tradition is further evidence that he misses this initial shift in moral theory, for Aquinas and other medieval thinkers conceived various elements of their ethical theories in terms of the moral precedent set by the Greek tradition.

I wish, then, to take issue primarily with Schneewind's interpretation of Aquinas' moral theory and neglect of the Greek moral tradition that hinders his interpretation of Aquinas. I am leaving aside many important elements of his massive study with which I have no quarrel. In my following overview of Schneewind's *IA* I will focus on his interpretation of Aquinas' moral theory, the rise of modern natural law moral theory, and finally Kant's moral theory.

iii. Aquinas

An important thread that runs throughout Schneewind's analysis is the impact on a moral theory from the way God's relationship to the moral life is construed. Throughout this period there were two basic approaches to keeping God essential to morality (which was a priority for most of the

theorists). Using the standard terminology, Schneewind refers to the two approaches as "voluntarism" and "intellectualism."

> Voluntarists hold that God created morality and imposed it upon us by an arbitrary fiat of his will. He is essential to morality, therefore, because he created it and can always, in principle, alter it...On the other approach, often called "intellectualism," God did not create morality. When he gives us moral commandments, his will is guided by his intellect's knowledge of eternal standards.[5]

The twist and turns of how God is related to morality affected a good number of thinkers in this period, including Kant. The first main figure in Schneewind's narrative is Aquinas, and part of what is noteworthy about Aquinas' theory is its intellectualism.

Schneewind's interpretation of Aquinas' moral theory centers on the latter's notion of natural law. For Aquinas, human beings have a proper mode of operation and conduct that is defined by the law directing us to our divinely ordained end. God promulgates to us this law. For the intellectualist Aquinas, God's reason contains the eternal standard (the law) by which to guide human nature to its end, and therefore, the law is unchangeable. The key issue is our epistemic access to this law. Explaining Aquinas' stance, Schneewind states,

> We can know the laws because seeds of them are naturally implanted in the part of the conscience that Thomas calls the *synteresis* (*sic.*). But although everyone has some grasp of the most basic law, not everyone has the same ability to become fully aware, without assistance, of what follows from it. "The truth," as Thomas says, "is the same for all, but it is not equally known to all." There are two reasons for this inequality. One is the sinful nature we inherited from Adam...Another is that some of the conclusions to be drawn from the

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[5] Schneewind, p. 9.

> laws of nature require so much consideration of circumstance that "not all are able to do this carefully, but only those who are wise."[6]

Essentially, on Schneewind's interpretation most human beings do not even have the capacities necessary to govern themselves, which is one reason why they find themselves in a position of moral obedience owed to some authority.

Schneewind considers Aquinas' interpretation of St. Paul's teaching in Romans 2: 14-15, which seems to hint at self-governance. Paul's passage reads as follows.

> For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves. Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.

Schneewind contends that Aquinas understands this passage in such a way as to preclude the possibility of self-governance.

> [Paul's dictum] does not say that we rule ourselves [according to Aquinas]. "[P]roperly speaking," Thomas says, "none imposes a law on his own actions." Through our awareness of the laws of nature, however imperfect, we participate in God's eternal law. But St. Paul means that the law is within us not only "as in one who rules, but also...as in one that is ruled."

Even though Aquinas affirms in this passage that the law is in us as "one who rules," Schneewind concludes on the basis of the last clause that for Aquinas, "Our participation in the eternal law shows that we are not self-governed. We are governed by another."[7] He interprets Aquinas' stance to include two key features that preclude realizable self-governance. The first is that we lack the

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[6] Schneewind, pp. 20-21.
[7] Schneewind, p. 21.

capacities necessary to govern ourselves. Furthermore, we lack the right to govern ourselves. This is the logical consequence of the idea, at least on Schneewind's interpretation, that only God has the right to govern us with the law He has ordained for our nature.

Evident in this analysis of Aquinas is Schneewind's underlying complex notion of self-governance. In the course of *IA*, Schneewind relies on an understanding of self-governance as comprised of three main components. In his interpretation of Aquinas, he makes distinct points about each of these aspects of self-governance. While he does not clearly specify these conditions, I think it is important to identify them since these conditions and constituents of self-governance recur throughout his analysis and play a significant role in my own argument.

Schneewind's basic distinction is between a person's psychological capacities and a person's proper authority or right to exercise those capacities, or in the case of his interpretation of Aquinas, a person's lack of authority in that only God can properly govern. This separation is common in the related literature.[8] Schneewind divides the psychological conditions into two: the epistemic and motivational requirements. There are, then, three conditions for self-governance according to Schneewind. Each constitutes a necessary condition for a minimally acceptable account of self-governance, but jointly they make up a sufficient condition.

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[8] Christman. See especially Christman's "Introduction," and Joel Feinberg's "Autonomy."

Epistemic Requirement: Self-governance presupposes that a person possesses the capacity for the awareness of moral standards in order to know how to govern her conduct.

Motivational Requirement: Self-governance entails the ability to initiate action based on internal sources of motivation, and not to be moved merely out of fear of punishment, promise of reward, or other such external motivational sources.

Authority/Right Requirement: Whether a person has the psychological capacities necessary for self-governance, no person is self-governing in Schneewind's sense unless he has the proper authority to exercise those capacities. An acceptable account of self-governance includes a person's right or proper authority to exercise self-governance.

On Schneewind's interpretation, then, Aquinas' moral theory lacks realizable self-governance in that the vast majority of people lack the psychological capacities necessary for self-governance, and all people lack the appropriate moral authority to self-govern in that we are governed exclusively by God.

iv. The Rise of New Natural Law Theory

After his interpretation of Aquinas, Schneewind proceeds to give an account of the rise of what he calls the new natural law theory. In the final chapter I will explain and defend in detail my interpretation concerning the shift in the medieval period from a self-governance dominated conception of morality to a an obedience-based divine command theory. However, some general contours of this shift can be detected in Schneewind's own account, though he doesn't seem to realize their implications. The changes he discusses are those concerning the transition from intellectualism in ethics to voluntarism. He tracks the adaptations through Scotus, Ockham, Luther, and

Calvin, after which he treats Suarez's theory of law and obligation at some length.

Suarez developed his own theory in large part through commentary on Aquinas' work, most notably on law. Aquinas understands the nature of law to be first and foremost a dictate of reason. Suarez reformulates to some extent Aquinas' concept of law/natural law. For Suarez the natural law is in part something ordained by God for the good of human beings, as it is in Aquinas, but he also forcefully stresses the preceptive function of the law and that from which the force of the law is derived. "Law, unlike advice or counsel, must involve the command of a superior."[9] This command issues from God's will. In effect, then, God's will is the source of moral obligation.

Hugo Grotius goes a few steps further and reconceives natural law in such a way as to sever the link between it and the human good, i.e. the good in the sense of an ordained *telos* of human nature. He believes a law resting solely on naturalistic (non-theistic) assumptions provides the only hope of employing the law to resolve actual disputes, especially international disputes. Instead of justifying the natural law by appealing to a divine lawgiver or a final end, Grotius appeals to the facts of human nature that any person has access to by empirical means. Schneewind terms Grotius' conception of human nature the "Grotian problematic," which is compactly characterized in the following passage.

> We are self-preserving and quarrelsome beings; but we are also sociable. These two aspects of human nature make the problem of maintaining the social order quite definite: how are quarrelsome but

[9] Schneewind, p. 59.

> socially minded beings like ourselves to live together? What limits must we place on our tendency to controversy in order to satisfy our sociable desires? Grotius's central thought is that the laws of nature are empirically discoverable directives that show us how to solve this problem.[10]

Grotius' reformulation of the natural law promised to be more serviceable to the emerging and ongoing social changes than the old formulation based on natural teleology and a divine lawgiver. This new empirical natural law structure was widely influential, yet it was also thought to lack an adequate account of obligation. In Hobbes, we find the Grotian problematic pushed to the extreme with a brazen emphasis on human selfishness, but with an accompanying strong account of obligation accounted for through psychological necessity or self-interested prudence. The following passage from Schneewind offers both a good illustration of the changing models of natural law and a helpful exposition of Hobbes' theory of obligation.

> There are some differences between Hobbes's use of the idea that a command is necessary in order to make laws out of mere theorems of prudence and Suarez's use. Hobbes does not use God's command, as Suarez does, to explain how natural law obligates or creates "a moral impulse to action" (*De Legibus* II. VI. 22). The Suarezian moral impulse may be the impulse to righteousness, or to compliance with law as such, but that, as I have noted, is absent from Hobbes's theory. Hobbes agrees instead with Grotius in thinking that reason teaches us directives whose obligatory force does not depend on God. If command is needed for law, it is unnecessary for obligation.

The obligatory force trickles up from each person's contractual agreement.

> The sovereign must be able to order his commonwealth simply by uttering commands, thereby transmitting the strength of each subject's general contractual obedience to the specific laws needed in daily life.[11]

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[10] Schneewind, p. 72.
[11] Schneewind, pp. 96-97.

Proponents of the new natural law theory can not be said to have welcomed Hobbes' contribution to it. Generally, Hobbes' assumptions about human nature were considered unpalatable and inaccurate. His account of God was labeled heretical. Finally, key figures such as Cumberland, Pufendorf, and Locke were skeptical about Hobbes' account of obligation itself. They did not believe his account sufficiently justified the binding force of obligation. As a result, these natural lawyers would reintegrate God's will into their theories in order to justify a person's obligation to obey the law.

For instance, Pufendorf accepts the Grotian problematic but is unsatisfied with both Grotius' and Hobbes' account of obligation. Consequently, his own theory of natural law shares many of Grotius' assumptions about human nature and the essential conflict-resolving aim of Grotius' account. Nevertheless, he adds to the basic Grotian schema in order to account for and justify the concepts of law and obligation. To do this, he introduces the notion of "moral entities." The nature of these moral entities is largely beside the point. What is relevant is the function they play in his moral theory. Morality is based on these entities. However, these entities are things imposed on human beings by God's will. So in effect, morality and the obligation to follow its precepts arise from the command of God's will.

Schneewind introduces Locke as consciously working within the Cumberland and Pufendorfian formulations of natural law. Locke's own account of natural law is an attempt to expand on the main ideas in these formulations, which in turn places him in the Grotian tradition.

> It is better to take [Locke] to be working with the modern natural law framework than to be using a Thomistic view. His description of the state of nature is Grotian without being Hobbesian. Grotian sociability as well as need draw us together...At the same time there is enough discord to drive us to seek a ruler as a remedy...Controversies among sociable beings seem therefore to set the problem that gives law its utility. Law directs rational free agents to their own interests.[12]

Locke affirms the empirical epistemic access to the law, but he believes that most people are incapable of understanding the law in this way, so they cannot see for themselves what ought to be done. Hence, morality for them consists primarily of obedience to those who do understand the law. The law itself, moreover, arises from God's will.

The last main figure in the natural law story, Christian Thomasius, initiates the theoretical transformation from obedience-based to self-governance-based conceptions of morality. In Schneewind's words, the integration of self-governance into moral theory becomes self-conscious at this point. Thomasius wants to eliminate the obedience conception altogether, and instead formulate morality (in this case natural law theory) in terms of self-governance. He begins this transformation by reconceiving the relationship between God and humanity with respect to law and obligation.

> Thomasius abandons the thesis that God enforces his will by threats of punishment. A wise God is a teacher rather than lawgiver...[Due to God's nature as teacher] the standard natural law distinction between advising or counseling and obligating must also be revised. To obligate someone, the legislator must have the power to make it necessary, by threat, for someone to do what the obligator wants. Thomasius retains the natural law distinction between what a teacher does in counseling and what a superior does in issuing a command. But he no longer says that what a commanding superior does is to obligate. A superior rules. And he almost says that God's directives are to be taken as counseling. God is a father, and "a father's

[12] Schneewind, p. 143.

> directions are more Counsels than Rules" (*Fundamenta* I.5.41). God directs us to our good, and we can understand what that is. In terms of the standard distinction, Thomasius is saying that it is up to us to take or reject God's directives. Obedience is not our primary relation to him.[13]

With Thomasius, on Schneewind's interpretation, morality ceases to be obedience-based, or at least a new strand in ethical theory begins that is not based in obedience. This sets in motion the conscious attempts to reconceive morality fundamentally in terms of self-governance, but not in terms of autonomy.

> Clarke tried to move beyond the contingencies of desire by tying motivation directly to immediate awareness of the laws of morality. Price and Reid follow him in holding that everyone equally can know what morality requires and thus have some psychologically moving reason for acting properly. They do not, however, think that we give ourselves the laws of the morality we are to follow. Even if we need neither outside instruction not outside motivation, our moral knowledge is knowledge of an order independent of us, and our psychology enables us to bring ourselves into conformity with it. We are self-governing, for these thinkers, but not autonomous.[14]

Schneewind understands that the actual historical movements in moral theory shift from obedience-based conceptions, to theories of self-governance, and then with Kant we find a theory that is rooted in autonomy, which, again, includes self-governance. Prior to Kant, theories of self-governance included accounts of how people can know what morality requires, how it is that people can motivate themselves to action through some internal source of motivation, and why it is that people should be allowed to exercise these capacities. However, according to Schneewind, none of these theories included the idea that it is the rational will itself that

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[13] Schneewind, pp. 161-162.
[14] Schneewind, pp. 513-514.

legislates or makes the moral law, which is what automony specifically refers to. That is why Schneewind labels pre-Kantian theories as self-governance-based, but not properly autonomous. It is up to Kant to invent the concept of autonomy.

v. Kant

Kant's invention of autonomy can be understood as a response to several issues, puzzles, and inadequacies he found in preceding moral theories. Kant was deeply influenced by some of the modern natural lawyers, especially their empirical human psychology.

> Kant's view of the facts of human psychology ally him with the empiricists; and it is thus not surprising that the empiricist natural lawyers should have provided him with what he took to be the central problem concerning human sociability. He did not accept their solution; but he thought they were essentially right in seeing the issue of social conflict as the first problem for which morality had to be suited. The natural law theorists thought only a morality built around a specific concept of law and obligation would be serviceable. They ran into difficulties in explaining their concepts. Kant meant his own theory to clear up the difficulties.[15]

The empiricists' inclusion of God's commands as the source of law and obligation was unacceptable to Kant. He thought such a source of obligation would create a heteronomous motivation on the part of the rational agent. Heteronomy literally means being ruled or governed by another. Citing God's will as the source of obligation and thereby the reason to obey the moral law entails that the agent who obeys is simply submitting to the will of another being, thereby forfeiting self-rule in favor of rule by another. Heteronomy struck at the very heart of self-governance and had to be eliminated. Also, a

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[15] Schneewind, p. 518.

Hobbesian notion of law and obligation resulting from self-interested prudence was unserviceable in that it did not do justice to what Kant thought was the absolute character of obligation.

Kant's solution was to invent the concept of autonomy. By having each person's rational will itself legislate the moral law, Kant believed he was able to preserve both a strong conception of law and an account of obligation that was compatible with self-governance. Within Kant's theory, it is the fact of autonomy that creates the possibility for self-governance. It accomplishes this task by securing the independence of each person from the authority of any other person or institution. In other words, no moral obedience is owed to any other person by the mature rational agent.

The will's legislative ability also eliminates the natural lawyers' need of God's will to legislate the law. Once the source of the law is internalized to the agent himself, the obligation to obey the law is internalized to one's own rational will. In submitting to the moral law, the agent is not submitting to the will of another being, but rather he is submitting to himself-his own will. In sum, for Kant, we can govern ourselves because and only because we are autonomous.

The three conditions for full self-governance are met for Kant. In self-legislating the moral law, a person has full epistemic access to the law, i.e., she knows what she is to do. The motivational requirement is met through Kant's notion of the motive of duty or respect of the law. Finally, each person

has a right to exercise self-governance in virtue of the absolute value of his rational nature, which itself is partly defined by the will's legislative function.

Chapter 2: Pre-Thomistic Tradition

2.1: Introduction

Other writers have noted that self-governance has roots in the pre-modern era. For instance, consider the claims made by Christman in his introduction to a work devoted to contemporary issues in self-governance.

> Ideas and theories that make crucial use of the notion of autonomy, or what amount to close variations on that theme, are ubiquitous in the history of Western moral and political philosophy. Plato's view of the ruling part of the soul which represents the highest self-the purely intellectual part of the person poised to act on the basis of ideas alone-begins one strand in the concept. This was picked up and expanded by Augustine, in his insistence that the truly free person is guided only by the rational part of the soul. The Stoics, especially Epictetus, echo another major theme in their ideal of the truly free person as one moved only by rational desires, free of "lower impulses and unfulfillable wishes.[16]

I believe Christman is right to call attention to elements within this early tradition of moral thought as relevant to the notion of autonomy. However, perhaps due to its sweeping range, I do not think his points are quite accurate, at least, I do not think they pertain to the notion of self-governance as outlined by Schneewind, and accepted by me. This chapter will be devoted to treating some key figures and their accounts of self-governance, in the history of moral philosophy leading to Aquinas, namely, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, and Augustine. I hope to accomplish two aims in this chapter. I wish to bolster my contention against Schneewind that the notion of self-governance was present in and key to pre-modern moral theories. The second aim mirrors Schneewind's approach to Kant's moral theory in *IA*. By attending to the significant developments in the moral tradition prior to

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[16] Christman , p. 4.

Aquinas, I should be in a better position to explain why Aquinas construed his theory the way he did, what his theory seeks to accomplish, and how his overall approach might help us to work out a viable moral theory for our own time.

In the course of my analysis I will recurrently touch upon and address certain issues. The distinct elements that go into Schneewind's account of self-governance will be at the forefront of these recurring concerns. The first cluster of issues concern the psychological conditions requisite for governing oneself: the epistemic and motivational capacities. The former constitutes a person's epistemic access to the moral law or whatever standard is thought to rightly guide one's actions. The latter is comprised by a person's ability to bring herself to perform an action without some external threat of punishment or promise of reward. The other issue pertains to a person's right to govern herself. This is to say that even if one met the psychological requirements necessary for self-governance, there is still the question whether she has a just claim to exercise these capacities. Within the Greek tradition, there is a largely homogenous stance on this last issue.

The general stance pertains to their tight correlation between the psychological capacities relevant to self-governance and the proper authority to exercise those capacities. For the Greeks, the authority requirement is simply reducible to the satisfaction of the epistemic and motivational conditions. If a person has the requisite moral knowledge and the ability to initiate action through some internal source of motivation, then it follows that

she has the proper authority to exercise those abilities through self-governance. In other words, what confers the authority to exercise self-governance is the possession of the necessary psychological capacities. All of the philosophers to be considered in this tradition affirm this basic schema in some form.

Conversely, because the possession of the relevant psychological capacities bestows the proper authority to exercise self-governance, if a person were to lack any or all of the capacities in question, he would thereby lack any rightful claim to direct his own life. For this reason, the importance of education, especially moral education, is continually stressed throughout this tradition of thought. For instance, children should not be allowed to direct their own activity even if they have the potential to do so because this potential is in need of development and refinement through proper education. These educational concerns are an instance of this tradition's general focus on the psychological capacities of human nature, such as intellectual powers, desires, emotions, etc. The widespread emphasis on such capacities is due in part to these philosophers' aim of articulating a coherent, realizable, and suitable notion of self-governance.

An important addition to the attention given to psychological capacities is a point concerning the notion of self-control (Greek: *sophrosune*, Latin: *temperantia*). Self-control/moderation/temperance is explicated often with such descriptions as "self-mastery" and "ruling oneself." This notion applies to a person's psychological abilities and how they are integrated with one

another. The substantial point pertaining to my project is that self-control is not equivalent to self-governance. Self-governance refers to the abilities to reason out for oneself what course or courses of action would be appropriate and to initiate such a course of action. That is the phenomenon to which self-governance refers, at least according to Schneewind, and I agree. I stress this point because the notions are sufficiently similar to cause confusion. That being said, there is an almost familial relationship between the two concepts that holds for much of the pre-modern tradition. According to the dominant tradition of pre-modern moral theory, the exercise of self-governance cannot take place without a healthy dose of self-control on the part of the agent. Perhaps it is more accurate to say to govern oneself well, one must be self-controlled. Either way, conceptually and often otherwise, discussions of self-governance occur within close proximity to discussions on self-control.

The focus on self-governance in the pre-modern tradition up to and including Aquinas is, in turn, for the sake of the basic goal that motivates engagement into ethics to begin with, namely in order to achieve *eudaimonia*. Because of its ubiquity in ethical theory throughout the pre-modern era, eudaimonism is a pivotal notion for my project. In a eudaimonistic theory, the basic structure revolves around the notion of *eudaimonia*/happiness/ flourishing. Flourishing is the goal of our activities, the goal of what we do. Therefore, we ought always to do those actions and activities that are conducive to this state of flourishing. This moral structure determines the

content of good and bad things by reference to the goal of happiness. Brickhouse and Smith call this structure the "principle of eudaimonism," which asserts that "a thing is good only insofar as it is conducive to happiness."[17] Conversely, a thing is bad insofar as it hinders or interferes with one's ability to achieve happiness.

The nature and role of self-governance in any given theory is going to rest upon or presuppose some antecedent conception of the person or self since it is that self that is doing the governing. In the ensuing theories, such a self is eudaimonist. Pervasive in all of these accounts is the basic characterization of a person's motivational structure by reference to eudaimonistic considerations.[18] Put weakly, in a eudamonist theory, all persons desire happiness and indirectly those actions, activities, or objects that are conducive to happiness. The eudaimonist self, then, wants to perform those actions and seek those objects that are conducive to flourishing. Eudaimonistic considerations also affect the way in which moral standards are characterized. These standards represent the object of knowledge that is relevant to self-governance. I will discuss these issues in detail as I treat each philosopher's moral theory.

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[17]Brickhouse and Smith, p. 103.

[18] I intend to keep this account sufficiently general so as to not equate "psychological eudaimonism" with eudaimonism itself. For an overview of psychological eudaimonism see Irwin, p. 53.

2.2: Socrates

My historical overview begins with Socrates. Plato's *Gorgias* provides a case study in the themes that I wish to address concerning self-governance, while Book I of the *Republic* also neatly supplements these themes. I will assume that the Socrates of these dialogues was a thinker distinct from Plato, but the theses of my investigation do not depend upon that assumption.[19]

Socrates made the notion of a true or ideal self a critical part of his moral philosophy. A memorable feature of Socrates' life is his devotion to living out the Delphic injunction "Know Thyself." His remarks concerning morality and knowledge seem to commit him to the view that there is a true and authentic self that is not readily transparent and requires a healthy degree of self-examination to discover. Brickhouse and Smith offer the following summary of this true-self interpretation.

> Socrates of the *Gorgias* had a conception of a "true self," which each of us can discover only through the sort of reflective introspection Socrates takes his *elenchos* to promote. This "self" is the one Socrates believes the Delphic injunction exhorts us to know.[20]

Socrates' life, like his philosophy, is in part a search for the nature of this true self, a self that he believes is knowable through self-examination, reflection, and dialogue with others. Ethics is concerned with how one ought to live. The "one" in question is the true self, which we will see in the *Gorgias.*

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[19] For a clear overview of the positions concerning this issue in Plato's dialogues see Kraut.

[20] Brickhouse and Smith, p. 102.

i. *Gorgias*

The *Gorgias*, on the whole, addresses issues concerning the foundation of ethical standards, most importantly standards of justice, and what constitutes the best life, or at least the better life among the considered possibilities. Socrates engages in three distinct, though related, discussions with separate interlocutors: Gorgias, Polus, and Callicles. With Gorgias he treats the topic of the benefits and harms of rhetoric and then engages in a similar analysis of justice, featuring Polus. Finally, Socrates squares off with Callicles. Their discussion represents the most extended debate of the three, and it will be the focus of my commentary.

Socrates concludes his conversation with Polus having argued for the claim that suffering injustice is better for the individual than committing injustice. Callicles adamantly rejects Socrates contention and in turn offers his own accounts of the origin of justice and moral standards in general.

> I believe that the people who institute our laws are the weak and the many. They do this, and they assign praise and blame with themselves and their own advantage in mind. They're afraid of the more powerful among men, the ones who are capable of having a greater share, and so they say that getting more than one's share is "shameful" and "unjust," and that doing what's unjust is trying to get more than one's share. They do this so that those people won't get a greater share than they. I think they like getting an equal share, since they are inferior. These are the reasons why trying to get a greater share than most is said to be unjust and shameful by law and why they call it doing what's unjust.

Conventional justice, according to Callicles, is instituted by the weak in order to restrain the strong. Such justice's inhibiting dynamism actually causes the

strong to be worse off than they otherwise would have been, had they been unrestrained.

Callicles believes that there is an authentic and true notion of justice that nature proposes. This natural justice is radically distinct from conventional justice.

> But I believe that nature itself reveals that it's a just thing for the better man and the more capable man to have a greater share than the worse man and less capable man. Nature shows that this is so in many places; but among the other animals and in whole cities and races of men, it shows that this is what justice has been decided to be: that the superior rule the inferior and have a greater share than they. (483b-d).[21]

This true morality leads to real flourishing and happiness for the better and more capable man. In Callicles' opinion, Socrates wrongly equates true justice with conventional justice. Consequently, Socrates misconstrues the correct path to flourishing by promoting conformity to social convention, and by doing so precludes the possibility that those who by nature are strong will have the opportunity to flourish.

Socrates and Callicles are clearly at odds about the nature of justice. Nevertheless, there is a deep source of agreement by them that underpins their respective analyses and subsequent arguments. This agreement lies in their basic understanding of the ideal purpose of moral standards. For both, *eudaimonia* or flourishing is the goal of our actions and activities. Ideally, we should live the life we do and direct our activities we perform in order to achieve *eudaimonia*. They disagree as to the means to this end, but they both accept the same structure for morality and the determination of what

[21] Plato. *Gorgias*.

constitutes good and bad. This shared moral framework determines what type of strategy is in place for the critical analysis of each opponent's position. The strategy is to demonstrate that the favored proposal keys in on activities that actually lead to a state of flourishing, while the other account does not.

Socrates questions Callicles concerning the latter's account of what makes one man superior to another and how that grants the "superior" license to rule over others. Since Callicles' account of justice turns on this notion of a man being superior by nature, Socrates is questioning the very core of Callicles' position. The following passage picks up with Callicles' continuing response to this line of questioning. Socrates criticizes Callicles for ignoring the crucial role that self-control plays in the pursuit of happiness.

> Callicles: But I've already said that I mean those who are intelligent in the affairs of the city, and brave, too. It's fitting that they should be the ones who rule their cities, and what's just is that they, as the rulers, should have a greater share then the others, the ruled.
> Socrates: But what of themselves, my friend?
> Callicles: What of *what*?
> Socrates: Ruling or being ruled?
> Callicles: What do you mean?
> Socrates: I mean each individual ruling himself. Or is there no need at all for him to rule himself, but only to rule others?
> Callicles: What do you mean, rule himself?
> Socrates: Nothing very subtle. Just what the many mean: being self-controlled and master of oneself, ruling the pleasures and appetites within oneself (491d-e).

This passage is extremely important for two reasons. The passage illustrates Socrates bringing the notion of self-control (*sophrosune)* into the debate. Here, he simply elaborates on what the notion involves, but throughout the rest of the discussion Socrates will repeatedly praise self-control as necessary to achieve happiness, while Callicles will scoff at such

appraisals. In fact, self-control becomes a driving theme in Socrates' brand of eudaimonism. That is significant both for a proper understanding of Socrates' moral theory, and for an adequate understanding of subsequent eudaimonist accounts, since Socratic eudaimonism sets the standard for how such moral theory should be construed. The second point of interest relates to the relationship between the notions of self-control and self-governance, which I will treat momentarily.

In the debate stemming from the passage quoted above, Socrates and Callicles clarify and refine their respective characterizations of the self[22]. Callicles ridicules Socrates' endorsement of self-control, and he proceeds to argue why his characterization of the self and code of conduct leads to happiness.

> How could a man prove to be happy if he's enslaved to anyone at all: Rather, this is what's admirable and just by nature-and I'll say it to you now with all frankness-that the man who'll live correctly ought to allow his own appetites to get as large as possible and not restrain them. And when they are as large as possible, he ought to be competent to devote himself to them by virtue of his bravery and intelligence, and to fill them with whatever he may have an appetite for at the time...Rather, the truth of it, Socrates-the thing you claim to pursue-is like this: wantonness, lack of discipline, and freedom, if available in good supply, are excellence and happiness; as for these other things, these fancy phrases, these contracts of men that go against nature, they're worthless nonsense! (492-c).

Given that happiness is the goal of our active pursuits, Callicles maintains that we should increase our desires and satiate them by any and all available

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[22] What I mean by different conceptions of the self has been explained differently by others in the literature. For instance, Brickhouse and Smith explain the distinction in terms of motivation, though their explanation is tied to the true-self interpretation of Socrates; see pp. 97-102.
Plochmann and Robinson characterize the distinction in terms of "two lives," see especially chapters 7-9.

means, and this will give us the happiness we want. The Calliclean true, ideal self consists of uninhibited freedom to satisfy desires, which themselves are uncontrolled or not moderated. A person who desires happiness should do those things conducive to it, which in this case is the maximization of desire and desire satisfaction.

On this model, self-governance is realized in the undisciplined procurement of satiating objects, but notice that Callicles is clearly endorsing self-governance by presupposing it as a necessary means to his ideal kind of life. He fulfills the motivational requirement through his talk of fostering large appetites which will automatically incline a person to seek what will satiate them, and such a person's courage will motivate him to obtain them. Callicles also meets the epistemic requirement through claiming that a person's intelligence will enable him to know what to do to obtain the objects in question. The Calliclean model of the ideal self is definitely not egalitarian in the sense that all can live their life in the manner suggested above, for that is a privilege reserved to the strong by nature, i.e. those who have both the psychological capacities and the means necessary to pursue the ideal. Nevertheless, for those whom nature has privileged, not only can they each govern their lives, but also nature has bestowed upon them the authority to do so.

Something surprising occurs with Socrates' critique of Callicles. If Schneewind's view of the origin and role of self-governance is correct, we might expect Socrates to brush off Callicles' promotion of self-governance as

nonsense and harmful to the possibility of happiness. However, this is not what happens. Socrates goes through a lengthy argument whereby he shows that a Calliclean self can never truly be happy because his desires can never be satiated, mainly because such a person is not really in control of himself. Such a person is likened to a leaky jar that cannot hold liquid, but Callicles' presupposition and inclusion of self-governance is not criticized. Socrates proceeds to construct a picture of how a truly flourishing person conducts his life, i.e., what type of conduct leads to happiness.

> Listen, then, as I pick up the discussion from the beginning. Is the pleasant the same as the good?-it isn't, as Callicles and I have agreed.-Is the pleasant to be done for the sake of the good, or the good for the sake of the pleasant?-The pleasant for the sake of the good.-And *pleasant* is that by which, when it's come to be present in us, we feel pleasure, and *good* that by which, when it's present in us, we are good?-That's right.-But surely we are good, both we and everything else that's good, when some excellence has come to be present in us?-Yes, I do think that that's necessarily so, Callicles.-But the best way in which the excellence of each thing comes to be present in it, whether it's that of an artifact or of a body or a soul as well, or of any animal, is not just any old way, but is due to whatever organization, correctness, and craftsmanship is bestowed on each of them. Is that right?-Yes, I agree.-So it's due to organization that the excellence of each thing is something which is organized and has order?-Yes, I'd say so.-So also a soul which has its own order is better than a disordered one?-Necessarily so.-But surely one that has order is an orderly one?-Of course it is.-And an orderly soul is a self-controlled one?-Absolutely.-So a self-controlled soul is a good one...And if [this account] is true, then a person who wants to be happy must evidently pursue and practice self-control (506c-507;507d).

So, whatever else ethical principles may be, they should direct an agent to her good or happiness. Socrates contends that not only does the Calliclean model not lead to happiness, but that it has the opposite effect of resulting in wretchedness and unhappiness. A person so dominated by

desire-maximization/satisfaction can never achieve happiness because the ever-growing desires can never be satiated. Socrates then goes on to propose his own conception of the ideal self as one who moderates and limits those desires through self-control. Self-governance takes on a more active role in this conception.

> This is the target which I think one should look to in living, and in his actions he should direct all of his own affairs and those of his city to the end that justice and self-control will be present in one who is to be blessed. He should not allow his appetites to be undisciplined or undertake to fill them up-that's interminably bad-and live the life of a marauder (507e).

The Socratic self seems to meet all of the Schneewindian conditions set out to allow for self-governance. A person through understanding what is best for him will naturally be motivated to pursue those things. The epistemic requirement is met through reason carefully considered what is most conducive to flourishing. The motivational requirement is essentially met in virtue of two considerations. The eudaimonist conception of the self underlying Socrates' view brings to the table a person who is naturally motivated to perform those actions directed at the end of happiness. The cultivation of self-control strengthens these natural motives so as to enable a person to be in a position where he can do those actions judged to be appropriate.

For Socrates, then, self-control is conceptually related to self-governance as a necessary condition. An undisciplined and uncontrolled individual, like the Calliclean ideal, cannot truly govern himself in that he is led about by his appetites and desires. Only through the cultivation of self-control

can the full exercise of self-governance take place. This theme of self-control as necessary to self-governance will be repeated and expanded upon in all of the thinkers in my history, up to and including Aquinas.

Socrates does not explicitly speak about the authority to self-govern, though he does seem to encourage anyone with the capacity to understand what is truly good for him to "direct all of his own affairs" (507e) so as to do the appropriate actions and seeks the right kind of things. It seems that if Socrates is encouraging people to exercise their capacity for self-governance, he must think they have the appropriate authority to do so. The upshot of his view in the *Gorgias* is that even if not everyone can or should govern themselves, some people definitely can and should.

ii. *Republic* I

In Book I of the *Republic*, Socrates expands on his conceptions of ethics and self-governance found in the *Gorgias*. He also refines his characterization of eudaimonism, and these refinements pave the way and set the standard for virtually all subsequent eudaimonist theories in the pre-modern tradition. The *Republic* as a whole, and Book I in particular, is devoted to an investigation into the nature and benefits of justice. In treating Book I as representing Socrates' own thought as distinct from Plato, I am following a common developmentalist position which interprets Book I as Socratic and the remainder of the *Republic* as properly Platonic.[23] However, my previous caveat relating to the *Gorgias* holds here as well. The main lines

of my investigation do not hinge on this interpretative assumption regarding Plato's works.

In Book I, Socrates' primary interlocutor is Thrasymachus, whose theses and arguments embody the spirit of Callicles' positions in the *Gorgias*. The key point in the debate occurs when Thrasymachus objects to Socrates' characterization of justice as something beneficial to the just person. Thrasymachus counters Socrates' suggestion by labeling justice another's good, in the sense that the benefits of justice fall not to the just, but to another taking advantage of the near-sightedness of the just. Socrates proceeds to argue that justice really does bestow benefits on the just and is good in the eudaimonistic sense.

In the *Gorgias*, Socrates countered Callicles' ethical theory not by attacking the notion of self-governance that underpinned Callicles' account. Rather, Socrates argued that Callicles theory suffered in that it did not lead to flourishing on account of its undisciplined approach to the appetites. Socrates proposed his own account, which not only included self-governance, but gave to such governance a more active role than Callicles had given to it. We find Socrates making even more surprising claims (surprising, at least, if Schneewind's view were correct) about self-governance in the *Republic* Book I.

As we have seen, one driving motif in Socratic eudaimonism is the emphatic endorsement it gives to rational self-control. A second such theme in Socratic eudaimonism is the nature and role of a soul's function as

developed in Socrates' response to Thrasymachus. Socrates develops his idea of the soul's function within the context of his defense of justice against Thrasymachus' assault.

> Socrates: Now, I think you'll understand what I was asking earlier when I asked whether the function of each thing is what it alone can do or what it does better than anything else.
> Thrasymachus: I understand, and I think that this is the function of each.
> Socrates: All right. Does each thing to which a particular function is assigned also have a virtue? Let's go over the same ground again. We say that eyes have some function?
> Thrasymachus: They do.
> Socrates: So there is also a virtue of eyes?...And could eyes perform their function well if they lacked their peculiar virtue and had the vice instead?
> Thrasymachus: How could they, for don't you mean if they had blindness instead of sight?
> Socrates: Whatever their virtue is, for I'm not now asking about that but about whether anything that has a function performs it well by means of its own peculiar virtue and badly by means of its vice?
> Thrasymachus: That's true it does...
> Socrates: Come, then, and let's consider this: Is there some function of the soul that you couldn't perform with anything else, for example, taking care of things, ruling, deliberating, and the like? Is there anything other than a soul to which you could rightly assign these, and say that they are its peculiar function?
> Thrasymachus: No, none of them.
> Socrates: What of living? Isn't that a function of a soul?
> Thrasymachus: It certainly is.
> Socrates: And don't we say that there is a virtue of a soul?
> Thrasymachus: We do.
> Socrates: Then, will a soul ever perform its function well, Thrasymachus, if it is deprived of its own peculiar virtue, or is that impossible?
> Thrasymachus: It's impossible.
> Socrates: Doesn't it follow, then, that a bad soul rules and takes care of things badly and that a good soul does all these things well?...Now we agreed that justice is a soul's virtue, and injustice its vice?...Then, it follows that a just soul and a just man will live well, and an unjust one badly (353b-e).[24]

[24] Plato. *Republic.*

Just as the function of an eye is to see, and that an eye that sees well is a good eye, so a person who manages her life well, i.e. justly, is a good/happy person. Socrates ties the function argument into his praise of self-control, self-mastery, and self-governance. He states, "Is there some function of a soul that you couldn't perform with anything else, for example, taking care of things, ruling, deliberating, and the like?" Ruling over other desires and impulses is part of the soul's function. Notice that these remarks about a person's function further refines Socrates' model of the self. What it is to be a self consists in the very activity of governing, both in the sense of one mastering his own desires and emotions and in the sense of directing his own affairs and actions.

In other words, what is unique about a soul, what "it alone can do or what it does better than anything else," is the very activity of ruling itself through deliberation about what actions would be most appropriate and being able to perform such actions in virtue of cultivated appetites and desires that do not interfere with their execution. Deliberation about what to do satisfies the epistemic requirement for self-governance, where self-control and the ability to take care of things demonstrates that a person is able to motivate himself to do what is appropriate. Given that doing all of these things well, i.e., through justice, is what constitutes, or at least chiefly contributes to *eudaimonia*, and *eudaimonia* is what Socrates is promoting that people seek, it seems to follow that he is granting that people, in virtue of possessing a function, have the necessary authority to govern themselves.

This seems to be a significant development relative to his position in the *Gorgias*. For there, he encouraged active self-governance for the sake of flourishing. Now, with the function argument, the very defining feature of a person or self is essentially self-governance. Both his endorsement of self-governance in the *Gorgias* and his recognition that the capacities for self-governance constitute a soul's unique properties and thereby determine its function in the *Republic* I represent strong evidence against the considered theses of Schneewind. The function argument ends Book I, setting up Plato's extended arguments in the remainder of the *Republic*.

2.3: Plato

Socrates' interlocutors remain unconvinced and unsatisfied by his concluding arguments against Thrasymachus. As a result, they restate in strengthened form objections to his view concerning the beneficial nature of justice and request a stronger defense-a request he grants. The remaining nine books of the *Republic* represent Plato's own development of the issues in question. In the course of his characterization of the nature of justice and defense of its benefits, Plato presents a view of self-governance in some ways distinct from that of Socrates'. However, at no point does he abandon the notion as unimportant, and in the end, it plays a crucial role in his overall account.

i. The Nature and Role of Justice

I wish to summarize Plato's main argument in the *Republic* (most notably Books II, IV, and VIII) to the extent necessary to give adequate

context for the remainder of my investigation and interpretation of Plato's ethical theory.

The argument begins with a restatement of the eudaimonistic framework that sets the terms and standards for the ensuing analysis. The framework dictates that if Plato is to show that justice is truly beneficial and good, then he must demonstrate that justice is conducive to flourishing inherently, and not just occasionally in virtue of its consequences. Accepting these terms, Plato's mouthpiece Socrates proceeds first to determine the nature of justice. The manner in which he accomplishes this task is to discern justice on a large scale-namely in a good city/political arrangement-and then to judge by analogy the nature of justice in an individual person.

Plato begins the construction of the city by setting forth its basic parts-in this case, three classes of people. These three classes are the rulers, the soldiers or guardians, and the workers. The best city, the one with the best constitution, instantiates the four virtues of wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice. Plato seeks to discover the nature of justice by finding its place in the city, and to do this he first determines where the other virtues reside. Through a process of setting aside the properties of the non-justice virtues, whatever remains relevant to virtue will pertain to justice. Wisdom is found in the good judgment of the rulers. Courage is located in the spirited protection offered by the soldiers. Moderation is spread throughout the city as each class and each member accept who ought to rule the city. What remains is

the order and harmony produced by each part and each person doing her own work and not interfering with the proper work of others, and this is justice.

What pertains to the city on a large-scale pertains to the individual on a smaller scale. The task of determining the nature of justice in the individual amounts to finding the analogues between city and person and using the model of the good city to elucidate the nature of a good person, including his requisite virtues. Plato goes on to distinguish, classify, and describe three parts of the person or soul: the rational (the deliberative and judging part), spirited (the fighting part), and appetitive (the food, drink, sex, etc. desiring part). I want to discuss one of his arguments concerning the virtue of moderation and its relation to his parts of the soul theory.

In the *Gorgias*, we find Socrates praising self-control and arguing that it allows us to direct our lives as we see fit, as opposed to being led about by various desires. Self-control performs an equally important and similar role in Plato's account in the *Republic* as well. He looks to analyze and articulate the conditions that make self-control possible. He then uses this account as evidence in favor of distinct parts of the soul.

> Moderation is surely a kind of order, the mastery of certain kinds of pleasures and desires. People indicate as much when they use the phrase "self-control" and other similar phrases. I don't know just what they mean by them, but they are, so to speak, like tracks or clues that moderation has left behind in language...Yet isn't the expression "self-control" ridiculous? The stronger self that does the controlling is the same as the weaker self that gets controlled, so that only one person is referred to in all such expressions...Nonetheless, the expression is apparently trying to indicate that, in the soul of that very person, there is a better part and a worse one and that, whenever the naturally better part is in control of the worse, this is expressed by saying that the person is self-controlled or master of himself (430e-431).

Like Socrates before him, Plato devotes considerable time to the notion of self-control (*sophrosune).* On his own account, a self-controlled person is one in whom the rational part effectively rules over the spirited and appetitive parts. As might be guessed, this notion of self-control will factor into my exposition of other Platonic notions. Plato completes his city-individual analogy by describing the just person as one in whom reason rules, the spirited part seeks honor in submission to reason, and the appetites desire necessary things for bodily well-being in an appropriate way.

ii. Five Types of Constitutions/Individuals

Plato's extended views on the nature of self-governance and the conditions allowing for it are best represented in Book VIII and the very beginning of IX. Here he maps the degeneration of the best type of city/individual to the worst type. "Then, if there are five forms of city, there must also be five forms of the individual soul" (544e). I am interpreting him to be offering five general characterization of the self, in this case five different types of individuals with varying degrees of psychological capacities. The self can be characterized in multiple ways for Plato because the parts of the self can relate to one another in different ways. The distinct types of souls or selves are going to be characterized in terms of arrangement of its parts.

One important point to note is that the person or self is not reducible to one part, or vice versa. What it is to be an individual is to be composed of

these parts.[25] Plato conducts his analysis by first considering the political constitution and then focusing on the corresponding individual type. He begins with the best constitution, i.e. the one which embodies justice most fully-kingship or aristocracy, and then discusses, in order of increasing degeneracy, timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, and tyranny.

The best city is the aristocratic city that Socrates had constructed in his exploration of the nature of justice. All of the virtues are embodied in this city, where the rulers rule wisely, the guardians protect courageously, each part accepts its proper role producing moderation, and each part does its own work, thereby effecting justice. The best individual, then, is one in whom reason deliberates and judges wisely, the impulses of the spirit serve reason, and the appetitive desires serve reason and promote bodily well-being.

The aristocratic individual both has the most robust capacities for self-governance and performs such governance in the way most conducive to flourishing. With regard to the epistemic requirement, he has access to moral standards in virtue of good upbringing, education, and resultant knowledge. His complete self-control enables him to allow the appropriate desires and emotions of the non-rational parts of the soul to motivate himself to do what he chooses to do, or at least, such desires and emotions do not interfere with the process of action performance. In other words, the lower emotions and desires to not interfere and frustrate the rational part's planning and judgment on how best to govern. I will address the issue of a person's right to govern

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[25] For a helpful discussion on issues surrounding the relation of the parts of the soul to the person herself, see Annas especially chapter 5, section 3.

herself in further detail subsequent to my exposition on the four other types of constitutions/individuals. But at this point what is clear is that the full possession of the psychological capacities and their proper ordering through self-control grants to a person the proper authority to exercise self-governance. Hence, the aristocratic individual fully possesses the ability to govern himself, and he has the right to do so.

The aristocratic individual comprises, from Plato, a very convincing piece of evidence against Schneewind's contentions that self-governance was not present or central to moral theory prior to the modern era. The aristocratic individual is offered by Plato as the ideal of ethical achievement. Such an individual is fully flourishing and ethically excellent through the self-governance of her life by means of knowledge of the good and an ordered soul. The remaining four constitution/individual types provide a very visual, detailed, and insightful analysis of the dependency relationship that self-governance has with the relevant psychological capacities and how such capacities can be corrupted, thus negatively affecting the possibility of self-governance. I believe this analysis by Plato definitely represents the most original, systematic, and engaging investigation into self-governance and its necessary components of the ancient period and most likely of the modern period as well.

The first degenerate political arrangement is timocracy. Timocracy is characterized as a city where the guardian class claims hegemony and forces the now puppet ruling class and worker class to serve the aim of military

victory and honor. Plato characterizes the corresponding timocratic individual as conflicted, but not divided. His rational part is still well-educated and knowledgeable, but circumstances have enabled his spirited and appetitive parts to grow too strong. To mediate the conflict, he allows the spirited part to rule.

The timocratic individual is still capable of some self-governance. His developed rational part enables him to possess sufficient knowledge of moral standards for the task, and therefore, he satisfies the epistemic requirement. However, his excessively developed spirit interferes with and undermines his ability to motivate himself properly to do what reason counsels, thus stunting, but not eliminating, his motivational capacities. In other words, his capacities for self-governance are still present, but much diminished relative to the aristocratic person.

Next in line is oligarchy, where citizenship and political authority are based primarily on property/wealth holdings. Since wealth translates into political power, the rulers of this city seek above all else money. Plato presents an oligarchy as a city divided or torn between the rich and poor, where the latter rebels against the former, and in turn the former suppresses the latter. The oligarchic individual is construed as one who allows one appetite, namely the desire for money, to rule over all other appetites and the other parts of the soul. Reason and the spirit are placed in the service of money-making, while the remaining lower desires are suppressed. This leads to an unstable equilibrium where conflict brims. Plato states,

> And doesn't this make it clear that, in those other contractual obligations, where he as a good reputation and is thought to be just, he's forcibly holding his other evil appetites in check by means of some decent part of himself? He holds them in check, not by persuading them that it's better not to act on them or taming then with arguments, but by compulsion and fear, trembling for his other possessions...Then someone like that wouldn't be entirely free from internal civil war and wouldn't be one but in some way two, though generally his better desires are in control of the worse...For this reason, he'd be more respectable than many, but the true virtue of a single-minded and harmonious soul far escape him (554d-e).

This type of self is even less capable of governing itself than the timocratic individual. His epistemic access to moral standards is much more limited compared to the timocratic person. So, while he has some knowledge of what is appropriate, he lacks such knowledge in other areas. Hence, he is ill-equipped from an epistemic point of view to know what he should do in a fair number of situations. Moreover, his perpetual suppression of the spirited part and fear of the other appetitive desires cripples his ability to motivate himself in matters other than those relating to the acquisition of money. Even in cases where he does have the knowledge necessary to know what course of action should be taken, it is probable that he will be unable to initiate such action.

Next is the democratic city. Socrates, tongue-in-cheek, offers a detailed look at such a city.

> First of all, then, aren't they free? And isn't the city full of freedom and freedom of speech? And doesn't everyone in it have the license to do what he wants?...In this city, there is no requirement to rule, even if you're capable of it, or again to be ruled if you don't want to be...And what about the city's tolerance? Isn't it so completely lacking in small-mindedness that it utterly despises the things we took so seriously when we were founding our city, namely, that unless someone had transcendent natural gifts, he'd never become good unless he played

> the right games and followed a fine way of life from early childhood? Isn't it magnificent the way it tramples all this underfoot, by giving no thought to what someone was doing before he entered public life and by honoring him if only he tells then that he wishes the majority well?...Then these and other like them are the characteristics of democracy. And it would seem to be a pleasant constitution, which lacks rulers but not variety and which distributes a sort of equality to both equals and unequals alike (557b-558c).

The city is ruled by all, including the workers and tradesmen, and consequently, it is ruled by no one person or group of persons who have the knowledge to rule wisely. All people have an equal voice and authority in matters of public policy and the like. The democratic individual lives at the whim of his appetitive desires. All of these desires are given equal considerations of importance, and his life is directed by the given desire prompting his activity at that particular moment. "And so he lives on, yielding day by day to the desire at hand" (561c).

Plato seems to be presenting a sophisticated analysis of the Calliclean ideal self (an analysis that continues though the discussing of tyranny). Recall that Callicles advocated a life of uninhibited desires. Plato, like Socrates of the *Gorgias*, wishes to say that on such a conception (the Calliclean and democratic person), self-governance is an illusion. A democratic individual cannot truly govern himself because his rational part has no substantive awareness of moral standards, and even if it did, his appetitive desires are so potent that they prompt him to do what they dictate, over and above any other consideration.

> And so he lives, always surrendering rule over himself to whichever desire comes along, as if it were chosen by lot. And when that is

> satisfied, he surrenders the rule to another, not disdaining any but satisfying them all equally (561b).

In essence, the individual is a slave to his lower desires, which brings us back to the importance of self-control for this tradition. It is because the individual lacks self-control that he is unable to effectively self-govern.

Plato seems to be suggesting that the complete lack of self-control goes hand in hand with a lack of knowledge of appropriate moral standards. Part of this is due to his theory of education and upbringing, where the good person would have learned and practiced self-control along with learning about what is good. Another element though, seems to be that the undisciplined life where the appetites are in charge leads to an obfuscation of whatever moral knowledge is present. The dynamic seems to be that the undisciplined person, in virtue of a lack of self-control, is not attentive to this knowledge, and the knowledge is thus useless. Due to this, there is a sort of double necessity of self-control to self-governance. If a person is undisciplined, then there is a failure to meet the motivational requirement, but also there is a failure to meet the epistemic requirement in virtue of some knowledge never learned and other knowledge that is ignored.

Plato completes his analysis with a consideration of tyranny. A tyranny is the rule by one person, similar to a kingship in this respect. Unlike a kingship, however, the tyrant is a person from the working class who has seized power. He has no wisdom, no sense of the common good, and he achieves his political aims through violence, murder, and oppression. In effect, he reduces all citizens to slaves. The corresponding tyrannical

individual is characterized as having one "lawless" appetitive desire rule over all others. Plato identifies erotic love or lust as this dictatorial desire. Annas offers a brief explanation concerning the connection of lust and tyranny that is very illuminating.

> Plato is pressing the idea that the tyrant's soul must be dominated by a kind of motivation that has not only no conception of the good of the whole, but no real notion of the whole self. He chooses lust, presumably, as being the archetypical motivation that is wholly fixed on getting its object and is in itself indifferent to the other factors in the soul and their interdependent satisfactions.[26]

Whether erotic love actually motivates in this way is beside the point, as long as Plato believes that it motivates in this, or some similar, manner. The desire of lust, when it becomes, in a Calliclean turn of phrase, "as large as possible" (573b), tyrannizes over all the other parts and desires of the soul, such that none of them can be satisfied. The possibility of true self-governance, as with the democratic person, is simply eliminated. The rational part is dominated to the point of being useless with respect to moral standards, and all motivational abilities are in the sole service of lust. The person cannot govern herself on account of her lustful desire ruling over her.

With respect to the issue of one's right to rule herself relevant to all five types of individuals, Plato maintains that if one has the full capacities necessary for self-governance, then she should exercise those capacities. On his view a non-egalitarian standard is in place for determining who has the proper authority to govern themselves, since the standard is determined by

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[26] Annas, pp. 303-304.

each person's ability for such activity. Plato makes this standard clear in the following passage.

> Now, one finds all kinds of diverse desires, pleasures, and pains, mostly in children, women, household slaves, and in those of the inferior majority who are called free...But you meet with the desires that are simple, measured, and directed by calculation in accordance with understanding and correct belief only in the few people who are born with the best natures and receive the best education...Then, don't you see that in your city, too, the desires of the inferior many are controlled by the wisdom and desires of the superior few? (431c-d).

The rulers govern themselves and others in virtue of their knowledge and appropriate motivational structure. The other members of the city lack one or both of these capacities and therefore are not allowed to try to govern themselves. Plato elaborates on the nature of a society that does adhere to an egalitarian self-governance ideal in his description of the democratic city. However, as already noted, he also views this arrangement to be severely degenerate because such citizens lack the capacity to govern themselves and others in any significant sense.

Plato is affirming the principle that if a person fully possesses the requisite psychological capacities, then he has the proper authority to exercise self-governance. Moreover, Plato's initial strategy in Book II was to begin with the ideal city/individual and discover the necessary features of both. The ideal moral agent had the proper authority from the start, with the psychological conditions being the necessary conditions for that authority. Hence Plato also affirms the principle that if a person has proper authority to exercise self-governance, then they fully possess the requisite psychological

capacities. From this the following principle follows, which I call the Platonic biconditional:

> **Fully possessing psychological capacities requisite for self-governance is a necessary and sufficient condition for possessing the proper authority to exercise self-governance.**

The only caveat to this principle, for Plato, is that to fully possess the relevant psychological capacities, it seems that a person (unless he has "transcendent natural gifts" (558b)) must have had the proper education and upbringing that instills self-control and other such disciplines into him. That is why self-control remains a necessary condition, for Plato, to the practice of self-governance.

Plato is explicitly non-egalitarian in holding that some individuals, namely the oligarchic, timocratic, democratic, and tyrannical, should not, either by degree or all together, govern themselves. Nevertheless, the notion of self-governance plays a pivotal role in his overall theory as a constituent of the aristocratic ruling class and those individuals whose rational part rules over the spirited and appetitive parts. His appraisal and praise of self-governance and his robust analysis of the necessary conditions for the exercise of self-governance provide a rich contribution to the understanding of the nature and role self-governance may have in moral theory.

2.4: Aristotle

Aristotle most fully develops his account of self-governance in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Like Socrates and Plato before him, he spends

considerable time and thought treating the nature, cultivation, and exercise of the psychological abilities relevant to the activity of self-governance. In fact, most of the previously considered themes reappear in Aristotle.

i. *Nichomachean Ethics*

Aristotle begins his *Nicomachean Ethics* by accepting the eudaimonist framework as the proper mode for an ethical inquiry. Human beings want the best good, that is, they desire to live well/be happy. The practical end of investigating the nature of ethics, and by extension politics, is to discover those objects, states, and activities that will best enable us to achieve this goal of happiness. Aristotle echoes Socrates with his method for determining what the best good actually consists in.

> Perhaps, then, we shall find this if we first grasp the function of a human being. For just as the good, i.e., [doing] well, for a flautist, a sculptor, and every craftsman, and, in general, for whatever has a function and [characteristic] action, seems to depend on its function, the same seems to be true for a human being, if a human being has some function...What, then, could this [function] be? For living is apparently shared with plants, but what we are looking for is the special function of a human being; hence we should set aside the life of nutrition and growth. The life next in order is some sort of life of sense perception, but this too is apparently shared with horse, ox, and every animal. The remaining possibility, then, is some sort of life of action of the [part of the soul] that has reason. One [part] of it has reason as obeying reason; the other has it as itself having reason and thinking. Moreover, life is also spoken of in two ways [as capacity and as activity], and we must take [a human being's special function to be] life as activity, since this seems to be called life more fully. We have found, then that the human function is activity of the soul in accord with reason or requiring reason (I, 7, 1097b-1098a).[27]

Just as Socrates believes the nature of happiness and what is conducive to it is defined in terms of the individual soul's function, so Aristotle insists that if

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[27] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics.*

the human being has a function (characteristic activity), that function will determine wherein happiness lies. For Aristotle, human beings do in fact have a function, which he characterizes as "activity of the soul in accord with reason or requiring reason." The human being is good/happy if he performs this function well, otherwise he is not happy. The function is performed well if it is completed though the virtue or virtues proper to such activity.

Though not identical to Socrates' characterization of the soul's function as "taking care of things, ruling, deliberating, and the like," Aristotle's conception is very similar, especially in that it places a great deal of emphasis on the soul/person performing an activity and doing so in a certain way. Also of interest is that Aristotle distinguishes between two broad parts of the soul. One of the parts contains reason, while the other part does not possess reason inherently, but it is capable of obeying reason, and thereby can become rational through participation in the rational part.

Since reason and deliberation possess such a central role in his theory, Aristotle gives a detailed and technical account of the nature of reason, deliberation, and action in Book III. Here, he outlines the process by which deliberation, choice, and action is voluntary.

> As we have said, then, a human being would seem to be a principle of action. Deliberation is about the actions he can do, and actions are for the sake of other things; hence we deliberate about things that promote an end, not about the end...What we deliberation about is the same as what we decide to do, it is definite; for what we decide to do is what we have judged [to be right] as a result of deliberation. We have found, then, that what we decide to do is whatever action, among those up to us, we deliberate about and [consequently] desire to do. Hence also decision will be up to us; for when we have judged [that it

> is right] as a result of deliberation, we desire to do it in accord with our wish (III, 3, 1112b-1113a).

Aristotle is outlining the process by which the activity of self-governance is possible. Each human being is the efficient cause of the action he performs. The ability of deliberation allows a person to sort through the possible courses of action in order to discern which course would be most conducive to the end of *eudaimonia*; whatever that course of action is, it is classified as right. The agent then makes a judgment that the considered possibility is the right one, which is the decision. Aristotle notes that once this judgment has been made, there is a natural desire to do whatever action is decided. This brings us to the consideration of issues concerning motivation.

For Aristotle, sources of motivation lie in the nonrational part of the soul. However, this does not mean they are completely outside the control of an individual or that they are wholly nonrational.

> The nonrational [part], then, as well [as the whole soul] apparently has two parts. For while the plantlike [part] shares in reason not at all, the [part] with appetites and in general desires shares in reason in a way, insofar as it both listens to reason and obeys it. This is the way in which we are said to 'listen to reason' from father or friends, as opposed to the way in which [we 'give the reason'] in mathematics. The nonrational part also [obeys and] is persuaded in some way by reason, as is shown by correction and by every sort of reproof and exhortation. If, then, we ought to say that this [part] also has reason, then the [part] that has reason, as well [as the nonrational part], will have two parts. One with reason fully, by having it within itself; the other will have reason by listening to reason as to a father (I, 13, 1102b-1103a).

The connection to motivation is that the nonrational part of the soul, which includes the emotions and other factors that contribute to act-motivation, can come under the influence and direction of reason. The

rational part has the capacity to habituate the emotions of the non-rational part to follow its lead. So, once a decision is made, there is an accompanying desire that ideally prompts the appropriate action. However, because the desires are not inherently rational, they may not automatically prompt in a way consonant with judgment. That is why the emotions and desires must be made to come under the sway of reason. Aristotle proposes that the moral virtues can be cultivated to achieve this task, especially the virtues of bravery and temperance/moderation (*sophrosune)*, since "bravery and temperance seem to be the virtues of the nonrational parts" (III, 10, 1117b).

Bravery concerns finding the rational mean concerning the feelings of fear, while temperance (self-control) moderates desires concerning bodily-pleasurable things. For instance, describing the temperate person, Aristotle states,

> The temperate person has an intermediate state in relation to these [bodily pleasures]. For he finds no pleasure in what most pleases the intemperate person, but finds it disagreeable; he finds no pleasure at all in the wrong things. He finds no intense pleasure in any [bodily pleasures], suffers no pain at their absence, and has no appetite for them, or only a moderate appetite, not to the wrong degree or at the wrong time or anything else at all of that sort. If something is pleasant and conducive to health or fitness, he will desire this moderately and in the right way; and he will desire in the same way anything else that is pleasant, if it is no obstacle to health and fitness, does not deviate from the fine, and does not exceed his means. For the opposite sort of person likes these pleasures more than they are worth; that is not the temperate person's character, but he likes them as correct reason prescribes (III, 12, 1119a).

The moral virtues and their accompanying motivation are acquired through choice. Aristotle's view is that over time, through discrete choices, we habituate ourselves in virtue of our emotions, which underpin motivation, to

act in certain characteristic ways. In this way, all of right types of motivation of sufficient action-prompting intensity are acquirable.

At this point in the overview, we see that Aristotle believes that at least some human beings have the adequate motivational capacity within themselves to allow them to initiate self-action, without the external threat of punishment or promise of reward. With this sophisticated analysis of the capacities relevant to deliberation and motivation, Aristotle fulfills the motivational requirement for self-governance.

Aristotle's proceeds to give an account of the intellectual virtue that directly concerns deliberation, namely, prudence (*phronesis).*

> It seems proper to a prudent person to be able to deliberate finely about things that are good and beneficial for himself, not about some restricted area-about what sorts of things promote health or strength, for instance-but about what sorts of things promote living well in general...prudence is a state grasping the truth, involving reason, concerned with action about things that are good or bad for a human being (VI, 5, 1140a-1140b)...Prudence, by contrast, is about human concerns, about things open to deliberation. For we say that deliberating well is the function of the prudent person more than anyone else, but no one deliberates about things that cannot be otherwise, or about things lacking any goal that is a good achievable in action. The unqualifiedly good deliberator is the one whose aim accords with rational calculation in pursuit of the best good for a human being that is achievable in action (VI, 7, 1141b).

A person who deliberates well is one who has epistemic access to moral standards, i.e., principles about what are good or bad for a human being, and consequently, in virtue of this knowledge, is able to act in a way conducive to his flourishing. Such a person fulfills the epistemic requirement. The psychological conditions are thus met for self-governance. More to the point, though, is the importance that Aristotle seems to place on the role of

self-governance. The eudaimonist self desires to flourish and therefore desires those things that are conducive to that end. What it is to flourish is in large part to govern and rule oneself by deliberating about what to do and then motivating oneself to performing the selected option.

I am not alone in interpreting Aristotle as promoting a strong conception of self-governance. For instance, Fred Miller argues to this same conclusion regarding the interpretation of Aristotle's moral theory in his article "Aristotelian Autonomy," where he frequently contrasts Aristotle's conception of autonomy (self-governance) with that of Kant's, as he does in the following passage.

> The Aristotelian moral agent is self-directed and governed by reason, but Aristotle does not view the rule of reason as consisting in self-legislation, that is, the making and enacting of universal moral laws on the basis of our pure practical reason alone. For Kant, reason is in itself "a higher faculty of desire," and it is able to motivate us to obey our moral duty without relying on any prior desires. For Aristotle, in contrast, human beings have natural ends such as health and happiness, and when the agent apprehends these through reason he has a natural appetite for them.[28]

Aristotle goes to great length to explain the nature and role of self-governance in the good person's life and the psychological capacities necessary for engaging in self-rule.

Next, we must examine the issue of who has a justified claim to actually exercise the ability of self-rule. To do this, we must turn to some considerations in Aristotle's political theory. His theory of self-governance, like Plato's before him, lacks an egalitarian dimension, in both the allotment of necessary psychological capacities and in the recognition of one's right to

[28] Miller, 2002.

govern oneself.[29] His views on the social nature of human beings and the nature of political organization further expose and explain the dimension of this inequality in his overall ethical theory. Moreover, his political theory presents a bit of a puzzle on the issue of the connection between the possession of psychological capacities and the authority to self-govern, which I need to address.

ii. Political Concerns and *The Politics*

Early in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle inquires into some of the constitutive features of the best human good. He observes that such a good would be self-sufficient in that it would lack nothing necessary for happiness. In this context, he makes the following remark.

> The same conclusion [that happiness is complete] also appears to follow from self-sufficiency. For the complete good seems to be self-sufficient. What we count as self-sufficient is not what suffices for a solitary person by himself, living an isolated life, but what suffices also for parents, children, wife, and, in general, for friends and fellow citizens, since a human being is a naturally political [animal] (I,7, 1097b).

This passage expresses two significant points. Human happiness, by nature, includes a social and political dimension, and the very nature of human selfhood includes a political component. In other words, what it is to be a human person is to be social in some way.[30]

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[29] In both the article cited above and in his *Nature, Justice, and Rights in Aristotle's Politics*, Miller seems a little too optimistic about the issue of egalitarian rights recognized by Aristotle.

[30] Kullman recognizes the importance of Aristotle's attribution of political to human selfhood when he comments a similar passage in *The Politics*. "the statement undoubtedly has an important place within the entire anthropology of Aristotle; it is not merely interesting from the point of view of the participation of man in daily politics," p. 95.

Aristotle offers further details on the nature of political selfhood when he discusses the relationship between the individual and state. In this context he notes the following asymmetry.

> Furthermore, the state has a natural priority over the household and over any individual among us. For the whole must be prior to the part. Separate hand or foot from the whole body, and they will not longer be hand and foot except in name, as one might speak of a 'hand' or 'foot' sculptured in stone. That will be the condition of the spoilt hand, which no longer has the capacity and the function which define it. So, though we may say they have the same names, we cannot say that they are, in that condition, the same things. It is clear then that the state is both natural and prior to the individual. For if an individual is not fully self-sufficient after separation, he will stand in the same relationship to the whole as the parts in the other case do. Whatever is incapable of participating in the association which we call the state, a dumb animal for example, and equally whatever is perfectly self-sufficient and has no need to (e.g. a god) is not a part of the state at all (I, ii, 1253a18).[31]

C.C.W. Taylor offers an informative analysis on the meaning of Aristotle's characterization of a human being as a political animal and the state's natural priority over the individual, including the hand to body-individual to state analogy.

> Aristotle makes analogous claims about the relation between individual and *polis*; an individual *incapable* of membership of a *polis* is not, strictly speaking, a human being, but rather a (non-human) animal, while one who is self-sufficient apart from the *polis* is superhuman, or, as Aristotle puts it, a god. His point is not the uncontentious one that one cannot be a wicket-keeper (as opposed to a former, or a potential, wicket-keeper) except as a member of a cricket team. It is the stronger point that one cannot be a human being except in the context of a *polis*. The context need not be actual; so Robinson Crusoe does not cease to be human during the period of his total isolation. But nevertheless the analogy commits Aristotle to holding that what makes any of us human is our capacity for *polis* membership.[32]

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[31] Aristotle. *The Politics*.
[32] Taylor, p. 239.

Connecting this to self-governance, recall that my position is that the notion of self-governance can be best understood only in terms of the conception of the person or self underpinning it. Aristotle's conception is that of a eudaimonist and political self. That is, the self is something that desires happiness, and the things in accordance with it, but in virtue of being a political self, happiness can only be properly realized in some sort of social or political community. The natural priority of the state over the individual does not immediately affect the exercise of self-governance in a significant manner. For Aristotle still maintains that citizens, especially the best citizens will achieve flourishing by self-directing their activity to their own good and the good of the state, which ultimately turns out to be the same overall good. However, a combination of Aristotle's view on natural inequalities of psychological capacities and abilities and the way in which he construes the priority of the state over the individual leads to the denial that all people possess a legitimate claim or right to govern themselves. This denial is either total or limited, depending on certain factors.

In the passage below, Taylor offers a summary of Aristotle's view on the principles determining the organization of the household, principles which also obtain for the organization of the state.

> Household management involves the rule of the developed practical wisdom of the patriarch over slaves, females, and children, all types of human beings who, in Aristotle's view, lack that developed wisdom; "the slave does not have the faculty of deliberation, the female has it, but in a form lacking authority, and the child has it, but in an incomplete form" (1260a12-14). Since that deficiency makes them unable to

> provide adequately for their own lives...they must make good the deficiency by dependence on the wisdom of the patriarch.[33]

In this passage, Aristotle simply reiterates Plato's view that if a person lacks the appropriate capacities, he lacks the authority to govern himself. This view in and of itself seems to be unproblematic. However, further comments by Aristotle slightly confuse the matter. Regarding the organization of the state, Aristotle advocates a type of limited democracy where the citizens, men who are not foreigners or slaves, take turns making the political decisions. In this system, these citizens have the right to direct their own activity to their own good. However, Aristotle recognizes that his principles of unequal capacities and priority of state theoretically commit him to maintaining that if an eminently wise group of rulers were to exist, then even the well-educated men, i.e., the full citizens of the democracy, would forfeit their right to rule in deference to the wise men.

> Since every association of persons forming a state consists of rulers and ruled, we must ask whether those who rule and those who are ruled ought to be different persons or the same throughout life; for the education which will be needed will depend upon which way we make this distinction. If one group of persons were far superior to all the rest as we believe gods and heroes to be superior to men, and if they had both bodies and souls of such outstanding quality that the superiority of the rulers were indisputable and evident to those ruled by them, then it would obviously be better that the same set of persons should always rule and the others always be ruled, once and for all. But since this is not a condition that can easily be obtained, and since rulers are not so greatly superior to their subjects as Scylax says the kings are in India, it is clear that, for a variety of reasons, all must share alike in the business of ruling and being ruled by turns (VII, xiv, 1332b12).

The apparent puzzle here is that the authority to self-govern might be interpreted to be relative not simply to one's own psychological capacities, but

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[33] Taylor, p. 245.

also relative to the capacities of others. So the situation might obtain where one day person x has the proper authority to rule himself in virtue of his abilities, but the next day, due to the arrival of others far superior to him, he loses his authority. I need to untangle several issues here.

It is not clear in Aristotle that being politically ruled by another precludes all self-governance on the part of the citizen. So, where he is clear that children, women, and slaves actually lack the abilities necessary for self-rule and therefore are in need of being governed by another, both politically and otherwise, it does not follow that political rule on the part of another prevents self-governance. In fact, based on Aristotle's description of democracy of citizens of equal capacities taking turns ruling and being ruled, it seems that he does think self-governance as outlined in his *Nicomachean Ethics* can and should occur in both situations.

For the sake of argument, though, I will grant that being ruled by another in a strong political sense, especially if one is ruled for life by another, does preclude the possession of proper authority to self-govern. Even if this is so, strictly speaking, Aristotle does not seem to violate the Platonic biconditional (a principle, I believe, he accepts), which states, fully possessing psychological capacities requisite for self-governance is a necessary and sufficient condition for possessing the proper authority to exercise self-governance. The reason for this is that for Aristotle, only that group of far superior humans would fully possess psychological capacities requisite for self-governance. In the absence of such individuals, the group of people

whose psychological capacities are second best become top dog, and therefore possess rightful authority to self-govern, although the right would not be inalienable.

The remaining difficulty pertains to the role of the virtues. Aristotle's account in the *Nicomachean Ethics* contends that what fully actualizes a person's psychological capacities are the virtues relevant to each capacity. So, for instance, to possess fully the intellectual psychological capacity pertaining to moral knowledge, one needs the relevant virtue of prudence, and to motivate oneself appropriately in matters concerning sensual pleasure, one must have the virtue of temperance, and so on. The problem is that in this same work Aristotle seems optimistic that a good number of people can acquire these virtues, fully actualize their capacities, and thereby justifiedly govern themselves. However, in the passage above cited from *The Politics,* Aristotle seems to undermine his Nicomachean picture somewhat. I leave this as an unresolved puzzle, but one that does not undercut my theses, in that the superior few would still fully govern themselves on any reading of these passages.

The upshot of all of these comments on slaves, women, children, and perhaps even educated, refined men in certain circumstances is that there is clearly no recognition of self-governance rights to all people, even all adult persons. It just so happens that given the intellectual and deliberative abilities of relatively large groups of males, the most practicable political constitution is one in which these males do in fact govern themselves. Moreover, within this

arrangement, they even seem to have the right to direct their lives as they see fit in virtue of their capacities.

In sum, for Aristotle, self-governance plays a central role in his moral and political theory, though the concept is applied most properly to only a small minority of the human population.

2.5: The Stoics

The Stoics uphold the tradition of treating ethics, both theoretical and practical, as first and foremost the discipline of thought that directs the individual to her proper end, namely happiness. The eudaimonistic framework mandates that good things are those which are conducive to or constitutive of happiness, while bad things are those which hinder the attainment of happiness in some way. Perhaps the most prominent theme that runs throughout Stoic thought is the role and importance of Nature, and in ethics too we find that it is Nature that determines the standard that distinguishes the good from the bad.

i. Nature and Nature's Laws

A. A. Long presents the following report on Nature and its role in Stoic ethics.

> Logic and natural philosophy prepare the ground for ethics...Nature, which the 'physicist' and the dialectician investigate from specific points of view, is also in Stoicism the ultimate source of everything which has value. So Chrysippus wrote: 'There is no possible or more suitable way to approach the subject of good and bad things, the virtues and happiness than from universal Nature and the management of the universe.' Nature (God, *pneuma*, cause, *logos*, or destiny) is a perfect being, and the value of anything else in the world

> depends upon its relationship to Nature. Accordance with Nature denotes positive value and contrariness to Nature the opposite.[34]

Both a descriptive and prescriptive account of nature underpins Stoic anthropology and ethics. Ethical theory is indebted to an account of nature, both universal Nature and human nature, and moreover, ethical principles derive from the same sources. Because human nature plays a significant role, the Stoics give to it careful attention. Such attention is evident in their characterization of the distinct stages of maturation of human nature in an individual. The development of human nature from infancy to fully mature adulthood affects and determines what actions are deemed appropriate and inappropriate.

Cicero analyzes human nature's development as a process consisting of five stages.

> The starting point being, then, so constituted that what is natural is to be taken for its own sake and what is unnatural is to be rejected, the first appropriate action (for that is what I call *kathekon*) is that it should preserve itself in its natural constitution; and then that it should retain what is according to nature and reject what is contrary to nature. After this [pattern of] selection and rejection is discovered, there then follows appropriate selection, and then constant [appropriate] selection, and finally [selection] which is stable and in agreement with nature; and here for the first time we begin to have and to understand something which can truly be called good. For man's first sense of congeniality is to what is according to nature; but as soon as he gets an understanding, or rather a conception and sees the ordering and, I might say, concord of things which are to be done, he then values that more highly than all those things which he loved in the beginning, and he comes to a conclusion by intelligence and reasoning, with the result that he decides that this is what the highest good for man consists in, which is to be praised and chosen for its own sake (3.20-21).[35]

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[34] Long, p. 179.
[35] Cicero. *On Goals.*

Long offers an informative interpretation of Cicero's analysis, and shows how the notion of function plays a pivotal role in Stoic thought from both an anthropolgical and ethical perspective.

> From infancy onwards a pattern of behavior is sanctioned by Nature as appropriate to man (and other creatures), but the pattern changes as man matures from a creature whose responses are purely animal-like and instinctive into an adult fully endowed with reason. Each of the five stages traced by Cicero assigns a function to human beings which is appropriate to them at particular periods of their development. Human nature, as so defined, is an evolving phenomenon, a concept which gives distinctive character to Stoic ethics. Things which are appropriate at an early stage do not cease to be such later. But their relation to the function of a man changes as he changes. Each new stage adds something which modifies the immediately preceding function. The goal of the progression is life in accordance with mature human nature, that is, a life governed by rational principles which are in complete harmony with the rationality, goals, and processes of universal Nature.[36]

The defining feature of human nature in the mature individual, and therefore human nature most properly conceived, is reason. Living according to or consistently with nature at this final stage is living according to the law or precepts of nature that reason discerns. The notion of law and its role in guiding conduct is another important element in Stoic thought. Their idea is that nature itself contains a law that is binding on human conduct. Cicero treats this notion of natural law and its connection to action throughout his *Laws*. He introduces the general concept of law and some related notions in the following passage where he seeks to uncover the origin of justice.

> Now let us investigate the origins of Justice. Well then, the most learned men have determined to begin with Law, and it would seem that they are right, if, according to their definition, Law is the highest reason, implanted by Nature, which commands what ought to be done and forbids the opposite. This reason, when firmly fixed and fully

[36] Long, p. 188.

> developed in the human mind, is Law. And so they believe that Law is intelligence, whose natural function it is to command right conduct and forbid wrongdoing...For as they have attributed the idea of fairness to the word law, so we have given it that of selection, though both ideas properly belong to Law. Now if this is correct, as I think it to be in general, then the origin of Justice is to be found in Law, for Law is a natural force; it is the mind and reason of the intelligent man, the standard by which Justice and Injustice are measured (I. vi.).[37]

Nature promulgates its own law that morally binds human behavior. Cicero notes that the idea of selection pertains to the notion of law. The idea of selection refers to the process of choice that undergoes change as human nature develops, as indicated in the preceding passage from Cicero. Hence, there are natural law precepts relevant to each of the five developmental stages of human nature, though what most concerns Stoic thinkers are the laws pertinent to a fully mature, and therefore fully rational, person.

Reason in tandem with nature, specifically the law of nature, dictates what is acceptable and unacceptable with regard to action. So an ethical standard for action guidance is in place. This standard represents the proper object of moral epistemology. If a person were to know nature's moral laws, then he would meet the epistemic condition necessary for self-governance. I will begin fleshing out this issue and others by turning to the Stoic moral ideal: the sage.

ii. The Sage

The Stoic sage or wise person is an individual who is fully knowledgeable and flourishing. The sage represents the pinnacle of moral

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[37] Cicero. *Laws.*

formation and development. Referring to the sage and virtue, Diogenes Laertius notes,

> The wise man does everything well, as we also say that Ismenias plays all the flute tunes well...They say that the virtues follow on each other and that he who has one has them all. For [the virtues'] theoretical principles are common...For he who has virtue has a theoretical knowledge of what is to be done and also practises it. And what one is to do and choose is also what one is to endure for and stand firmly by and distribute, so that if he does some things by way of choosing and others by way of enduring and others by way distributing and others by standing firmly by [something], one will be prudent and courageous and just and temperate (7.125).[38]

The sage is fully virtuous, which includes both intellectual and moral virtues. It is through the intellectual virtues, especially prudence (*phronesis*) that the sage has full access to the moral law. Because the sage has full knowledge of moral standards, he easily fulfills the epistemic condition of self-governance. Moreover, for the Stoics, the virtues are essentially connected, so that if a person possesses one virtue fully, he possesses all of them fully. In other words, the sage not only completely has the intellectual virtues relevant to knowledge of moral laws, he also embodies the moral virtues, which pertain to the proper cultivation of emotions and other issues surrounding motivation. These other moral virtues, such as courage and temperance, produce good emotional states.

Long remarks on the sage's proper knowledge and emotional comportment.

> [The sage] knows infallibly what should be done in each situation of life and takes every step to do it at the right time and in the right way...[He] is free from passion. Anger, anxiety, cupidity, dread, elation, these and similar extreme emotions are all absent from his disposition. He does

[38] Laertius, Diogenes.

> not regard pleasure as something good, nor pain as something evil...The Stoic sage is not insensitive to painful or pleasurable sensations, but they do not 'move his soul excessively'. He is impassive towards them. But he is not entirely impassive...His disposition is characterized by 'good emotional states.'[39]

The absence of extreme passions and the cultivation of good emotional dispositions allow for proper motivation. The motivational requirement is fulfilled in the sage in virtue of his inner calm and tranquillity, i.e., his moral virtuousness. The eudaimonist motivational structure underpinning Stoic thought allows for motives issuing from internal sources. Full knowledge of what the law dictates provides a natural desire to act appropriately. Only uncultivated passions and related inner turmoil can undercut this natural motivational process.

In the context of the sage, the Stoics make explicit claims about the proper authority to self-govern. Diogenes Laertius notes the following about the sage.

> He alone is free, and the base men are slaves; for freedom is the authority to act on one's own, while slavery is the privation of [the ability] to act on one's own...Not only are the wise free, but they are also kings, since kingship is a form of rule not subject to review, which only the wise could have...For [Chrysippus] says that the ruler must know about good and bad things and that none of the base understands these things (7.121-122).

The sage possesses the right to rule himself, as indicated by the claim that true and full freedom bestows the proper authority to act on one's own judgment and not be subject to the review of others. True and full freedom issue from the sage's virtue, which are those qualities that enable the full cultivation of the psychological capacities relating to knowledge, motivation,

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[39] Long, p. 205-207.

and choice. The Stoics affirm the Platonic biconditional, which claims that fully possessing psychological capacities requisite for self-governance is a necessary and sufficient condition for possessing the proper authority to exercise self-governance. A full possession of the requisite capacities involves the cultivation of the virtues, which enables the capacities to become fully functional.

So, like Plato and Aristotle before them, the Stoics develop a robust conception of self-governance, and that concept proves to play a central, positive role in their ethical theory. Also like Plato and Aristotle, the Stoic affirmation of the self-governance biconditional and their thesis that not all individuals have the requisite capacities, or at least such individuals do not have sufficiently developed capacities, as indicated by the passage above, commit them to holding that not all people have the proper authority to govern their own lives.

iii. The Base

Consonant with the preceding ethical tradition, the Stoics spend considerable effort detailing the nature of the worst possible person, the base or vicious individual. Moral development sometimes goes astray, and the Stoics believe it is important to discover the exact causes of such moral degeneration, particularly so that such a state of wretchedness can be avoided by others. Recall Cicero's description of the developmental stages of human nature.

> The starting point being, then, so constituted that what is natural is to be taken for its own sake and what is unnatural is to be rejected, the

> first appropriate action (for that is what I call *kathekon*) is that it should preserve itself in its natural constitution; and then that it should retain what is according to nature and reject what is contrary to nature. After this [pattern of] selection and rejection is discovered, there then follows appropriate selection, and then constant [appropriate] selection, and finally [selection] which is stable and in agreement with nature (*On Goals*. 3.20).

The goal of this development is to reach full maturity, which is characterized by rationality and life in accordance with it. This goal, however, is not always attained. Long remarks to this effect.

> The majority of men never fully attain to the final stage, and many of them do not reach even the fourth. If this were a purely descriptive statement of evolution from infancy to maturity foolish or bad men would not exist. They do exist because...the perfection of human nature is not determined independently of man's own efforts.[40]

There is an inequality with respect to capacity for self-governance because there exist varying degrees of developing this capacity, or what is the same thing, moral development. Some people get stuck at an earlier stage of maturation. Long mentions that some do not even reach the fourth stage of constant appropriate selection. What follows from his point is that a fair number of people develop only to the stage where they have sufficient knowledge and ability to choose appropriately, but they then fail to choose appropriately in a consistent manner. Coupled with other Stoic passages, the picture that emerges is one similar to Plato's description of the degeneration of the soul. The Stoics maintain that most every adult person has at least minimal knowledge of appropriate action, but at some point in the development of many adults, there is a moral failure to tame the passions. The passions gradually gain strength and eventually take over.

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[40] Long, p. 188.

> Everyone in a state of passion turns his back on reason, not like those who are deceived on some point or other, but in a special sense. For those who are deceived, about atoms being principles for instance, when they are taught that they do not exist, then abandon their belief. But those who are in a state of passion, even if they do learn and are taught that one should not suffer pain or fear or generally experience any of the passions of the soul, still do not abandon them but are drawn by the passions into being dominated by their tyrannical rule (10a)[41]

Once baseness becomes entrenched, the possibility of self-rule is precluded. The vices prevent the psychological capacities relevant to self-governance from being accessible. The base individual's passions cause him to be perpetually inattentive to the moral law, and the same passions prevent him from motivating himself to do what is contrary to the promptings of vice.

However, in the non-extreme cases, self-governance, even if not fully realized as in the instance of the sage, plays an important role, particularly in near mature and mature human beings who are not yet wise. In these cases, from the Stoic viewpoint, a person has some capacity for self-rule by both an incomplete mastery of the passions and some knowledge from natural inclinations and reason about what is appropriate. Also, when such a person finds herself in a situation where her limited moral knowledge is insufficient, the Stoics recommend looking to the sage and imitating his behavior, since he always does what is most appropriate. So by asking the question, "What would Socrates or Zeno have done in these circumstances? (33)[42], a person can in a sense extend her moral knowledge to help make the appropriate decision. Though only the sage has full authority to self-govern, many others

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[41] Stobaeus, John, *Anthology.*
[42] Epictetus. *Handbook of Epictetus.*

have the ability to do so, and should do so for the most part. The mature non-sagacious person, like Plato's timocratic individual and perhaps Aristotle's democratic citizen, has a legitimate, though truncated possession of the right to govern himself.

In sum, the Stoics prize self-governance as necessary to full flourishing. Human nature gives to the average person what is necessary to minimally exercise the capacity of self-rule, but through poor decision-making, a person may lose the ability to perform such governance. Only the sage who has a fully developed capacity of self-governance is thought to have full authority or right to govern himself completely.

2.6: Augustine

The preceding philosophers offer to us a remarkably unified narrative of ethical inquiry and theory. The homogeneity of themes and issues no doubt arises from the careful consideration that each thinker rendered to his predecessors. The leap from the Stoics to Augustine causes a noticeable rift in this narrative. Augustine's thought consists of a loosely systematic attempt to articulate, explain, and defend the various doctrines of Christianity and its associated worldview. Moreover, Augustine did not have access to many of the texts from the preceding Greek (and Roman, depending on how Stoics such as Cicero are classified) tradition.

Nevertheless, Augustine was both familiar with and influenced by thinkers and themes of this tradition due to his pre-Christian conversion

education and consequent career in rhetoric. The Stoic theory of law is an instance of such an influence. Due to this connection, Augustine's account of law is a fitting place to begin my overview.

i. The Law and God's Authority

Augustine adopts and adapts Cicero's distinction of kinds of laws into his own explication of God's ruling activity and authority over His creation, namely humanity. Recall that Cicero believes that in nature there is a universal and fixed law. All other laws, such as civil law, are evaluated against this universal standard. Cicero states in his *Laws,*

> But in fact we can perceive the difference between good laws and bad by referring them to no other standard than Nature (I, xvi, 45).

Nature's laws are in turn discovered by right reason.

> For those creatures who have received the gift of reason from Nature have also received right reason, and therefore they have also received the gift of law, which is right reason applied to command and prohibition (I, xi, 33).

On Augustine's Christianized account, this fixed law is referred to as eternal law, while all other laws are deemed temporal.

> I think too that you understand that in temporal law there is nothing just and lawful which men have not derived from eternal law...To put in a few words, as best I can, the notion of eternal law that has been impressed upon our minds: it is that law by which it is just that everything be ordered in the highest degree (*On Free Choice of the Will*, I, vi, 50-51).[43]

The eternal law provides the evaluative standard upon which all other laws and precepts are to be judged. Most importantly, though, is that the eternal law is God's law. Augustine maintains that God is responsible for the

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[43] Augustine. *On Free Choice of the Will.*

law and that it is He who impresses this law upon the minds of human beings in order to provide a standard of right conduct.[44] The notion of God's eternal law constitutes a fundamental element in Augustine's thought, for it is through this notion that Augustine explains God's authority and rulership over His creation. God rules over humanity, in part, by impressing standards upon us. This idea of rulership raises a general conceptual issue that I need to address.

In Schneewind's interpretation of Aquinas, he claims that Aquinas precludes self-governance through his insistence that God rules over us. I have already addressed this point in chapter 1, but it raises a more general objection concerning conceptual consistency. One might think that the concept of a supreme being ruling human beings automatically precludes the possibility of self-governance on the part of humanity. For how could a person rule himself, if he were already ruled by God? In other words, affirming both self-governance and God's governance seems to result in an inconsistency.

However, I do not believe that these two notions are logically inconsistent. Consider the following model. If by God's rule, it is meant the moral law God has decreed for human beings, i.e., an objective moral standard by which a person should live her life, then there is no more incompatibility between self-governance and God's rule than with self-

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[44] An issue of some importance is whether the eternal law is understood by Augustine in a voluntaristic or intellectualist manner. Bits of both characterizations are to be found in Augustine, making an interpretation difficult. For a citation of contemporary scholarship on this issue, see Burt, O.S.A, p. 41.

governance and any objective moral standard. A person would govern her life according to the standards set forth by God. Now, I am not maintaining that anyone who affirms God's governance of His creation also affirms that human beings can govern themselves. My general point is only that the concepts of self-governance and God's rule are not logically incompatible.

Specifically, I do not believe Augustine conceptualizes the two notions inconsistently. According to Augustine, God rules us through His eternal law, and He, as creator, has the proper authority to do so. Augustine treats the issue of self-governance within the context of humanity's response to the eternal law. In fact, this context provides the backdrop for much of his ethical theory.

ii. Free Choice of the Will

Augustine's ethical theory is structured by the same eudaimonistic considerations as in the ancient thinkers.

> Insofar as all men seek the happy life, they do not err. Insofar as each man fails to follow the road of life that leads to happiness, although he may confess and profess that he is unwilling to arrive anywhere except at happiness, he is in error. His error is that he follows something that does not lead to where he wishes to arrive. The greater his error on the road of life, the less his wisdom, and the further he is from the truth in which the highest good is discerned and grasped. Moreover, when the highest good has been pursued and obtained, each man becomes happy-which beyond a doubt is what we all wish (II, ix, 101-102).

Human beings desire happiness. Legitimate moral standards, in effect, demarcate between good and bad things and related activities, therefore guiding a person to what is good, i.e., what contributes to happiness. On this view, the highest good, which assures complete happiness, is God.

Augustine introduces a new concept, or at least emphasizes in a new way, when he discusses why not all people achieve happiness. This concept is that of the will (*voluntas*).[45] In the following exchange, Augustine explains this function of the will.

> Augustine: But do you think that every man does not in every way want and desire the happy life?
> Evodius: Who doubts that every man wants a happy life?
> Augustine: Why then do not all men achieve it? For we have said and agreed between us that it is by the will that men merit a happy life, and by the will that they merit an unhappy one...Thus when we say that men are unhappy because of their will, we do not mean that they wish to be unhappy, but that they are in that state of will where unhappiness must result even if they do not want it (I, xiv, 99; 102).

According to Augustine, a person is free in the sense of having the ability to choose one course of action over another. The locus of this freedom resides in the capacity or power or the will. The will, then, is the central feature of his ethical theory. For if a person stands to merit happiness or otherwise, it is in virtue of his exercise of the will. Augustine underscores the will's centrality in his summary of Book I of *On Free Choice of the Will.*

> We have established, moreover, that what each man chooses to pursue and to love lies in his own will, and that the mind cannot be disposed from the citadel of mastery or from right order by anything except the will (I, xvi, 114).

A person is happy if he loves God above all other things and obeys His laws. Every person is capable of obtaining this happiness on account of the power of the will to either seek or spurn the path to the highest good.

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[45] Perhaps the best account of Augustine's concept of will as new is that of Albrecht Dihle's study.

iii. Conditions for Self-Governance

Augustine seems to develop a moral theory that acknowledges and defines an important role for self-governance. Through the will's freedom, a person is able to direct her own life, with the road to happiness lying in the eternal law of God. Augustine devotes much thought to the consideration of the capacities relevant to self-governance. Like the Stoics, Augustine often develops his moral positions through the example and nature of the moral ideal: the wise man. Augustine also expands on his moral ideas by describing the process of becoming a wise individual.

> So even if the goods are many and varied from which each man may choose what he wishes, determining to discern, grasp, and enjoy the highest good rightly and truly, nevertheless, it is possible that the very light of wisdom, in which these goods can be discerned and grasped, is one wisdom common to all wise men (II, ix, 108).

This wisdom, in turn, instructs a person on how to master himself.

> Therefore, when reason, whether mind or spirit, rules the irrational emotions, then there exists in man the very mastery which the law that we know to be eternal prescribes (I, viii, 65).

As a person conforms himself to the law that he understands in virtue of wisdom, he achieves increasing control over what he can do relative to his own capacities. In the following conversation, Augustine further clarifies the positive impact that wisdom acquisition has in a person's life. One note of explanation: for Augustine 'incorruption' refers to what is eternal and unchanging, while 'corruption' refers to what is temporal and changing.

> Augustine: Likewise, doesn't that man who lives prudently choose incorruption and judge that incorruption is to be preferred to corruption?
> Evodius: Most clearly.

> Augustine: Therefore, when he chooses to turn his spirit to that which no one doubts should be chosen, it cannot be denied, can it, that he chooses wisely?
> Evodius: Of course not.
> Augustine: When, therefore, he turns his mind to a wise choice, he does so wisely.
> Evodius: Certainly.
> Augustine: And he acts wisely who is not turned by fear or punishment from what he chooses or turns to wisely.
> Evodius: Without a doubt.
> Augustine: It is very clear, then, that all that we have called the rules and lights to virtue are a part of wisdom, inasmuch as the more a man uses them in leading his life, the more wisely he acts and lives. Moreover, whatever is done wisely cannot rightly be said to be separate from wisdom (II, x, 117-118).

Augustine advocates that all people should pursue this path of wisdom so as to satisfy their most basic desire for happiness.

> But it is by clinging to truth and wisdom, which are common to all, that all men may become wise and happy (II, xix, 197).

These passages contain a wealth of information pertaining to a person's psychological capacities. Augustine contends that it is possible to know the eternal moral standards, which are adequate for knowing what actions are appropriate and which are not. He, therefore, satisfies the epistemic requirement for self-governance. Also, he affirms the principle that a person has the capacity to motivate himself through internal sources, and even in spite of the threat of punishment, to act according to moral standards. His theory, then, contains the motivational condition for self-governance. Augustine proceeds to explain how these capacities should be exercised.

> No one becomes prudent through another's prudence, or brave through another's courage, or temperate through another's temperance. So too, on one becomes just through the justice of another. Instead, man obtains virtues by adapting his spirit to the immutable rules and lights of those virtues which dwell incorruptible in

> truth itself and in common wisdom, to which the virtuous man has adapted himself and fitted his spirit. The man seeking virtue has determined to imitate this spirit, because it is endowed with virtue. Therefore the will, clinging to common and immutable goods, obtains the first and great goods of man, although it is itself only an intermediate good (II, xix, 198).

A person cannot obtain the goods necessary for happiness unless she governs herself through the capacities explaind above. Augustine encourages all to do those things conducive to happiness. Hence, he encourages all people to exercise self-governance. Though he doesn't speak of it in these terms, he seems to recognize through his encouragement that persons have the authority to exercise self-governance.

Augustine also warns against the adverse consequences of exercising self-governance poorly.

> The will, however, commits sin when it turns away from immutable and common goods, towards its private good, either something external to itself or lower than itself. It turns to its own private good when it desires to be its own master; it turns to external goods when it busies itself with the private affairs of others or with whatever is none of its concern; it turns to goods lower than itself when it loves the pleasures of the body. Thus a man becomes proud, meddlesome, and lustful; he is caught up in another life which, when compared to the higher one, is death (II, xix, 199-200).

No doubt this passage calls for careful consideration and clarification. Augustine has been formulating a position which advocates that a person should utilize the capacities and abilities that he possesses for the sake of directing himself to the acquisition of virtue and other goods conducive to happiness. Now, however, he makes it clear that the eternal law (which is shorthand for God's will at this point) decrees that it is unacceptable and morally wrong for the will to be its own master. A person succumbs to the

vice of pride by seeking to cling to things for private gain and personal aggrandizement. So, it may seem that Augustine is not encouraging self-governance after all. I will let Augustine finish his thought and then offer an explanation.

> Yet [the person who commits sin] is ruled by the administration of divine providence, which places everything in its proper order and gives to each what is his own. So it follows that [1] neither the goods desired by sinners, nor the free will itself which we found to have been numbered among certain intermediate goods, are evil in any way, and that [2] evil is a turning away from immutable goods. This turning away and turning toward result in the just punishment of unhappiness, because they are committed, not under compulsion, but voluntarily (II,xix, 200).

Augustine is not undercutting his earlier positive comments on self-governance. God's eternal law decrees that each person is to seek good things in their proper axiological order. A person has both the knowledge and motivational capacity, at least potentially, necessary to direct her actions according to the law. A person governs herself badly when she shuns this law and seeks to be her "own master" relative to the eternal law/God's will. The upshot of this position is that it is prideful and wrong to act as if the law does not apply to you. Humans are not their own master with respect to the law, for that law is morally binding in all cases. But relative to one's own actions, a person both has the capacities, authority, and even obligation to direct one's own activity.

As it turns out, the model I proposed for reconciling God's ruling authority and self-governance in section i is essentially Augustinian. God

governs each person through His law, but each person governs himself through freely choosing his actions and resultant character.

iv. Moral Obligation and the Effects of Sin

Up to now, I have not discussed the nature and role of moral obligation, i.e., the obligation a person has to conform his behavior to proper moral standards, within this historical narrative. The notion of moral duty/obligation is not absent in the ancient period, for instance, the Stoics discuss the idea in some detail. However, issues of obligation do not substantially intersect with those of self-governance until Augustine, or so I maintain.

Recall from chapter 1 that Kant believes the source of obligation must be internal to a person for him to be autonomous and therefore fully self-governing. For if a person were to submit to the external authority of another person, he would not truly be governing himself but rather be governed by another. Schneewind thinks this notion of internal authority is new with Kant, or at least not present in say the modern natural law tradition, some contributors of which had theories of self-governance. Hence, according to Schneewind's own account, obligation and its source do not really constitute a necessary feature or presupposition of self-governance. Nevertheless, I believe it is an important issue that, due at least to its historical relevance to Kant's influential notions of self-governance and autonomy, needs to be treated closely.

Augustine's thought on the notion of moral obligation plays a doubly consequential role in my historical account, because of its impact on both Aquinas and late medieval divine command theorists. Both sides cite Augustine as justification for their own positions, which are opposed to one another. This bilateral usage is made possible because Augustine's writings on these matters are a bit perplexing and seemingly inconsistent. Augustine's views of moral obligation are intimately connected with his characterization of human nature, which in turn is affected by his stance on the effects of sin. In this section I will draw from Augustine's *The City of God.* This work was written long after *On Free Choice of the Will,* and its characterization of the effects of sin on human nature is much more severe and devastating relative to his earlier works. I will look at a couple of entries from *The City of God* that treat both sin and obedience. Augustine articulates the general stance that humanity stands to God in a relation of obedience to Him, and therefore we have an obligation to follow His will. Any and all disobedience to His will is termed 'sin.'

> We have already stated in the preceding books that God, desiring not only that the human race might be able by their similarity of nature to associate with one another, but also that they might be bound together in harmony and peace by the ties of relationship, was pleased to derive all men from one individual, and created man with such a nature that the members of the race not have died, had not the two first (of whom the one was created out of nothing, and the other out of him) merited this by their disobedience; for by them so great a sin was committed, that by it human nature was altered for the worse, and was transmitted also to their posterity, liable to sin and subject to death (XIV, 1).[46]
>
> Therefore, because the sin was a despising of the authority of God- ...who had laid upon him neither many, nor great, nor difficult

[46] Augustine. *The City of God.*

> commandments, but, in order to make a wholesome obedience easy to him, had given him a single very brief and very light precept by which He reminded that creature whose service was to be free that He was Lord-it was just that condemnation followed, and condemnation such that man, who by keeping the commandments should have been spirited even in his flesh, became fleshly even in this spirit; and as in his pride he had sought to be his own satisfaction, God in His justice abandoned him to himself, not to live in the absolute independence he affected, but instead of the liberty he desired, to live dissatisfied with himself in a hard and miserable bondage to him to whom by sinning he had yielded himself (XIV, 15).

The account that emerges from these descriptions is that God commands each and every person to obey Him, and the attendant moral obligation to do this results from God. So, the obligation to follow God's law stems not from a source internal to a person but directly from God's will. Yet other passages considered previously seem to indicate that a person's knowledge of both the law and the law's happiness-guiding function suffices for obligation. In other words, the former account locates the source of obligation in the will of God, while the latter account points to something internal to the capacities of human nature. I suppose one could give an account that resolves the perceived tensions in these texts, but that is not important here. More to the point is that Augustine sets forth ideas that could reasonable be interpreted and developed in different ways. Furthermore, his many thoughts and ideas proved fertile to ensuing thinkers in just this manner.

Chapter 3: Aquinas' Account of Human Nature and Ethics

Aquinas' moral theory provides the strongest evidence against Schneewind's claim that pre-modern moral philosophy was devoid of the concept of self-governance. Schneewind never treats the ancient moral theorists explicitly in *IA*, but he does consider certain medieval ethicists, beginning with Aquinas. My contention is that Schneewind's interpretation of Aquinas' moral theory is at best extremely misleading but more likely simply inaccurate. I will continue to counter Schneewind's account of the origin, development, and place of self-governance in the history of moral theory by offering a detailed and systematic interpretation of Aquinas' moral theory, especially his account of the nature and place of self-governance in morality.

I will approach Aquinas' theory by first exploring his overview of the relationship between God's providence or governance of creation and human self-governance. I will then summarize key elements of Aquinas' anthropology, psychology, and ethics that underpin his account of the inner-workings of self-direction. Against this backdrop, I will closely attend to the specific issues in Aquinas relevant to the epistemic, motivational, and authority notions relevant to my understanding of self-governance. Finally, I will consider Aquinas' account of the ultimate foundations of moral obligation and will look at the proper place of obedience in his account of ethics.

3.1: God's Providence and Self-Governance

Aquinas was above all else a theologian. As such, God is both the starting and focal point of his work. Moreover, his theology consists of integrating his own ideas with those who came before him, most notably Augustine. Perhaps Aquinas' most significant point of departure from Augustinian theology was his insistence that the effects of sin on human nature and its capacities were not as severe as Augustine had characterized them. Departures such as this notwithstanding, Aquinas' general approach to theology was to adhere to the primary contours of Augustine's thought. It is not surprising, therefore, that Aquinas devotes extensive space to the issue of God's providence over creation. It is within this setting that we first find Aquinas addressing the importance of self-governance for humanity.

i. Providence and the Human Species

In the following passage, Aquinas reflects on how God's rule or governance specifically affects humanity and within this reflection affirms that human beings rule themselves.

> Of course, the result of [God's] rule is manifested differently in different beings, depending on the diversity of their natures. For some beings so exist as God's products that, possessing understanding, they bear His likeness and reflect His image. *Consequently, they are not only ruled but are also rulers of themselves, in as much as their own actions are directed to a fitting end.* If these beings submit to the divine rule in their own ruling, then by virtue of the divine rule they are admitted to the achievement of their ultimate end; but, if they proceed otherwise in their own ruling, they are rejected" (III, 1, 4. Italics mine).[47]

[47] Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Contra Gentiles.*

The theme of human beings as rulers of themselves runs throughout Aquinas' thought, which of course should be unexpected if Schneewind's interpretation were correct.[48] Aquinas expands upon this notion of dual-rulership of humanity by both God and self in the next passage.

> First of all, then, the very way in which the intellectual creature was made, according as it is master of its own acts, demands providential care whereby this creature may provide for itself, on its own behalf; while the way in which other things were created, things which have no domination over their acts, shows this fact, that they are cared for, not for their own sake, but as subordinated to others. That which is moved only by another being has the formal character of an instrument, but that which acts of itself has the essential character of a principal agent. Now, an instrument is not valued for its own sake, but as useful to a principal agent. Hence, it must be that all the careful work that is devoted to instruments is actually done for the sake of the agent, as for an end, but what is done for the principal agent, either by himself or by another, is for his own sake, because he is the principal agent. Therefore, intellectual creatures are so controlled by God, as objects of care for their own sakes; while other creatures are subordinated, as it were, to rational creatures (III, 112, 1).

Having explained the fundamental difference between non-rational creatures, those who do not have mastery or dominion over their own actions, and rational creatures, those who do have such mastery, Aquinas further distinguishes the different approaches God takes in ruling them.

> Again, one who holds domination over his acts is free in his activity, "for the free man is he who acts for his own sake" (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 2). But one who is acted upon by another, under necessity, is subject to slavery. So, every other creature is naturally subject to slavery; only the intellectual creature is by nature free. Now, under every sort of government, provision is made for free men for

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[48] I want to stress that the terminology indicative of self-governance in Aquinas is not a mere artifact or accident of the English translation. Consider the Latin text of the italicized statement above. *Unde et ispa non solum sunt directa, sed et seipsa dirigentia secundum proprias actions in debitum finem* (*Opera Omnia*). *Dirigentia* derives from the verb *dirigere* meaning "to direct." *Seipsa* is a reflexive pronoun meaning "themselves." Hence *seipsa dirigentia* indicates that humans, in this case, direct or rule themselves, as captured in the translation above.

> their own sakes, but for slaves in such a way that they may be at the disposal of free men. And so, through divine providence provision is made for intellectual creatures on their own account, but for remaining creatures, for the sake of the intellectual ones (III, 112, 2).

God governs non-rational creatures by fully directing them to their ends. For instance, the squirrel has no choice but to scurry up a tree or bury acorns, due to an instinct that God has implanted into its nature. However, with humanity, God rules or governs in a different manner. He does endow human nature with basic inclinations or impulses, but He does not determine human beings to act automatically and blindly in accordance with those inclinations. Rather, through control or "domination" over action, humans can choose whether to act in accordance with the inclinations.

ii. Providence and the Individual Person

So far, Aquinas has explored how God's rule or governance is realized in the human species. Having established to his satisfaction that God rules humanity differently than other creatures, Aquinas turns his attention to how the individual human person is ruled by God, and how, as it turns out, the individual can exercise self-governance. Aquinas begins his analysis by contrasting the human individual with the individuals of other species.

> It is evident, as a result, that only the rational creature is directed by God to his actions, not only in accord with what is suitable to the species, but also in accord with what is suitable to the individual. Each thing appears to exist for the sake of its operation; indeed, operation is the ultimate perfection of a thing. Therefore, each thing is ordered to its action by God according to the way in which it is subordinated to divine providence. Now, a rational creature exists under divine providence as being governed and provided for in himself, and not simply for the sake of his species, as is the case with other corruptible creatures. For the individual that is governed only for the sake of the

> species is not governed for its own sake, but the rational creature is governed for his own sake (III, 113, 1).

God governs each individual human being, in virtue of being a free, intellectual creature, for the sake of that individual. God gives to each individual the guidance necessary to achieve happiness (the ultimate end) but does not necessitate the activity that would produce happiness. In the next passage, Aquinas speaks of the capacity of individual self-governance as a share or participation in divine providence that God gives to each human being.

> Furthermore, the [individual] rational creature is subject to divine providence in such a way that he is not only governed thereby, but is also able to know the rational plan of providence in some way. Hence, it is appropriate for him to exercise providence and government over other things. This is not the case with other creatures, for they participate in providence only to the extent of being subordinate to it. Through this possession of the capacity to exercise providence one may also direct and govern his own acts. *So, the rational creature participates in divine providence, not only by being governed passively, but also by governing actively, for he governs himself in his personal acts* (III, 113, 5. Italics mine).

Aquinas clearly affirms active self-governance on a person's part. He declares that God's providence does extend to each and every human being, but also that each and every person shares in this providence by governing his own activity.[49] Aquinas stresses the active role of human self-governance by contrasting its role to the mere passive participation in governance on the part of non-rational creatures.

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[49] Previously, Aquinas employed the verb *dirigere* to convey the idea that persons direct their own behavior. In this passage, he uses the verb *gubernare*, which adds the connotation of political governance. The italicized statement reads as, *Participat igitur rationalis creatura divinum providentiam no solum secundum gubernari, sed etiam secundum gubernare: gubernat enim se in suis actibus propriis* (*Opera Omnia*).

Throughout these passages Aquinas emphasizes both humanity's active and passive participation in God's ruling or providential care of creation. I have focused on the active element of self-governance in this section and will turn to the makeup of humanity's passive participation in the next couple of sections. I wish to underscore that the passive elements in God's governance of humanity in no way threaten or undermine Aquinas' positive remarks about self-governance. The gist of humanity's passive participation is that human nature possesses several natural inclinations, which form part of the foundation of the natural law. The moral law can be characterized at this point as the standard upon which human acts are evaluated as appropriate or inappropriate.

> Again, the rational creature, as we have said, is so subjected to divine providence that he even participates in a certain likeness of divine providence, in so far as he is able to govern himself in his own acts, and also others. Now, that whereby the acts of such agents are governed is called law. Quite appropriately, then, law was given to men by God (III, 114, 2).

Like Augustine, Aquinas' view of God's providence includes the moral law, which God gives to humans for guidance.

iii. Providence and Schneewind

Aquinas is keenly aware that he must make careful distinctions if he is going to support both individual human self-governance and God's governance of humanity. The distinctions he makes would allow him to reply quite easily to Schneewind's characterization of his theory, which I examined in chapter 1. Recall that Schneewind discusses how Aquinas interprets Paul's dictum that we are a law unto ourselves. Schneewind contends that

Aquinas interprets Paul in such a way as to favor an obedience-based conception of morality that entirely precludes self-governance. To re-quote, Schneewind states,

> [Paul's dictum] does not say that we rule ourselves [according to Aquinas]. "[P]roperly speaking," Thomas says, "none imposes a law on his own actions." Through awareness of the laws of nature, however imperfect, we participate in God's eternal law. But St. Paul means that the law is within us not only "as in one who rules, but also...as in one that is ruled." Our participation in the eternal law shows that we are not self-governed. We are governed by another.[50]

Given the position of Aquinas expressed in the preceding passages and even in the quote given by Schneewind, it is evident that Schneewind draws a wrong interpretive inference. Aquinas does affirm that we are governed by another, namely God. However, in virtue of our rational and intellectual nature, God rules us in such a way so as to both include and promote self-governance on our part. Schneewind seems to interpret Aquinas' comments about God's rule of non-rational creatures as applicable to human beings as well. Nevertheless, Aquinas' position is well articulated. God rules the non-rational creatures by necessitating them to their proper operation. The proper operation of human beings, on the other hand, includes self-governance, and for this reason, God's providence over us does not preclude, but rather promotes full individual self-governance. In sum, God's rule does not conflict with the recognition that individuals may possess the proper authority to self-govern.

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[50] Schneewind, p. 21.

3.2: Anthropology and Psychology

Aquinas plainly includes a notion he terms self-governance in his account of human nature and its proper activities. But is this all that needs to be said on the issue? Is what Aquinas calls "self-governance" the same general concept that is so important to late modern and contemporary moral theorists? Does Aquinas' notion include the idea that people are able to reason out for themselves what ought to be done and then motivate themselves to perform the appropriate action in the absence of external reinforcements? If individuals do in fact possess these capacities, do they have the proper moral authority to exercise them, or does "moral obligation" for most individuals consist of a mere deference to another person or institution?

I intend to answer these questions with the aim of establishing that the notion Aquinas refers to as active self-governance meets the three conditions used by Schneewind. In the next two sections, I will set forth the basic structure and content of Aquinas' account of human nature and ethics. My subsequent arguments will presuppose these elements in his general theory.

i. The Soul

Aquinas identifies the rational soul as the most distinctive feature of human nature, and therefore the individual person. The soul, in Aquinas' Aristotelian anthropology, is what makes a thing alive, and it provides the source of a given thing's capabilities and powers. The human soul has several capacities and powers. It has all of the capabilities of a vegetative soul, namely nourishment and reproduction, an animal soul, namely

sensation and movement, and lastly those abilities pertinent to the rational element, namely thinking, understanding, and free choice. The human person, then, has several abilities at his disposal in virtue of his nature as human.

Aquinas also contends that each ability found in human nature possesses a built-in inclination or appetite that naturally inclines a person to certain objects/ends. He explains that, "The natural appetite is that inclination which each thing has, of its own nature, for something; wherefore by its natural appetite each power desires something suitable to itself" (*Summa Theologica*, I, 78, 1).[51] A person, then, has several natural abilities or powers, such as sensation and reasoning, and each of these powers has a natural appetite or inclination to whatever is most suitable to it, which is a way of saying that the end or object sought by the inclination is what most enables the power in question to operate in the best possible manner.

ii. The Sensitive Appetite

The first of the soul's inherent abilities I wish to consider in some detail are those relating to its sensitive nature, which refers to sensation through the five senses. For Aquinas, the soul has a basic impulse or inclination to seek or avoid objects perceived through perception. This inclination is called the sensitive appetite. The sensitive appetite is a moving or motivating power. A person is motivated to seek food, for instance, through the sensitive appetite causing him to desire food immediately grasped by the senses, or mediately

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[51] Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*.

through memory. Aquinas distinguished two basic kinds of desires within the sensitive appetite: the concupiscible and the irascible.

> The sensitive appetite is one generic power, and is called sensuality; but it is divided into two powers, which are species of the sensitive appetite-the irascible and the concupiscible. In order to make this clear, we must observe that in natural corruptible things there is needed an inclination not only to the acquisition of what is suitable and to the avoiding of what is harmful, but also to resistance against corruptive and contrary agencies which are a hindrance to the acquisition of what is suitable, and are productive of harm...Therefore, since the sensitive appetite is an inclination following sensitive apprehension...there must needs be in the sensitive part two appetite powers-one through which the soul is simply inclined to seek what is suitable, according to the senses, and to fly from what is hurtful, and this is called the concupiscible: and another, whereby an animal resists these attacks that hinder what is suitable, and inflict harm, and this is called the irascible (I, 81, 2).

In Aquinas' account of the basic psychological makeup common to all human beings, there are inherent motivating powers that pertain to self-preservation and bodily well-being. As Aquinas continues to construct his psychological theory, he affirms that the rational abilities of human nature have a fair degree of hegemony over these bodily desires. Replying to an objection that contends that the sensitive appetite does not obey reason, Aquinas develops the following line of thought.

> But the intellect or reason is said to rule the irascible and concupiscible by a politic power: because the sensitive appetite has something of its own, by virtue whereof it can resist the commands of reason. For the sensitive appetite is naturally moved, not only by the estimative power in other animals, and in many by the cogitative power which the universal reason guides, but also by imagination and sense. Whence it is that we experience that the irascible and concupiscible powers do resist reason, inasmuch as we sense or imagine something pleasant, which reason forbids, or unpleasant, which reason commands. And so from the fact that the irascible and concupiscible resist reason in something, we must not conclude that they do not obey [reason] (I, 81, 3).

Aquinas, like his predecessors in the eudaimonistic self-governance tradition, carefully attends to human nature's psychological capacities because self-governance begins with these capacities. Human beings have basic motivating powers correlated with sensory apprehension, but as it stands, those powers are not always under the complete control of a person. Much of Aquinas' ethics is dedicated to deciphering ways of mastering this source of motivation so that an individual can effectively govern himself. There is one last important feature of Aquinas' psychology that is relevant to self-governance-namely, the will and its relation to reason.

iii. The Rational Will

Aquinas formulates his account of the free, rational will in part through a combination of Aristotle's insights into the voluntary nature of action and Augustine's more specific notion of the will as the locus of freedom in a person. Aquinas situates his account within the context of the soul's constitutive powers and attendant appetites. He develops his notion of the will by considering its rational appetitive nature. I cite two complementary passages that shed a great deal of light on the two main, interrelated features of the human will. The first passage spells out the will's rational characteristics through a comparison with brute or non-human animals, which lack reason. The second passage supplements the first by fleshing out the will's natural appetitiveness.

> Man has free-will: otherwise counsels, exhortations, commands, prohibitions, rewards and punishments would be in vain. In order to make this evident, we must observe that some things act without

judgment; as a stone moves downwards; and in like manner all things which lack knowledge. And some act from judgment, but not a free judgment; as brute animals. For the sheep, seeing the wolf, judges it a thing to be shunned, from a natural and not a free judgment, because it judges, not from reason, but from natural instinct. And the same thing is to be said of any judgment of brute animals. But man acts from judgment, because by his apprehensive power he judges that something should be avoided or sought. But because this judgment, in the case of some particular act, is not from natural instinct, but from some act of comparison in the reason, therefore he acts from free judgment and retains the power of being inclined to various things. For reason in contingent matters may follow opposite courses as we see in dialectic syllogisms and rhetorical arguments. Now particular operations are contingent, and therefore in such matters the judgment of reason may follow different courses, and is not determinate to one. And forasmuch as man is rational is it necessary that man have a free-will (I, 83, 1).

The proper act of free-will is choice: for we say that we have a free-will because we can take one thing while refusing another; and this is to choose. Therefore we must consider the nature of free-will, by considering the nature of choice. Now two things concur in choice: one on the part of the cognitive power, the other on the part of the appetitive power. On the part of the cognitive power, counsel is required, by which we judge one thing to be preferred to another: and on the part of the appetitive power, it is required that the appetitive should accept the judgment of counsel. Therefore Aristotle (*Ethics,* vi, 2) leaves it in doubt whether choice belongs principally to the appetite or the cognitive power: since he says that choice is either *an appetitive intellect or an intellectual appetite.* But (*Ethics,* iii loc. cit) he inclines to its being an intellectual appetite when he describes choice as *a desire proceeding from counsel.* And the reason of this is because the proper object of choice is the means to the end: and this, as such, is in the nature of that good which is called useful: wherefore since good, as such, is the object of the appetite, it follows that choice is principally an act of the appetitive power. And thus free-will is an appetitive power (I, 83, 3).

The will is an appetite in that it perpetually seeks or desires the good. It is a rational or intellectual appetite in that it works with reason to pass judgement on what the best good is relative to the particular circumstances. Notice that Aquinas has specified two motivating or appetitive powers in

human nature: the sensitive appetite, which is further specified as the concupiscible and irascible desires, and the rational appetite or will. I will focus on the significance of the distinction of and interaction between these two appetites when I offer an analysis of the motivational requirement of self-governance in Aquinas' moral theory.

Aquinas makes one significant qualification to the will's freedom. The will, though otherwise free, must necessarily seek the perfect or complete good, which is happiness (*beatitudo*-for the Greek *eudaimonia*).

> Now the object of the will, i.e., of man's appetite, is the universal good; just as the object of the intellect is universal true. Hence it is evident that naught can lull man's will, save the universal good (I-II, 2, 8).

Aquinas proceeds to clarify the nature of the ultimate good.

> Happiness can be considered in two ways. First according to the general notion of happiness: and thus, of necessity, every man desires happiness. For the general notion of happiness consists in the perfect good, as stated above. But since good is the object of the will, the perfect good of a man is that which entirely satisfies his will. Consequently to desire happiness is nothing else than to desire that one's will be satisfied. And this everyone desires (I-II, 5, 8).

In other words, the will is not free with respect to seeking complete happiness. The will's appetitive nature is directed to the end of happiness. The notion of complete happiness causes the will to automatically incline towards and desire objects that are thought to be conducive to happiness. The will's natural desire for happiness provides Aquinas with both a starting point and overall aim for treating ethics.

3.3: Ethics

I shall address three core ideas in this overview of Aquinas' ethical theory. I need to extend my discussion on the will's natural desire for happiness and the nature of this happiness. Also, I must examine the current that runs throughout Aquinas' work that human beings are the masters of their actions. Finally, I offer a basic outline of the place of the natural law in his ethical account.

i. The Will and Happiness

The human will, which is ultimately responsible for initiating action, must of necessity seek happiness. Moreover, any particular object or end sought by the will can only be sought after insofar as it appears to be good, that is, something that is conducive to happiness in some way. This is what Aquinas means when he maintains that things can only be willed *sub ratio boni*, or under the appearance or notion of goodness.[52] Consequently, like many of the eudaimonists preceding him, if Aquinas is going to propose an ethic, he must show that it is conducive to a person's happiness. Otherwise, a person would simply be unable, given her psychological makeup, to act in accordance with the ethical norms.

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[52] Ralph McInerny's commentary on this notion fleshes out its pervasiveness in Aquinas' system by using what might be thought to be mundane examples. For instance, consider the example of a mere choice of eating a hamburger. "This *ratio boni* or reason for choosing any and everything we choose is what Thomas means by ultimate end. If it is the case that we choose foodstuffs as assuaging hunger, there is implicit in the choice that satisfying our hunger is good for us. And so too with other particular choices," p. 30. This book represents, perhaps, the best contemporary, English introduction to Aquinas' ethics.

Recall that for Aquinas, a person's will seeks complete or universal good, which is to say that only an infinite good could satiate a person's desires. Aquinas is going beyond the ancient tradition in this instance and is aligning himself with Augustine. For Aquinas believes that only one thing can actually fulfill the requirements of being a universal good, namely God.

> Hence it is evident that naught can lull man's will, save the universal good. This is to be found, not in any creature, but in God alone; because every creature has goodness by participation. Wherefore God alone can satisfy the will of man...(I-II, 2, 8).

Such complete happiness cannot be obtained in this life for the simple reason that we do not have the kind of access to God necessary to achieve it. Nevertheless, there is a more limited notion of happiness that is obtainable here and now, which Aquinas terms imperfect or incomplete happiness.

> Therefore the last and perfect happiness, which we await in the life to come, consists entirely in contemplation [of God]. But imperfect happiness, such as can be had here, consists first and principally in contemplation, but secondarily, in an operation of the practical intellect directing human actions and passions, as stated in [Aristotle's] *Ethics* x, 7,8 (I-II, 3, 5).

Imperfect happiness is sufficient to motivate human action. Hence, spelling out what this type of happiness consists in is adequate for giving to any person sufficient motivation to act in such a way as to acquire it. For the most part, then, the notion of imperfect happiness fulfills the function that *eudaimonia* performs in ancient Greek ethics. It grounds certain approaches to life and types of actions as appropriate and acceptable as others inappropriate and unacceptable.

ii. Mastery and Dominion over Action

In 3.1, I looked at Aquinas' argument that God exercises His providence over rational creatures in a manner different from non-rational creatures on account of the latter having "no dominion over their acts," while the former "holds dominion over his own acts" (*SCG* III, 112, 1-2). "Dominion" in this sense connotes the notion of control. So, to have dominion over one's own actions is to have control over them. Such control or mastery is what makes the study of ethics possible, which is why Aquinas begins his treatise on ethics in the *Summa Theologica* by discussing this concept.

> Of actions done by man those alone are properly called *human*, which are proper to man as man. Now man differs from irrational animals in this, that he is master of his actions. Wherefore those actions alone are properly called human, of which man is master. Now man is master of his actions through his reason and will; when, too, the free will is defined as *the faculty and will of reason.* Therefore those actions are properly called human which proceed from a deliberate will (*S.T.*I-II, 1,1).

Human beings have control over their actions because, for Aquinas, they are the source and cause of those actions. The will elicits its own actions and it is free to do whatever it desires, as discussed earlier, with the one qualification of seeking happiness necessarily. Aquinas discusses the interplay of mastery over actions and acting for an end (namely the ultimate end of happiness) in the following passage.

> Nevertheless it must be observed that a thing tends to an end, by its action or movement, in two ways: first, as a thing, moving itself to the end,-as man; secondly, as a thing moved by another to the end, as an arrow tends to a determinate end through being moved by the archer, who directs his action to the end. Therefore those things that are possessed of reason, move themselves to an end; because they have dominion over their actions through their free-will, which is the *faculty*

> *of will and reason*...Consequently, it is proper to the rational nature to tend to an end, *as directing and leading itself to the end (se agens vel ducens ad finem*) (I-II, 1, 2. Last italics my own. Latin text from *Opera Omnia*).

This passage affords Aquinas with another opportunity to state and develop his eudaimonistic self-governance account.[53] A person, due to human nature, is determined to seek the end of happiness, but she is still free with respect to the manner or means by which she may accomplish or obtain this goal. Consequently, she directs herself to her end. For Aquinas, in virtue of a person's ability to be master over his own actions and his necessary desire for happiness, he governs himself in the pursuit of happiness.

iii. Natural Law

I will explore certain details of Aquinas' conception of the natural moral law thoroughly later on. At this point, I wish merely to offer a general picture of the nature and role of the law in his overall ethical theory. I will concentrate on two ideas. The first is that the precepts of the natural law serve to distinguish what is truly good from what appears to be good, but really is not, where "good" means "conducive to happiness." The second idea is that the precepts arise from practical reason's reflection upon and ordering of the various natural inclinations of human nature.

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[53] The particular terms Aquinas employs to capture what the individual is doing are forms of the verbs *agere* and *ducere*. This latter term means "to lead." The former term is of special interest both in that it literally means "doing, directing, conducting, etc.", and that it is the word from which the English word "agent" is derived. In its moral connotation, "agent" captures the notion that a person is a source of action and that he is responsible for them, which is found in the Latin root word as well. Aquinas deliberately uses this strong word to leave little doubt that a person actively directs his own life. In fact all of the terms Aquinas has employed to denote what the self does, *dirigere, gubernare, agere, ducere*, are in the active voice.

The fact that the natural law precepts serve to demarcate true from merely apparent goods is not really surprising or unexpected. Given Aquinas' underlying psychology of motivation which maintains that human beings can only seek and desire objects that appear good to them, it should be expected that something is needed to distinguish what really brings happiness from what does not. What that something is, is the natural law. To understand what Aquinas means by natural law, we need to look at what he thinks law is in general. He defines the general nature of law as "nothing else than an ordinance of reason for the common good, made by him who has care of the community, and promulgated" (I-II, 90, 4).

The natural moral law, then, is an ordinance of reason for the good of the individual and community, made by God, in this case, and promulgated. Aquinas returns to the theme of God's providence over humanity to explain further the natural law.

> Law, being a rule and measure, can be in a person in two ways: in one way, as in him that rules and measures; in another way, as in that which is ruled and measured, since a thing is ruled and measured, insofar as it partakes of the rule or measure. Wherefore, since all things subject to Divine providence are ruled and measured by the eternal law, as was stated above; it is evident that all things partake somewhat of the eternal law, in so far as, namely, from its being imprinted on them, they derive their respective inclinations to their proper acts and ends. Now among all others, the rational creature is subject to Divine providence in the most excellent way, in so far as it partakes of a share of providence, by being provident both for itself and for others. Wherefore it has a share of the Eternal Reason, whereby it has a natural inclination to its proper act and end: and this participation of the eternal law in the rational creature is called the natural law (I-II, 91, 2).

Law serves as a rule and measure. Human beings, due to our rational nature, are not simply ruled and measured by God. God imprints an image of his law onto human nature, which is manifested in our natural desire for happiness and other natural inclinations which inherently seek what is truly good or most conducive to our well-being. The rest of the process of arriving at actual precepts of the natural law is completed through each person's reason harmonizing and organizing the pursuit of the ends specified by the natural inclinations. The principles that set forth the best possible way of pursuing natural ends and thereby achieving happiness constitute the natural law. Aquinas offers a rigorous account of human nature's inclinations and their role in the natural law in the next seminal passage on natural law.

> *good* is the first thing that falls under the apprehension of the practical reason, which is directed to action: since every agent acts for an end under the aspect of good. Consequently the first principle in the practical reason is one founded on the notion of good, viz., that *good is that which all things seek after.* Hence this is the first precept of law, that *good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided.* All other precepts of the natural law are based upon this: so that whatever the practical reason naturally apprehends as man's good (or evil) belongs to the precepts of the natural law as something to be done or avoided.
>
> Since, however, good has the nature of an end, and evil, the nature of a contrary, hence it is that all those things to which man has a natural inclination, are naturally apprehended by reason as being good, and consequently as objects of pursuit, and their contraries as evil, and objects of avoidance. Wherefore according to the order of natural inclinations, is the order of the precepts of the natural law. Because in man there is first of all an inclination to good in accordance with the nature which he has in common with all substances: inasmuch as every substance seeks the preservation of its own being, according to its nature: and by reason of this inclination, whatever is a means of preserving human life, and of warding off its obstacles, belongs to the natural law. Secondly, there is in man an inclination to things that pertain to him more specially, according to that nature which he has in common with other animals: and in virtue of this inclination, those

> things are said to belong to the natural law, *which nature has taught to all animals*, such as sexual intercourse, education of offspring and so forth. Thirdly, there is in man an inclination to good, according to the nature of his reason, which nature is proper to him: thus man has a natural inclination to know the truth about God, and to live in society: and in this respect, whatever pertains to this inclination belongs to the natural law; for instance, to shun ignorance, to avoid offending those among whom one has to live, and other such things regarding the above inclination (I-II, 94,2).

Practical reason, which is simply the capacity and activity of reasoning about what course of action to perform, seeks to pursue good and avoid evil out of necessity. The moral element concerns a person's striving to obtain true, as opposed to merely apparent, goods and avoid real evils. What those true goods and real evils are can be known by reflecting upon the dynamics of our natural inclinations, since they in a sense point to these objects. Practical reason then deliberates about the best way to pursue all of the goods in question, so that the multiple pursuits and acquisitions may be compatible with each other. Aquinas is confident that reason's best possible organization of this task, a task that is spread throughout one's whole life, leads to definite precepts, which taken together constitute the natural moral law.

3.4: The Epistemic Requirement

i. Practical Reason and the Source of Moral Standards

Aquinas differentiates two basic ends of reason. One end is truth in speculative matters; the other is truth with respect to action. Accordingly, though he treats reason as one basic power, he distinguishes between the

speculative and the practical reason, where the former is concerned with purely theoretical issues and the latter with action, i.e., knowledge of various courses of action. All human beings possess practical reason, which essentially means that each human being can reason about what to do, which is the process of bringing one's knowledge to bear on matters of action. As we saw in the previous section, there is a basic principle that guides all practical reasoning, which is that good is to be done and pursued, and evil avoided. Aquinas contends that this principle is self-evident to all people in that it is based on the nature of the will as seeking happiness. Hence, the reason, whose function is to present to the will objects of choice must present objects that appear good or necessary in the avoidance of evil in order to motivate the will, or grab its attention, so to speak.

The problem that creates the need for ethics, according to the eudaimonists, is that not everything that may appear good, is really good. Just because something may appear to a person as an object that would contribute to happiness in some way, that object may not be something that actually does contribute to one's overall flourishing. Aquinas handles the method of discerning real from apparent good through the sophisticated process involving natural inclinations and reason, which we saw in the previous section. The upshot of his method for my present purposes is that because reason and natural inclinations are common to all people, all people have access to the resulting moral standards. Aquinas insists that, "all men know the truth to a certain extent, at least as to the common principles of the

natural law" (I-II, 93, 2). At the absolute minimum, according to Aquinas, everybody knows basic moral standards.

Because the source of moral standards is within human nature itself, each and every person seems to meet the epistemic requirement for self-governance to some degree. However, Aquinas clouds the picture somewhat when he takes up the issue of very specific cases that require subtle and exacting moral distinctions.

> The practical reason, on the other hand, is busied with contingent matters, about which human actions are concerned: and consequently, although there is necessity in the general principles, the more we descend to matters of detail, the more frequently we encounter defects...But in matters of action, truth or practical rectitude is not the same for all, as to matters of detail, but only as to the general principles: and where there is the same rectitude in matters of detail, it is not equally known to all.
>
> It is evident that, as regards the general principles whether of speculative or of practical reason, truth or rectitude is the same for all, and equally known by all...But as to the proper conclusions of the practical reason, neither is the truth or rectitude the same for all, nor, where it is the same, is it equally known by all. Thus it is right and true for all to act according to reason: and from this principle it follows as a proper conclusion, that goods entrusted to another should be restored to their owner. Now this is true for the majority of cases: but it may happen in a particular case that it would be injurious, and therefore unreasonable, to restore goods held in trust; for instance if they are claimed for the purpose of fighting against one's country. And this principle will be found to fail the more according as we descend further into detail...
>
> Consequently we must say that the natural law, as to general principles, is the same for all, both as to rectitude and as to knowledge. But as to certain matters of detail, which are conclusions, as it were, of those general principles, it is the same for all in the majority of cases, both as to rectitude and as to knowledge; and yet in some few cases it may fail, both as to rectitude, by reason of certain obstacles..., and as to knowledge, since in some the reason is perverted by passion, or evil habit, or an evil disposition of nature... (I-II, 94, 4).

A person's ability to know what to do in certain circumstances may be impaired due to a combination of the two factors of the uniqueness of the situation and ignorance of the morally relevant features of the situation on the part of the person himself. Aquinas puts considerable effort into parsing out the problem of ignorance-in this case moral ignorance, which is the lack of appropriate moral knowledge-and its effect on the ability to self-govern.

ii. Ignorance and Involuntariness

In virtue of being master of his actions, a person can and should direct, lead, and govern himself in the pursuit of happiness. However, a person can master his acts only insofar as those acts are voluntary. Hence, Aquinas, again following Aristotle, carefully separates the voluntary from the involuntary. In the course of this analysis, Aquinas considers the issue of ignorance as an impediment to voluntariness, and therefore self-governance. As he puts it, "if ignorance causes involuntariness, it is insofar as it deprives one of knowledge, which is a necessary condition for voluntariness" (I-II, 6,8).

Aquinas reviews two types of ignorance directly relevant to my argument, which he terms consequent and antecedent ignorance, each type relative to an act of the will. Explaining the nature of consequent ignorance, Aquinas notes,

> Ignorance is consequent to the act of the will, in so far as ignorance itself is voluntary: and this happens in two ways, in accordance with the two aforesaid modes of voluntary. First, because the act of the will is brought to bear on the ignorance: as when a man wishes not to know, that he may have an excuse for sin, or that he may not be withheld from sin...And this is called *affected ignorance*. Secondly, ignorance is said to be voluntary, when it regards that which one can and ought to know: for in this sense *not to act* and *not to will* are said to

> be voluntary, as stated above. And ignorance of this kind happens, either when one does not actually consider what one can and ought to consider;-this is called *ignorance of evil choice*, and arises from some passion or habit: or when one does not take the trouble to acquire the knowledge which one ought to have; in which sense, ignorance of the general principles of law, which one ought to know, is voluntary, as being due to negligence.-Accordingly, if in either of these two ways, ignorance is voluntary, it cannot cause involuntariness simply. Nevertheless it causes involuntariness in a certain respect, inasmuch as it precedes the movement of the will towards the act, which movement would not be, if there were knowledge (I-II, 6, 8).

This type of ignorance is significant in that while it does impair a person's ability to act voluntarily, and thereby impairs or restricts self-governance, it is the result of an earlier choice or choices not to attend to considerations that would have led to the appropriate knowledge. Moreover, those considerations were within this person's epistemic range. Aquinas notes that negligence of this type may result from a poor habit or untempered passion.

There are two points I wish to single out that are relevant to the epistemic requirement. First, this type of ignorance does not count against the requirement of epistemic access to appropriate moral standards in that it is not a deficiency in a person's capacity that leads to the ignorance, but rather a person's choice. Secondly, the possibility of voluntary ignorance or negligence shows that a person through poor self-governance can actually over time lose a great deal of ability to govern himself. Plato illustrated that self-governance is a concept that admits of degrees in his analysis of the degeneration of the city/individual. Aquinas recognizes the same phenomenon, which is why he so strongly cautions against forms of behavior that undermine one's own capacities and ability to self-govern.

Antecedent ignorance concerns a lack of knowledge for which a person is not responsible.

> Ignorance is *antecedent* to the act of the will when it is not voluntary, and yet is the cause of man's willing what he would not will otherwise. Thus a man may be ignorant of some circumstance of his act, which he was not bound to know, the result being that he does that which he would not do, if he knew of that circumstance; for instance, a man, after taking proper precaution, may not know that someone is coming along the road, so that he shoots an arrow and slays a passer-by. Such ignorance causes involuntariness simply (I-II, 6, 8).

The example Aquinas gives to illustrate this type of ignorance does not really capture the element of an epistemic deficiency, but rather bad luck. More precisely, the epistemic deficiency in this case results from bad luck. The archer took precautions, but still lacked relevant knowledge. But this type of ignorance is what causes a person to be at a loss about what to do in very unique circumstances. Also, it is the type of ignorance that a child may have prior to receiving appropriate instruction and education, which is why, incidentally, that Aquinas espouses good moral education from an early age. If a child receives appropriate instruction, his intellectual capacities will be further developed, thus promoting a solid and sound epistemic capacity for self-governance.

Regarding the case of an adult who, though otherwise knowledgeable in moral matters, finds himself in a unique situation where the knowledge of an appropriate course of action is elusive, this individual may be in a position where he might defer to the judgment of a person with greater moral wisdom. If a decision must be made, the ignorant person might be morally required to act in the way specified by the more experienced individual. For instance,

take the case Aquinas presents earlier concerning returning another person's possession. If the circumstances are unusual, say the owner intends to use the thing in question in a destructive way, then the borrower may be confused as to the best course of action, even if he understands that it is typically appropriate to return borrowed goods. If the borrower has an opportunity to seek the counsel of a wiser individual and follow his advice, the borrower should do so.

Aquinas elaborates on other epistemic issues when he treats the virtue of practical reasoning, i.e., prudence (*prudentia*, translation of Greek *phronesis*). I have elected to forgo considering those points here, since I will treat the issues at length when I focus on the authority element in Aquinas' account of self-governance. From the foregoing analysis, however, we see that Aquinas strongly endorses the notion that all people, in virtue of their natural inclinations and practical reasoning, have considerable moral knowledge. Only when faced with unusual and unique circumstance, which by definition are rare, do some people fail to have the appropriate knowledge necessary to act. So Aquinas' account of self-governance includes an epistemic component, and thereby his account meets that particular requirement set forth by Schneewind.

3.5: The Motivational Requirement

Aquinas is equally concerned with issues of motivation as he is with those of moral knowledge for self-governance. As I have explained, central to

Aquinas' moral theory is the idea that human beings share in divine providence by actively governing and directing themselves to the end of happiness. Self-governance is made possible in part through voluntary action, which in turn is dependent on knowledge. Aquinas recognizes that all people possess sufficient knowledge for directing themselves through typical situations. Yet he is somewhat less optimistic when it comes to the average person motivating himself to do what is appropriate, but Aquinas remains optimistic even in this.

He believes that everybody has the essential capacities required for self-motivation, but that sub-standard moral education or repetitive choices of a poor nature can render these capacities so ill-formed that external reinforcements, such as the threat of punishment or promise of reward, may be needed to prompt certain people to act appropriately. However, allow me to underscore that such external reinforcements are not the norm. The typical adult person is more than able to initiate and carry through on an action through purely internal motivational sources.

i. Natural Appetites

Aquinas' anthropological and psychological account provides answers to several questions pertaining to the issue of motivational sources. The sensitive appetite, which is comprised of the concupiscible and irascible desires, is hard-wired to seek objects that are necessary for self-preservation and bodily well being. Similarly, the rational appetite (the will) is hard-wired to seek overall flourishing of the body and soul. Because ethical precepts serve

only to guide a person to maximal happiness and these precepts and their happiness-guiding function are knowable to all people, human beings possess not only internal sources of motivation, but also these sources by nature are appropriately directed. In other words, a person has a head-start on appropriate behavior given the natural tendencies of her desires.

Recall that in Aquinas' account of our sensitive nature, reason does have some, but not total, control over the sensitive passions and emotions that contribute to motivation. He contends that reason rules with a politic or royal power, as opposed to a despotic power. A king rules over free men with political power in that his subjects have the ability to not submit to his rule, whereas, despotic power is absolute and none may resist it. "But the intellect or reason is said to rule the irascible and concupiscible by a politic power: because the sensitive appetite has something of its own, by virtue whereof it can resist the commands of reason" (I, 81, 3). This dynamic between reason and emotion[54] is largely responsible, on Aquinas' picture, for preventing people from always acting appropriately and achieving happiness.

The passions move a person to real goods, e.g., food, drink, intercourse, etc., but their movement is, by definition in this case, non-rational. The passions blindly, but potentially intensely, propel a person towards a given end. If left unchecked or unmoderated by reason, the movement of the passions could and most likely would interfere with the process of rational choice and action. This is to say that unhindered passions would undermine a person's ability to self-govern. For this reason, Aquinas

[54] Here I mean only Aquinas' notion of sensitive emotions.

methodically outlines the process by which the sensitive passions may be best cultivated by reason with the dual aim of preventing them from interfering with self-governance and of developing them to best contribute to rational self-governance. So, through practice, a person is able to develop habits in the sensitive nature so as to cause the passions to reliably tend towards certain kinds of objects in specific ways, so as to not undermine, but rather, aid rational choice. Aquinas discusses this dual aim of sensitive cultivation in the following passage.

> But if we give the name of passions to all the movements of the sensitive appetite, then it belongs to the perfection of man's good that his passions be moderated by reason. For since man's good is founded on reason as its root, that good will be all the more perfect, according as it extends to more things pertaining to man. Wherefore no one questions the fact that it belongs to the perfection of moral good that the actions of the outward members be controlled by the law of reason. Hence, since the sensitive appetite can obey reason, as stated above, it belongs to the perfection of moral or human good, that the passions themselves also should be controlled by reason.
>
> Accordingly just as it is better that man should both will good and do it in his external act; so also does it belong to the perfection of moral good, that man should be moved unto good, not only in respect to his will, but also in respect to his sensitive appetite (I-II, 24, 3).

Aquinas builds upon this description by introducing the moral virtues.

ii. Moral Virtues

A person, through consciously acting in certain ways, can develop habits, which are qualities that dispose one to act in characteristic ways. Good habits are included in the class of moral virtues, while bad habits in the class of moral vices. The particular moral virtues that I want to treat expressly are those relating to the sensitive passions/appetite. Notice in the next passage that Aquinas makes claims about the relationship between certain

virtues and the passions that are similar to his claims about rational motivation and the passions.

> But if by passions we understand any movement of the sensitive appetite, it is plain that moral virtues, which are about the passions as about their proper matter, cannot be without passions. The reason for this is that otherwise it would follow that moral virtue makes the sensitive appetite altogether idle: whereas it is not the function of virtue to deprive powers subordinate to reason of their proper activities, but to make them execute the commands of reason, by exercising their proper acts. Wherefore just as virtue directs the bodily limbs to their due external acts, so does it direct the sensitive appetite to its proper regulated movement (I-II, 59, 5).

The process that is emerging is one in which reason begins to exercise the control that it does possess over the passions thereby training them to move or desire things in determinate ways. Through this process, reason's range of control effectively increases in that passional movement is more restricted to what reason commands. Through the virtuous habits, the passions motivate in tandem with reason so as to prompt and sustain the activity that reason chooses.

Aquinas, through his endorsement of this process of sensitive cultivation, affirms his commitment to the eudaimonistic self-governance tradition's espousal of the necessity of self-control and related notions to the exercise of self-governance. Socrates and Plato heralded self-control as the key virtue in paving the way for psychological development and resulting self-governance. Aristotle prized equally both courage and moderation, making both qualities necessary to the full actualization of the non-rational capacities of the soul. Aquinas adopts Aristotle's account into his own. For Aquinas,

two key virtues are needed to develop the capacities relevant to one's sensitive nature.

> The irascible and concupiscible powers...can be considered as participating in the reason, from the fact that they have a natural aptitude to obey reason. And thus the irascible and concupiscible power can be the subject of human virtue; for, in so far as it participates in the reason, it is the principle of a human act. And to these powers we must needs assign virtues (I-II, 56, 4).

The particular virtues needed for this task are temperance and courage (*fortitudo*).

> For the need of putting order of reason into the passions is due to their thwarting reason: and this occurs in two ways. First, by the passions inciting to something against reason; and then the passions need a curb, which we call *Temperance*. Secondly, by the passions withdrawing us from following the dictate of reason, e.g., through fear of danger or toil: and then man needs to be strengthened for that which reason dictates, lest he turn back; and to this end there is *Fortitude* (I-II, 61, 2).

These virtues, which each and every person can acquire through practice, enable us to overcome the latent difficulties of having bodily desires and emotions, which can underpin motivation, not wholly under our control. The moral virtues, particularly temperance and courage, perfect the bodily desires and sensitive nature so that those desires contribute to the motivation of the particular action that the reason and will choose to perform. Hence, human beings, on Aquinas' picture, have the necessary internal sources of motivation to prompt and sustain action without the need for external reinforcement. Aquinas' account thus meets the motivational requirement for self-governance.

3.6: The Authority Requirement

i. Platonic Biconditional

Throughout the eudaimonistic self-governance tradition, the individual theorists have affirmed in some form what I call the Platonic biconditional, which states that fully possessing the psychological capacities requisite for self-governance is a necessary and sufficient condition for the possession of the proper authority to exercise self-governance. Plato's version seems to be captured in this strong form of fully possessing the capacities relevant to self-governance. Other theorists weaken the initial clause concerning the possession of relevant psychological capacities by affirming proper authority even if those capacities are not perfectly developed or actualized. On this weaker version, individuals may possess the rightful authority to govern their own lives in virtue of adequate psychological capacities, though other individuals may have capacities superior to the former. In whichever form, the principle states that if a person's capacities are sufficiently developed to some threshold set within the theory, then that person has a legitimate moral claim to exercise these capacities through self-governance. Further, a person cannot possess the proper moral authority to exercise self-governance unless he has the requisite capacities.

Aquinas also endorses this principle, though in its weaker form. As a result, he places a great deal of emphasis on the nature of the psychological capacities in question, diagnosing how the capacities may be neglected and ill-cultivated, and suggesting practical techniques of promoting optimal

development and use of the capacities. I tried to accentuate his emphases on such capacities in the preceding sections. The way in which Aquinas proceeds to develop his account of the authority requirement for self-governance continues in this manner, focusing most notably on the cultivation of practical reason and its corresponding virtue, prudence (*prudentia*).

Aquinas distinguishes among the virtues by reference to the part or capacity of human nature to which the virtue pertains. So, for instance, courage pertains to the irascible appetites or emotions, while temperance to the concupiscible.

> For there are four subjects of the virtue we speak of now: viz., the power which is rational in its essence, and this is perfected by *Prudence*; and that which is rational by participation, and is threefold, the will, subject of *Justice*, the concupiscible faculty, subject of *Temperance*, and the irascible faculty, subject of *Fortitude* (I-II, 61, 3).

Prudence is the virtue that corresponds to and perfects practical reason. Reason[55] works best, or is most fully actualized when accompanied by prudence. For Aquinas virtues are qualities that are not so much inherently good, but rather good-making qualities following Aristotle's "virtue is that which makes its possessor good, and his work good likewise" (*NE,* II, 6). The virtuous habit effects this goodness by enabling the capacity to which it refers to thrive.

> Since the habit perfects the power in reference to act, then does the power need a habit perfecting it unto doing well, which habit is a virtue, which the power's own proper nature does not suffice for the purpose (I-II, 56, 6).

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[55] Henceforth, by 'reason' I mean 'practical reason.'

The upshot of these considerations is that when Aquinas analyzes the virtue of prudence, he is simultaneously offering a detailed account of how practical reason best functions. My argument in this section is going to employ Aquinas' account of prudence and reason as strong evidence that he meets the authority requirement for self-governance.

ii. Prudence and Practical Reason

Prudence is the process of reasoning well about matters of action and, in conjunction with the virtues considered above, of performing the best course of action.

> Prudence is *right reason applied to action*...Hence that which is the chief act of reason in regard to action must needs be the chief act of prudence. Now there are three such acts. The first is *to take counsel,* which belongs to discovery, for counsel is an act of inquiry...The second act is *to judge of what one has discovered*, and this is an act of the speculative reason. But the practical reason, which is directed to action, goes further, and its third act is *to command*, which act consists in applying to action the things counseled and judged (II-II, 47, 8).

Moreover, Aquinas links prudence to all sorts of abilities inherent in human nature.

> In this way, eight [things] may be taken as parts of prudence...namely, *memory, reasoning, understanding, docility* and *shrewdness*: while the three others belong thereto, as commanding and applying knowledge to action, namely, *foresight, circumspection,* and *caution.* The reason of their difference is seen from the fact that three things may be observed in reference to knowledge. In the first place, knowledge itself, which, if it be of the past, is called *memory*, if of the present, whether contingent or necessary, is called *understanding* or *intelligence*. Secondly, the acquiring of knowledge which is caused either by teaching, to which pertains *docility*, or by *discovery*...Thirdly, the use of knowledge, in as much as we proceed from things known to knowledge or judgment of other things, and this belongs to *reasoning.* And the reason, in order to command aright, requires to have three conditions. First, to order that which is befitting the end, and this belongs to *foresight*; secondly, to attend to the circumstances of the

> matter in hand, and this belongs to *circumspection*; thirdly, to avoid obstacles, and this belongs to *caution* (II-II, 48, 1).

Thus, prudence is the virtue whereby a person consults his moral knowledge, applies that knowledge to the given situation, and then initiates the most appropriate action. In short, prudence is simply the adept exercise of the psychological capacities relevant to self-governance. In fact, Aquinas himself terms prudence "the government of oneself" (II-II, 47, 10)[56]. For Aquinas, then, there is a specific virtue of governing oneself, whereby the activity of prudence is not only the exercise but the best possible exercise of self-governance in that actions truly conducive to happiness are undertaken. Also, prudence has a status of priority relative to all other moral virtues.

> Now it is clear from what has been said that the cause and root of human good is the reason. Hence prudence which perfects the reason, surpasses in goodness the other moral virtues...in so far as it partakes of the reason (I-II, 66, 1).

Prudence, the virtue of self-governance, possesses a special status in the moral life because it enables a person to make the best possible use of reason. Moreover, because reason is part of human nature, all persons have reason and thereby the authority to self-rule.

> Prudence is in the reason. Now ruling and governing belong properly to the reason; and therefore it is proper to a man to reason and be prudent in so far as he has a share in ruling and governing...Since, however, every man, for as much as he is rational, has a share in ruling according to the judgment of reason, he is proportionately competent to have prudence (II-II, 47, 12).

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[56] *Videtur quod prudentia non se extendat ad regimen multitudinis, sed solum* ***ad regimen sui ipsius***. Here Aquinas makes the point that not only does prudence concerning governing oneself, but the same generic virtue applies to the manner in which a political leader may best exercise his governance of the state.

Aquinas recognizes the capacity of reason as the source of the proper authority to self-rule. Since everybody has reason, all people have the proper authority to cultivate prudence, which is synonymous with self-governance. Hence, all people have the proper authority to govern themselves. Aquinas affirms reason's authority conferring role in the opening question on ethics in the *Summa Theologica*.

> Those things that are possessed of reason, move themselves to an end; because they have domination over their actions through their free-will, which is the *faculty of will and reason*...Consequently, it is proper to the rational nature to tend to an end, as directing and leading itself to the end (I-II, 1, 2).

Properly speaking then, the capacity of reason, not God, confers the proper authority for the exercise of self-governance. For Aquinas, God gives to each individual person the capacity of reason, but God cannot strip a person of the authority to self-govern without removing reason itself, as reason and such authority are inseparable. This is to say that the authority requirement is met in virtue of the possession of the requisite psychological capacities rooted in reason. The notion that such authority and capacities could be separate is foreign to his thought.

As it turns out, the way in which Aquinas structures his moral theory is such that he begins with the appropriateness of the rational person to govern himself. He proceeds to identify the capacities necessary for this activity of self-governance, and he notes that those capacities are common to all people. He shows that through a person's natural inclinations and rational reflection on those inclinations moral standards are knowable. Furthermore,

through the cultivation of emotions and desires, a person may develop internal motivational sources so as to prompt and sustain appropriate activity. Finally, all people, in virtue of possessing reason, have the right to cultivate the virtue of prudence, which is the virtue characterized as the activity of governing oneself.

iii. Summary

Aquinas' account of self-governance meets all three conditions, as implied by Schneewind, which jointly suffice for a minimally acceptable account of self-governance. I therefore conclude that self-governance was neither a theoretical notion new to the modern period nor was its centrality to moral theory original with the moderns. Far from being an obedience-based conception, Aquinas' moral account prizes self-governance as the central feature.

3.7: Moral Obligation

Aquinas includes a robust notion of self-governance in his ethical account. However, it does not follow from this inclusion that he precludes a notion of morally acceptable obedience. Rather, obedience plays a role in his ethics, even to the point of being a virtue, where *virtu* connotes strength and power. His account of the nature and role of obedience is important to my project for a couple of reasons. Schneewind construes Aquinas' morality as obedience-based as opposed to based on self-governance. I have already countered the gist of that interpretation. However, I believe by locating and explaining

the role that obedience does perform in Aquinas, any lingering ambiguities should be resolved. Secondly, my motivation for explaining and defending this interpretation of Aquinas is in part to reveal some of the advantages that his account of ethics and self-governance have relative to other historical theories. His account of the relationship between self-governance and obedience constitutes one such advantage for contemporary thought.

Aquinas maintains that human beings are morally obligated to perform certain actions and develop certain character traits while avoiding other actions and traits. His justification of moral obligation underpins his concept and defense of morally appropriate obedience. Hence, before addressing obedience itself, I wish to focus on his notion of obligation.

i. History of Obligation and Self-Governance Revisited

As mentioned in 2.6, iv, Kant does not think that full self-governance is compatible with moral obligation unless the source of the obligation is internal to a person. If the source of moral obligation were external, then the morally obliged would out of moral necessity have to submit to the authority or will of another person or group of persons. In effect, the morally obliged person would not truly be governing himself but instead be governed by another.

I also mentioned in that section that ethicists in the modern natural law tradition and others did affirm the possibility of self-governance with an external source of moral obligation, that source being God's will. So, historically at least, affirming a certain source of moral obligation does not constitute a necessary presupposition for self-governance. Nevertheless, I

think that there is minimally a strong *prima facie* reason for holding that true self-governance is incompatible with a source of moral obligation that lies outside a person's own capacities. Kant is essentially correct in thinking that if the will of another person represents the ultimate reason why the obliged must submit, then the obliged is not governing her own life.

I am confident that the three conditions for self-governance outlined previously represent necessary conditions and jointly sufficient for a minimally acceptable account. I now propose a corollary bolstering such an account. For moral obligation to be compatible with self-governance then the following condition must obtain. The source of that obligation must in some substantial way be internal or reducible to a person's capacities.

ii. Aquinas' Anthropology Revisited

Aquinas' characterization of the will as a rational appetite provides the key to understanding his notion of moral obligation. The rational appetite is the source of a person's ability to direct her own activity in that it bestows the capacity to choose one way or another. However, the will of necessity desires the end or goal appropriate to it. The will necessarily seeks happiness (*beatitudo*), which Aquinas contends is the ultimate good. He states,

> Happiness can be considered in two ways. First according to the general notion of happiness: and thus, of necessity, every man desires happiness. For the general notion of happiness consists in the perfect good, as stated above. But since good is the object of the will, the perfect good of a man is that which entirely satisfies his will. Consequently to desire happiness is nothing else than to desire that one's will be satisfied. And this everyone desires (I-II, 5, 8).

As noted earlier, this fact about human nature structures Aquinas' entire ethical account, as it had for the previous contributors to the eudaimonist ethical tradition.

With this notion of the will as rational appetite in mind, Aquinas construes the notion of moral precepts as principles that serve to distinguish what is truly good and hence conducive to happiness from what is only apparently good and hence a hindrance to happiness. The upshot of this is that if Aquinas' ethical theory is built up from the foundation of the will as rational appetite that of necessity seeks happiness, then Aquinas' notion of moral obligation must also be something that is dependent upon the nature of the will.

iii. Rational Appetite as Source of Moral Obligation

Moral obligation arises from the twofold consideration of the will's necessary desire for happiness and the fact, for Aquinas, that there are action-guiding principles whose function it is to demarcate true from merely apparent goods. I can best represent the obligation generated from these two notions through the means of a *modus ponens* argument.

> **P1:** If human beings desire to be happy, then they ought to perform those actions and develop those character traits that are conducive to happiness and avoid those actions and traits that are a hindrance to happiness.
>
> **P2:** All human beings desire happiness in virtue of the rational will.
>
> **C:** Therefore, human beings ought (have a moral obligation) to perform those actions and develop those character traits that are conducive to happiness and avoid those actions and traits that are a hindrance to happiness.

The consequent of premise 1 is a summary of Aquinas' account of human nature with respect to action. There are certain activities, objects, and states that are really good for human beings. That is, there are certain activities, objects, and states that produce or lead to happiness. The means of obtaining them are sufficiently constant as to be summarized in terms of precepts or principles, namely the principles of natural moral law. The antecedent of the same premise is automatically discharged in virtue of the rational will, which of necessity seeks happiness. Hence, all people have an obligation to perform the appropriate actions.

The obligation, though, does not arise from some source external to a person. It is not something imposed from without, but rather generated from within. The source of moral obligation, on Aquinas' account, is internal to each person in that it is reducible or justified in terms of each person's psychological capacities, namely rational will. In sum, Aquinas account of ethics meets the corollary condition connected to self-governance, which is for moral obligation to be compatible with self-governance, the source of that obligation must in some substantial way be internal or reducible to a person's capacities.

As I mentioned above, I believe that Kant is right to hold that for self-governance to be realizable, any obligation to abide by moral standards must in some substantial way issue from a source internal to a person. His theory accounts for this by affirming that by the rational will legislating the law, a person imposes the obligation on herself. I find it both interesting and

significant that both Kant and Aquinas construe the source of moral obligation in terms of the rational will. However, their accounts are by no means identical. For Aquinas, a person does not legislate to herself the moral law. Rather, the moral law is something that each person can discover, but not legislate.[57] In deference to Schneewind, perhaps Kant does invent autonomy in the sense of self-legislation. However, I am not sure what is so historically significant about Kantian autonomy given that antecedent theories, like Aquinas', had robust conceptions of self-governance with internal accounts of moral obligation.

iv. Obligation to Self-Govern

As we saw in chapter 3, Aquinas believes that the only way to achieve happiness[58] is to actively direct and govern oneself. Self-governance is fully realized in the virtue of prudence. In Aquinas' response to the question "whether prudence is a virtue necessary to man" we find both another strong affirmation of eudaimonistically construed self-governance and a strong hint regarding the obligation to govern one's own life. He considers an objection and offers a response.

> Objection 2. Further, *It is by prudence that we are of good counsel*, as stated in *Ethic. vi. 5.*[59] But man can act not only from his own, but also from another's good counsel. Therefore man does not need prudence in order to lead a good life, but it is enough that he follow the counsels of prudent men.
>
> [Aquinas'] Reply. When a man does a good deed, not of his own counsel, but moved by that of another, his deed is not yet quite perfect,

[57] Rhonheimer interprets Aquinas as saying that although we do not self-legislate the law, we do, in a sense, create the law for ourselves by an act of self-promulgation.
[58] Here I mean the happiness attainable in this life.
[59] The reference is to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

> as regards his reason in directing him and his appetite in moving him. Wherefore, if he [does such] a good deed, he does not do well simply; and yet this is required in order that he may lead a good life (I-II, 57, 5).

Happiness/flourishing both presupposes and includes the governing of one's own actions through one's own counsel and motivation. Because we have already determined, for Aquinas, that we have a moral obligation to do those things that are truly conducive to happiness, it follows from the above that we have an obligation to govern our own lives. Specifically, we have the obligation to govern ourselves well.

Aquinas supports his contention of the obligatory nature of self-governance by considering the wrongful nature of not acting with prudence. He does this in the context of discussing imprudence and why it is wrong.

> Imprudence may be taken in two ways, first as a privation...Taken as a privation, imprudence denotes lack of that prudence which a man can and ought to have, and in this sense imprudence is a sin by reason of a man's negligence in striving to have prudence (II-II, 53, 1).

It is wrong not to cultivate prudence because in so doing, a person undermines both his ability to self-govern and his potential to be happy. In summary, for Aquinas, all people have a moral obligation to do certain things, including governing themselves well. The justification for that obligation fundamentally derives from the common characteristics of human nature and the means for achieving happiness.

3.8: Obedience

Human beings are capable of self-governance. Moreover, we have a moral obligation to govern ourselves well in that such fruitful governance is

necessary for happiness. Aquinas does not maintain that the fact that we are self-governing precludes obedience as a proper facet of morality. However, he does insist on two main points that underscore his account of obedience. Obedience is morally necessary for the sake of best securing happiness for individuals. Secondly, morally appropriate obedience must presuppose self-governance.

i. The Social and Political Nature of Humanity

The capacities for self-governance are inherent and natural to every person. In addition, it is, for Aquinas, natural and necessary that people live together, not simply in terms of physical proximity, but in an organized society or community. Without the presence of a community, individuals would be hard pressed to meet even the most basic bodily necessities, let alone to flourish. In the following passage from his political treatise *On Kingship*, he describes and defends this account of human nature.

> But man is by nature a political and social animal. Even more than other animals he lives in groups. This is demonstrated by the requirements of his nature. Nature has given to other animals food, furry covering, teeth, and horns and claws-or at least speed of flight-as means to defend themselves. Man however, is given none of these by nature. Instead he had been given the use of his reason to secure all these things by the work of his hands. But a man cannot secure all these by himself, for a man cannot adequately provide for his life by himself...Therefore if it is natural for man to live in association with others, there must be some way for them to be governed. For if many men were to live together and each to provide what is convenient for himself, the group would break up unless one of them had the responsibility for the good of the group...(*On Kingship*, 1).[60]

Such natural association affects the way in which a person should best exercise her practical reason or prudence. Moreover, according to Aquinas,

[60] Aquinas, Thomas. *On Kingship.*

the sphere of political governance, which is mandated by human nature's social and political aspects, lies outside the scope of the virtue of prudence as it pertains to the government of oneself. The immediate concern of personal prudence is the good of the individual. Aquinas believes a special form of prudence, for which he uses the term "political prudence," is necessary for the government of the community. The proper object of political prudence is the common, as opposed to the individual's, good.

In the following passage, Aquinas considers the objection that perhaps political prudence is not necessary.

> Objection 3. Further, each subject is an individual person. Now each person can direct himself sufficiently by prudence commonly so called. Therefore there is no need of a special kind of prudence called political.
>
> [Aquinas'] Reply. Man directs himself by prudence commonly so called, in relation to his own good, but by political prudence, of which we speak, he directs himself in relation to the common good (*S.T.* II-II, 50, 2).

Society is necessary for advancing the welfare of individual human beings. Political prudence is necessary for securing the common good of that society, which in turn creates the possibility of each person achieving her individual good.

It is this dynamic that arises from the social and political dimension of human nature that establishes the moral appropriateness of obedience on Aquinas' account. If there were no common authority and individuals governed their lives by personal prudence and nothing else, then the common good would be unobtainable. Such a consequence would not be as dire as

the Hobbesian state of nature in that personal prudence places some checks on force, acquisition, and raw self-interest. But there would remain an unstable dynamic in personal relations that would prevent the benefits of large-scale cooperation and social interaction. In eudaimonistic terms, the lack of common authority would lead to the lack of individual happiness.

Aquinas maintains that sustaining civil society and thus promoting and protecting the associated social benefits entails that certain individuals will possess political authority. Such political authority requires the obedience of other citizens, at least to some extent. Aquinas addresses the nature and scope of this obedience below.

> Since by nature all men are equal, [an individual] is not bound to obey another man in matters touching the nature of the body, for instance in those relating to the support of his body or the begetting of his children. Wherefore servants are not bound to obey their masters, nor children their parents, in the question of contracting marriage or of remaining in the state of virginity or the like. But in matters concerning the disposal of actions and human affairs, a subject is bound to obey his superior within the sphere of his authority; for instance a soldier must obey his general in matters relating to war, a servant his master in matters touching the execution of the duties of his service, a son his father in matters relating to the conduct of his life and the care of the household; and so forth (II-II, 105, 5).

Taking the above passages together, we find a general argument concerning the justification of obedience. The argument runs as follows:

> **P1:** Human beings necessarily desire happiness as their end.
>
> **P2:** Human happiness requires living in societies.
>
> **P3:** Living in societies requires that certain people have authority over other people.
>
> **C:** Obeying proper authority serves each person's end of happiness. Moreover, each person indirectly desires obedience in these cases.

We desire happiness, but we cannot obtain happiness without living in a community with others. In order to sustain and contribute to the health of the community, political leaders and other members of the government possess authority to direct certain spheres of human affairs. This authority underpins the moral appropriateness of obedience. In short, our desire for happiness serves as the ultimate justification for obedience.

Nevertheless, as indicated in the passage above, Aquinas does not hold that any and all responses of obedience would be appropriate. Only when the authority is proper and ultimately conducive to happiness is a person bound to obey. Other forms of obedience are harmful, such as the instances within personal affairs described by Aquinas.

ii. Obedience Sanctioned by Self-Governance

Aquinas's basic justification for obedience rests upon his understanding of human nature and happiness. He proceeds to specify the conditions under which an act of obedience is justified. He does this through a consideration of a person's appropriate exercise of self-governance. This is to say that in addition to the external justification of obedience brought about through the community obligations outlined above, Aquinas adds an internal justification which mandates that for obedience to be appropriate, an obedient person, through his own capacities, must agree that such an act is justified. He explains that each person has a sufficient share of political prudence to understand when such an act of obedience is necessary for the common good, and hence contributive to one's own happiness.

> Men who are slaves or subjects in any sense, are moved by the commands of others in such a way that they move themselves by their free-will; wherefore some kind of rectitude of government is required in them, so that they may direct themselves in obeying their superiors; and to this belongs that species of prudence which is called political (II-II, 50, 2).

Aquinas' development of the notion of political governance and obedience is parallel to his development of God's providence over rational creatures. The explanation for the parallel turns on the commonality of the authority of reason in both instances. Recall that for Aquinas, humans have the authority to direct and govern themselves and thereby share in God's providence.

> Of course, the result of [God's] rule is manifested differently in different beings, depending on the diversity of their natures. For some beings so exist as God's products that, possessing understanding, they bear His likeness and reflect His image. Consequently, they are not only ruled but are also rulers of themselves, in as much as their own actions are directed to a fitting end (*SCG,* III, 1, 4).

Moreover,

> Furthermore, the [individual] rational creature is subject to divine providence in such a way that he is not only governed thereby, but is also able to know the rational plan of providence in some way. Hence, it is appropriate for him to exercise providence and government over other things. This is not the case with other creatures, for they participate in providence only to the extent of being subordinate to it. Through this possession of the capacity to exercise providence one may also direct and govern his own acts. So, the rational creature participates in divine providence, not only by being governed passively, but also by governing actively, for he governs himself in his personal acts (III, 113, 5).

God does not control human beings so that we act blindly or without choice. Because we possess the capacity of reason, He gives to us the space to govern ourselves. Similarly, the same capacity of reason invests

each person with the right and duty to govern his life with respect to political authority. Due to the necessity of certain political obligations, some obedience is necessary. But those acts of obedience are only appropriate when the moral space for directing oneself in obeying a political superior is safeguarded. In the event that laws and obligations are imposed that are not just and hence do not meet the external justification for obedience, a person is not morally bound to obey such laws.

> Laws may be unjust in two ways: first, by being contrary to human good...either in respect of the end, as when an authority imposes on his subjects burdensome laws, conducive, not to the common good, but rather to his own cupidity or vainglory;-or in respect of the author, as when a man makes a law that goes beyond the power committed to him;-or in respect of the form, as when burdens are imposed unequally on the community, although with a view to the common good. The like are acts of violence rather than laws...Wherefore such laws do not bind in conscience...(*ST*, I-II, 96, 4).

Some laws may even possess the external justification for obedience in general, but when due to changing social circumstances, each person is to evaluate whether the law would be appropriate to obey.

> Every law is directed to the common weal of men, and derives the force and nature of law accordingly...How it happens often that the observance of some point of law conduces to the common weal in the majority of instances, and yet, in some cases, is very hurtful. Since then the lawgiver cannot have in view every single case, he shapes the law according to what happens most frequently, by directing his attention to the common good. Wherefore if a case arise wherein the observance of that law would be hurtful to the general welfare, it should not be observed (I-II, 96, 6).

In sum, obedience is morally justified when it is warranted externally by social concerns and internally through a personal sanction by an exercise of self-governance. The points of departure for Aquinas' ethical theory are the

capacities of reason and the accompanying rational will. These capacities, along with other anthropological considerations give to each person the ability to govern her own life. All other aspects of Aquinas' moral theory, including obedience, are built upon these considerations. Hence, to label Aquinas' account obedience-based, as Schneewind does, is unreasonable. Obedience plays a role in Aquinas ethics, but it is not foundational, in fact moral obedience depends upon self-governance for the legitimacy that it does possess.

Chapter 4: The Rise of Obedience-Based Morality

There is one last question that I want to address concerning both Schneewind's historical account and my own. With self-governance performing such a key role in Aquinas' account, why would Schneewind claim that the story of modern moral philosophy is one of reacting to and chipping away at an ensconced obedience-based moral tradition? The reason is that he overlooks or at least underplays both a significant shift in moral theory that occurred subsequent to Aquinas and specific consequences of this shift.

4.1: Overview of Schneewind's Misinterpretation

In *The Invention of Autonomy,* Schneewind tracks a change in medieval moral philosophy concerning the relation of moral principles to God. The move that occurred was away from intellectualism, the approach that characterizes ethical laws as separate (or separable) from God's will, to voluntarism, the approach which characterizes ethical norms as derived completely from God's will. Schneewind accomplishes a commendable task of tracing this change from the intellectualist Aquinas through and to the increasingly voluntarist positions of Scotus, Ockham, Luther, and Calvin. However, Schneewind fails to account for the underlying significance of this shift. Aquinas' intellectualism in part made possible the centrality of self-governance to his overall ethical account. For instance, in Aquinas' theory, a person is able to know moral norms apart from divine revelation precisely because those norms are not totally contingent on God's will, and the source

of those norms is in each person in virtue of natural inclinations and practical reason. In addition to intellectualism, Aquinas' account of the will and moral obligation play a key role in his notion of self-governance. Subsequent thinkers re-conceive these notions as well.

Voluntarism, with its strong insistence that God's will is the source of the content of moral norms and the obligation to live by them, developed into a divine command ethical theory. In the divine command theories of the time, a person's primary moral response was one of simple obedience to the laws enjoined by God's will. Because moral laws were not based on reason, a person was not in a position to really understand them or know them apart from divine revelation. Also, because regulation of conduct and moral justification were based solely in God's will, a creation of conceptual space occurred whereby there could be an essential distinction between a person's psychological capacities and her authority to rightfully exercise them. Furthermore, connected to this change was the way the will itself was characterized.

These moves in ethical theory prompted theorists, e.g. Scotus, Ockham, Luther, and Calvin, to move away from self-governance to that of obedience. Moreover, some ethicists like Suarez who considered themselves to be followers and commentators on Aquinas tended to include strong voluntaristic elements in their interpretations of Aquinas. I believe these later Thomists misled and continue to mislead historians about the nature of Aquinas' ethical account.

In this chapter, I will first address in closer detail Scheewind's account of the shift from intellectualism to voluntarism and the early stages of the rise of what he calls modern natural law theory. My contention is that his account, though in many respects accurate, contains some subtle and not so subtle mistakes that call for correction. I believe that Scotus is the pivotal figure in the story of how divine command theory gained prominence. Consequently, I will treat his account of the human will and morality in some detail. In addition, I will draw out the significant differences between his and Aquinas' accounts. I will conclude by noting the presence of certain voluntaristic elements within later early modern Thomism and how these elements affected Schneewind's analysis of the origin and importance of self-governance in the history of moral philosophy.

4.2: Schneewind's Account of the Rise of Voluntarism

Schneewind tracks the dramatic shift in the way medieval ethicists after Aquinas characterized the relationships between the will and the good and God and the moral law. Schneewind construes the change as one away from intellectualism to voluntarism, which it was. However, as I have maintained he fails to give adequate consideration to the simultaneous rise of divine command theory and new conceptions of the human will. Voluntarism and divine command theory could rightly be construed as two sides of the same coin, but, to extend the metaphor, they are different sides with separate characteristics. I wish to first summarize Schneewind's account of the rise of

voluntarism. Then, I will offer my supplement to the history, showing how deficiencies in Schneewind's account relate to his interpretation of Aquinas and self-governance.

i. Duns Scotus

Schneewind compares Aquinas' and Scotus' understandings of how moral principles are related to God.

> Aquinas, as I noted, held that the first principles of natural law are rational, and agreed with Cicero's view that right reason, in showing them to us, shows us principles that properly govern God's will as well as ours. Hence for Thomas, Duns Scotus says, "what is commanded [in the Decalog] is not good merely because it is commanded, but commanded because it is good in itself." But for Duns Scotus the will is nobler than the intellect and is not tied by what the intellect can show it. He can appeal to the divine word for this view: Christ said that "With God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27). Hence it seems that God can will anything. Duns Scotus sees only one limit to God's will. God cannot will anything that goes against his own nature. Laws of nature, therefore, can require only what God could not reject without the self-contradiction in denying his own nature.[61]

This understanding of God and the moral law has certain consequences with respect to the status of moral principles, in this case the principles contained in the decalogue.

> It follows, Duns Scotus thinks, that only the first two commandments are genuine laws. They follow strictly from the necessary truth that if God exists, he alone is to be loved as God. Hence God could not will their opposite. But the commandments of the second table – those concerning relations among humans – do not follow in this way from any necessary truth.[62]

Scotus maintains that the moral principles concerning relations among human beings do turn out to contribute to the good of individuals, but that the

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[61] Schneewind, p. 23.
[62] Schneewind, p. 23.

ultimate goodness of these laws is derivable from the fact that God wills them. Schneewind explains this in Euthyphronian prose.

> Most so called laws, however, are on [Scotus'] view included under that name only by courtesy. Only those concerning the worship of God command something because it is good; the others make something good because they command it. They do not have any basis in prior goodness arising from the nature of what they command or the results of those actions. Consequently we could not infer anything about how we are to behave from any knowledge we might have about the nature of specific actions.[63]

In other words, most moral principles, such as the one proscribing murder, are changeable if God so wills it. For Aquinas, not even the foundational principles concerning human relations were changeable by God. Schneewind is careful and correct to point out that what motivates Scotus on this point is the concern about the nature of God, specifically God's omnipotence. Moreover, this concern extended far beyond Scotus, securing the prominence of voluntarism for a couple of centuries.

> The most basic consideration leading Duns Scotus to the voluntarist postion was the desire to maintain God's omnipotence. If all the precepts of the Decalog were genuine laws of nature, "true by reason of their terms," they would have to be true "even if, to assume the impossible, no act of willing existed." Then God's will would have to agree with them or be wrong, a limitation on God that Duns Scotus rejects...Omnipotence is secured, at the cost of making God's commands concerning the moral relations of human beings to one another an outcome of his arbitrary will. Luther and Calvin did not mind the cost. Voluntarism became an inescapable issue for later thinkers because of the decisive place they gave it in their moral theologies.[64]

How could God really be all-powerful if he were constrained by predetermined moral standards? Aquinas thought there was no real problem.

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[63] Schneewind, p. 24-25.
[64] Schneewind, p. 25.

He simply places such moral standards outside the scope of things that are changeable given antecedent considerations about human nature. Scotus found this account unacceptable. Moreover, eventually the early Reformers disagreed with the intellectualist picture as well, which made voluntarism the prominent manner by which to explain the relationship between God and the moral law.

ii. Luther and Reformation Moral Theology

Schneewind begins his account of Martin Luther by focusing on the latter's account of the effects of sin on human capacities, and how God uses the law to remedy these effects.

> Although Luther grants that reason gives us knowledge of the law, he stresses, more emphatically than St. Thomas, the effects of sin in weakening our powers of reasoning, and the consequent importance of God's repromulgation of the laws through the Mosaic Decalog and Christ's teaching...the main point of the law is to convince us all that we are sinners, "to reveal unto a man his sin, his blindness, his misery, his impiety, ignorance, hatred and contempt of God, death, hell, the judgment and deserved wrath of God." As long as we remain unaware of our actual condition we will be full of pride and presumption. But the natural laws, as repeated in the Decalog, "show us what we ought to do but do not give us the power to do it"...In this powerful statement Luther is not saying that we cannot behave externally as the laws require. We can indeed control our actions; but we cannot control the motives that lead us to do what the laws require...Works alone do not save. Only a right will does; and only those who are given grace can act from the right will.[65]

By way of commentary, I will say that this is the first full-fledged obedience-based moral theory found in Schneewind's account. Luther, in effect, denies all three requirements for self-governance. Due to sin, we are hard-pressed to know what to do. Even once God reveals to us what to do,

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[65] Schneewind, p. 27.

we still lack the appropriate motivational sources to prompt action. Lastly, no one, save God, possesses the proper authority to self-rule. In addition to denying self-governance, Luther goes on to construe morality in terms that seem to indicate nothing other than human obedience to a command that really cannot be understood. I think this is significant given that Luther was born over 200 years after Aquinas' death, thus showing the vast gulf between the latter's ethics and the onset of a full-fledged prominent obedience conception of morality.

To continue my account of Schneewind, Luther's voluntarism is the next issue considered.

> "What God wills is not right because he ought or was bound so to will; on the contrary, what takes place must be right, because he so wills." Luther thus accepts a voluntarist position about God's commands, and accepts with it the conclusion that we can neither understand God nor judge his decisions.[66]

With the spread of the reformation and its associated moral theology, voluntarism gained prominence. Morality's dictates, or the law, were something changeable by God because His omnipotence demanded as much. Moreover, moral principles derived their legitimacy and force through God's will. The consequence of this was that if a person was to be morally good, then her chief moral obligation was to obey God's commands.

iii. Suarez

Schneewind's interpretation of the thought of Suarez is especially important to my overall project. Suarez considered himself to be a Thomist. He was consciously thinking within the basic framework of Aquinas' thought.

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[66] Schneewind, p. 31.

Moreover, Suarez is the only early modern "Thomist" that Schneewind considers. However, Suarez's ethical thought contains marked differences from that of Aquinas. Now this is important in that some of these differences pertain to classifying resultant ethical theories as obedience or self-governance based. Suarez's ethics, I contend, in the end emphasizes obedience more than it does self-governance. It is no wonder, then, that Schneewind classifies Suarez's moral theory as obedience-based. My problem is that Schneewind projects certain elements of Suarez's natural law moral theory into his interpretation of Aquinas, even though Aquinas never includes those elements in his account. The key element to which I refer is Suarez' notion of God's will and moral obligation. I will address this issue after I have offered Schneewind's account of Suarez.

Schneewind begins his summary of Suarez by looking at the latter's notion of the natural moral law and the obligation to obey the law.

> There is no absolute necessity that law should exist. God is the only necessarily existing being. But once God created free rational beings, law is necessary because "an intellectual creature, by virtue of the very fact that he is a created being, has a superior to whose providence and control he is subject," and that control is exercised by law. In addition to being appropriate, law is useful. Created beings can turn to evil as well as to good, and laws are necessary to improve what they do to attain their divinely assigned end. Law, unlike advice or counsel, must involve the command of a superior.[67]

Suarez begins with Aquinas' framework for understanding the origin of the content of the natural moral law.

> Law must function to direct a community, and when we are considering natural law, we have in mind simply the community of rational agents...[Suarez's] central concern is the relations of intellect and will

[67] Schneewind, p. 59.

> in constituting law. Law is made to direct action, so it must have a "demonstrative" function, showing us what is good and what bad for a rational nature. But it must also have a "preceptive" function. For "law does not merely enlighten, but also provides motive force and impels; and, in intellectual processes, the primary faculty of moving to action is the will."[68]

After addressing the origin of the content of law as something good for rational agents, Suarez focusing on the law's "preceptive" function. In the next passage, Schneewind shows how Suarez relates this function of the law to God.

> Suarez's own view is a mediating position that he attributes to Thomas: "Not only does the natural law indicate what is good or evil, but furthermore, it contains its own prohibition of evil and command of good." Some things are naturally good for beings with a rational nature. But it is fitting that God, as "supreme Governor," should add his own command that we pursue them. Willing this as our governor, he creates an obligation to act, while leaving us free not to do so. Natural law is thus preceptive because it includes God's command that we do good. Natural goodness provides the material for God's command and justifies it; the formality of command alone makes obligation supervene upon natural goodness.[69]

So, on Suarez's account, the natural law has two main features or functions. The first feature is the law's "demonstrative" function. This refers to the actual content of the law. The law demonstrates or instructs a person with respect to a certain kind of action. The second feature is the law's "preceptive" function. This refers to the law's obligating force. The former function arises mainly through the notion of what is good for rational beings, while the latter comes about by God's command.

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[68] Schneewind, p. 60.
[69] Schneewind, p. 61.

iv. Suarez, Aquinas, and Schneewind

I have no contention with Schneewind's interpretation of Suarez insofar as he is explicating what the latter said and meant. I take issue only with Schneewind's implicit and explicit view that various aspects of Suarez's ethical theory are straightforward adoptions or extensions of Aquinas' thought. As I have stated, I believe some of those aspects are completely foreign to Aquinas. Specifically, Suarez believes that the "preceptive" function of the natural moral law, i.e., that characteristic of the law that obligates a person to perform or avoid types of action, arises solely from God's command.

Suarez's insistence that God's commands are the ultimate origin of moral obligation runs counter to Aquinas' position of the origin and justification of our obligation to follow the law. As I discussed in the last chapter, moral obligation, for Aquinas, is ultimately reducible to each person's own desire for happiness, i.e., the nature of the rational will itself. For Suarez, the moral response of a moral agent is obedience, namely obedience to natural law precepts that derive their obligating force from God's will. For Aquinas, on the other hand, the moral response is not reducible to obedience, but rather to actively seeking happiness, which on his account involves self-governance.

I believe that Schneewind is interpreting Aquinas' theory through Suarez's eyes. This leads Schneewind to place an emphasis on obedience and God's will that is not found in Aquinas' account. I think that the best

explanation for this discrepancy is that Schneewind fails to understand the full extent of the shift that occurred between Aquinas and Scotus and reached its pinnacle in the 16th century. I believe a further comparison between Aquinas and Scotus should clarify the particular differences that so affected subsequent ethical theory.

4.3: Aquinas and Scotus Revisited

There are two elements in Scotus' ethical theory that I wish to explain further. The first aspect is his notion of the will as comprised of two basic inclinations. To be fair, Schneewind does mention and briefly describe this idea, and I will reflect his account in my own. However, Schneewind fails to account for the full significance of Scotus' view as it plays out in the narrative of self-governance and obedience-based moral philosophy. I will also explain how the combination of Scotus' notions of the will and the scope of God's omnipotence require a new understanding of moral authority, as embodied in the authority requirement in this project. In the moral tradition up through Aquinas, a person's right or authority to exercise self-governance is, in effect, reducible to the possession of the relevant psychological capacities. Scotus's ethics, I submit, severs this connection.

i. The Will's Two Affections

Schneewind begins his overview of Scotus' account of the will by noting Scotus' general dissatisfaction with Aquinas' account of sin, namely a person's responsibility for a sinful act.

> Thomas's critics think he has a problem about explaining responsibility for sin. The intellectualist view seems to imply that we can act wrongly only if we fail to know what is good. But is our ignorance blameworthy?[70]

Scotus believed that Aquinas' account of the will was too impoverished to explain how a person could really be accountable for committing a sin. For if a person always acts *sub species boni*, i.e., for the sake of some perceived good, then how could that person be said to have intentionally committed an evil action? Scotus thought that the only way around this problem was to expand the will's capacities for choosing. He proposed that instead of the will having only one basic inclination, it has two. Recall from my account of Aquinas, that the will or rational appetite has one basic tendency or desire, which is for happiness. Moreover, that basic desire underpins all of the will's activity. Scotus offers his own alternative account within his discussion of Lucifer's first sin. Schneewind offers a concise summary of this discussion.

> Lucifer's fall, Duns Scotus thinks, was due to an inordinate desire for his own happiness. Lucifer improperly or inordinately desired good for someone he loved or to whom he wished well. It could not have been God for whose good he had an inordinate desire, since God is himself so lovable that it is impossible to love him excessively. It is unlikely that Lucifer sought good for anyone else; so it must have been himself whom he loved to excess. Now how is this possible? The will naturally seeks the advantageous and, if only this aspect of the will is involved, seeks as much as possible...Duns Scotus thinks there is another aspect to the will. The will can seek what is just, not merely what is useful or pleasant. And justice puts a check on the extent to which one may properly seek the useful or the agreeable...Lucifer's sin, then, was not due to ignorance. It was a deliberate pursuit of a good he knew he ought not to pursue, and which he did not have to pursue. He was free to pursue a justly obtainable good instead.[71]

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[70] Schneewind, p. 21. N.B. "intellectualism" in this passage does not refer to the way moral principles are related to God, but rather to a person's motivational structure.

[71] Schneewind, p. 22.

By adding another essential inclination to the will, Scotus is able to offer an alternative account of the origin and personal responsibility for sin. The will's inclinations are the affection for the advantageous and the affection for justice. Scotus distinguishes the two inclinations or affections through the way they relate to an agent's own good or benefit.

> Two affections may be assigned to the will, namely, the affection for justice and the affection for the advantageous...The affection for justice is nobler than the affection for the advantageous, understanding by "justice" not only acquired or infused justice, but also innate justice, which is the will's congenital liberty by reason of which it is able to will some good not oriented to self. According to the affection of what is advantageous, however, nothing can be willed save with reference to self. And this we would possess if only an intellectual appetite with no liberty followed upon intellectual knowledge, as sense appetite follows sense cognition. The only point I wish to make from this is the following. To love something in itself [or for its own sake] is more an act of giving or sharing and is a freer act than is desiring that object for oneself. As such it is an act more appropriate to the will, as the seat of this innate justice at least. The other act [of wanting something for oneself] pertains to the will inasmuch as it has an affection for the advantageous (*Ordinatio* III, suppl., dist. 46).[72]

For Scotus, the affection for the advantageous is basically equivalent to Aquinas' notion of the will as seeking happiness. The affection for justice adds the dimension whereby a person can seek some object, not because it is conducive to his happiness, but rather because "justice" demands we respond to certain objects in certain ways, irrespective of our happiness. For instance, to love someone, according to Scotus, I cannot simply incline towards her merely insofar as she is conducive to my happiness. Rather, I

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[72] From *Duns Scotus: On the Will and Morality*. All citations of Scotus are from this translation and source.

must respond to her or be inclined to her for her own sake, i.e., insofar as she is an inherently good thing.

The specifics of the dynamic are not important for this project, but suffice it to say the interplay between these dual affections make personal responsibility for sin possible, according to Scotus. Schneewind, at this point in his overview, turns to God's omnipotence and Scotus' voluntarism, which I addressed in the previous section. However, I believe Schneewind would have benefited to delve further into Scotus' account. For Scotus believes that since the will has an affection not attributed to it by Aquinas, practical reasoning needs to be construed differently than on Aquinas' account.

Recall that the basic principle that governs practical reason on Aquinas' account is "good is to be done and pursued, and evil avoided" (I-II, 94, 2). Scotus, on the other hand, insists that the basic principle is "God is to be loved" (*Ordinatio,* III, 27, 2). For Scotus, the will's inclination to do "justice" to objects of intrinsic value commits practical reasoning to seek out objects in proportion to their respective degrees of value or goodness. Thus, practical reason, through an understanding of this hierarchy of value, can direct a person to such objects, and through the will's affection for justice, a person can properly love them. God, on this scheme, is the most valuable or good thing. Therefore, a person ought to love Him above all else, hence Scotus' basic principle.

Aquinas' view of practical reasoning is tied into his view of the will as a rational appetite with its basic inclination to seek what is good but where

"good" means "conducive to the agent's happiness." Therefore the basic principle that directs the activity of practical reasoning is one tied into the pursuit of such goods and the avoidance of evil. God is to be loved, according to Aquinas, but the love of God is not fundamental to practical reasoning. Rather, love of God is something that is conducive to happiness and therefore falls under the general principle already stated.

Scotus' view of the will includes what Aquinas calls the rational appetite, which is captured in the affection for the advantageous. But the real source of freedom in the will is the affection for justice. The dynamic of the affection for justice differs from the advantageous, and it is the dynamic of the former that underpins Scotus' view of practical reasoning. As a result of the affection for justice, Scotus must account for moral obligation in a radically different way than Aquinas.

ii. Moral Obligation

For Aquinas, moral obligation is reducible to each person's desire for happiness, which is construed in terms of the rational will. The will, for Scotus, does not of necessity seek happiness, at least not in its inclination for justice. Hence, for Scotus, the will's desire for happiness cannot be the ground for moral obligation in the Thomistic manner. The basic moral principle is that God is to be loved. Loving God entails obeying his commands. Basic moral obligation is justified, by Scotus, in terms of our capacities insofar as our will mandates we should love God. The obligation that we have to do or refrain from doing anything else is in turn justified by

God commanding us to do or refrain from doing those things. In the following passage, Scotus discusses the moral status of the principles found in the Decalogue. The passage concerns both the justification of their obligating force and our knowledge of the principles.

> One way is as first practical principles known from their terms or as conclusions necessarily entailed by them. These are said to belong to the natural law in the strictest sense, and there can be no dispensation in their regard...But this is not the case when we speak in general of all the precepts of the second table [of the Decalogue]. For the reasons behind the commands and prohibitions there are not practical principles that are necessary in an unqualified sense, nor are they simply necessary conclusions from such. For they contain no goodness such as is necessarily prescribed for attaining the goodness of the ultimate end, nor in what is forbidden is there such malice as would turn one away necessarily from the last end, for even if the good found in these maxims were not commanded, the last end [of man as union with God] could still be loved and attained, whereas if the evil proscribed by them were not forbidden, it would still be consistent with the acquisition of the ultimate end (*Ordinatio* III, suppl., dist. 37).

Aquinas believes that all of the moral principles found in the Decalogue are necessary and unchangeable given our nature as rational, social animals. Moreover, those same principles are discernible and knowable through a rational reflection upon the various inclinations of human nature and a consequent coordination of the pursuit of the objects/goods to which those inclinations tend. Therefore, for Aquinas, the Decalogue is a specification of the first basic principle of practical reason of doing good, etc. Scotus does not believe the principles of the Decalogue are necessary or even unchangeable given human nature.

Scotus maintains that love of God is logically possible even if a person were to murder, commit adultery, steal, etc.. The goods specified by the

Decalogue, then, are not necessary to the fulfillment of the Scotistic basic principle of loving God. Moreover, the obligation to abide by the principles cannot be derived from the good or evil endorsed or prohibited by the given principle. Rather, the obligation is derived from the fact that God commands those things. For Scotus, then, morality is largely equivalent to obedience to God's commands.

iii. Source of Moral Authority

Scotus extends his discussion of the moral precepts from the second table, i.e., moral standards that do not directly relate to God, in an interesting way. He notes that although these moral precepts do not follow necessarily from the basic principle of loving God, they are in exceeding harmony with it.

> The other way in which things belong to the law of nature is because they are exceedingly in harmony with that law, even though they do not follow necessarily from those first practical principles known from their terms, principles which are necessarily grasped by any intellect understanding those terms. Now, it is certain that all the precepts of the second table also belong to the natural law in this way, since their rightness is very much in harmony with the first practical principles that are known of necessity (*Ordinatio* III, suppl., dist. 37).

The picture that emerges here is one where a person of at least average epistemic capacity can know all basic moral principles in much the same way as on Aquinas' account. However, for Scotus, God is doing humanity a favor by making these principles such that they are understandable and conducive to happiness. Moreover, God can change these precepts at any time in virtue of His omnipotence. A person's capacities, then, though reliable with respect to what is appropriate for humans to do, do not grant the authority to exercise self-governance.

With the ethical theory of Scotus, there occurs a fracturing of what I have called the Platonic biconditional, which states that possessing psychological capacities requisite for self-governance is a necessary and sufficient condition for possessing the proper authority to exercise self-governance. The source of moral authority, or the right to govern oneself, is characterized by Aquinas as reason itself. If a being possesses reason, then it has the appropriate authority to direct itself to its end. Moreover, if a being possesses the rightful authority to self-rule, then it must possess reason.

For Scotus, human beings do possess reason, but the possession of reason does not bring with it the authority of self-direction. God wants us to live voluntarily according to the principles He sets out for us. So, there is a sense in which God wants us to rule ourselves according to His law. However, the authority to do so is something He gives to humanity. The authority is not derivable from our psychological capacities. Scotus thus drives a wedge between the biconditional components. Subsequent moral theorists, especially in the 16th century, sever any connection between them. Thinkers in Schneewind's self-governance tradition look for ways to remove the seat of moral authority from God and place it elsewhere. Schneewind hails Kant for doing just this through his notion of the self-legislation of the moral law.

But as I have maintained throughout this project, many of the discoveries or inventions attributed by Schneewind to thinkers in the modern period are better understood as re-discoveries or re-inventions. For prior to

Scotus and the rise of voluntarism, divine command theory, and changes in how human nature's capacities were understood, self-governance and related notions flourished in ethical thought. Schneewind is correct in thinking that some early modern theorists, such as Machiavelli and Montaigne, were reacting strongly against an established obedience-based tradition of morality. But he is mistaken in thinking that Aquinas belonged to this tradition.

iv. Summary and Conclusion

Schneewind claims that moral theory prior to the modern period revolves around the concept of obedience. In this dissertation, I have shown that there is a rich tradition of incorporating self-governance at the heart of ethical theory that reaches back to at least Socrates. Self-governance forms the backbone of the eudaimonist tradition in ethics. My account of the eudaimonistic self-governance tradition that includes Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, and Augustine suggest that Schneewind's view is mistaken. My detailed account of Aquinas' notion of self-governance and its place in his ethical theory confirms it. Aquinas included, developed, and endorsed a robust conception of self-governance in his ethics. We who look to history to help solve contemporary problems should bring his account to bear on current issues of self-governance.

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