

# I I Will and Intellect

Thomas Williams

## I I. I INTRODUCTION

What we do depends on three things: what we think, what we want, and what we feel – or, in the more technical language of medieval philosophy, on intellect, will, and passions. In this chapter I first examine the changing conceptions of *voluntas*, will, from Augustine through Ockham. I then examine views of the relationship between will and intellect in the process of action, concentrating on debates in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The following chapter, by Martin Pickavé, examines different conceptions of the passions across the period, including the nature of their contribution to action and the degree to which they are subject to rational control.

Other important aspects of will and intellect are considered elsewhere in this volume. For the extent to which the moral law depends on God's will or intellect (and, perhaps correlatively, the extent to which it can be discerned by unaided human reason) in Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, see, respectively, Eric W. Hagedorn, 3.3.1; Jon McGinnis, 4.4.1; and T. M. Rudavsky, especially 5.2. For the debate over whether happiness is located primarily in the will or intellect, see Jeff Steele, 6.6. For the functioning of the practical intellect and the various epistemic and metaphysical threats that it faces, see M. V. Dougherty, Chapter 10.

## I I. 2 CHANGING CONCEPTIONS OF *VOLUNTAS*

Throughout our period, Christian writers talk about *voluntas* as an important determinant – in many later writers, as the single ultimate determinant – of human action. What I argue in this section is that there is no single notion corresponding to the word *voluntas*; even

so apparently simple a matter as whether to translate the word as “a will” or rather as “the will” (for Latin has no articles) can be contentious, for “a will” can be a simple wanting or desire, whereas “the will” suggests a unified faculty or power responsible for choice or action.

### 11.2.1 Augustine and Abelard

It is sometimes said that Augustine invented the “faculty” of will (e.g. Dihle 1982), but this notion is a projection on to Augustine of later debates that would take inspiration from him but miss the largely Stoic sources of his ideas. (See especially Byers 2012, Frede 2011, Rist 2014.) The Stoics, as Augustine knew them through Cicero, Varro, and Seneca, taught that experiences bring before us various propositions: “This is to be feared,” “The proper course of action is to face this difficulty,” and so forth. We can assent to (or dissent from) such propositions, and our assent gives rise to an impulse: *horme* in Greek – Augustine knows the word (e.g. *City of God* 19.4.2) and translates it as *impetus ... vel appetitus actionis*, “impetus, or the desire for action.”

Sarah Byers (2006) has argued that *voluntas* is for Augustine equivalent to *horme*, both dispositional and occurrent, and this identification is borne out by the texts. For the sake of space I consider here only the celebrated discussion of the divided will in *Confessions* 8. Augustine struggles between his desire to continue the sexual relationship to which he is accustomed (addicted, we could even say) and the continence that he has come to envision as a greater good:

The enemy held my will in his power and fashioned from it the chains that held me fast. Indeed, a perverse will gives birth to inordinate desire, and when the will serves inordinate desire, a habit is formed; and when the habit is not resisted, it becomes compulsion. By these small hooks, each joined to the one before (this is why I have called them a chain), a brutal enslavement held me in its grip. And yet I knew that a new will had begun to

arise in me, a will to worship you without desire of reward and to enjoy you, O God, our only sure joy. But this new will was not yet capable of overthrowing my prior will, which had grown stronger and stronger the longer it endured. Thus my two wills, one old and one new, one carnal and the other spiritual, were at war with one another, and by their conflict they laid waste to my soul.<sup>1</sup>

'Will' here consistently translates *voluntas*.<sup>2</sup> That there can be two opposed wills in the same person shows clearly that *voluntas* is not here a faculty or power, but occurrent *horme*. There are as many *voluntates* as there are occurrent desires:

someone is deliberating whether to kill someone by poisoning or stabbing; whether to seize this man's property or that one's, when he cannot do both; whether to spend money on pleasure in the service of lust or to save money in the service of greed; whether to go to the circus or to the theater, if both have performances on the same day – and I shall add a third: whether to go into someone else's house to rob him, if the occasion arises – even a fourth: to commit adultery, if the opportunity presents itself to do that as well at the same time. If all these things are present at a single moment of time and one desires them all equally but cannot do them all at the same time, what we typically say is that the mind is torn into pieces by these four – or more – mutually opposed wills because it desires so many things; we do not say that the mind is a great multitude of diverse substances.

(Conf. 8.10.24)

The difficulty that the "divided will" (really a multiplicity of competing wills) presents is best described as the inability of the mind (*animus*) to command itself; the resolution, which requires God's grace, is for the mind to will one thing *ex toto*, wholly or wholeheartedly:

The mind commands the mind to will, and the mind is nothing other than itself, and yet it does not obey. What is the source of

this remarkable conflict? How do things come to this pass, so that the mind wills what it would not command unless it willed it, and yet it does not do what it commands? But it does not will it wholeheartedly, so it does not command wholeheartedly. So far as it wills, it commands; so far as it does not will, the command is not carried out. For what the will is commanding is that a certain will should exist: not some other will, but that very will itself. And so the will that commands is not complete (*plena*), and for this reason what it commands does not come to be. For if it were complete, it would not command such a will to exist, since it would already exist. So it is not remarkable after all when someone is partly willing and partly unwilling: it is an illness of the mind, because it is so weighed down by habit that it cannot wholly rise up in the truth. And the reason that there are two wills is that neither of them is the whole, and something is present in one that is lacking in the other.

(Conf. 8.9.21)

Augustine makes it clear in *Confessions* 8 that his struggle was an affective rather than a cognitive matter: in the language of the later debate, that the failure was one of will, not of intellect. To be sure, earlier in his life he could have explained or even justified his hesitation on the grounds that he was not yet certain of which was the preferable course of action: "I had formerly thought that I had an excuse for not rejecting the world and serving you: my grasp of the truth was uncertain. But this excuse could no longer serve, for I was certain of your truth" (Conf. 8.5.11). The mind's knowledge is not enough; it fails to command what it knows is best because it is torn by competing *voluntates*.<sup>3</sup>

This is not to say, however, that the only problem besetting fallen human beings is a failure of will. Augustine consistently says that after the fall we are troubled by both ignorance and difficulty:

Indeed, all sinful souls have been afflicted with these two punishments: ignorance and difficulty. Because of ignorance, error

warps our actions; because of difficulty, our lives are a torment and an affliction. But to accept falsehoods as truths, thus erring unwillingly; to struggle against the pain of carnal bondage and not to be able to refrain from acts of inordinate desire: these do not belong to the nature that human beings were created with; they are the penalty of a condemned prisoner.<sup>4</sup>

He has rather less to say about ignorance, at least about specifically moral ignorance (ignorance of what ought to be done, as opposed to ignorance of the nature of God, though of course the latter kind of ignorance contributes to the former), than he does about difficulty. He treats difficulty independently, but ignorance almost always in conjunction with difficulty, as at *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* 2.17.26: "So ignorance and weakness are vices that hinder the will from being moved to do a good deed or abstain from an evil deed. That what is hidden should become known, or what gives no pleasure should become sweet, is a matter of the grace of God, by which he helps the wills of human beings." In Letter 96.5 he indicates that one cause of ignorance is the great variety of moral codes in different societies. Because we are ignorant we ought to pray for wisdom (*De natura et gratia* 17.19). Often, however, Augustine speaks as though we have, at least in principle, a secure grasp of the most general moral truths: "rules ... and lights of the virtues," as Augustine calls them in *On Free Choice of the Will* 2.10.29. We know, for example, that inferior things should be subject to superior things and all people should be given what is rightfully theirs; the challenge comes in having the wisdom to know *which* inferior things should be subjected to *which* superior things, and *what* rightfully belongs to a particular person. As he tells us belatedly in *Confessions* 8.7.17, even the young Augustine knew the good well enough to ask God for continence and chastity – just not yet. His problem was not in knowing the good but in wholeheartedly desiring it.

Peter Abelard likewise uses *voluntas* to mean not a faculty or power but simple occurrent desire (on this see also Eileen C. Sweeney, 15.1.2 in this volume). The slave who seeks to escape

from his enraged master does not will (that is, does not want) to kill his master to save his own hide; he does so with regret and under duress. Nevertheless he sins, not because his will is bad, but because he consents to an act (killing another human being in self-defense) to which he ought not consent (*Ethica* 1.11–20). Abelard recognizes the possibility of ignorance in moral matters: someone might mistakenly marry his sister (*Ethica* 1.53) or believe that the followers of Christ should be persecuted (*Ethica* 1.107). But, much like Augustine, Abelard is not concerned to develop a theory of moral knowledge that explains such ignorance and how it can be remedied.

### 11.2.2 Anselm

In Anselm, writing a generation before Abelard, we see the emergence of the will as a faculty. In his last completed work, *De concordia* (*On the Harmony of God's Foreknowledge, Predestination, and Grace with Free Choice*, 1107–1108), Anselm sets forth three distinct senses of the word *voluntas*:

“Will,” in fact, appears to be said equivocally. It has three senses: the instrument for willing, the affection of the instrument, and the uses of that instrument. The instrument for willing is the power of the soul that we employ for willing, just as reason is the instrument for reasoning that we employ when we reason and sight is the instrument for seeing that we employ when we see. The affection of this instrument is that by which the instrument itself is disposed in such a way to will something (even when one is not thinking of what it wills) that if that thing comes to mind, the instrument wills it, either immediately or at the appropriate time ... By contrast, the use of that instrument is what we have only when we think of the thing we will.

(*De concordia* 3.11; cf. *De libertate arbitrii* 3, 7; *De conceptu virginali et de peccato originali* 4.)

The instrument for willing is the power or faculty of will; the uses of that instrument are particular volitions. Affections of the will are dispositional desires. In his account of freedom Anselm identifies

two such affections: a disposition to will what is right (the affection for justice) and a disposition to will what makes for happiness (the affection for advantage).<sup>5</sup>

Anselm's doctrine of the two affections means that the will is not aimed exclusively at happiness. Although every rational nature wills happiness (*De casu diaboli* 4), justice is also an object of the will, and an object distinguished from happiness. Anselm describes the situation of the primal angelic choice precisely as a choice between happiness and justice: there was some element of happiness that the angels lacked (Anselm wisely declines to speculate on exactly what that might have been) and their affection for happiness inclined them toward choosing it; there was also God's will that that aspect of happiness be denied the angels, at least for the time being, and their affection for justice inclined them toward choosing obedience to God. Some angels willed to preserve justice and forgo happiness; other angels willed to seek happiness and forgo justice (*De casu diaboli* 6). The difference between the angels who fell and those who remained steadfast in the truth is traceable only to their wills, not to any differences in their knowledge, natural endowments, or divine assistance. For any such differences would be ultimately traceable to God, and Anselm is emphatic that the difference between the good angels and the fallen angels must be attributable only to the angels themselves. The will, then, is the faculty by which creatures can make choices the causal origin of which is in themselves and not in anything external.<sup>6</sup>

### 11.2.3 Thomas Aquinas

Whether Aristotle had a notion of the faculty of will is a contentious matter (Rapp 2017). But medieval Aristotelians certainly thought that they were following Aristotle in ascribing such a faculty to human beings and locating it in the intellectual part of the soul, the part that human beings, alone among the animals, possess. Accounts of what this faculty is, however, continued to

vary just as they had before the recovery of the complete corpus of Aristotle's works.

In Thomas Aquinas the will is rational (or intellectual) appetite. As *appetite* it moves toward an end; as *rational* it moves toward ends as *apprehended by reason*. Rational apprehension differs from sensory apprehension in that it is universal, rather than particular; even though of course we will particular things, we will them as falling under the universal concept of goodness. The object of the will is therefore the good in general, and happiness is the ultimate, complete, and sufficient good. So whatever we will, we will either as the ultimate end, happiness, or as in some way ordered to that end (*ST* I-II, q. 1, a. 6).

In this way the will for Aquinas is continuous with the rest of nature, all of which is teleologically directed. Things without cognition act as they do from the natural inclination God has bestowed on them by creating them as the sorts of things they are. Things with sensory cognition tend toward the particular objects presented to them as good (or away from the particular objects presented to them as bad) by their sensory cognition. And human beings, with our vastly more complicated capacity for universal understanding, deliberation, and considering one and the same particular under multiple aspects, likewise tend toward the objects presented to us by the intellect. The will, intellectual appetite, is thus in effect the natural appetite of creatures with a rational nature.

#### 11.2.4 John Duns Scotus

For John Duns Scotus, by contrast, the will is not identical with intellectual appetite; nor do we will everything we will either as, or for the sake of, happiness.<sup>7</sup> Intellectual appetite is only one aspect of the will, though Scotus acknowledges that it is an important aspect: no inclination, natural or acquired, can influence the will more powerfully than its natural appetite for the good.

Scotus makes a fundamental distinction between natural powers and rational powers.<sup>8</sup> Natural powers have what Scotus



calls “indeterminacy of insufficiency,” the kind of indeterminacy that requires determination from without; the intellect is a natural power, because although there are in principle any number of things that can actualize the intellect, in a given set of circumstances the intellect can have actual understanding only of what is presented to it. Hence, though “it can have contrary acts ... those contrary acts are not in the intellect’s power” (*In Metaph.* ix, q. 15, n. 36; Williams 2017, 6). A rational power, by contrast, has what Scotus calls “indeterminacy of superabundant sufficiency”: it can determine itself. The will is such a power, and indeed the only such power. There are therefore only two kinds of powers: natures and wills. Will is *sui generis*: “it seems perfectly ridiculous to apply universal propositions about active principles to the will on the grounds that there is no counterexample to those propositions in anything other than the will” (*In Metaph.* ix, q. 15, n. 44; Williams 2017, 8).

If the will were merely intellectual appetite, he argues, it would follow on the deterministic operations of the intellect and therefore would, in turn, operate deterministically itself, leaving no room for freedom as he understands it. Scotus follows Anselm in postulating two affections in the will: an affection for the advantageous, which is the will as intellectual appetite, with its ineliminable desire for happiness, and an affection for justice, which is the will as free.<sup>9</sup> In this way Scotus keeps the will rooted in nature and the natural desire for happiness, but insists that the will must also transcend nature if we are to be free.

### 11.2.5 William of Ockham

Where Scotus tries to retain the idea of the will as rooted in nature (though transcending it), William of Ockham goes further. The will for him is arguably “de-natured,” becoming a neutral steering wheel, an executive power by which we choose what we please. Like Scotus, Ockham holds that the will need not will happiness; but he goes a step further by insisting that the will can even will against happiness.

The will can even will something bad qua bad, a very radical view indeed: “the will is able to will something bad that is neither really nor apparently good, and able to will against a good thing that is neither really nor apparently bad” (*Quaestiones variae* q. 8 [*OTH VIII:443*; see Osborne 2012, esp. 437–443]).

### II.3 WILL AND INTELLECT IN THE GENESIS OF ACTION

As we have seen, even before the emergence of the will as a faculty, there are questions about how we come to have moral knowledge and how ignorance affects our desires and thereby our actions. Once will is identified as a distinct faculty of the soul, the question becomes one of its relationship to another distinct faculty, intellect, in the process of action. This question includes, but is by no means exhausted by, the question whether freedom in action derives ultimately from the will or from the intellect.

In the *Sentences* (II, d. 24, a. 3) Peter Lombard defines *liberum arbitrium* (usually translated “free choice”) as “a faculty of reason and will,” and many writers accept this definition and expand upon it. Albert the Great, for example, repeats it in several places in his commentary on the *Sentences* (*Sent.* II, d. 3, aa. 6, 7; d. 24, a. 5; d. 25, a. 1). The role of both intellect and will can be seen clearly in *Sent.* II, d. 5, a. 6, where Albert says that “*liberum arbitrium* was given ... so that by reason one might see what is true and what is false, what is true and what is even truer – not so that one might end one’s journey in either of them, but in one, namely, in the first truth – and so that through the will one might test (*probet*) what is good and what is better, and end one’s journey in what is best of all.”<sup>10</sup> *liberum arbitrium* “has something of reason and something of the will” (*Sent.* II, d. 24, a. 5), though Albert does suggest that the characteristic act of *liberum arbitrium* is choice, and it is the will’s function to choose (*Sent.* II, d. 24, aa. 5, 14). Bonaventure likewise regards *liberum arbitrium* as including both will and reason; but he is much more emphatic than Albert in making the freedom of *liberum arbitrium* depend on the will’s capacity for self-motion, and unlike Albert he

does not give rational deliberation a role in the production of a free act (Hoffmann 2010, 415).

Although Thomas Aquinas also speaks of *liberum arbitrium*, we can see the vocabulary beginning to change: where Albert asks whether the stars have power over *liberum arbitrium* (*Sent.* II, d. 15, a. 5), Aquinas asks whether heavenly bodies move the will (*ST* I-II, q. 9, a. 5). (Both give the same answer: yes, though only insofar as heavenly bodies can cause physical changes that incline us to desire one thing more than another or to be subject to some passion.) The will is *what* is free, but reason is *why* the will is free: as Aquinas puts it,

The will is the root of freedom in the sense that it is the *subject* of freedom; but reason is the root of freedom in the sense that it is the *cause* of freedom. You see, the reason that the will can be freely drawn to various things is that reason can have various conceptions of the good. And that is why philosophers define *liberum arbitrium* as free judgment on the part of reason, implying that reason is the cause of freedom.

*(ST* I-II, q. 17, a. 1, *ad* 2)

Aquinas's theory of action is characterized by a complex interplay between reason and will.<sup>11</sup> A key distinction is that between the *exercise* of the will's act and the *specification* of the will's act. Exercise refers to whether a power acts or does not act; specification refers to what sort (species) of act the power performs. For Aquinas, the will moves itself to the exercise of its act; in virtue of willing an end, it moves itself to will what is for the end. The ultimate source of the will's movement is God, who bestows on the will its general inclination toward the good: "Without this universal movement, human beings cannot will anything" (*ST* I-II, q. 9, a. 6, *ad* 3). Reason moves the will to the specification of its act: that is, we will what reason presents to us as good. But the will in turn moves reason to the exercise of its act. We will to deliberate, or to cease deliberation; we will to think about this or that aspect of an object.

As we have already seen, it is reason's capacity to take different views both of the ultimate good and of particular goods that explains the will's freedom. Nothing moves the will necessarily to the exercise of its act, "because one can just not think about a given object, and consequently one will not actually will it." As for specification, only an object in which there is no aspect of deficiency or evil – happiness – moves the will necessarily: "Other particular goods, by contrast, can be regarded as not-good insofar as they are lacking some good; thus, depending on how one looks at them, the will can either reject them or approve them, since it can be directed to one and the same object under different descriptions" (*ST* I–II, q. 10, a. 2).

How to understand Aquinas's account of the interaction between intellect and will – and, in particular, how to understand the nature of the freedom that emerges from and characterizes that interaction – was, and remains, highly contested. If we take seriously the notion of will as rational appetite (see 11.2.4), it seems that the will has no independent power to shape human action.<sup>12</sup> Even the fact that the will can divert the intellect from considering a particular object, or command it to consider the object under this description (as good) or that (as lacking in goodness), must, it seems, ultimately rest on the intellect, for if the will is rational appetite, how it directs the intellect's consideration and deliberation must depend on reason's judgment. And Aquinas does in fact assert that the will never acts contrary to a particular judgment of reason (*ST* I–II, q. 77, a. 1).<sup>13</sup> If reason in turn works deterministically, then it would seem that acts of will inherit that determinism and so are free, if at all, only in a compatibilist sense.<sup>14</sup>

Certainly many early critics of Aquinas held that on his account acts of will are necessitated by acts of intellect. In 1277 the Franciscan William de la Mare published the *Correctorium fratris Thomae*, which offered "corrections" to 117 passages in Aquinas; in 1282 the Franciscan order officially endorsed the work and required that any Franciscans who read the *Summa theologiae* read it with William's corrections. (The *Correctorium* in turn inspired several

“corrections of the corrections” by defenders of Aquinas.) Replying to Aquinas’s claim in *ST I-II*, q. 9, a. 6, ad 3 that “through reason human beings determine themselves to will this or that,” William says:

If by the act of determining he means that reason, by inquiring, taking counsel, and judging, offers or presents one of a pair of opposites to the will so that it might will and obtain that one and not its contrary, that doesn’t seem to call for criticism; on the contrary, it is well said. If, however, by the act of determining he means that reason, in concluding that one of a pair of contraries is to be willed and pursued, thereby determines – that is, necessitates – the will to that thing in such a way that the will cannot will or pursue its contrary, that is contrary to Bernard, *On Grace and Free Choice*, ch. 3, and contrary to the Philosopher, *Metaphysics* 9, and erroneous, and recently condemned along with a number of articles in the ninth chapter, on the will, where the claim that the will does not remain free after the intellect has come to a conclusion about what is to be done is condemned as an error; as is the claim that the human will is necessitated through its cognition in the way that the appetite of the lower animals is; as is the claim that the will follows necessarily what is firmly believed by reason and cannot withdraw from what reason determines.

(Glorieux 1927, 232)<sup>15</sup>

To this the anonymous defender of Aquinas who wrote the *Correctorium corruptorii Thomae* “*Quare*” replies: “It never ceases to amaze me how these people twist Thomas’s words to mean what they don’t mean, when the whole drift of Thomas’s argument is to teach the opposite. So I don’t see any need to respond to this nonsense” (Glorieux 1927, 232).

William is insistent that the will must be able to act against the judgment of reason, and this view comes to be generally adopted by later Franciscans, a development perhaps encouraged, but certainly not initiated, by the Condemnation of 1277: earlier Franciscans

such as John of la Rochelle (fl. 1238–1245) and Walter of Bruges (fl. 1267–1269) had defended such a view of the freedom of the will (Eardley 2006). Not surprisingly, those who held that the will was the root of freedom found the old language of *liberum arbitrium*, which designated a faculty of both reason and will, less apt, and were increasingly using the expression *libertas voluntatis*, freedom of the will. We see this shift in vocabulary in the 1270s, accelerating with the Condemnation of 1277.

But even if one accepts that the will is free in its own right and not merely because of its connection with reason, one still needs some account of what reason contributes. The will depends on the intellect to present an object, even if the will is free either to accept or reject the intellect's judgment about whether that object should be chosen. Henry of Ghent insisted that "the intellect functions simply as a *conditio sine qua non* of volition" (Eardley 2006, 366): a necessary precondition for willing, but no more than that. Against Henry, Godfrey of Fontaines upheld a strong intellectualist view: the will is passive, causally determined by the cognized object, and it cannot choose contrary to a judgment of reason.

When John Duns Scotus, who agreed with his Franciscan predecessors that the will is free in its own right, first considered the question of the respective contributions of will and intellect to action, he presented the views of Henry and Godfrey as two extremes – one attributing no causality to the intellect, the other attributing all causality to the intellect – and argued for an intermediate view. In his early *Lectura* on the *Sentences* (c. 1299), he argued that the will and the object presented by the intellect together constitute the total efficient cause of an act of will. Neither depends on the other for its causal power, and both are required. The will is "the more principal and perfect agent" because it is responsible for the freedom of the act, but the intellect must also exercise an efficient-causal role (*Lect.* II, d. 25, q. un.). By the time of his last lectures on the *Sentences* (c. 1303), however, he had come around to Henry's position that the will is the total cause of its own act and

the intellect's presentation of the object is merely a *sine qua non* condition (*Reportatio* II, d. 25, q. un.).<sup>16</sup>

For all that they disagreed over the causal contributions of intellect and will in action, all the authors discussed so far in this section did at least agree that they were examining the interaction of two distinct faculties. William of Ockham departed from this consensus. On his view, "will" and "intellect" both refer to one and the same thing: the intellectual soul. The terms have different connotations. Connotation is a kind of indirect reference: when I use the word "horseman," for example, I refer directly to a human being but indirectly to a horse.<sup>17</sup> According to Ockham, "will" connotes volitional acts and "intellect" connotes intellectual acts, but it is one and the same thing, the intellectual soul, that has both kinds of acts: "When we want to stress [the intellectual soul's] capacity for intellectual acts, we call it the intellect, and when we want to stress its capacity for volitional acts, we call it the will" (Panaccio 2012, 78–79).

Nevertheless, even though we are talking about a single intellectual soul rather than about two different faculties, we can still ask how intellectual acts are related to volitional acts. Ockham does not hesitate to say that "an act of understanding is a partial efficient cause with respect to an act of willing, and it can exist naturally without an act of willing, but not vice versa" (*Reportatio* II, q. 20; *OTh* v:441–442). Ockham cannot quite uphold the traditional Franciscan view that the will is nobler than the intellect, since strictly speaking the will and the intellect are one and the same thing.<sup>18</sup> But he does hold that acts of willing are nobler than acts of understanding, despite the natural priority of acts of understanding, because only acts of willing are fully within our power and therefore only they can be virtuous, praiseworthy, and meritorious.<sup>19</sup>

Every volition must be preceded by an intellection, but not necessarily a judgment (such as "This ought to be done") or any deliberation. Scotus, by contrast, had given deliberation a greater role in action: "one does not act in a properly human way unless

one understands that for the sake of which one acts: and that understanding is precisely deliberation" (*Ord.* III, d. 33, q. un., n. 76; Williams 2017, 206). It is perhaps for this reason that Scotus was so concerned to defend the possibility of what he calls "deliberation in a quasi-imperceptible time": the virtuous deliberate so quickly and effortlessly that it seems as if they have not deliberated at all (*Ord.* III, d. 33, q. un., nn. 76–77). For Ockham, however, a simple intellectual apprehension of an object is all the will needs in order to choose or refuse it. Volitions are directly under our control; some intellections are indirectly under our control, because we can will to direct our thoughts in a certain way, though some intellections arise unbidden or "mechanically," just because of our interaction with our environment (Panaccio 2012, 83–84). It is always possible for us to will as right reason dictates, but likewise it is always possible for us to will the opposite of what right reason dictates – and experience makes it perfectly clear that we in fact do so, not just in haste or under the influence of passion, but deliberately and with our eyes wide open.<sup>20</sup>

#### II.4 CONCLUSION

It has long been the practice of historians of medieval philosophy to classify various thinkers as either voluntarists or intellectualists, depending on whether they give primacy to the will (*voluntas*) or the intellect. What I have tried to show in this chapter is that such classifications, though undoubtedly useful for certain purposes, can easily obscure important differences. The meaning of *voluntas* is not stable across the period, and the contribution of the intellect to the genesis of action is as much a matter of debate among voluntarists (such as Scotus and Ockham) as it is between voluntarists and intellectualists. And some thinkers, most notably Thomas Aquinas, may not belong unambiguously to either camp.<sup>21</sup> The inventiveness of medieval thinkers resists such easy dichotomies, and that is precisely why the medieval debates repay careful study.



## NOTES

- 1 *Confessions* 8.5.10. All translations in this chapter are my own.
- 2 Translators of the *Confessions* into English often obscure the nature of *voluntas* in Augustine by translating the word variously as “whim,” “volition,” “will,” “urge,” “inclination,” “impulse,” and so forth. (I take all these translations from just four paragraphs of book 8 in one of the most widely used English translations, which compounds the difficulty by speaking of “our will,” as if it were a single faculty, where the word *voluntas* does not even appear in Latin.)
- 3 For that reason I hesitate to follow Sarah Byers, to whom my account is otherwise greatly indebted, in calling this a “cognitive dissonance model of acrasia” or “‘warring thoughts’ model of acrasia” (Byers 2012, 42). For although it is true that Augustine describes himself as having competing impressions – the *dignitas* of continence, the habit-enhanced pleasure of sex – it is only because both of these impressions have motivational force, because both are “hormetic impressions” or wills, that Augustine is torn between the two incompatible kinds of life that he is envisioning.
- 4 He continues the discussion of ignorance and difficulty through *De lib. arb.* 3.20.58 and returns to it at 3.22.64 and 3.23.70. He repeats it in his treatment of *De lib. arb.* in *Retractationes* 1.9.6. See also *De natura et gratia* 17.19, 67.81 (quoting his earlier treatment in *De lib. arb.*); *De dono perseverantiae* 11.27 (quoting *Retract.*), 12.29 (quoting *De lib. arb.*), and *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* 2.17.26.
- 5 See especially *De casu diaboli* 12–14. The account of the two affections given here, as two competing first-order dispositional desires, is consistent with Brower 2004, 243–249, and Williams and Visser 2001, 230–238. Rogers 2005 argues instead for taking the affection for justice as a second-order desire for desiring advantage in the right way. Against this reading of Frankfurtian hierarchy into Anselm, see Williams 2014a.
- 6 Unlike Augustine and Abelard, Anselm downplays the possibility of ignorance in moral matters, and to the extent that he does acknowledge it, he attributes it ultimately to a failure of the will. See Williams and Visser 2008, 204–207.
- 7 See *Ord.* I, d. 1, part 2, q. 2, nn. 91–99, 134–158 (Williams 2017, 56–66) and *Reportatio* IVA, d. 49, qq. 8–9, which in default of a critical edition is translated at [ethicascoti.com/Reportatio IV 49 8-9.pdf](http://ethicascoti.com/Reportatio IV 49 8-9.pdf).

- 8 See especially *Questions on the Metaphysics* IX.15, but also *Ord.* I, d. 1, part 2, n. 80; *Ord.* II, d. 6. q. 2, nn. 54–62; *Ord.* II, d. 39, qq. 1–2, nn. 23–25; *Ord.* III, d. 17, q. un., nn. 5–18 (translated in Williams 2017, 1–15, 53–54, 116–118, 142, 156–160).
- 9 The story here is complicated: with each successive set of lectures on the *Sentences* Scotus moves further away from Anselm, to the point that there seems to be nothing left of the two affections but their names. See King 2011. Though the point requires much more argument than I can give it here, I would insist that Scotus’s final understanding of the two affections is precisely a way of talking about the will as both free and yet still rooted in nature.
- 10 Albert perhaps intends an echo here of Romans 12:2, “that you might prove (*probetis*) what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”
- 11 I can offer only an overview here; for extensive commentary, see Williams 2016.
- 12 This is the view defended by Jeffrey Hause (2007).
- 13 For the role that this claim plays in Aquinas’s account of what we call weakness of will but he calls incontinence, see Kent 1989.
- 14 Pasnau 2002, 221–233, argues that Aquinas was a compatibilist. For the case against intellectual determinism in Aquinas, see Hoffmann and Michon 2017.
- 15 This is a later revision of William’s text; I include it here because it is the version to which the defender of Aquinas quoted next is responding. The earlier version likewise invokes the fact that the view was recently condemned; the reference is to the Condemnation of 1277.
- 16 I discuss this development in greater detail in Williams 2013.
- 17 I take the example from Panaccio 2012, 77. Another example he gives is “father,” which refers directly to a human being and indirectly to offspring (since no one is a father without having offspring).
- 18 For the debate over the relative nobility of will and intellect, see Jeff Steele in this volume, 6.6.
- 19 So Panaccio (2012, 82) argues, but the text he cites (*Quaestiones variae* q. 7, a. 1; *OTh* VIII:329) does not actually say that volitional acts are nobler than intellectual acts, and the only unambiguous affirmation of that thesis that I can find in Ockham occurs in a passage in which he is setting forth other people’s views (*Ordinatio* I, prol. q. 12; *OTh* 1:327).

Ockham does, however, say explicitly that *if* the intellect and the will were distinct powers, the will would be nobler (*Ordinatio* I, d. 1, q. 2; *OTh* 1:402); he also affirms there that “enjoyment, which is an act of will, is nobler than an act of intellect” – a view that even Thomas Aquinas, “as if compelled by the truth,” affirms in one place, though in many others he says the opposite, “following the errors of his own head” (*OTh* 1:402–403).

- 20 See Williams 2013, 176 (from which I have borrowed some language here), and Panaccio 2012, 89–90.
- 21 Tobias Hoffmann (2010) makes this point well, though (for what it’s worth) I stand by my view in Williams 2012 that Jeffrey Hause (2007) is right to regard Aquinas as an intellectualist in the sense that he does not think the will has any power independent of the intellect to shape human action. What is important in the present context is that merely calling Aquinas an intellectualist gives no indication of the complex interplay of intellect and will that generates human action.