out of which we are made and which God so loves, he planted his life-giving death, like a seed, under the appearances of bread and wine.

THE PLAY OF GRACE

THOMAS GILBY, O.P.

VARRO, a naval officer and the most learned of the Romans, refers to three kinds of theology, mythological, physical, and political—*mythicon*, *physicum*, and *civile*: St Augustine discusses the division in the *De Civitate Dei*.[1] The first ranges from fable to myth and includes symbolic and poetic theogonies, the genealogies of heaven and earth; the approach is not scientific, yet Jungians are not alone in agreeing with Plato that the results may be educationally valuable. The last is concerned with public worship largely as a factor of social cohesion, and is accordingly dominated by the requirements of administrators and lawyers in both or either Church and State. Neither represents the theology of St Thomas.

The middle type therefore remains. It rises from the impulse of the early Greek philosophers—Aristotle calls them the *physikoi*, St Thomas the *antiqui naturales*—to discover their explanations in and through the elements of our material environment. 'All very well', remarks St Augustine, 'if we are in quest of physiology and not of theology, if we seek nature and set God aside.'[2] That, however, is not St Thomas's temper, and it is without apology that we carry on the behaviour of the earlier articles of this series and go grubbing about.[3] We do not forget the mystery of our regeneration and adoption by God, but our task, more humdrum than displaying the riches of the *Epistle to the Romans*, is to relate the effects of grace—the Christian virtues and the Gifts of the Holy Ghost—to the physico-psychological system of reference set forth in the *Summa Theologica*.

Grace itself, though not our substance, lies closer to our core than do our other qualities, our traits of character, abilities,

1 vi, 5. 2 *Ibid.*, vi, 8.
3 THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT, February, May, September, 1957. March, 1958.

activities. It is a real condition in which the whole person lives, not merely a credit note for divine favour or an external designation, *denominatio extrinseca*, which leaves us innerly unaffected.[4] We are not going to consider it at that depth. Our subject is what we do by grace, not what we are by grace. Or, to be more modest and accurate, for *what* substitute *how*. The manner-of-being, *habitus entitativus*, is the basis for a manner-of-acting through the appropriate psychological dynamism of faculties and habits. It is at this we glance. Our title was to be 'the Gear of Grace', to suggest how a workmanlike 'physical theologian' can lay out the equipment and apparatus. But on reflection and a re-reading of St Thomas on the habits and virtues it was clear that any hint of the rigidly exact and mechanical belied the lissom vitality released by grace. 'Play' in the present title should sound every debonair harmonic.

I

First, a note on the human abilities, *potentiae*, or faculties, as they are called. Do not imagine them as things. There is but one single thing, the human person, manifesting itself in various types of activity through distinct principles of operation.[5] A usage of spiritual literature speaks of the mind doing this and the will doing that, but it is not formally accurate. It is the human being who acts. St Thomas does not personify even the soul. 'Soul does not act; what acts is this man through his soul.'[6] The point is important, and the reminder is particularly salutary to any writer engaged on structurizing—or skeletonizing—the spiritual life.

Next, the properly human abilities of knowing and loving are embodied in the one and the same substance which also exhibits the functions of vegetable and animal life; a unique soul animates the whole from the top, where it is capable of the beatific vision, to the bottom, where the toenails grow.[7] We know as human beings and we love as human beings; our assents are charged with sensation and our loves with emotion.[8] This point also is important, and not least to those who would trace the path of Christian perfection rising to the heights of mysticism.

St Thomas often invokes the principle that grace acts con-

4 See 1a-2ae, cx, 1-4.
5 1a, lxxvii, 1-6.
6 *X Ethics, lect.* 6.
7 1a, lxxvi, 1, 4.
8 1a, lxxxiv, 7; lxxxv, 1; 1a-2ae, ix, 2.

naturally to our constitution.[9] The supernatural virtues and the gifts of the Spirit associated with them as they exist in this life are the endowments given by God to creatures of flesh and blood, not to naked spirits. Thus the theological virtue of faith whereby we cleave to God in darkness is professed in words and deeds.[10] Thus by the cardinal virtue of prudence we are governed and so act in a particular pocket of space and time that our angel guardian may exclaim, Oh, what a *sensible* thing to do.[11]

Those are virtues in the mind. The same holds true for virtues in the will. Hope expects the resurrection of the body, charity knows the ordinary gestures of affection and holds dearer those who are nearer.[12] 'Salute one another with a holy kiss'—do you suppose the apostolic injunction was to a dutiful peck?[13] Justice too sets us to the observing of rights in physical things and acts, such as returning a book we have borrowed, leaving a lavatory as we found it, genuflecting as well as we can in church.[14] Last of all, the two cardinal virtues of fortitude and temperance are not regarded as applications of will-power but as tonics to our emotional powers, so that neither have they to be screwed up during an emergency nor are they softened by pleasure.[15]

II

Now we are not from birth steadily set on doing the right things. It is easy to see that this is the case in the order of grace. By my mind alone I cannot elicit an act of faith, nor by my will alone an act of hope or charity. These are supernatural virtues, and so also are the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. Their activity supposes that our powers are lifted higher than the level to which they can climb of themselves. But even at that level, many of our powers, though able to act well, cannot be relied on to do so unless they are trained. Let us say that their intentions are excellent, but that does not guarantee a good performance.

The condition of having a well-trained power is called a habit, *habitus*, or, to be more precise, an operative habit, *habitus operativus*, a sub-species of the category of quality, *qualitas*.[16] St Thomas

9 *e.g.* III *Contra Gentes*, 149; 2a-2ae, xxiii, 2.
10 2a-2ae, i, 1, 2, 6, 9. 11 2a-2ae, xlvii, 1, *ad* 3, 3; xlix, 4. 12 2a-2ae, xxvi, 7.
13 Rom. xvi, 16; 1 Cor. xvi, 20; 2 Cor. xiii, 12; 1 Thess. vi, 26; 1 Peter v, 14.
14 2a-2ae, lviii, 7, 10, 11; lxi, 3; lxii, 1.
15 1a-1ae, 1, 3; lvi, 4; lx, 5. 16 1a-2ae, xlix, 1, 2.

takes over from Aristotle the analysis of habits, and we should pause here if we are to appreciate the workings of the Gifts of the Holy Ghost. For they, like the virtues round which they cluster, are habits.[17]

A habit is an established disposition of a voluntary power to act in a certain way. Well, if it is a good habit; ill, if it is a bad habit. Good habits are called virtues, bad habits vices.[18] Some of our powers do not need good habits, nor indeed can they acquire or be endowed with them. There are good digestions and bad digestions, but not, strictly speaking, well-trained digestions: otherwise one of the difficulties of the religious life for men would be lessened. It is true, of course, that discipline elsewhere can make us eupeptic just as the lack of it can make us dyspeptic; also that the situation can vary, for practioners of yoga are more adept than we are at controlling organic functions. Yet in general we can say that habits are not directly located in the body.[19] Physique and temperament are affected by them through our character; we can regulate our digestions so that they can be counted on to behave in their quasi-automatic responses to their provender. Remember that a habit is more than a physiological bias or knack; it is and remains a voluntary tendency. Still, if we cannot be virtuous digesters we can be virtuous eaters; we may even, though not necessarily in a moral sense, have virtuous palates, that is, educated, discriminating, and trustworthy.

III

You will not be surprised, then, to be told that only the higher human powers can be affected by habits. Why is this? It is because there is a certain breadth about them, a *latitudo*, says St Thomas, which enables them to range in different directions.[20] Their activity is not instinctive, or necessitated by a determinism permitting only one reaction to a particular stimulus. They are versatile. Unlike the lower powers, we can look at them and not be sure which way the cat will jump. There is within them a poise between alternatives, a sort of freedom, so that unless we take our bearings and gather them together they can lead us astray. In other words, in order to be reliable they have to be impressed by a habit.

17 1a-2ae, lxviii, 8; 2a-2ae, viii, ix, xix, xlv, lii, cxxi, cxxxix.
18 1a-2ae, liv, 3; lv, 1, 2, 3. 19 1a-2ae, 1, 1. 20 1a-2ae, li, 1; xlix, 4.

The inner balance of these powers, or indeterminancy as it is called, does not imply that they are inert. On the contrary, it is because they are full of resource that they are not confined to one groove. This vitality must be insisted on, because habit implies habituation and habituation has come to convey a lack of spontaneity. Moreover, the clichés favoured by minor theologians and their addiction to casting moral precepts in the moulds of legalism could make us picture the virtues and the gifts as a hard glaze annealed to the soul. Rather they should be described in terms of the biology which watches things reaching out and being lifted up to their highest ends; they are among what St Thomas calls the intrinsic principles of vital activity.[21]

The Sapiential Books of the Bible strike the same note. 'The just shall run to and fro like sparks among the stubble.'[22] 'Wisdom showeth herself cheerfully.'[23] 'The spirit of understanding is subtle, mobile, active, quick.'[24] 'More active than all active things.'[25] 'Cunning.'[26] 'Without tediousness.'[27] 'Wisdom opens the mouths of the dumb and makes the tongues of infants eloquent.'[28] 'Delights every day, playing at God's side at all times, playing in the world, and delighting to be with the children of men.'[29] No wonder that St Thomas compared contemplation to a game.[30] Fun is not frivolity.

So then, let us not think of good habits as stiffeners. A creature of habit we say, and imagine a narrow life, repetitive and monotonous. That is a caricature of habit, as the moral theologian uses the word. He rules out clumsiness, not verve; indeed, he thinks acts done from habit are more voluntary than those done without, since they are more from within, or, shall we say? from more within.[31] And, on the reverse side, to sin from habit introduces a special malice.[32]

We do better to think of habit as second nature, stressing the sense in which *natural* signifies motion from within by contrast with artificial or coerced motion imposed from without.[33] Whether acquired or infused, that is to say, whether slowly

21 Ia-2ae, xlix, Prologue.
22 Wisd. iii, 7.
23 Ibid. vi, 17.
24 Ibid. vii, 22.
25 Ibid. vii, 24.
26 Ibid. viii, 6.
27 Ibid. viii, 16.
28 Ibid. x, 21.
29 Prov. viii, 30–1.
30 *De Hebdomadibus*, Prologue. *Philosophical Texts*, ed. T. Gilby, pp. 1–2.
31 See Ia-2ae, vi, 1, 2, 6, 7.
32 Ia-2ae, lxxviii, 2, 3.
33 Ia-2ae, vi, 4, 5; x, 1, 4.

formed by practice or given by one stroke of grace, a good habit is always a strengthening and a steadying of the pulse of a power, not a covering demanded by convention and thrust on it by Super-Ego-dynamics.[34]

IV

On occasion St Thomas, distinguishing the freedom of acting by mind and will from the determinism of acting by nature, summons Stoic notions of material processes being ruled by a reason separate from them.[35] In general, however, he is guarded about treating the natural man as the instinctive man, and still less as the merely animal man. We are by nature reasonable, and it is in accordance with the Natural Law, not merely positive law, that we should be civilized.[36] *Nature* can be applied to us in two ways, retrospectively and prospectively, or better, genetically and teleologically. In the first way it signifies what is inborn; and while we are about it, without scorning the artless and unaffected, let us dismiss the cult of the primitive: it is all very well for sophisticates to find elemental drama in blood-and-sand or charm in the *gamine* touch, but many of us have met children-of-nature and know what little horrors they can be—when they are not just crashing bores. Prospectively the natural means the fully developed. 'The Latin *natura*, connected with a verb which indicates the idea of birth, suggests the primitive: the Greek *physis*, connected with a verb which indicates the idea of growing (and which may be used in the transitive sense, of "growing" a family, or teeth, or an understanding), suggests the whole process that leads from the first inception of "growing", through all the stages of "growth", to the completion of the "grown" thing.'[37] Aristotle judges a nature from its end; *natura est finis*, this is the sense preferred in St Thomas's moral science which tests what is natural in human life by reference to its ultimate purpose.[38]

We are born good, even inclined to good, but we are not born virtuous. The beginnings of virtue may be present, but not the complete habits.[39] Temperament also plays a part, but though

34 1a-2ae, li, 2, 3, 4; lv, 3, 4. 35 e.g. *Contra Gentes*, ii, 23, 26.
36 1a-2ae, xciv, 4; 1a, xxix, 1, *ad* 4; 3a, ii, 1; 2a-2ae, ii, 3; 1a-2ae, xxxi, 7.
37 Sir Ernest Barker. *Note on the Vocabulary of the Politics*, p. xxiii. *The Politics of Aristotle*. Oxford, 1948. 38 1a-2ae, xlix, 2, 3.
39 1a-2ae, li, 1. For *synderesis*, the habit of first moral principles, see 1a, lxxix, 12.

some people, for instance, are congenitally more apt to be cautious than others, this is not to say that they have the virtue of prudence.[40] The world gives us much elbow-room; the margin is very wide, and includes acting and not acting, acting for the bad or the good, or rather, many goods, rising from the better to the best, so that unless fortified our higher powers will not promptly and reliably swing to the best.[41] The habit is habile, the virtue is virile; the effect is voluntary and shows an elegance and energy which is rather the liberation of the power than its subjection to a system of law.

All our active bad habits are of our own making for none are innate. Original Sin is a sort of habit, but it is not an active habit, and though its effect is a propensity to evil, analysis shows this to be not a total corruption of our powers, still less of our radical nature, but rather a clogging of the spring of our motion towards God.[42] Our good habits are our own, but not all are of our own making, for in addition to those we laboriously acquire there are others—the Christian virtues and the gifts—which are infused into us by God.[43]

We leave aside the question of the coincidence of the acquired and infused moral virtues,[44] and merely note the rough-and-ready axiom, act as though grace does nothing but think that grace does everything, which can be adapted to mean, be a practical Pelagian but a convinced Augustinian. Certainly initial goodness is inadequate and ineffective without effort—as an American priest may ask, 'Sure, he's a Catholic, but does he work at his religion?'

When left to ourselves, how we hang back from committing our minds to the ultimate truth of God, and either console ourselves with the presumption that all will be well notwithstanding or try to forget our despair. How mean we are about the generosities of friendship, how foolish and fearful and feeble. Only the virtues of grace can rescue us; faith by making us dare to face the last mystery of things; hope by giving us awe and confidence; charity by causing us to love really and to the end; the cardinal virtues by rendering us judicious, fair, brave, tempered. All these, apart from the judgment of a theologian, are manifested in a well-adjusted psychological bearing, for

40 2a-2ae, xlvii, 15.
41 1a-2ae, lv, 1.
42 1a-2ae, lxxxii, 1, 3; lxxxv, 1, 2.
43 1a-2ae, li, 4.
44 1a-2ae, lxiii, 4.

virtue is a 'physical' good (in the sense of our opening paragraphs), not only a principle of morally right activity.[45] As such it is one sign of what grace is and does.

45 1a-2ae, xlix, 2, 3; li, 1; lii, 1.

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE: AN HISTORICAL APPROACH—II

The Patristic Heritage

SEBASTIAN BULLOUGH, O.P.

IN the first of these articles it was explained that the series is being written with the conviction that an historical approach to Christian teaching on the spiritual life, an enquiry into the thought of successive masters on the subjects of prayer and perfection, will be a powerful aid to the deepening of our own understanding of what the knowledge, love and service God means to each one of us today.

The roots of Christian thinking on prayer and the spiritual life are to be found with the Greek Fathers of the East, whose teaching sprang in the early centuries from the Gospel itself, forming a great heritage from which grew the medieval development in Western Christian thought (while the East has preserved, and continues to preserve, the treasures of the patristic heritage), and in the West at the close of the middle ages the systems of the *devotio moderna* in turn grew out of the medieval developments. We have called the patristic, medieval and modern periods the three ages of the history of spiritual teaching, and our present concern is with the patristic.

It would be easiest here at once to indicate at what point we are going to see the beginning of Western medieval thought in this connection, and its emergence from the patristic. The history of spiritual teaching has always been closely connected with the history of those who are professedly and primarily occupied with the practice of spiritual perfection, namely with the history of monasticism, for indeed one of the salient features of the *devotio moderna* was the organization of the spiritual life in such a way