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THE ARISTOTELIAN BACKGROUND TO SCOTUS'S REJECTION OF THE NECESSARY CONNECTION OF PRUDENCE AND THE MORAL VIRTUES

Questions about the connections of the moral virtues with prudence occupied the attention of such medieval thinkers as Godfrey of Fontaines, Henry of Ghent, and Thomas Aquinas. Duns Scotus was also concerned with these questions, and several recent articles have looked at his views.¹ In general, these articles have stressed the notion that the will is a voluntary agent as key to understanding Scotus's views. While it is important to emphasize the voluntary nature of the will, there are other significant aspects of Scotus's views about the virtues that also merit attention. Once these aspects are highlighted the strong influence of Aristotle's views about the virtues in Scotus's thought becomes clearer.

I

In his *Protagoras*, Plato discusses the question of the unity of the virtues. The sophist Protagoras suggests to Socrates that the different virtues — justice, courage, piety, temperance, wisdom — are united in Virtue but are themselves dif-

¹ See Stephen Dumont, "The Necessary Connection of Moral Virtue to Prudence According to John Duns Scotus — Revisited" in *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale*, 55 (1988), 184-205; the Introduction to *Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*, ed. and trans. by Allan B. Wolter (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1986); Marilyn McCord Adams, "Scotus and Ockham on the Connection of the Virtues" in *John Duns Scotus: Metaphysics and Ethics*, eds. Ludger Honnefelder, Rega Wood, Mechthild Dreyer (Leiden, New York, Koln: E J Brill, 1996), 499-522; Mary Elizabeth Ingham, "Practical Wisdom: Scotus's Presentation of Prudence" in *John Duns Scotus: Metaphysics and Ethics*, 551-71; Bonnie Kent, "Re-thinking Moral Dispositions: Scotus on the Virtues" in *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus*, ed. Thomas Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 352-74. I discuss some of Scotus's views about the virtues in Chapter 4 of my *Conscience and Other Virtues* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001).

ferent. He claims that the virtues are like the parts of the human face (the eyes, nose, mouth, and so on). As parts of the face they are united, but they are very different from one another. Moreover, one can possess one of the virtues without having them all. For example, Protagoras thinks it is clear that a person might well possess the virtue of courage and lack the virtue of wisdom.

In response to Protagoras, Socrates seems to argue that the virtues are very strongly interconnected. In fact, he seems to suggest that the virtues are all names for the same thing, Virtue. Obviously, if this is true, one could not possess one virtue without having them all. In the course of the dialogue, Socrates looks at Protagoras's own example of courage and wisdom and shows through his dialectic that courage and wisdom cannot be separated since a person who possesses courage must also possess knowledge.

In his essay "The Unity of the Virtues in the Protagoras," Gregory Vlastos identifies three different ways to understand Plato's view about the unity of the virtues.² The first view (the unity thesis) and the second view (the similarity thesis) seem to suggest that the virtues themselves are identical or, at least, logically linked. While these two views seem to echo Plato's comments that all the virtues are forms of Virtue, Vlastos sees the real position Plato endorses in the third thesis: the biconditionality thesis. According to this view, while the virtues themselves are distinct and name different qualities, instances of them all must be found in the same person if that person is virtuous. That is to say, a truly virtuous person must possess instances of all the virtues in order to be virtuous. Thus, instances of all the virtues are necessarily connected in the virtuous man.

Aristotle was obviously influenced by Plato's views about the virtues. In fact, in Book VI, Chapter 13 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* he comments:

This is why some say that all the virtues are forms of practical wisdom, and why Socrates in one respect was

² In his *Platonic Studies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 221-34.

on the right track while in another he went astray; in thinking that all the virtues were forms of practical wisdom he was wrong, but in saying they implied practical wisdom he was right. This is confirmed by the fact that even now all men, when they define virtue, after naming the state of character and its objects add "that (state) which is in accordance with the right rule"; now the right rule is that which is in accordance with practical wisdom. (1144b15f.)

This passage clearly links the virtues with practical wisdom and indicates that any virtue requires practical wisdom in the person possessing it. A few lines later, Aristotle makes an even stronger claim:

It is clear, then, from what has been said, that it is not possible to be good in the strict sense without practical wisdom, nor practically wise without moral virtue. But in this way we may also refute the dialectical argument whereby it might be contended that the virtues exist in separation from each other; the same man, it might be said, is not best equipped by nature for all the virtues, so that he will have already acquired one when he has not yet acquired another. This is possible in respect of the natural virtues, but not in respect of those in respect of which a man is called without qualification good; for with the presence of the one quality, practical wisdom, will be given all the virtues. And it is plain that, even if it were of no practical value, we should have needed it because it is the virtue of the part of us in question; plain too that the choice will not be right without practical wisdom any more than without virtue; for the one determines the end and the other makes us do the things that lead to the end. (1144b30f.)

The passage is clear in stating a unity to the virtues in the sense that one who possesses practical wisdom will possess all the virtues. It seems to echo Plato's view as explained by Vlastos that the virtues are united in the virtuous person.

In order to understand Aristotle's claim (and subsequent medieval reactions to it), we must briefly examine what Aristotle means by practical wisdom.

According to Aristotle, there are two sets of virtues: intellectual and moral.³ The intellectual virtues are five in number: scientific knowledge, intuitive knowledge, philosophical wisdom, art, and practical wisdom. Putting aside art, which is the intellectual virtue of making, the other virtues involve either theoretical (speculative) reason or practical (deliberative) reason. Scientific wisdom, for example, looks to necessary, unchanging truths; its subject matter is eternal objects.⁴ Similarly, intuitive reason and philosophical wisdom concern unchanging objects or principles. In contrast, practical wisdom concerns the changing objects and truths of the world. It is, in fact, the capacity to deliberate well about the means for obtaining goals in the world. And it acts in the world in connection with the moral virtues. While it appears that there is no set number of them, Aristotle treats such moral virtues as justice, courage, and great-soulness.

At the root of Aristotle's division between the intellectual and moral virtues are two opposed tendencies. On the one hand, there is a desire to separate human beings as thinking beings from human beings as acting beings. On the other hand, Aristotle wants to unite these two aspects of human beings. Perhaps as a legacy from Plato, Aristotle sees human beings as beings who contemplate eternal truths. Indeed, in Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle sees this aspect of human beings as the most valuable part of human nature — a part that make human beings “god-like.”⁵ Yet, Aristotle also sees human beings as beings concerned with acting in the changing world. And since human beings are rational animals, they can bring reasoning to their actions in the world. In essence, practical wisdom (and its inferior forms) connects human beings as reasoning beings with their acting in the world. As an intellectual virtue, practical wisdom is thus unusual in comparison to scientific knowledge, intuitive

³ *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 6, Chapter 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Book 6, Chapter 3.

⁵ See Book X, Chapters 7 and 8.

wisdom, and philosophical wisdom.⁶ It connects the activities of the intellect with their impact in the changing world of action.

For Aristotle, practical wisdom must be developed; it is an acquired rather than a natural virtue.⁷ There is, however, no clear route to the development of practical wisdom that all human beings follow.⁸ Each person is born with certain natural virtues (dispositions) in a certain environment. In general, one begins the development of moral virtues by following the societal example one is exposed to. Imitative practice of the actions of these exemplars perhaps leads one in the proper direction, but it should be apparent that mere imitation is insufficient to develop any virtue. The actions one performs to develop any virtue must be modified by the individual to fit the person's natural tendencies and circumstances. For example, what a person born as rash will do to cultivate the virtue of courage will differ from what the person born shy will do. One must also learn how to generalize appropriately from both successes and failures, for these are the grounds for developing the behaviors appropriate to the various virtues. Practical wisdom for Aristotle seems then to be a general ability to determine in any circumstance what is the appropriate action that will lead one to one's happiness (*eudaimonia*). Since Aristotle sees the virtues as the way happiness is achieved, practical wisdom is the ability to determine in any circumstance how to act virtuously, i.e., how to act in line with the virtues relevant to the circumstances.

Given this understanding of practical wisdom, one can easily see why Aristotle would maintain that there could be no virtues without practical wisdom nor could there be practical wisdom without virtues. Since the development of moral virtues is the means by which practical wisdom is developed, one could not have practical wisdom without developing the virtues. And, since acting in accordance with a virtue requires the appropriate knowledge of what should be done in the cir-

⁶ Art, as a making, of course, is also different from the three purely intellectual virtues.

⁷ See *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 6, Chapter 13.

⁸ See Book 2, Chapter 2 and following.

cumstances there cannot be moral virtues without practical wisdom. Of course, one might see here a paradox since it appears that one must have a virtue before developing the capacity to have a virtue, i.e., one must, for instance, have courage before developing the necessary capacity to know how to act courageously. While Aristotle seems aware of the difficulty, it seems not to concern him because he thinks that Ethics is only a rough and ready discipline and not subject to the rigors of scientific demonstration. To flesh out his point, one can point to the paradox of learning to play the lute. In order to learn to play the lute, one must play the lute (however badly). From the mistakes and successes in practice one makes, one becomes better and better at playing the lute. Eventually (for some) one learns to play the lute and such knowledge informs one's lute playing. Paradoxically, then, one must play the lute to learn to play the lute.

Moreover, given Aristotle's understanding of practical wisdom, one can understand why he would think that "with practical wisdom all the virtues are given." If one has developed the intellectual capacity to know what the appropriate action is in any circumstance (which is what the possession of practical wisdom comes to), one will act with the appropriate virtue in any circumstance. One will act with courage when courage is appropriate, with justice when that is appropriate, with great-soulness appropriately, and so on.

It is important to note that Aristotle's view that practical wisdom gives rise to all the virtues points to a critical aspect of Aristotle's view about action. Aristotle's view of the will is not well developed. Perhaps due to the influence of Plato, Aristotle seemed to think that the will carries out the determinations of the intellect.⁹ It makes little sense to Aristotle to think that one's intellect can determine that one will act in a certain way and one's will not carry out this determination. His notion of weakness of will, in fact, bears this out.¹⁰ One suffers from weakness of will when one knows that one should perform some action, but one has not developed one's

⁹ See Kent "Scotus on the Virtues," op. cit., 352, 356-57, 360.

¹⁰ For his discussion of weakness of will, see *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 7, Chapter 2.

character so that one will do what one thinks one should do. One follows instead what one wants to do and this intellectual determination determines one's will and what one does. Aristotle is very clear that the person of practical wisdom does not fall prey to weakness of will. If one possesses practical wisdom, by the nature of its development, one has developed oneself into the type of person who acts as he thinks he should act (to achieve happiness). As we shall see, Scotus does not share Aristotle's view that the will merely executes the determinations of the intellect and this fact features prominently in his modifications of Aristotle's views about the virtues.

II

Like Aristotle, Scotus claims that moral virtues are developed from repeated acts. Similarly, in agreement with Aristotle, he thinks that virtues come from good habits and that vices come from the practice of bad habits.¹¹ Interestingly, he seems to claim that at least intellectual habits can be formed from a single act. In the normal development of the moral virtues, repeated acts are required to produce the habits leading to virtues.

In agreement with Aristotle, Scotus thinks that the performance of an act in accordance with virtue requires "right reason" as well as right time, right place, right manner, and right end.¹² Right reason involves knowing that the act to be performed is something that fits with the relevant virtue in the specific circumstances. Scotus calls the knowledge of

¹¹ See, for example, *Ordinatio* III, distinction 36, question unica, n. 75 (Vatican Edition, Volume 10, 250-51). [The Latin text is edited by Allan B. Wolter in *Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality* and found on page 402 with an English translation on page 403]: *Et sicut habitus generatus ex imperio voluntatis bene elicentis in intellectu dictante, circa media ad illum finem bene electum perquirendum, est prudentia, ita in voluntate male eligente, habitus acquisitus ex dictamine circa ea quae ordinatur ad illud male electum, est error et habitus directe oppositus habitui prudentiae, et potest vocari "imprudentia" vel "stultitia"...*

¹² See Adams's "Scotus and Ockham on the Connection of the Virtues," *op. cit.*, 502.

what is required for acting in accord with the virtue a “proper prudence.” The notion of a proper prudence is very important for Scotus’s view about the moral virtues. In the first place, the notion is his way of acknowledging the diversity among the moral virtues. Courage is a different virtue from, say, temperance, and the acts corresponding to each virtue differ considerably. Thus the “right reason” associated with a virtue like courage — e.g., act forcefully in dangerous circumstances — will be very different from the right reason associated with temperance — e.g., eat and drink with moderation. There can be no one virtue of prudence that consists of all the right reasons peculiar to each virtue.¹³ Secondly, the proper prudences are developed from an individual’s practice of the acts intended to lead to the virtues. Thus they reflect the conditions of an individual and the individual’s experiences in the world. Hence, the proper prudence for courage associated with, say, Achilles who was born with semi-divine strength, near invulnerability, and a bellicose nature will differ considerably from the proper prudence of courage for, say, Ulysses who was born vulnerable and clever. Thus the proper prudences for Scotus reflect many of the elements of Aristotle’s thoughts about the development and variability of the virtues I have described above.

Unlike many of his predecessors, Scotus thinks that the moral virtues are located in the will, which he calls the seat of the moral virtues.¹⁴ To a large extent, this placement of the moral virtues in the will emphasizes Scotus’s view that the moral virtues are developed by the practice of acts. Since the will moves the agent to its actions, molding the will to direct the agent in performing appropriate actions is critical to both the development and the execution of the moral virtues.

¹³ As we shall see, the general habit of prudence Scotus discusses only virtually includes the proper prudences and the right reasons associated with them. Virtual inclusion does not mean that the general habit of prudence consists of the conjunction of the right reasons of the proper prudences.

¹⁴ See *Ordinatio* III, distinction 33, question unica (Vatican Edition, Volume 10, 141 f.). [*Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*, 318 and following.] Thomas Aquinas held that prudence and faith are in the intellect; justice, hope, and charity are in the will; and temperance and courage are in the sensory appetites. See Adams, op. cit., 500.

Of course, since acting in accordance with right reason is an essential part of a moral virtue and part of what a proper prudence is, proper prudences of moral virtues must be in the intellect.¹⁵ It seems on Scotus's view that through practice an individual learns the right dictate associated with a particular proper prudence and trains the will to follow the right dictate of the proper prudence. As a rational faculty, the will in a virtuous person acts with the right reason of the intellect associated with a proper prudence to cause a person to act virtuously in a particular circumstance. Since the will is a voluntary power, however, the will (even of a virtuous person) can choose not to follow the right dictate of a proper prudence in a particular circumstance. That is to say, according to Scotus, a human being who has cultivated a particular virtue retains the power not to act in accord with that virtue. As he claims in *Ordinatio* I, distinction 17, virtues incline but do not determine the will.¹⁶

Scotus contrasts proper prudences with a "general habit of prudence":

How all these "prudences" form one habit and how all habits of geometry pertain to one universal science has been explained in my first question on Bk. VI of the *Metaphysics*, for one should understand this not as a formal but as a virtual unity. Just as a habit which is about a first subject is formally one by reason of that subject, and is virtually concerned with all those things contained in that first subject, though it

¹⁵ The "right reason" associated with a moral virtue is the most important component of what Scotus means by a proper prudence but I do not think he equates the two so I distinguish them throughout the essay.

¹⁶ See Vatican Edition, Volume 5, 156-57, n. 46: *Qui vellet tenere conclusionem istarum rationum, posset negare ab habitu omnem rationem principii activi, et dicere quod habitus tantum inclinatur ad operationem, quasi actus prior conveniens cum actu secundo, et determinans ad actum illum, — sicut gravitas est actus prior, determinans et inclinans ad determinatum 'ubi', licet secundum aliquos gravitas non sit principatum respectu esse in illo 'ubi'.* In her *Ethics and Freedom. An Historical-Critical Investigation of Scotist Ethical Thought* (Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America 1989), 185-91, Mary Elizabeth Ingham discusses the nature of "habitus" in this section of the *Ordinatio*.

is not formally about them, so this habit, which is formally about some end of certain actions, is virtually, but not formally, concerned with all of these possible actions, the practical knowledge of which is virtually included in that end. And so, by extending the name “prudence” to that habit which is an understanding of first practical principles, that prudence, which is formally one in itself, is virtually concerned with all the virtues.¹⁷

Scotus does not talk at great length about this “general habit” of prudence, unfortunately. It is clear from what he says in this passage, however, that he is motivated to posit it because he thinks there is some unity to the virtues and that this unity involves an understanding of first practical principles. Described this way, Scotus’s general habit of prudence seems very similar to what I described above as Aristotle’s notion of practical wisdom. While there is no explicit identification by Scotus of this general habit of prudence with practical wisdom, it seems reasonable to identify them. Both seem to be an intellectual capacity to develop the rules by which one can develop and act in accord with the moral virtues. If we think of the general habit of prudence as a capacity and emphasize the comparison Scotus makes between the general habit of prudence and the one universal science containing all the habits of geometry, we can think that the general habit of prudence is generated in the intellect when-

¹⁷ *Ordinatio* III, distinction 36, question unica, n. 97 (Vatican Edition, Volume 10, 259-60) [*Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*, 412]: *Qualiter autem omnes prudentiae sint unus habitus, et omnes habitus geometriae pertinent ad unam scientiam universalem, dictum est quaestione illa VI Metaphysicae, quia ibi debet intelligi non unitas formalis sed virtualis: quia sicut habitus ille qui est de primo subiecto, est formaliter unus ab eo, et est virtualiter omnium illorum qui continentur in illo primo subiecto, sed non formaliter est illorum, ita habitus ille qui est formaliter alicuius finis in aliquibus agibilibus, est virtualiter omnium illorum quorum cognitio practica includitur virtualiter in illo fine; sed non est formaliter omnium illorum, — et ita una ‘prudentia formaliter’ est virtualiter omnium virtutum, extendendo nomen ‘prudentiae’ ad illum habitum qui est intellectus primi principii practici.*

ever any proper prudence is developed in the individual.¹⁸ Once a person develops a proper prudence and generates the general habit of prudence in the intellect, the person is in a position, given the proper circumstances, to develop other proper prudences. Indeed, Scotus talks about a moral person as one who possesses all of the virtues. While a person can possess certain virtues and not others, to be a moral person one must have all the virtues:

But one is not simply a moral person without all the virtues, just as one is not simply sentient without all one's senses.¹⁹

III

Scotus's discussion of the connections among the moral virtues (*Ordinatio* III, distinction 36) has recently received considerable attention. In particular, people have discussed to what extent Scotus agrees with the Aristotelian thesis that prudence and the moral virtues are necessarily connected. This thesis can be reformulated as the two-fold maxim: (A) no moral virtues without prudence and (B) no prudence without moral virtue. Given the way Scotus defines moral virtue, any moral virtue requires prudence since the performance of any moral virtue requires knowledge of the right dictate associated with the particular virtue. Unless one has developed

¹⁸ See *Opera Philosophica*, Volume IV (St. Bonaventure: The Franciscan Institute, 1997) 15. *Quaestiones Super Libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis*, Book 6, q. 1, n. 39: *Inter dictas ergo opiniones quodammodo mediando potest dici quod cum habitus intellectivus sit qualitas quaedam generata et firmata ex frequenti consideratione vel unica perfecta, quandoque etiam ad consimilem inclinans intellectum respectu complexi speculandi, duplex potest poni habitus. Unus proprius, qui formaliter inclinatur ad speculationem eius tamquam naturalis similitudo ex eius consideratione derelicta. Alius communis qui virtualiter inclinatur ad speculationem eius, inclinando formaliter ad speculationem alterius in quo tale complexum virtualiter continetur.*

¹⁹ *Ordinatio* III, distinction 36, question unica, n. 33 (Vatican Edition, Volume 10, 234) [*Duns Scotus on Will and Morality*, 388]: *... non tamen est simpliciter moralis sine omnibus (sicut non est simpliciter sentiens sine omnibus sensibus);*

the proper prudence connected with the virtue, one cannot perform the virtuous actions falling under that virtue. There seems to be general agreement among commentators on Scotus that he does accept this first (A) part of the Aristotelian maxim.²⁰

It is, however, important to emphasize a complexity to the maxim. Given Aristotle's views about the development and performance of the virtues, it is clear that practical wisdom is presupposed by both moral virtues as well as virtuous acts. That is to say, in order for one to have a particular virtue, e.g., courage, one must have practical wisdom; but it is also the case that one must have practical wisdom in order to perform a virtuous act, e.g., an act of the virtue courage. Aristotle seems to think that one cannot have any moral virtue until one has practical wisdom and with practical wisdom all the moral virtues are found in the virtuous individual. Many reject Aristotle's view on this matter, claiming that moral virtues can be developed independently of each other, but this seems to be his view.²¹ Moreover, Aristotle regards virtues as states of character, which an individual possesses even when the individual does not exercise the moral virtues.²² So, for Aristotle, the existence of practical wisdom entails the existence of the moral virtues, even if the agent is not performing virtuous acts. To be sure, when a virtuous individual acts morally the agent acts from the relevant moral virtue, according to Aristotle. But the moral virtues exist in an individual even when no moral acts are performed. The importance of this fact becomes apparent when we look at the second (B) part of the Aristotelian maxim: no prudence without moral virtue.

Lottin claimed on the basis of certain texts that Scotus, in fact, ends up embracing the (B) part of the maxim. Stephen

²⁰ Scotus, in fact, says this. See *Ordinatio* III, distinction 36, n. 92 (Vatican Edition, Volume 10, 258) [*Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*, 410]: *ideo e converso potest concedi connexio, quod virtus moralis non potest sine prudentia circa materiam suam*.

²¹ Duns Scotus rejects the view as does Aquinas. See *Duns Scotus on Will and Morality* 84-86 for a brief history of the treatment of the issue.

²² Aristotle talks about virtues as states of character in *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 2, Chapter 5 and following.

Dumont argued on the basis of the dating of texts as well as the content of the texts that Scotus rejects the second part of the maxim.²³ Allan B. Wolter in the introduction to *Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality* also argues that Scotus rejects the second part of the maxim.²⁴ Moreover, Bonnie Kent, Mary Elizabeth Ingham, and Marilyn Adams all follow Dumont and Wolter's view. Wolter offers the following defense of his position:

As for the second part of the Aristotelian solution (viz., no prudence without moral virtue), Scotus wants to defend the freedom of the will to choose the opposite of what right reason dictates and, by its control over the intellect (see selection 3), the will's ability to turn the intellect's consideration to sophistical reasons or to irrelevant matters — "lest that actual displeasure remain that consists in that remorse for choosing the opposite of what one knows to be right."²⁵

In other words, Wolter indicates that Scotus's view of the freedom of the will permits a person who possesses proper prudence not to follow the right dictate of the proper prudence. He cites the following passage to support his claim:

This habit, generated by correct judgments, whether about the means to an end or about the ends themselves (at least certain particular ones which are properly speaking the ends of distinct moral virtues and where perhaps there is no other judgmental habit about such ends), is prudence, even though correct choice does not follow. [And then it would not be always necessary that a corresponding moral virtue be

²³ See Dumont's "The Necessary Connection of Moral Virtue to Prudence According to John Duns Scotus — Revisited," op. cit., for a presentation of Lottin's view as well as Dumont's argument against it. See Marilyn Adams's evaluation of the debate in "Scotus and Ockham on the Connection of the Virtues," op. cit., footnote 28, 507.

²⁴ *Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*, 88.

²⁵ Ibid.

connected to a prudential judgment about some moral matter.]²⁶

It is clear that this passage is talking about proper prudence (“this habit, generated by correct judgments”) and indicates that a particular choice (presumably about a particular action) in line with the proper prudence does not need to follow from the possession of a proper prudence. An even stronger passage for Wolter’s view occurs at the beginning of the section of the first part of the second article of the question where Scotus’s own opinion is found:

As for this article, it could be said that the intellect can have a dictate that is right in an unqualified sense without the will having to choose in conformity to that dictate. And since a single right act of dictating what should be done generates prudence, prudence will exist in the intellect without any moral habit in the will.²⁷

This passage comes at the beginning of a section that is a long and complicated discussion (402-10) [Vatican edition, Volume 10, 251, n. 76 –258, n. 93] containing a doubt and its solution and two answers — one of which contains an objection and its solution — to one of two questions generated in the section expressing the doubt and solution: “Is the intellectual habit generated without the moral virtue prudence?” Undoubtedly, the complicated nature of the section motivated Wolter to cite in his argument the passage coming at the end of the section (410) [257, n. 92] so as to be sure to express Scotus’s real view. There is an oddity about both the passage at the beginning of the section and the passage at the end that Wolter cites. And it is an oddity that has escaped the notice of recent commentators on Scotus’s view of the virtues. In both passages, Scotus links not acting in accordance with a moral

²⁶ Ibid. The passage cited is found on 411 of *Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*. Wolter leaves out the line I have put in brackets. Cp. Vatican Edition, Volume 10, 257-58.

²⁷ *Ordinatio* III, distinction 36, question unica, n. 72. [*Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*, 401].

virtue to the absence of the moral virtue. But given Scotus's views about the moral virtues, a failure to act in accord with a virtue does not indicate that a moral virtue is not present.

Bearing in mind Scotus's adaptation of Aristotle's views about the development of the virtues I have sketched in section II, it appears that Scotus maintains that proper prudences are developed through the practice of relevant acts. Thus, the proper prudence of courage is developed through the performance of courageous acts. There is then a dependence of proper prudences on the performance of appropriate acts. Once a person possesses the relevant proper prudence, a person can possess the relevant virtue and can perform acts in line with the relevant virtue (e.g., possessing the proper prudence for courage one can have the virtue of courage and perform courageous acts).

It is, however, important to emphasize that according to Scotus one might well possess a moral virtue and not act in some circumstances according to it. Moral virtues incline one to action but do not determine one to certain actions.²⁸ And this is the point that Wolter, following Scotus, emphasizes in showing that Scotus does not endorse the second (B) part of the Aristotelian maxim. Yet, given that there is a lack of necessary connection between the possession of a moral virtue and the performance of acts according to it, the fact that one does not act in accordance with a moral virtue does not show that one does not have the moral virtue.²⁹ Thus the will's ability to act not in accord with the right dictate of a proper prudence associated with a moral virtue does not demonstrate that one can have a proper prudence but lack the moral virtue connected with it. That is, the will's choosing not to act in accord with a proper prudence does not in fact demonstrate that the second (B) part of Aristotle's maxim is false, contrary to the views of the commentators mentioned above. This is especially true in the case where an individual

²⁸ See footnote 16 above.

²⁹ This is obviously a matter of degree. One who does not act once in a while in accordance with, say, courage could have the virtue of courage despite these occasional failures to act in accord with it. If one often fails to act in accord with the virtue, we might well think the person does not have the virtue anymore.

has developed a moral virtue through repeated acts, has the right dictate associated with the relevant proper prudence, and does not act in accord with the right dictate. This person has the relevant proper prudence as well as the relevant moral virtue but simply does not act in accord with the moral virtue.

If we think about the general habit of prudence Scotus posits, similar lessons emerge. This general habit of prudence is developed through the development of at least one proper prudence. If a person possesses this general habit of prudence, the person must also, then, possess at least one proper prudence associated with a particular moral virtue. Since the proper prudence is a capacity in the intellect to have the right reason necessary for the performance of a particular moral virtue, there seems to be little reason why this capacity would be lost if someone does not act in a particular circumstance in accord with the right reason of the proper prudence. So, the will's ability to not act in accord with a particular right dictate associated with a particular virtue does not show that a person would lack the general habit of prudence nor would it show that there would be a general habit of prudence without the particular proper prudence associated with the moral virtue. It would seem that only where repeated vicious acts create a vice that is the contrary of a moral virtue one has at one time developed could it be the case that the general habit of prudence would exist without the existence of the proper prudence that developed it.

But in the text Scotus clearly moves from the failure to act in accord with a moral virtue to the non-existence of the moral virtue. Why would he do this since it seems in conflict with what he must think is the relationship between proper prudence and acts connected with the corresponding moral virtue?

If we return to the passage at the beginning of the complicated section of *Ordinatio* III, distinction 36, the sentence

And since a single right act of dictating what should be done generates prudence, prudence will exist in the intellect without any moral habit in the will.

stands out.³⁰ Scotus seems to be imagining an unusual situation when one's capacity to generate a proper prudence jumps far ahead of training one's will in line with the moral virtue. For instance, if one were a very acute observer of human eating disorders, one might very well formulate a right reason of a proper prudence connected with temperance — e.g., avoid eating food and drinking alcohol in large quantities — without having cultivated any habits of eating well and avoiding excess in drinking. So one could have the proper prudence of temperance without possessing the moral virtue of prudence. While this situation seems very unlikely, it is certainly possible and would establish the falsity of the second (B) part of the Aristotelian maxim. Yet, its tension with Scotus's view of the need to practice relevant acts to generate the proper prudences is strong. Moreover, it seems to be a case where there is a proper prudence but no action is performed. The passage, however, where Scotus most clearly suggests that we can have prudence without moral virtue (footnote 26 above) talks about actions that are done but not done in accord with the proper prudence. What we seem to require to show that the second (B) part of Aristotle's maxim is not true are acts whose performance shows that the person lacks a particular virtue while possessing prudence. While Scotus does not clearly provide such acts, a type of case reveals itself when we accentuate a tie between Aristotle's and Scotus's views on the formation of the virtues.

Aristotle saw virtues as growing from habits. Through repeated performance of acts of a certain type, we develop the habit of performing this type of action. But a virtue involves a transformation of the person. Not only must a person possessing, say, the virtue of courage perform courageous acts, the person must perform them as a courageous man performs them in order to be said to have the virtue of courage.³¹

³⁰ *Ordinatio* III, distinction 36, question unica, n. 72 (Vatican Edition, Volume 10, p. 249) [*Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*, 400]: *et ita cum unicus actus rectus dictandi generet prudentiam ...*

³¹ See *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 2, Chapter 4 (1105b 5): "Actions, then, are called just and temperate when they are such as the just or the temperate man would do it." L. A. Kosman in "Being Properly Affected: Virtues and Feelings in Aristotle's Ethics" in A. Rorty's *Essays on Aristotle's*

While it is difficult to describe what this state is like exactly, it surely involves a readiness and satisfaction in performing the courageous actions. Until an individual is transformed emotionally in the way appropriate to the virtues, the person does not possess the virtue.

In discussing the virtue of charity, Scotus indicates that there are four characteristics of the possession of a virtue: delight, ease, quickness, readiness.³² These characteristics are developed through a long process of practice and probably at different times. For example, one might well be ready to act in a certain way before one is quick in so performing and ease may come even later and delight only much later. If, however, one lacks any of these characteristics, one does not (yet) have the relevant moral virtue. Once we see that the development of a virtue from acts through habits takes considerable time and effort, the gap between forming right dictates of the proper prudence of a moral virtue and possessing the moral virtue becomes obvious. And this gap explains how one can possess prudence (proper prudence) without (a) moral virtue. One might, for example, have learned the right reason associated with a moral virtue but lack delight in performing the acts associated with the virtue ("I'm ready to act forcefully in dangerous circumstances, but I don't enjoy it"). In this case, one would have prudence but lack the relevant moral virtue.

Perhaps Scotus has acts like this in mind when he talks about the will not acting in accordance with a proper pru-

Ethics (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980) gives an excellent discussion of the transformation a virtue causes in an individual for Aristotle.

³² See Vatican Edition, Volume 5, 142 (*Ordinatio* I, distinction 17, n. 7). See also *Ordinatio* III, distinction 33, question unica, n. 25 (Vatican Edition, Volume 10, 154) [*Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*, 326]: *Praeterea, habitus non tantum ponuntur ut potentiae per eos recte agent, sed ut delectabiliter et prompte*. And also n. 77 (Vatican Edition, Volume 10, 175) [*Scotus on the Will and Morality*, 344-46]: *... ita etiam per prudentiam ordinatus est ad statim recte dictandum circa illud eligendum, et quasi imperceptibiliter deliberat propter promptitudinem eius in syllogizando practice. Alius autem, imperfectus, cum difficultate et mora syllogizat practice, quia non habet habitus perfecte practice; et si tandem ille recte eligat, non dicitur repentine agere, sed morose, — et alius, perfectus, quasi repentine agere respectu illius, quia quasi in tempore imperceptibili agit.*

dence to show that one may have prudence without moral virtue. If this is the case, Scotus's dismissal of the second (B) part of Aristotle's maxim relies on the fact that the will can choose not to go along with the right dictate associated with a particular moral virtue, but it relies even more on the act of the will displaying characteristics that show the moral virtue is not (yet) present in the will.

IV

I have tried to fill in a gap in Scotus's dismissal of the second (B) part of Aristotle's maxim. Interestingly, my discussion demonstrates how faithful Scotus is to Aristotle's views about the virtues — even where Scotus disputes an aspect of it. Scotus seems to try to capture the unity to the moral virtues Aristotle claims is to be achieved through practical wisdom by suggesting that there is a “general habit of prudence” in the intellect. But since Scotus thinks that moral virtues can be developed in isolation from one another — and not together as Aristotle thought — the unity to the moral virtues that the general habit of prudence provides is one of “virtual inclusion,” a very weak form of unity. In Scotus's eyes, the real work of developing moral virtues involves the formation of the proper prudences associated with the different moral virtues. These proper prudences can be developed in isolation from one another, but the way they are developed seems the same for each one. Practice of acts of a certain type and reflection on the successes and failures for the individual of acting in certain ways lead to the formation of the right dictate associated with the moral virtues. Parallel to the development of the proper prudences is the training of the will not only to act in conformity with the proper prudence but also to act in the proper way in line with the virtue — the transformation of emotions so critical in distinguishing a mere habit from a virtue. So proper prudences for Scotus do the work in forming moral virtues that Aristotle thought was done through practical wisdom. And it is precisely the details of how acts lead to habits that might lead to virtues if the emotional transformation takes place that allow Scotus

to claim that one can have (a proper) prudence without (a) moral virtue. So Scotus's embrace and modification of Aristotle's views about the nature and development of moral virtues allows him to disagree with Aristotle on the necessary connection of prudence and the moral virtues.

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