Chapter 18
The Education of Desire According to Aquinas

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Abstract This chapter intends to give an account of how both the passion of desire and the desire of the will should be educated, following the teaching of Saint Thomas Aquinas. For this, this chapter is structured in two distinct parts: the first explains the existence and nature of desire (Sects. 18.1–18.3), while the second deals with its education (Sects. 18.4–18.5).

The first part begins by looking for the meaning of the term in the work of Aquinas. The question is then asked about the existence of desire. And finally, the nature of desire is addressed according to the various types of appetites: the natural, the sensitive and the rational. The fundamental importance is emphasized of the ordination of all appetites to the ultimate end, without which there would be no desire.

The second part begins by addressing the morality and educability of desire, identifying the virtues required for its ordination to a life according to reason. And finally, the education of desire within the framework of affective education in family life is elaborated. The importance of the *experimentum* in the child as a presupposition for any further education is highlighted. The education of the passion of desire is then explained mainly through the virtue of temperance from the prudence of the parents. The chapter concludes with the perfection of desire through theological virtues.

For the study of this topic, the contributions of authors from the Thomist School of Barcelona have mainly been followed.

Keywords Desire · Education · Appetite · Virtue · Aquinas

In his commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Saint Thomas Aquinas (1969, II, lect.2, n.3) defends the existence of an ultimate end that is not sought for another end. He argues that if this were not the case and one proceeded to infinity, man could never reach any end and therefore all his desires would be frustrated.

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However, that would be contradictory with nature, since desire is something natural, an inclination inherent in all things.

This thesis forms part of the entire Aristotelian–Thomistic tradition to this day. An example of this is found in Francisco Canals, maximum representative of the Barcelona Thomist School, who presented it as a fundamental thesis in the thought of Aquinas (1987): without the first desire of the ultimate end, "we would have to recognize the empty and inconsistent nature of all desire and the impossibility, therefore, of all choice, of all free volition, of all determination through the will of the rationally commanded activities in man" (1987).

That every desire of man lies in the ordination towards the ultimate end will allow us to find the proper place for the education of desire within the dynamism of the perfecting of man.

18.1 Desire in the Work of Thomas Aquinas

In order to situate the theme of desire in the work of Saint Thomas (Chenu 1974; Manzanedo 2004; Pinckaers 2009), we should begin by specifying what terms he uses to refer to it. And with Manzanero (1987), we conclude that are two: *desiderium* and *concupiscentia*. The different meanings of these terms in the work of Aquinas are found in Peter of Bergamo's *Tabula aurea* (1873) and Ludwig Schütz's *Thomas-Lexikon* (1895).

The term *desiderium* comes from the verb *desiderare*, which etymologically means to stop seeing a star (*de-sidus*) and, from there, to note the absence of something and to go in search of it (*desiderium*) (Ernout and Meillet 1951). In the works of St. Thomas, it designates precisely the appetitive movement towards an absent or unpossessed good (1888, I, q.20, a.1 c.). If that good is desired without prior apprehension, then the desire corresponds to the natural appetite, such as when Aquinas refers to the love, desire and hope that beings without knowledge have (1891, I-II, q.41, a.3 c.). If there is a prior sensitive apprehension, then the desire corresponds to a passion of the concupiscible sensitive appetite that moves towards a pleasing good, as occurs in animals and men (1891, I-II, q.23, a.4 c.). And if there is a prior rational apprehension, then the desire corresponds to an operation of the rational appetite or will that moves towards a rational good, which is why he speaks to us of the desire of angels (1888, I, q.58, a.1 ad 2).

On the other hand, the term *concupiscentia* comes from the verb *cupere*, which means to desire something fervently and which is personified in the god Cupid (Ernout and Meillet 1951). Hence, in St. Thomas, it rightfully designates the passion of desire, thereby identifying with the second of the mentioned meanings of *desiderium*. Indeed, the sensitive appetite of that which is pleasant takes its name—*appetitus concupiscibilis*—from this passion (1891, I-II, q.30, a.1 c.). Since the sensitive appetite is a power with a corporeal organ, desire or concupiscence in the strict sense entails a bodily transmutation, unlike rational desire (1891, I-II, q.22, 1 c.). In this case, only in a broad sense is *concupiscentia* used to refer to other desires, that of the natural appetite or of the rational appetite (1891, I-II, q.71, a.1 ob.2).

These meanings correspond to the Aristotelian terms όρεξις and επιθυμία. Thus, if όρεξις designates appetite in a broad sense, as *desiderium* does, for its part επιθυμία restricts its meaning to the passion towards the good that is pleasant for the sense, such as *concupiscentia*; this connection between *concupiscentia* and επιθυμία is very common in the Fathers of the Church, reaching Saint Thomas (Guthrie 1993).

These terms are present in practically all of Aquinas' work. Nevertheless, in the *Index Thomisticum* (Busa et al. 2005) we note that the places where they appear most frequently are, in order from highest to lowest:

(a) *Desiderium*: *Summa Theologiae, Scriptum super Sententiis, Summa contra gentiles* and *Super Psalmos Davidis expositio*.
(b) *Concupiscentia*: *Summa Theologiae, Scriptum super Sententiis, Quaestiones disputatae de malo* and *Sententia libri Ethicorum*.

Of all these, therefore, the *Summa Theologiae* is the work in which both terms appear most often; and, in this, in the *secunda pars*, both in the *prima secundae* and in the *secunda secundae*. This highlights that Saint Thomas addresses desire, both in general and in its specificity as a passion, from a moral perspective.

18.2 The Existence of Desire

Having identified the meaning of the term "desire," we can now ask ourselves about its existence. To do this, we can first turn to that criterion that allows us to recognize the truths evident to the conscience. This criterion is seen as a preknown one whose existence should not be in doubt (Forment 1992). This criterion of truth is of deep Augustinian roots and fully assumed by Saint Thomas. It is the one that leads to him to distinguish a dual knowledge of the soul: the essential and the existential; of the latter, he states "The knowledge that anyone has of the soul as to what is proper to themselves, is the knowledge of the soul as to what it has to be in such an individual" (1970, q.10, a.8 c.).

In this way, every man knows without the need for concepts, judgments or reasoning, the existence of his desires, both sensitive and rational. And he is in no doubt about it. The object of his desire may be confusing to him, or the nature of the desire, but not that he is desiring. Let us quote Saint Augustine to demonstrate this recognition of desire—in this case, of the rational desire to know itself: "Wherefore, by the very thing that is sought, it manifests itself more as known than as unknown to itself. For one knows that one seeks and does not know oneself, when one seeks to know oneself" (2006, X, c.3, n.5).

Secondly, we can turn to that other criterion that allows us to recognize the truths evident to what Balmes calls "common sense". This criterion is seen as another preknown one that cannot be doubted, for example "the correspondence of our sensations with an outside world, not purely phenomenal, but real and true" (1963; Forment 1992). From this deeply realistic perspective, which marginalizes the

aporetic "problem of the bridge", it is manifested as evident the existence of desire in other men and even in animals, that we see moving in one way or other towards certain goods that they do not have—we will not now enter into the question of the existence of desire in angels and in God, which are outside the scope of that which is evident to our intellect. If desire did not exist in animals and men, all attempts to train the former or educate the latter would be meaningless, since the starting point of both activities is none other than the desire that moves them. Consider, for example the statement that Aristotle makes at the beginning of Metaphysics, without which education in wisdom is impossible: "All men naturally desire to know" (1982, I, c.1).

18.3 The Nature of Desire

Let us now move on to understanding the nature of desire. It will be convenient to start from that desire that is best known to us, that is the sensitive desire.

18.3.1 Sensitive Desire

Saint Thomas clearly identifies the sensitive desire with a passion, that is with an act or operation of the sensitive appetite and therefore it must be distinguished both from cognitive operations and from operations of the rational or natural appetite (1891, I-II, q.23, a.2 c.). Like all passions, as has already been mentioned, the sensitive desire entails a bodily transmutation, as it is an operation of an appetite with a corporeal organ (1891, I-II, q.22, 1 c.).

The object of this passion is the pleasant good, not the arduous good and therefore its subject is the concupiscible appetite, and not the irascible (1891, I-II, q. 23, a.4 c.). However, Aquinas distinguishes three passions of this appetite whose object is the pleasant good: love, desire and joy. The specific nature of sensitive desire, which distinguishes it from love and joy, is its movement towards the good not yet possessed, but supposed in it the complacency proper to love and as ordained to its rest proper to joy (1891, I-II, q.25, a.2 c.).

It is important to highlight this relationship with love and joy. Indeed, without the prior complacency of love nothing would be desired; nor if the movements of desire were not ordained by nature to cease upon the appetite achieving the beloved and desired. It is therefore contrary to the very nature of things the desire for what is not loved, or the desire that is incapable of being satiated; if these desires do indeed occur, it is because what has been previously judged as a pleasing good is something that is not, or something has been judged as attainable which it is not either. Therefore, it must be said with Saint Thomas that "concupiscence or sensitive desire is the first effect of love, which gives rise to the greatest pleasure" (1891, I-II, q.36, a.2 c.); however, for the same reason, the delay of the desired good or its removal is the cause of sorrow.

It is also interesting to distinguish desire from its contrary passion. In this case, we must start from the prior distinction between the pleasant good and the unpleasant evil. There are again three passions that reject this evil: hatred, aversion or flight, and sorrow; and each one is contrary to the three mentioned ones: hatred is the disliking of unpleasant evil, aversion is the movement of flight from that evil, and sorrow is the cessation of this movement once the hated evil ensues (1891, I-II, q.23, a.4 c.). In this way, the passion contrary to the sensitive desire is the movement of flight. It is very easy to see the corporeal manifestation of these two movements, since desire clearly entails a physical approach to the beloved good, while aversion is a distancing from the hated evil.

Another characteristic that should be noted of the sensitive desire is its fervour, which is closely linked to the aforementioned corporeal condition. That is why Saint Thomas says that *concupiscentia* is nothing but intense *desiderium* (1958, III, d.26, q.1, a.3 c.); on another occasion he refers to it as *fervor*, which he gives as the effect of sensitive love, which causes the intense desire to obtain the beloved good (1891, I-II, q.28, a.5 ad 1). That explains that sensitive desires are more fervent than intellectual desires. Nevertheless, sensitive desires usually exceed the measure required to satisfy themselves because of their intensity and can therefore cause a greater distaste than that experienced before being satiated; this is what happens, for example when eating or drinking without moderation (1891, I-II, q.33, a.2 c.).

Aquinas distinguishes two types of sensitive desires. The first are those that correspond to the inclinations of the natural appetite, about which we will talk later; these natural desires are, for example those for food and drink, and intercourse. However, there are then the acquired desires that entail a cognitive apprehension of a good to which one is not inclined by nature, such as a trip and a profession. That does not mean that a good desired with the natural desire cannot also be desired with the acquired desire, since cognitive apprehension incorporates a singular concretion of that good; that is why man can naturally desire food, and then acquire the desire for Camembert cheese, for example. Natural desires are thus common to men and animals; they are always finite, because they are determined by nature, and when they are satisfied, *delectatio* or pleasure is reached. However, the acquired desires are exclusive to man because even though they are sensitive they are accompanied by reason; hence, they are characterized by a certain infinity, which is something proper to reason—St. Thomas gives the example of desiring limitless wealth—in this case, the *delectatio* produced when the desired good is obtained is called *gaudium* or joy (1891, I-II, q.30, a.3–4).

18.3.2 Natural Appetite

What we have seen vis-à-vis sensitive desire has led us to talk on the one hand of those desires that follow the natural appetite and, on the other, of those that are accompanied by reason. Let us now see what this natural appetite consists of and

whether one can speak of a desire of that appetite that is prior to cognitive apprehension. We will then talk about the desire of reason itself.

In Saint Thomas, the "natural appetite" is understood in several ways. In a broad sense, he refers to the inclination of anything to a good suited to its nature; in this way, any power of the soul desires its object with the natural appetite. In other places, he restricts the meaning to any appetite, except for the rational. And finally, he understands by "natural appetite" in a proper sense as "a certain inclination to good by their natural constitution, without knowledge, as plants and inanimate bodies. Such an inclination towards good is called *a natural appetite*" (1888, I, q.59 a.1 c.). We will use it according to this more proper meaning.

We will not enter here into the demonstration of this natural appetite, for which we refer to a recent work by Antonio Prevosti, from the Barcelona Thomist School (2016). Regardless, it should be noted with Prevosti on the one hand that the affirmation of the natural appetite is linked to that of the purpose in nature and, more generally, to the principle of purpose according to which every agent works for an end; and on the other, that the natural appetite will allow the sensitive and rational appetite to be understood adequately, and therefore of the desire in each one.

What interests us in this study is to ask ourselves whether there are desires in this natural appetite. To this, we must answer first that every natural appetite loves. Natural love is the connaturalness of the natural appetite towards what it desires, which is its perfection; Saint Thomas (1891, I-II, q.26, a.1 c.; Astorquiza 2002) gives the example of gravity, which consists of the connaturalness of a heavy body with its centre. This natural love is the principle of the movement by which the subject is directed towards the desired good. Therefore, it must be said that this movement is what we call "desire". Therefore, a natural desire of its own perfection must be affirmed in every entity: "Every creature, even insensitive ones, naturally desires its end" (1856, I, d.1, q.4, a.1 arg.1).

It is important to emphasize that this natural desire with which all things are moved by the connaturalness of love is towards an ultimate end, as we read at the beginning (1969, II, lect.2, n.3). And this ultimate end is God, whom all things naturally desire (1888, I, q.44, a.4 ad 3).

Thus, being unable to reach it through knowledge, the way all things move towards God is by resembling his Goodness by acquiring perfection itself, which is divine likeness (1961b, II, c.46).

Therefore, we can conclude this section by affirming the existence in every entity of a natural appetite, whose love or connaturalness with the entity's own perfection is the principle of the movement or desire to reach it; and that this natural desire is ultimately a desire of God.

18.3.3 Rational Desire

Having addressed natural and sensitive desire, we are left with only the higher desire to address, which belongs to the rational appetite. It was mentioned earlier that

sensitive desire in man is accompanied by reason. Let us now see whether desire also exists in reason itself.

The natural appetite, which inclines to perfection itself, occurs in every entity, including those of a rational nature. St. Thomas identifies various natural inclinations of man in the *Summa Theologiae* (1891, I-II, q.94, a.2 c.): First is the inclination that is common to every substance, which leads it to preserve its own being; then the common one to every animal, which moves it to beget and raise offspring; and finally there are those that are specific to man, which move him to know the truth about God and to live in society.

These natural inclinations entail moral demands that we know as "natural law". Indeed, that to which he is inclined, man apprehends as good and, therefore, as something that must be sought. Therefore, for natural desires to become rational desires, the apprehension of intellect is required; this captures the very reason of good, and therefore the rational appetite or "will" may desire not only a particular good, such as the sensitive good, but also the universal good (1888, I, q.59, a.1 c.). However, the will would not desire anything if the prior ordination of the natural appetite did not occur. As Aquinas teaches: "Each power of the soul is a form or nature, and has a natural inclination to something. Wherefore, each power desires by the natural appetite that object which is suitable to itself" (1888, I, q.80, a.1 ad 2).

Moreover, every act of the will requires a first one as a foundation, but already belonging to the rational order. In this way, apprehension by the understanding of the universal good moves the will to desire the ultimate end. This is what Canals affirmed at the beginning of this chapter as a fundamental thesis of the teaching of Aquinas.

While the natural appetite is characterized by being moved by another—which is the divine Intellect—the rational appetite, on the other hand, moves itself towards the end (1891, I-II, q.1, a.2 c.). This dominion of one's actions is possible because every rational substance subsists in its being, and this makes it the possessor of its being and its acts. Hence, the voluntary act very clearly manifests the grounding of the act in the being and, moreover, the dignity of the subject that acts rationally. It is what leads to this subject being called "person", as Saint Thomas so aptly teaches (1888, I, q.29, a.1 c.).

As occurs in the passionate order, rational desire presupposes and is born from rational love of the good in which the will connaturally indulge itself; and it ordains itself to rest in a rational joy: "Intellectual nature so as to rest therein when possessed, and when not possessed to seek to possess it, both of which pertain to the will" (1888, I, q.19, a.1 c.).

When the desired good is the Supreme Good, then man is heading towards his true happiness. Indeed, only an infinite Good can fully satisfy the desire for the infinity of rational nature: "Final and perfect happiness can consist in nothing else than the vision of the Divine Essence ... man is not perfectly happy, so long as something remains for him to desire and seek" (1891, I-II, q.3, a.8 c.).

This rational desire that we identify in man, and of which we have experience in the innermost of our conscience, we must also affirm in angels; thus, for example Saint Thomas affirms that angels may desire new revelations (1888, I, q.58, a.1 ad 2;

q.60, a.3 c.). It happens as in the Blessed, who may desire the glorification of the body (1891, I-II, q.67, a.4 ad 3). However, it is not so in God. Indeed, desire implies the lack of a good, which the appetite then moves to achieve; and that is incompatible with divine perfection. There are rational love and joy in God, but not desire (1888, I, q.20, a.1 c.).

18.3.4 Analogy of Desire

Having identified and distinguished the types of desire, namely natural, sensitive and rational, we can ask ourselves whether what is understood about the nature of desire is expressed in the same way in all these cases. And it is clear that we must answer that all of them are expressed according to a certain analogy (Prevosti 2016).

To understand this analogical predication of the term "desire" we must consider what is said in common and then identify the differences. It seems that what is common to all desire is the relationship between the movement of the appetite and the desired good that is not yet possessed. However, this relationship is different in each type of desire with respect to the subject and to the object. Regarding the subject, it moves itself more in some cases than in others. And with respect to the object, some desires are more united than others to the object. And we understand that this defines what proportionally differentiates the types of desire.

Thus, it must firstly be said that desire in its most proper sense is the rational desire. Indeed, man and angels move themselves in order to achieve the desired good, which is very close to the will given the immateriality of the union that is achieved with intellectual operations.

A smaller proportion describes the sensitive desire, which is a passion of the appetite and that is not so many moves as it is moved; that is why Aquinas points out that, "although it does not belong to the soul in itself to be passive and to be moved, yet it belongs accidentally" (1891, I-II, q.22, a.1 ad 2). The proximity of the appetite to the desired object is, in this case, less, since the material conditions for its achievement mediate.

And finally, "desire" is predicated in an improper sense of natural desire, because in this case the appetite does not move at all, but is entirely moved; and the good is therefore much further from the subject by the latter's reliance on an external agent.

18.4 The Morality and Educability of Desire

Indeed, because the proportion between the movement and the desired good occurs more properly in the rational desire, we can recognize in this a condition of morality that does not occur in the other desires. Aquinas is very clear on this: moral good and evil is only properly found in rational desire. And if we consider it in the sensitive desire it is only insofar as it is under the rule of reason (1891, I-II, q.24, a.1 c.). In this

way, there are no good or bad sensitive desires for being desires, but for being convenient or contrary to reason. Thus, one may want money to help someone in need or to be unfaithful; in the first case, the passion will be good, but bad in the second case.

Sensitive desire, like all passion, indirectly influences the will, which is the power in which the morality of human acts resides. This happens in two ways. Firstly, because the vehemence of desire concentrates the appetitive attention of the subject in such a way that the same will is affected; and secondly, because this sensitive vehemence also concentrates the attention of the imagination, consequently affecting the judgment of the reason on which the act of the will depends (1891, I-II, q.77, a.1 c.). If this influence of passion on the will moves to a sin or morally bad act, it must be said that it supposes a certain diminution in its malice—although not complete—in that it antecedently weakened the will (1891, I-II, q. 77, a.6 c.). Therefore, the sin originated by passion is said to be a "sin of weakness": "hence, the Philosopher compares the incontinent man to an epileptic, whose limbs move in a manner contrary to his intention" (1891, I-II, q.77, a.3 c.).

This weakness is caused by other prior sins, which tilt the appetites in the opposite direction to the order of reason, but above all by original sin, which corrupted nature. Aquinas, therefore, uses the term "concupiscence" not as a sensitive desire without paying attention to its morality, but as a disorder in the concupisible appetite: "and in so far as the concupiscible is deprived of its order to the delectable, moderated by reason, there is the wound of concupiscence"(1891, I-II, q.85, a.3 c.). For its part, the disorder in the will caused by sin, which affects the rational desire, is called "malice".

While the natural appetite is determined by its object, it is not so with the sensitive appetite as governed by reason and with the rational appetite. Habits are therefore needed by which it is disposed stably for its appropriate operation (1891, I-II, q.50, a.3); these habits are moral virtues. However, this is even more necessary as appetites are injured by original sin; however, against this the virtue acquired by the powers themselves is no longer enough—Divine grace is necessary (1891, I-II, q.109, a.2), which infuses supernatural virtues in the powers.

Temperance is the virtue that perfects sensitive desire, moderating it in order that it follows reason: "Temperance, which denotes a certain moderation, is chiefly concerned with those passions that tend towards sensible goods, viz. desire and pleasure" (1897, II-II, q.141, a.3 c.).

If we consider rational desires, we can identify the virtue of justice as firstly perfective of them. It provides the will to give each one their own, and that includes the desire for justice to be done. Thus, for example when speaking of the punishment of sinners, Aquinas says one should desire not so much this punishment as justice (1897, II-II, q.25, a.6 ad 3). We may see more clearly the presence of desire in one of the potential parts of justice, which is the virtue of religion. When Saint Thomas addresses this, he frequently mentions desire as that which moves to the prayer of petition: "The Lord is said to hear the desires of the poor, either because desire is the cause of their petition, since a petition is like the interpreter of desire" (1897, II-II, q.83, a.1 ad 2).

Now, rational desire is found above all in friendship, which is not so much a virtue as something that accompanies virtue. In friendship, both the presence of the friend and the good for the friend as if it were for this friend are desired (1891, I-II, q.28, a.2 c.).

We can also identify a projection of the virtues of the sensitive appetites in the rational part, in that rational desires require moderation or strengthening. In this way, studiousness is the virtue that moderates the rational desire for knowledge of the truth in order to not fall into the vice of curiosity, and magnanimity is the virtue that strengthens the rational desire to acquire honours proper to virtue. These rational desires are nevertheless accompanied by passions, and hence the work of these virtues is concerned with both rational and sensitive desires. This is very important for education, because to promote virtues in the will one has to start promoting virtues in the sensitive appetites. A child who possesses sensitive modesty will be well disposed for the virtue of chastity, and a child who possesses sensitive hope or trust will be well disposed to the virtue of magnanimity.

Finally, charity is the theological virtue that perfects the rational desire of the will ordained by grace to the friendship with God. Saint Thomas explains that, in the same way that love, desire and joy are followed in the sensitive part, so it happens in the rational part; thus, charity is the virtue which perfects both love and rational desire and joy in order to the supernatural friendship with God (1897, II-II, q.28, a.4 c.). However, if the reason for difficulty is added in the attainment of eternal happiness, we will have to distinguish another theological virtue different from charity, namely hope (1897, II-II, q.17, a.1).

All this perfectibility of desire through the virtues becomes educability if we consider it from the perspective of the need for help of another to acquire them. Hence, education is defined by Aquinas as the promotion of children to the state of virtue: “Nature does not tend only to the generation of the offspring, but also to its conduct and promotion to the perfect state of man as man, which is the state of virtue” (1858, IV, d.26, q.1, a.1 c.).

18.5 The Education of Desire

The definition of education given by Aquinas identifies marriage as its natural place and parents as the main educators. Moreover, education in the family culminates in the process initiated with procreation and subsequent parenting in perfect continuity with both. Hence, education can be considered a “second procreation” (Martínez 2011), because it promotes virtue in the child, which is like a “second nature”. Let us, therefore, see how desire is educated within the heart of family life; here, I will continue my study on the education of the passions in Saint Thomas Aquinas (2019).

18.5.1 Affective Education in the Family: The Experimentum

The continuity between procreation, upbringing and education requires the growth of the virtues of the soul to be accompanied by adequate development of the body that helps life according to reason; indeed, as Aquinas indicates: "reason is strengthened as the movement and emanation of moods rest" (1858, IV, d.27, q.2, a.2 c.). This allows the identification in the child of several stages that are characterized by a gradual calming of the passions and the growth of rational life (1858, IV, d.27, q.2, a.2 c.): "infancy" until the age of seven, in which the child receives the upbringing and finds himself still in a "spiritual womb" (1897, II-II, q.10, a.12 c.); "childhood" until the age of 14 years, in which education begins and the child is sent to school; "adolescence" until 25 years old, in which the child can already understand by himself; and "youth", in which his prudence allows him to marry, which is a sign of having reached the end of education.

However, the connection of passions with corporeality, which is the principle of individuation, entails different dispositions in each child, which we know as "temperament". And as passions, in turn, provide for rational life, there are some children who, due to their temperament, are more inclined to some rational operations and virtues, and other children to others: "In this way one man has a natural aptitude for science, another for fortitude, another for temperance" (1891, I-II, q.63, a.1 c.). Therefore, the education of the child should begin by addressing the passions according to his particular "temperament", and this even when the child does not yet have the use of reason and finds himself in that spiritual womb mentioned previously; in this case, it will be the parents' reason that should ordain their children's passions so that they are adequately provided of virtue.

The medium for this education of the passions in the child who still does not respond to the interpellation of reason is the so-called *experimentum* (Echavarría 2002), which is an association of sensitive memories that share something in common (I, lect.1, n.17). It should be noted with Aquinas that these memories are intensely imprinted on the child's memory, as he is greatly surprised by novelties (1949, tr.II, III, n.6). This experience of the infancy then acquires in the child the value of the principle for subsequent education in virtue (1961a, I, c.11, n.1).

These memories that constitute the *experimentum* are also ordained by the judgements of the cogitative faculty when comparing them to each other (Echavarría 2008). This allows the common factor among all memories to be recognized, and to judge them as harmful or useful, thus moving the sensitive appetite to put the passions into action (1950, I, lect.1, n.15; 1953, a.13 c.). While the child has no use of reason, this sensitive judgement, which shapes the *experimentum*, is carried out at the behest of the natural appetite, which inclines him to the good that suits him by nature and, ultimately, to the ultimate end without forgetting however that he also depends on the temperament according to the corporeal condition of each child, and also on the consequent passions (1891, I-II, q.77, a.1 c.). The parents' prudence should be ordaining or educating this experience of the child, both regarding those

things that will be kept in the memory and, above all, of those that are useful and harmful to him. One of the means to do so is language; indeed, the child imitates the parents' language and designates things in the way his parents do, even when he does not yet understand the meaning of what he hears. In this way, the language of the child, which is participatory of his parents, is integrated into his *experimentum* and serves as a principle for the subsequent ordination that he will execute with reason (1969, VII, lect.3, n.17).

The most relevant part of the *experimentum*, as Martín Echavarría (2002) teaches, is that it does not exclusively have as its object the external sensitive good, but rather refers mainly to itself, given that the most fundamental connatural inclination of the soul is love of the self. Thus, this entire set of perceptions and sensitive judgements configure in the child a perception and judgement about himself, which we could call *experimentum sui*. It can be deduced hence that affective disorders in children are due to a false image of themselves, a wrong *experimentum*; thus, as Echavarría explains: "To cure a person of their deviations of character . . . it is necessary to dismantle the false image, or the network of representations, that have been made of himself and reality" (2002).

18.5.2 The Education of Desire in the Family

But how does the child achieve an *experimentum* that serves as the ordaining principle of his desires?

Firstly, because of the experience of parental love. Love is the first passion, which, as we already know, is the principle of desire. Sensitive love originates through the natural inclination to good in which the sensitive appetite is satisfied through connaturalness (1891, I-II, q.26, a.1 c.). The child performs that inclination when he experiences parental love, responding with a connatural love towards his parents. The child perceived himself as being something of his parents, located in a spiritual womb, certainly, but still very physical and sensitive: mainly the arms and caresses of his mother. In this belonging, the child also experiences himself as coming from and similar to his parents; and as something similar is loved through connaturalness (1891, I-II, q.27, a.3 c.), this first connatural love of the child towards the parents arises, especially towards the mother (1891, I-II, q.27, a.1 c.). Hence, the child forms an *experimentum sui* in which he judges himself as an image of his parents and as a good loved by them. This *experimentum* is a necessary requirement for subsequent education, and without this experience the child's heart is fundamentally injured in its affectivity, which is very difficult to heal from a merely natural perspective.

This love has several effects on the child, effects which continue to configure his *experimentum*: a willingness to receive the good that comes from the parents; complacency through the presence of parents; and, finally, sorrow in their absence and the fervour, or the vehement desire, to be with them (1891, I-II, q.28, a.5). That is the most fundamental desire that arises connaturally in the child, the effect of the

experience of parental love. However, the vehemence of this desire is such that it should be appropriately moderated by the parents themselves, thus providing the child with the virtue of temperance.

And what is said about this fundamental desire must be said as a consequence of every other desire present in the child's life: food, toys, etc., but without losing sight of the fact that what will be the ordaining principle of all the others will be the desire to be with the parents. Saint Thomas thus distinguishes different parts of temperance according to the desired goods (1897, II-II, q.143–169): shame before dishonourable acts, honesty of virtue, abstinence from food, sobriety of drinking, sexual chastity, moderation in pleasures of the touch, clemency before punishments, meekness before the desire for revenge, humility before the desire of one's own excellence, studiousness before the desire to know the truth and the modesty of the external acts, eutrapelia before games and modesty in dress. All these virtues, which form part of temperance, must be educated in the child; however, if we were to explore each in detail it would be an extensive pedagogical treatise. Nonetheless, let us consider three of them for their strong involvement in the education of the *experimentum*: humility, honesty and shame.

Humility is the moderation of the desire for excellence (1897, II-II, q.161). Since this entails a true judgment about one's self, we consider that for the education of humility there is nothing more appropriate than the proper configuration of that *experimentum sui* of which we previously spoke.

On the other hand, the child who desires the presence of his parents and the good that comes from them will then also desire that honesty of the virtuous life that the parents wish for him (1897, II-II, q.145), which is manifestly appropriate for education. This is what affectively moves the child to desire to behave well, who is always grounded in the presence of his parents, who like that good behaviour. In contrast, the continued absence of parents and the experience of feeling himself in strange hands is a cause of distrust vis-à-vis his own behaviour.

Finally, there is also another passion that is highly appropriate for education and that comes to the aid of the desire for virtue. It is shame or the fear of falling into a dishonourable act (1897, II-II, q.144). Thus, if the presence of the parents moves the child to behave well, it also causes him to be ashamed of acting badly because it displeases his parents. It should be of no surprise then that the aforementioned repeated absence of the parents leads the child to behave badly, since the fundamental reason for him to behave honestly is missing, namely the presence of his parents. Such behaviour is very often a means the child uses to get the attention of his parents, and thus obtain that presence he misses.

However, the child can see his desire to behave well reinforced through sensitive rewards, and his fear of falling into evil thanks to punishments. It is the right method for education, as most parents know from experience; and it is effective insofar as the child understands himself to be loved, even when he is punished. This allows the child to be provided with an education in the virtue of justice, which ordains the rational desire for the just. Disorder occurs when there is an excess of rewards accompanied in addition by the absence of the parents, which is what the child most desires; or an excess of punishments, which leads the child to judge himself as bad.

The latter highlights another passion that is very important in the education carried out by parents, and this passion is mercy. This is a kind of sorrow that suddenly occurs in the concupiscible appetite through the apprehension of the evil of another experienced as one's own (1891, I-II, q.35, a.8). Parents must correct and even punish their children when they do wrong, but always with a merciful heart, which means condoling with the child in his grief for having done wrong. This has three effects, according to Aquinas (1891, I-II, q.38, a.3; q.40, a.5): first, the child is relieved in his grief by not feeling the punishment to be excessive; second, he feels loved, which is a cause of joy, which mitigates sorrow and third, it strengthens hope by seeing a possible correction of his behaviour; in other words, mercy increases the trust the child has in his parents, otherwise, the child ends up judging himself as bad and despairing of good; then he falls, on the one hand, into sloth or sorrow that he finds distressing, which drowns all good desire (1891, I-II, q.35, a.8); and, on the other, into resentful anger against those from whom he expected good, against his parents (1897, II-II, q.35, a.4 ad 2). This mercy should not only be experienced by the child in the relationship with his parents, but also with his brothers and friends, who help each other to achieve the desired good and avoid the abhorred evil; a beautiful experience of childhood friendship is the principle of friendships according to virtue in adult life.

And since mercy is absolutely necessary for education in the face of the error of naturalism in education denounced by Pius XI (1930), this reflection must be concluded by affirming the need for the perfection of all human desire through mercy, which ordains the desire of the contemplation of God. This also concerns education in family life because, as Aquinas teaches, "the most important good of marriage is the offspring, which must be educated in the worship of God" (1858, IV, d.38, q.1, a.1 c.). Hence, parents should primarily promote the desire to contemplate God in heaven. The path will be none other than theological charity, that is, an endearing friendship with the Heart of Jesus and a filial relationship with God the Father and the Virgin Mary, strengthened by a prayer of petition in which the child presents his wishes with all trust or theological hope. This will perfect the *experimentum*'s education also during the child's infancy. Even when he has not experienced parental love, he will always be able to find in that divine and human Heart that which he lacked in his childhood, which left him wounded, and in trust he will then heal his heart.

It serves to conclude this study on the education of desire the psalm with which Francisco Canals also concludes his work on the metaphysics of knowledge and which he describes as "prayerful supplication as a word emanating from the human heart, expressive of the yearning desire or craving of the vision of God face to face" (1987); prayer that parents should teach their children to enliven in them the desire of God: "My heart says of you, "Seek His Face!" Your face, Lord, I will seek" (Psalm 27, 8).

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