

Summa Theologica Ia IIae q17. OF THE ACTS COMMANDED BY THE WILL

1. Whether command is an act of the will or of the reason?

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[From the *Summa Theologica* of Saint Thomas Aquinas as translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, and from the works of Blessed John Duns Scotus as selected and arranged by Jerome of Montefortino and as translated by Peter L.P. Simpson. Texts are taken from the *Opus Oxoniense* and the *Quodlibeta* of the Wadding edition of Scotus' works.]

Article 1. Whether command is an act of the will or of the reason?

Aquinas

Objection 1: It would seem that command is not an act of the reason but of the will. For command is a kind of motion; because Avicenna says that there are four ways of moving, "by perfecting, by disposing, by commanding, and by counseling." But it belongs to the will to move all the other powers of the soul, as stated above (q.9 a.1). Therefore command is an act of the will.

Objection 2: Further, just as to be commanded belongs to that which is subject, so, seemingly, to command belongs to that which is most free. But the root of liberty is especially in the will. Therefore to command belongs to the will.

Objection 3: Further, command is followed at once by act. But the act of the reason is not followed at once by act: for he who judges that a thing should be done, does not do it at once. Therefore command is not an act of the reason, but of the will.

On the contrary, Gregory of Nyssa [Nemesius, *De Nat. Hom.* xvi.] and the Philosopher (*Ethic.* i, 13) say that "the appetite obeys reason." Therefore

Scotus [*Oxon.* 3 d.36; 4 d.14 q.2, d.49 q.4]

Objection 1. It seems that to command does not itself belong to the will but to the intellect. For according to Gregory of Nyssa (*Lib.* 4 cc.3,8) and also the Philosopher (*Ethics* 1, last chapter), appetite obeys reason; but the one whose orders are carried out by another is he who commands; therefore it belongs not to the will but reason to command.

Objection 2. The one who commands orders the one he commands to do something by giving him an intimation or a pronouncement; but to order by way of intimation belongs only to reason; therefore to command is essentially an act of reason, presupposing however or connoting an act of will.

On the Contrary. Just as to be commanded belongs to what is a subject, so to command seems to belong to what is most of all free; but the root of freedom is most of all in the will; therefore it belongs to the will to command. – Again, action follows on commanding; but action does not immediately follow on the act of reason, unless in addition he who judges that something is to be done immediately does it; therefore to command is not an act of

command is an act of the reason.

I answer that, Command is an act of the reason presupposing, however, an act of the will. In proof of this, we must take note that, since the acts of the reason and of the will can be brought to bear on one another, in so far as the reason reasons about willing, and the will wills to reason, the result is that the act of the reason precedes the act of the will, and conversely. And since the power of the preceding act continues in the act that follows, it happens sometimes that there is an act of the will in so far as it retains in itself something of an act of the reason, as we have stated in reference to use and choice; and conversely, that there is an act of the reason in so far as it retains in itself something of an act of the will.

Now, command is essentially indeed an act of the reason: for the commander orders the one commanded to do something, by way of intimation or declaration; and to order thus by intimating or declaring is an act of the reason. Now the reason can intimate or declare something in two ways. First, absolutely: and this intimation is expressed by a verb in the indicative mood, as when one person says to another: "This is what you should do." Sometimes, however, the reason intimates something to a man by moving him thereto; and this intimation is expressed by a verb in the imperative mood; as when it is said to someone: "Do this." Now the first mover, among the powers of the soul, to the doing of an act is the will, as stated above (q.9 a.1). Since therefore the second mover does not move, save in virtue of the first mover, it follows that the very fact that the reason moves by commanding, is due to the power of the will. Consequently it follows that command is an act of the reason, presupposing an act of the will, in virtue of

reason but of will.

I answer that, some suppose from the sentence here [*sc.* of Lombard] that to command does in fact belong essentially to reason, on the presupposition, however (because of the arguments in the first two objections), of an act of will. Nevertheless, for the greater evidence of the thing, they think it needs to be added that reason's intimating and pronouncing that something is to be done can happen in two ways: in one way absolutely, when the intimation is expressed by a verb in the indicative mood, as if someone were to say to another 'you ought to do this'. But sometimes reason intimates something to someone by admonishing him to do it, and such intimation is expressed by a verb in the imperative mood, as when it is said to someone 'do this'. But the first mover to the exercise of an act in the powers of the soul is the will; since therefore the second mover does not move except by virtue of the first mover, it follows that reason's moving by commanding is present in it by virtue of the will. To command is therefore an act of reason, indeed, but presupposing an act of will, in virtue of which reason moves, through commanding, to the exercise of an act.

But we do not approve of this opinion; for those who think that it belongs essentially to the will to command (the presentation of the object being presupposed), seem, as in all other cases, to hold the more probable opinion. For the will commands the intellect; therefore to it, and not to the reason, is commanding essentially to be attributed. The assumption is clear from Anselm (*De Concep. Virg.* c.4), where he teaches that the will moves itself against the judgment of the other powers which submit even unwillingly to its command; therefore, when the intellect intimates anything and presents it to the will,

which the reason, by its command, moves (the power) to the execution of the act.
 Reply to Objection 1: To command is to move, not anyhow, but by intimating and declaring to another; and this is an act of the reason.

Reply to Objection 2: The root of liberty is the will as the subject thereof; but it is the reason as its cause. For the will can tend freely towards various objects, precisely because the reason can have various perceptions of good. Hence philosophers define the free-will as being “a free judgment arising from reason,” implying that reason is the root of liberty.

Reply to Objection 3: This argument proves that command is an act of reason not absolutely, but with a kind of motion as stated above.

commands to itself. For it is neither the case that any sensitive power can command the intellect and the will and combine those powers in its acts, nor that the intellect can command itself and the will, since, no matter what dictate of reason is in place, the will freely chooses. Therefore the will alone commands itself and the intellect; so it belongs to the will alone to command the intellect and not the reverse, since, even when the ultimate sentence of practical deduction is in place, the will is able, by its dominating power over itself, to ignore that dictate and embrace worse counsels, or at least to suspend itself and refrain from any action. – Lastly, the intellect or intellectual virtue says that a thing is true or not true, whether in matters to be thought or in matters to be done: but the commanding will, or the will to command, says that the act which has been commanded as needing to be immediately done is to be carried into execution; therefore the act of commanding does not belong to reason dictating that this ought to be done but to the appetitive power ordering that what was intended be done.

whatever the verb be in which the intimation is made or the insinuation expressed, it must obey as the will prescribes – not as the powers of the soul that are deprived of effective dominance think or dictate is to be done, but as it seems to the will and as the will prefers to choose, even against the inclination and express judgment of reason. If therefore the will uses the other powers of the soul as it pleases, commanding certainly belongs essentially to the will. – Next, when the will intends and effectually wills the end, it orders the intellect to seek out and find means of getting to the attainment of that end and keeps the intellect employed in investigating these means until, by a practical syllogism, the deduction is reached that these are to be chosen and those passed over, as Augustine says (*De Trinit. c.3, The will unites the parent to the offspring*); moreover, the will gives

Reply to Objection 1. I respond [*Oxon. 3 d.33 n.4*] that the philosopher’s saying that appetite complies with reason is to be understood of the sensitive appetite; but in the part of man as sensitive there is no acting of man qua man whereby he commands himself and those subject to him and excels other animals. The part, therefore, that excels in man above his whole sensitive part is divided by the philosopher into that which thinks and that which is persuadable by reason (*Ethics 1 c.9*); he understands the will by the persuadable by reason. And that is why he sometimes calls the sensitive appetite obedient to reason and sometimes the will, as at the end of *Ethics 1*. And just as obedient to reason is taken in two ways, so also is rational; in one way rational is taken strictly and primarily, and thus it belongs to the intellect alone; in another way not strictly nor

primarily but simply, and in this way the will itself is also rational. But to the third, namely to sensitive appetite, it does not belong except metaphorically. Therefore the one in between, which is the will, is sometimes called rational from one extreme, and sometimes obedient to reason from the other extreme. But taking reason strictly, the will is indeed persuadable by reason but in no way obedient to it; the sensitive appetite, however, is not persuadable by reason but obedient to it: for what is free can indeed be persuaded by reason, but cannot be compelled into obeying. Hence from this authority of Aristotle it is not had that to command belongs to reason.

Reply to Objection 2. The response is clear from the solution. Although by reason a pronouncement or intimation may be made of what is to be done or not done, yet in no way is there in the process a formal act of commanding having as import, not what is true or not true, but that that be performed which has been commanded. Wherefore nothing can rightly be inferred from this other than that there is indeed pre-required for command an act of reason giving intimations and pronouncements, but in no way is commanding itself to be posited in such an act.

Reply to the On the Contrary. It will be responded to the first argument that the root of freedom is the will as subject, but as cause it is reason; for from this fact the will can be borne freely to diverse things because reason can have diverse conceptions of the good, and that is why philosophers define free choice as *what is a free judgment of reason*, as if reason be the cause of freedom. – On the contrary, that the hypothesis on which this response relies is not to be approved of we have shown at large in *Ia* q.83 [collected from *Oxon.* 2 dd.6, 25, 42; *Quodlib.* q.18]; , which is about free choice; so we say this first argument is to be accepted. – To the second argument it will be responded that that reasoning concludes that commanding is not an act of reason absolutely but along with a certain motion of the will. – On the contrary, if on an act of reason intimating or pronouncing that this or that is to be done it does not follow that it is done unless there is a movement of will, then to the will is to be attributed command and not to reason, except as to a condition, which condition, however, does not formally influence the act of commanding.