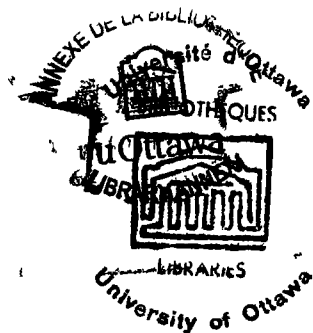


AN ETHICAL APPRECIATION
OF THE CHARACTER OF KING LEAR
IN SHAKESPEARE'S KING LEAR

by J. Pat Murphy

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of Graduate Studies of the
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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to make an ethical appreciation of the character of the King in Shakespeare's King Lear, through an application to the drama of the moral philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas. This ethical appreciation will treat of the King as a moral agent; his character and actions will be studied in terms of good and evil; more exactly stated, they will be dealt with in relation to the virtues and vices of the Thomistic system.

The work of the thesis, to define it more specifically, is to address itself to an ethical problem which arises in connection with Shakespeare's development of Lear's character, a problem which has much exercised the literary scholars. This is the question of the continuity of identity between the Lear of the early part of the play, and the Lear that emerges out of emotional and physical prostration into seemingly regenerated moral greatness in the final scenes of the play. The question can be formulated in this way: does the dramatist in fact depict a case of moral growth in Lear, and, further, does he adequately account for it?

Such a moral study of King Lear is to be distinguished from a psychological investigation of either his normal

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or abnormal states: this is outside of the ambit of the present thesis. Emotional and mental factors, such as his passions and his temporary mental derangement, are important to the present work, but only insofar as they affect Lear as a moral agent, that is, as a man who is responsible for the moral quality of his acts.

In dealing with the above-mentioned problem the thesis will make use of Thomistic ethics as the instrument of analysis. It is important to make clear that no attempt is being made to argue to any direct influence of St. Thomas upon Shakespeare. The historical provenance of Shakespeare's moral themes in King Lear is beyond the scope of this thesis. There is no intention of proving that Shakespeare was a conscious Thomist.

However several considerations have led to the choice of the system of St. Thomas for the work of analysis. To begin with, there is, of course, the interest that inheres in the application of a major work of philosophy to a piece of great dramatic art. There is, besides, the historical fact, which will be enlarged upon in Chapter One, that in the England of Shakespeare's time, Scholastic Philosophy in general, and Aquinas in particular, enjoyed a position of some prominence in the cultural climate of the age. However, the chief reason for the selection of Thomism lies in the nature of the dramatic subject

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which is to be analysed. Shakespeare drew into his characterization of King Lear a poetic and dramatic art that embraces every aspect of the man and of the cosmos about him: Lear's inner nature, his passions, his will, his intellect, are explored, and his relationship to his fellow men, and to the gods, are extensively portrayed. The Thomistic system provides a suitable tool for probing a character possessed of such depth and breadth of thought and feeling. For it deals with man, as a creature of God, as a social being, as a moral agent possessed of mind and will and feelings; and all of these concepts, outgrowths of other parts of Aquinas's system, of his metaphysics, his philosophy of man, are drawn together in Aquinas's ethics into one cohesive body of thought that admirably addresses itself to the analysis of a character as complex and profound as Lear. Of particular value to this thesis is the fact that the Thomistic doctrine on the virtues provides a philosophy of moral change, which is the special field of interest in this study.

The thesis, while making use of Thomism, does not attempt to prove that this system has philosophical value. This indeed is taken as a given: reputable scholars have accepted St. Thomas's ethics as having serious weight. Nor does the philosophical contribution of the thesis consist in a presentation of some aspect of the philosophy of

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Aquinas. All that this study attempts in that regard, is a fairly comprehensive statement, through the use of primary sources, of those aspects of Thomism which bear upon an ethical appreciation of King Lear.

At this point it seems appropriate to clarify the nature of the philosophical orientation of this thesis. This is perhaps best done by first situating the study within the framework of Shakespearean scholarship. The thesis aims to make a contribution to the work of scholars (noted in the footnotes and in the bibliography of the thesis) who seriously treat Shakespearean drama, and King Lear in particular, as works of art that incorporate an integral ethical framework. In terms of such an ethical framework several scholars have referred to the problem of moral change in Lear, and endeavoured to find in ethical theory a rational account of this change, a change so radical that it produces in Lear a moral transfiguration. The approach of these scholars has been largely literary. To the author's knowledge, no serious endeavour to analyse at length the drama of King Lear in terms of any ethical system has been published. This thesis, then, accepting the creditable literary position that King Lear is an example of moral transformation, attempts to analyse and assay the transformation process in the character of the King, in terms of Thomistic ethics. At the same time, and

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it bears repetition, this thesis does not make any move to establish that Thomism had any direct influence on Shakespeare's dramatic work. The philosophical value of the thesis lies, therefore, in the author's reflective use of an accepted philosophical system to appreciate, philosophically, an important aspect of the character of Lear.

The above-stated relationship of this study to Shakespearean scholarship dictates several points of methodology which might otherwise be called in question: a) there is a heavy reliance on literary sources, primary and secondary, with extensive quotations from the text of King Lear. This is necessary in order to achieve harmony with good scholarship in Shakespeare studies. b) It was felt necessary to sacrifice a certain depth in philosophical analysis in favor of a more comprehensive treatment of the character of King Lear: this broader treatment of Lear in his philosophical aspect has enabled the author to work out on a larger scale an application of the Thomistic ethic to the various features of Lear's character as revealed in the poetry and the dramatic action. A narrower and more penetrating view of Lear in Thomistic terms in more properly the field of subsequent studies in the area chosen for this thesis.

The thesis will comprise three chapters. Chapter One, A Historical Survey, provides, first of all, a setting for the topic of the thesis, by raising and dealing with the

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question of how there can be such a thing as an ethical appreciation of a dramatic character. Secondly, the chapter enlarges upon the suitability of the ethics of St. Thomas as a means of achieving an ethical appreciation of King Lear. It is pointed out that medieval ethics was a living system of thought in Shakespeare's time, and that Aquinas in particular enjoyed some prestige in that era. Chapter Two, The Moral Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, presents in summary form the ethical doctrine of St. Thomas and its philosophical foundations. In outline form Thomistic metaphysics, cosmology, philosophy of man, and ethics, are described. In the ethics the doctrine on the moral virtues is emphasized and forms the nucleus of the second chapter. A lack of balance in this setting forth of Thomistic thought will be apparent, but the ethical orientation of this thesis requires that the moral teaching receive the emphasis. In Chapter Three, An Ethical Appreciation of King Lear, lies the heart of the thesis. A summary of the play opens the chapter, in order to refresh the reader's memory about the basic plot, but it must be made clear that a thorough knowledge of the play by the reader is presupposed. There follows an exploration of the dramatic text of King Lear for its presentation of the character of the King. This exploration is necessarily thorough, because in the dramatic and poetic material of the play lies the basis for the ethical appreci-

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ation. However there is considerable narrowing of focus, insofar as the various elements of the play are dealt with only in terms of their relationship to the character of King Lear. The ethical problem that forms the substance of this thesis, the problem which the literary data will make concrete, will be analysed by means of the Thomistic ethic, according to the following steps: 1. A Summary of the Play; 2. Lear as a Moral Agent. Here the question of freedom and of moral norms will be dealt with. 3. Lear's Early Moral State, which will treat of Lear's character as it appears in the early part of the play. 4. Lear's Later Moral State: this division will deal with the moral changes that occur in Lear, and with the factors that brought about this change. 5. An Assessment of the Credibility of Moral Change in Lear.

Textual references are as follows: Aquinas's summas will be referred to by the initials: "ST" indicates the Summa Theologiae, and "SCG" refers to the Summa Contra Gentiles. The parts of ST are named as "1," "1-11," or "111"; the numbers then appearing designate the appropriate question and article; the word "ad" followed by a number points out a response to an objection. In the SCG the numbers following the initials refer to book and chapter. The text of King Lear being used is the Arden edition edited by Kenneth Muir and published by Methuen in 1968. The references to

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King Lear use roman numbers to locate the act and scene,
arabic numbers the verse.

CHAPTER ONE

AN HISTORICAL SURVEY

Two sorts of historical background, arising from two different questions, are required for an ethical appreciation of King Lear in terms of the moral system of St. Thomas Aquinas. The first question asks, does history provide a justification for the ethical treatment of a work of dramatic art? This thesis builds upon a tradition going back to Aristotle which holds that within drama an ethical element exists. The second question inquires what considerations led to the adoption in this thesis of the system of St. Thomas as an instrument for the appreciation of the drama of King Lear. In the Introduction, p. iv, where this matter is first touched upon, several non-historical reasons were set forth for the selection of the ethics of St. Thomas. What remains to be done in this chapter is to posit an historical justification for the fitness of the Thomistic system in regards to this thesis.

The two questions will furnish the materials for the two divisions of this chapter: 1. The Relationship of Drama to Ethics: this will discuss the link between ethics and drama in general, then between ethics and Shakespearean drama in particular, with special attention to the play of

King Lear; 2. The Role of Medieval Philosophy and of the Thought of St. Thomas in Shakespeare's England: here the point will be developed that Thomism, in virtue of the wide acquaintance it enjoyed in Renaissance England, is a fitting instrument for the ethical appreciation of a play of the period. No attempt will be made to establish the fact that St. Thomas had any direct effect upon the thought of Shakespeare. What is merely indicated is the special fitness of a philosophical system which had considerable currency in England at the time that Shakespeare wrote King Lear.

1. THE RELATIONSHIP OF DRAMA TO ETHICS

The acceptance of a connection between drama and ethics by weighty authorities both ancient and modern provides the precedent which this thesis adopts. The citation of these authorities appears to suffice for the purposes of this thesis; no effort is made to go beyond this and attempt a scientific demonstration that a precisely defined relationship exists between drama and ethics. What is outlined is a historical consensus of sufficient weight to justify a thesis which brings an ethical system to bear upon a work of drama. In regard to drama in general and the links that bind it to ethics, let us examine the views of Aristotle, then of some Elizabethan near-contemporaries of Shakespeare; finally, of some modern critics.

Aristotle, --G.E.R. Lloyd indicates that Aristotle in his "Poetics" defines poetry in terms that connect it with his ethical doctrine: "Furthermore his own theory of poetry is clearly linked with other parts of his philosophy, particularly with his ethics, and several of the terms he uses are obscure or liable to be misunderstood unless we take into account doctrines that are expressed more fully in other treatises."¹ The terms used by Aristotle in his definition of tragedy are of particular interest here: 'action' and 'character' are the key words, out of six factors that he enumerates in the definition, and they bear an ethical connotation: "A tragedy . . . is the imitation of an action that is serious . . . in language with pleasurable accessories . . . in a dramatic, not a narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions . . . the action involves agents, who must necessarily have their distinctive qualities both of character and thought . . . Now the action . . . is represented in the play by the fable or plot, whereas character is what makes us ascribe certain moral qualities to the agents . . . There are six parts, consequently, of every tragedy . . .

¹G.E.R. Lloyd, Aristotle, the Growth and Structure of his Thought (Cambridge: University Press, 1968), p. 274; see also L.C. Gallagher's doctoral dissertation (unpub.), Shakespeare and the Aristotelean Ethical Tradition (Stanford University, 1953), pp. 39-40.

a fable or plot, characters, diction, thought, spectacle and melody.²

'Action' for Aristotle is not primarily a bodily or external fact; it is an ethical notion, referring to those functions which man performs in virtue of being human. This point Aristotle enlarges upon in another passage in the Poetics where he calls happiness an 'action' of man and the chief good and end of all human striving.³

We turn to Aristotle's Ethics for further clarification of the meaning he gives to 'action.'⁴ It designates functions of man that arise in the soul, as opposed to bodily, outer actions which man shares with non-human beings.

²Aristotle, "Poetics," The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), 1449b23-1450a11.

³Aristotle, "Poetics," The Basic Works, 1450a15-24: "Tragedy is essentially an imitation not of persons but of action and life, of happiness and misery. All human happiness and misery takes the form of action; the end for which we live is a certain kind of activity, not a quality. Character gives us qualities, but it is in our actions--what we do--that we are happy or the reverse."

⁴Aristotle, "Ethics," The Basic Works, 1098b12-22: "Now goods have been divided into three classes, and some are described as external, others as relating to soul or to body; we call those that relate to soul most properly and truly goods, and psychical actions and activities we class as relating to soul . . . we identify the end with certain actions and activities; for thus it falls among goods of the soul and not among external goods. Another belief which harmonizes with our account is that the happy man lives well and does well; for we have practically defined happiness as a sort of good life and good action."

Such human actions imply a rational principle.⁵ Butcher interprets Aristotle's 'action' in this inward sense:

" . . . praxeis are actions in their proper and inward sense . . . The praxeis that art seeks to reproduce is mainly an inward process, a psychical energy working outward; deeds, incidents, events, situations, being included under it in so far as these spring from an inward act of the will, or elicit some activity of thought or feeling."⁶ These actions, from which arise a man's happiness or misery, Aristotle denominates as being either good or bad; if they are good he terms them 'virtue'.⁷

The other element in Aristotle's definition of tragedy which aligns it with ethics is 'character'. 'Character' refers to the moral purpose of the agents, the sort of things

⁵Aristotle, "Ethics," The Basic Works, 1097b23-1098a19: " . . . [and we state the function of man to be a certain kind of life, and this to be an activity or actions of the soul implying a rational principle, and the function of a good man to be the good and noble performance of these, and if any action is well performed when it is performed in accordance with the appropriate excellence: if this is the case] human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with virtue."

⁶S.H. Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, 4th ed. (London: Dover Publications, 1951), p. 123; see also Aristotle, "Ethics," The Basic Works, 1098b15.

⁷Aristotle, "Ethics," The Basic Works, 1097b23-1098a19.

they seek or avoid.⁸ Characters in drama receive evaluation in terms of good and evil: this is the primary distinction which is to be made among them.⁹ Aristotle therefore associates tragedy with the inner life of man when he defines tragedy in terms of 'action' and 'character'; these refer to the life of thought and will, of good and of evil, of happiness and misery, and invite a treatment of tragedy in ethical terms.

Elizabethans.--In the Elizabethan age it was a generally held opinion that not only tragedy, but all of literature, ought to teach virtue, and to urge its beauty and utility.¹⁰ Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586), in his Apology for Poetry establishes a moral connection between learning and poetry: all worldly learning has the life of virtue as its worthiest goal; and poetry is the chief means

⁸Aristotle, "Poetics," The Basic Works, 1450b8-9: "Character in a play is that which reveals the moral purpose of the agents, i.e., the sort of thing they seek or avoid."

⁹Aristotle, "Poetics," The Basic Works, 1448a1-6: "The objects the imitator represents are actions with agents who are necessarily either good men or bad--the diversities of human character being nearly always derived from this primary distinction, since the line between virtue and vice is one dividing the whole of mankind."

¹⁰R.M. Frye, Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 108: he states that everyone recognizes that in Shakespeare's age literature was expected to teach as well as to delight.

by which learning can enable man to attain this goal.¹¹

Sir John Harington (1561-1612) claims that poetry so renders the study of philosophy and theology attractive, that it draws minds that otherwise would find no appeal in them.¹²

Ben Jonson (1573-1637) expands on the teaching function of poetry: it benefits men of all ages, the young and the old, forming them in virtue and aiding them to maintain themselves in it. The poet is an interpreter and arbiter of nature, and a master of manners. His office is so identified with virtue, that he cannot be a good poet unless he is a good man.¹³ Dramatists had special reason to insist

¹¹Sir Philip Sidney, "Apology for Poetry," Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. Gregory G. Smith, (London: Oxford University Press, 1904), I, p. 175: ". . . as vertue is the most excellent resting place for all worldlie learning to make his end of, so Poetrie, beeing the most familiar to teach it, and most princelie to moue towards it, in the most excellent work is the most excellent workman."

¹²Sir John Harington, "A Preface or rather a brief Apology for poetry and of the author and translator," Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. Smith, II, p. 197: Poetry . . . doth erect the mind . . . to the consideration of the highest matters . . . and allureth them that of themselves would otherwise loth them to take and swallow and digest the holesome precepts of Philosophie, and many times even of the true diuinitie."

¹³Ben Jonson, "The Epistle, Volpone," Ben Jonson, ed. C.H. Herford and Percy Simpson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), V, p. 17: ". . . the impossibility of any mans being the good Poet, without first being a good man. He that is said to be able to inform yong-men to all good disciplines, inflame growne-men to all great vertues, keepe old-men in their best and supreme state . . . that comes forth the interpreter, and arbiter of nature, a teacher

upon the moral office of their work. In the last decade of the sixteenth century they were attacked as social nuisances. The city fathers of London, reflecting the Puritan prejudices, feared that playgoing was an occasion for stirring up riots, for spreading the plague, or for aiding whores in their trade.¹⁴ In this age frequent defenses of the moral value of drama were made.¹⁵ John Marston (1575-1634) refers to the moral value of his plays, asking us in the "Prologue" for Antonio's Revenge to look therein for a message about what men are, and must be.¹⁶ George Chapman (1557-1634) asserts that instruction and excitation to virtue are the soul and limbs of tragedy.¹⁷ So Shakespeare

of things diuine, no lesse than humane, a master of manners."

¹⁴Oscar J. Campbell, ed., The Living Shakespeare, Twenty-Two Plays and the Sonnets (New York: Macmillan, 1949), pp. 65-66.

¹⁵C. Leech, Shakespeare's Tragedies and Other Studies in Seventeenth Century Drama (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965), p. 26: it is this alleged didactic or reformatory value of the drama which is urged whenever a defense is made.

¹⁶John Marston, "The Prologue, Antonio's Revenge," John Marston, Antonio's Revenge, ed. G.K. Hunter (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), p. 3:

Who winks and shuts his apprehension up
From common sense of what men were, and are
Who would not know what men must be--let such
Hurry amain from our black-visag'd shows.

¹⁷George Chapman, "Dedication," The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois, 1613 (Menston, England: The Scholar Press Ltd., 1968), p. 8.

belonged to a group of writers who, whatever genre they worked in, were convinced of the moral dimension of literature.

Modern Critics.--It is no surprise, if Aristotle, closely associated with the beginnings of tragedy, linked it with ethics, and if the Elizabethan poets, presiding at a re-birth of great tragedy, did the same, that among moderns the ethical content of tragedy should be recognized. To this end Frye isolates the element of human conflict in tragedy.¹⁸ Conflicts are concerned with choice, and choices lead to the ethical problems of wisdom and folly, of goodness and evil. Frye, approaching the question also through the interest of the audience, asks how this could possibly be aroused, unless characters and actions are appreciated in terms of some standard of values, a standard that implies an ethics.

Ribner deals with tragedy's pre-occupation with evil and disaster. In exploring man's relation to these forces, tragedy searches for purpose and order; it does not merely invite the audience to wallow in the misery and confusion of the protagonists. Men who believe in a purposive, ordered universe in relation to their own lives, attend a play looking for the same situation in the lives of the

¹⁸Frye, Shakespeare, pp. 93-94.

characters depicted before them.¹⁹ Ribner asserts that this search in drama produces works of art which are not only ethical but positively religious.²⁰

In summation, some authors find the link between ethics and tragedy in the very substance of the drama, others in its didactic function. Aristotle, among the former, defines tragedy in ethical terms. It is an "action", that is, it is concerned with the inner life of men; a life wherein he thinks and wills as he seeks out his end, and is good and happy, or evil and miserable in proportion as an end befitting man is attained. Among the Elizabethans, the didactic role of poetry and drama was foremost: ethical instruction and persuasion were the elements that placed them in the moral sphere. The modern critics cited above, returning to the viewpoint of Aristotle, search for the ethical aspects of tragedy in its very substance. There one finds conflicts which are treated in terms of human choices about good and evil, about wisdom and folly; there one finds a search for meaning, for order, in a world filled

¹⁹Irving Ribner, Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy (London: Methuen, 1960), p. 1: Tragedy is ". . . an exploration of man's relation to the forces of evil in the world; a product of man's desire to believe in a purposive, ordered universe."

²⁰Ribner, Patterns, p. 9: ". . . tragedy searches for order and purpose in apparent disaster, and in doing so it reinforces a system of belief which essentially is religious."

with evil; there one finds an unfolding of the inner life of man in relation to standards of value.

Having discussed the relation between ethics and drama in general, we turn now to the question of the relation between ethics and the plays of Shakespeare. His plays in general will be discussed first; then attention will focus on King Lear in particular.

Ethics and Shakespeare's Plays.--Among recent evaluations of Shakespeare's plays, there is considerable agreement that they are ethical, and ethical in Aristotle's sense, not in the Elizabethan sense. Harbage claims that Shakespeare is moral but not moralistic. His plays are not didactic, but they exist in a moral frame. His plays are in their very fiber ethical. The audience is not taught, but its moral notions are exercised.²¹ Stewart points out that Shakespeare deals with morals always, but as a moralist never. He renders us more aware of ourselves as creatures of good and evil, but he does not adopt the teaching pose of a Jonson, a Marston or a Chapman.²² The ethics of Shakespeare's plays is not surface decoration; it is the bone and

²¹ Alfred Harbage, As They Liked it: An Essay on Shakespeare and Morality (New York: Macmillan, 1947), pp. xii & 40.

²² J.I.M. Stewart, "Shakespeare's Men and Their Morals," Shakespeare Criticism 1935-60, ed. Anne Ridler (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 304.

sinew of the dramas. Ribner mentions that as Shakespeare matured he became more and more absorbed in the religious and ethical dimensions of tragedy. Take note of his themes: first, the problem of evil; from the time of writing Titus Andronicus, Shakespeare concerned himself with it.²³ This moral order of good and evil, Bradley believes, is the central issue in the mature Shakespearean tragedies, the ultimate power of the tragic world.²⁴ Bethell points out other ethical themes that are dominant in Shakespearean tragedy: the relation of the world of man to God; death; sorrow and joy; sin and amendment.²⁵ Whitaker states that not only stray ethical themes, but a whole system of ethics provides the foundation for Shakespeare's dramatic artistry.²⁶

Turning from the element of theme to that of characterization, Shakespearean critics find, as did Aristotle,

²³Ribner, Patterns, pp. 2-3 & 14.

²⁴A.C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy (London: Macmillan, 1956), p. 33.

²⁵S.L. Bethell, Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition (London: Staples Press, 1948), pp. 79-80.

²⁶V.K. Whitaker, The Mirror up to Nature (San Marino, California: The Huntingdon Library, 1965), p. 182.

that it is moral in its dynamism. The response of the audience to Shakespeare's characters is a moral one, shown by the way they take sides.²⁷ Some authors attribute the power of Shakespearean drama to this ethical understanding between author and audience. Shakespeare invited and relied upon a complete moral interest and engagement on the part of his audience, as much as he took for granted its ability to understand words and sentences.²⁸ This common ground of ideas and values provides the author with a seed bed of significant themes, a solid intellectual basis for the emotions evoked, the materials needed for compelling works of art.²⁹ The dramatist's own view of character is moral rather than psychological; he thus neglects questions that are dear to modern minds.³⁰ It is in terms of his moral outlook that a Shakespearean character expresses his emotional being, rather than through an exposition of the anatomy of his thoughts and feelings.³¹ Ribner finds in his characters

²⁷ Harbage, As They Liked it, p. 19.

²⁸ L.C. Knights, "Shakespeare's Tragedies and the Question of Moral Judgment," Shenandoah, XIX, iii (1968), 33.

²⁹ Gallagher, Shakespeare, p. 317.

³⁰ Bethell, Shakespeare, pp. 79-80.

³¹ Robert Ornstein, "Character and Reality in Shakespeare," Shakespeare 1564-1964, A Collection of Modern Essays by Various Hands, ed. E.A. Bloom (Providence, Rhode Island: Brown University Press, 1967), p. 17.

an embodiment of specific ideas and moral positions.³² We are often unable to account for why a character thinks or acts as he does; but we are not often left in doubt about his moral viewpoint. Shakespeare instructs the audience in the moral standards which the characters believe in and follow if they are good, or which they deny if they are bad. He weaves a moral environment around his characters. They themselves, besides, make moral judgments of persons and situations.³³

• Several critics find the drama of King Lear especially rich in ethical material. For Nosworthy it is a moral study to a greater extent than any other Shakespearean play. Among its moral themes Bauer discerns that of 'degree', that is, respect and obedience for authority; Ornstein finds that of evil; Whitaker sees the themes of repentance, patience and resignation; Eddy, those of pride, power, justice, love, wisdom and endurance; and Ribner detects the theme of regeneration, which, he believes, dominates all other elements, poetic and dramatic, in the play.³⁴ Whitaker singles

³²Ribner, Patterns, p. 10.

³³Leo Kirschbaum, "Shakespeare's 'Good' and 'Bad'," Review of English Studies, XXI (1945), 136.

³⁴J.M. Nosworthy, "'King Lear'--The Moral Aspect," English Studies, XXI (1939), 268; R.J. Bauer, "Despite of Mine Own Nature : Edmund and the Orders, Cosmic, and Moral," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, X (1968), 359;

out another ethical element in King Lear: this is the frequent use of the term 'unnatural' to designate certain human acts.³⁵ Whitaker and several other authors find in King Lear an ethical system, Christian in its nature, which permeates the whole play. For Whitaker, King Lear is proof that a Christian tragedy is possible; Muir states that its values are Christian; for Danby, Lear is a Christian comment on man's world and society; and Heilman finds in the play a host of Christian ethical themes, such as expiatory suffering, free will, repentance, humility, patience, and compassion.³⁶ Several authors indicate that two philosophies are in conflict in the play. The characters represent two contrasting moral visions.³⁷ They are divided into good and evil, into Christian humanists and Renaissance skeptics, and

Robert Ornstein, The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), p. 224; Whitaker, The Mirror, pp. 183-84; D.M. Eddy, The Worlds of King Lear (Muncie, Indiana: Ball State University, 1970), p. 27; Irving Ribner, "The Gods are Just: a Reading of King Lear," The Tulane Drama Review, 2, (1958), 35.

³⁵V.K. Whitaker, Shakespeare's Use of Learning, An Inquiry into the Growth of His Mind and Art (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1964), p. 308.

³⁶Whitaker, The Mirror, pp. 183-84 & 240; Kenneth Muir, "The Great Tragedies," Shakespeare the Writer and His Work, ed. B. Dobree (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1964), pp. 357-59; J.F. Danby, Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature, A Study of King Lear (London: Faber and Faber, 1958), p. 204; R.B. Heilman, This Great Stage, Image and Structure in King Lear (University of Washington Press, 1963), n. 1, p. 331.

³⁷F. Fergusson, "Introduction to King Lear," Tragedies of Monarchy (New York: Dell, 1962), p. 268.

the dramatic conflicts of the play revolve about the moral issues that divide them.³⁸

2. THE ROLE OF MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY AND OF THE THOUGHT OF ST. THOMAS IN SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND

This section will treat first of medieval philosophy, then of the thought of St. Thomas, in their relation to Renaissance England.

It is to the Middle Ages that we must look for an ethical system that will have some kinship with a play of Shakespeare. Several authors show that the Renaissance was not a creative age for philosophy. It was an assimilative age. Men looked back to the Middle Ages and to antiquity for ethical systems. This holds true especially for England of Shakespeare's time, where, with the exception of St. Thomas More and Richard Hooker, no significant philosophical thinkers were to be found. The first outstanding philosopher of the post-medieval period in England was Francis Bacon, whose dates place him slightly later than Shakespeare (1561-1626).³⁹ The English Renaissance was a time of intense intellectual ferment; but not of philosophical creativity. The entire range of Greek Philosophy and scientific lit-

³⁸Ribner, "The Gods . . . ," p. 40-42.

³⁹F.C. Copleston, A History of Philosophy, Vol. III, Ockham to Suarez (London: Burnes Oates, 1963), p. 292.

erature had only recently been fully available, a large store of new ideas had to be digested. The new beginnings of European philosophy, on the basis of early physical science, were yet to be made by Bacon and Descartes.⁴⁰ So Shakespeare lived partly in the new world, partly in the old. In 1600 the educated Englishman's mind and world were more than half medieval.⁴¹ Tillyard lists as one of the strengths of this age, the fact that, while discovering much that was new, it retained the noble form of the old order.⁴²

• Curry emphasizes that in spite of the intellectual confusion of the period, arising from the Reformation, from new science, and from the revival of ancient skepticism, scholastic tradition remained in possession. It was the stable point, the standard of value by which the worth of the new learning was measured.⁴³ In two areas, that of scholarship and of popular instruction, the medieval ideas were current. Some Elizabethan theologians were well versed

⁴⁰P.O. Kristeller, The Classics and Renaissance Thought, Martin Classical Lectures (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), p. 23.

⁴¹Douglas Bush, English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century, 1600-1660, in the series Oxford History of English Literature, ed. F.P. Wilson and Bonamy Dobree (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 1.

⁴²E.M.W. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (London: Chatto & Windus, 1952), p. 6.

⁴³W.C. Curry, Shakespeare's Philosophical Patterns (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), pp. 21-22.

in scholastic philosophy.⁴⁴ This was the working philosophy of seventeenth century authors. Scholastic disciplines, still taught in Elizabethan England, and pervasive in influence, provided the age with a stable framework of religious and cultural thought. At both the scholarly and the popular level, moral philosophy was based on medieval assumptions and intellectual methods.⁴⁵ And it was widely read: witness to this was the dissemination of books on philosophical and ethics topics, including works of the ancients and of the most influential Schoolmen, and numerous collections of philosophical catechisms.⁴⁶ Bethell suggests that philosophical matters were more discussed in Renaissance England than during the Middle Ages: the old world grew more attractive as it came under threat from continental protestantism and the new science.⁴⁷

⁴⁴R.W. Battenhouse, Shakespearean Tragedy, its Art and its Christian Premises (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), p. 207.

⁴⁵Bush, English Literature, pp. 35-36; S.L. Bethell, The Cultural Revolution of the Seventeenth Century (London: Dennis Dobson, 1963), p. 17; Ornstein, The Moral Vision, p. 35.

⁴⁶L.B. Campbell, Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1963), pp. 47-48.

⁴⁷Bethell, The Cultural Revolution, p. 86.

Dramatists of Shakespeare's time received influences from the Middle Ages by two avenues, the philosophical, mentioned above, and medieval drama. Both the themes and the structures of the medieval theatre survived the Reformation. The cosmic pattern of the Fall, Redemption and Judgment, from the Cycles; the ethical debate between Vice and Virtue, from the Moralities: these impregnated the Chronicles, comedies and tragedies of the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre.⁴⁸

Shakespeare's own sense of man's life as part of a supernatural world grew out of the medieval religious tradition, and overflowed into the imaginative world he created in his plays. From the morality play tradition he inherited the theme of man's conflict with evil. From medieval Christianity he derived another motif, the link between man and the universal order: this is central to Shakespeare's thought, as it was to medieval Christianity. And it is the core of tragedy.⁴⁹ Cormican ascribes Shakespeare's development in power as a dramatic artist to the growth in his ability to use medieval morality: a morality based on these two pivotal ideas, man's supernatural destiny, and the regulation

⁴⁸G. Wickham, Shakespeare's Dramatic Heritage (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), pp. 22,23.

⁴⁹Douglas Bush, The Renaissance and English Humanism, The Alexander Lectureship 1939 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1939), p. 99; Ribner, "The Gods . . . ," p. 35; Bethell, Shakespeare, p. 83.

of his life in accordance with universal natural law.⁵⁰

In summary, the creativity of the Elizabethan poets must not obscure the fact that they borrowed heavily from the Middle Ages. They drew on scholastic thought as it perdured in scholarly circles and in popular literature and discussion. And they inherited dramatic themes and structures from medieval drama.

St. Thomas Aquinas, the greatest medieval theologian, might reasonably have affected English thought, since the Middle Ages had such extensive influence on Renaissance England. Ryan has found that the works of St. Thomas were known and widely used throughout seventeenth century England; and that he was recognized as the greatest of the Schoolmen.⁵¹ His chief work, the Summa Theologiae, was never printed in England at this time, but continental editions, of which there were many within Shakespeare's lifetime, must have had some circulation in England.⁵² As an example of a scholar who esteemed and used St. Thomas, John Case is mentioned, an

⁵⁰L.A. Cormican, "Medieval Idiom in Shakespeare: 11. Shakespeare and the Medieval Ethic," Scrutiny, XVII (1950), 317.

⁵¹J.K. Ryan, The Reputation of St. Thomas Aquinas Among English Protestant Thinkers of the Seventeenth Century (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1948), pp. 118-20.

⁵²Battenhouse, Shakespearean Tragedy, p. 207.

Oxford physician and philosopher (c. 1550-1600), who published commentaries on Aristotle, and quoted St. Thomas as his highest authority.⁵³ John Donne, Shakespeare's near contemporary (1573-1631), has over fifty references in his works to St. Thomas (besides a hundred to the Schoolmen).⁵⁴ Richard Hooker (1554-1600), a leading theologian of the Church of Shakespeare's time, used Thomistic thought in Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity. Hooker and Aquinas shared a reverence for Aristotle and a common view about the relation of soul to body in man. In both, there is a conception of a universe governed by reason, a universe therefore that could be at least partly understood by man's rational faculties. Both nature and supernature are governed by God's laws, according to this view, and therefore combine into one picture of reality.⁵⁵

Parker affirms that what Elizabethans believed is very largely what Aquinas believed. This is reflected in a widely circulated body of literature, which included treatises on education and government, the works of the official theologian Hooker, the Courtyer and the Courtier's Academie,

⁵³Ryan, The Reputation, p. 5.

⁵⁴Battenhouse, Shakespearean Tragedy, n. 4, p. 428.

⁵⁵Copleston, A History, p. 322; P. Munz, The Place of Hooker in the History of Thought (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952), pp. 49-51; M.D.H. Parker, The Slave of Life, A Study of Shakespeare and the Idea of Justice (London: Chatto & Windus, 1955), p. 228; Bethell, The Cultural Revolution, pp. 53-54.

and the volumes of Sabunde, Bodin and La Primaudaye.⁵⁶ Aquinas's summarizing statement on sin and the passions was generally accepted: that the passions in so far as they are contrary to the order of reason, incline us to sin, but that in so far as they are controlled by reason, they are akin to virtue. The division of the passions into irascible and concupiscible, held by Aquinas, continued to be popular.⁵⁷

Turning to the question of influences affecting Shakespeare himself, Whitaker believes that Hooker may have been responsible for both the thought and the structure of some of Shakespeare's greatest plays. Frye disputes this view.⁵⁸ But Whitaker cites Troilus and Cressida as proof that Shakespeare demonstrably knew Hooker.⁵⁹ In this play the ideas enunciated by Ulysses, Hector and others are to be found in a brief and orderly form in Hooker and in him alone among the writers that Shakespeare might reasonably have encountered.⁶⁰ Other echoes of Aquinas in Shakespeare are pointed out by Parker: Shakespeare held for the goodness of the world in a way that opposed the doctrine of Calvin; and the psychological hierarchy closely studied in Shake-

⁵⁶Parker, The Slave of Life, pp. 17-18.

⁵⁷Campbell, Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes, pp. 97 & 69.

⁵⁸Frye, Shakespeare, n. 9, p. 15.

⁵⁹Whitaker, Shakespeare's Use, p. 205.

⁶⁰Whitaker, Shakespeare's Use, p. 207.

speare is that of St. Thomas.⁶¹ Gallagher states that the Christian modification of the Ethics of Aristotle, for which Aquinas was chiefly responsible, colors Shakespeare's plays throughout.⁶²

Plainly, then, the works of Aquinas were widely known and used in seventeenth century England. Prominent writers and scholars such as Case, Donne and Hooker are evidence of this, and the host, besides, of treatises on education, government and related ethical topics. Among the Thomistic doctrines found here are widely held views on the passions, on the psychological hierarchy, on the dominant role of reason in the universe, and on the innate goodness of creation. All this supports the choice of the moral philosophy of St. Thomas as the tool for an ethical appreciation of King Lear. Leaving aside altogether the question of what influence Thomism might have had upon Shakespeare, there is evident advantage, when one undertakes the ethical appreciation of a play of his, in utilizing a system of thought that was current in his era.

⁶¹Parker, The Slave of Life, pp. 226 & 25.

⁶²Gallagher, Shakespeare, p. 318.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MORAL PHILOSOPHY OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

In this chapter the moral philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas will be examined and analysed insofar as it provides a useful tool for the ethical appreciation of the character of the King in King Lear. As was stated in the Introduction, the aspect of King Lear's character that will be highlighted is his moral change from a state of viciousness to a state of moral nobility. Therefore the presentation of Aquinas will narrow in upon those aspects of his thought which facilitate this philosophical appreciation of Lear. Thomistic ethics will be drawn upon chiefly, but concepts from the metaphysics, the philosophy of nature and the philosophy of man will be introduced, in order to set the ethical questions within Aquinas's entire philosophical vision of the real.

In this chapter, to state its aim more precisely, the question will be treated, "What does the ethical system of Aquinas say about man as a moral agent capable of moral actions, and as the subject of the moral character that arises from these actions?" The material in Thomistic ethics that sets forth a theory of moral achievement or deprivation will be assembled under two headings, and these provide the main divisions of this chapter: 1. Man the Moral Agent. This

will deal with man as the subject of moral acts and of the moral character that corresponds to these acts. This topic will be developed by a discussion of man's faculties of intellect, of will, and of the passions, and by a study of the virtues and vices. 2. The Norms of Morality. This section will present the means by which the moral character of the agent is charted. In this division reason as the standard by which the goodness or evil of actions is judged, will be treated. This chapter will close with a brief synopsis of the Thomistic position on the question of moral change in man. This will indicate the general lines that Thomistic ethics suggests of an appreciation of the character of King Lear.

1. MAN THE MORAL AGENT

In his metaphysics Aquinas, like Aristotle, sees in man, as well as in all material beings, a two-fold make-up, prime matter and substantial form, two principles which constitute one unified being. Substantial form is the principle in man that establishes him in his species and makes him to be what he is. Prime matter, on the other hand, is pure potency, a pure capacity to become other than what he is.¹ Man derives from this prime matter, then, a capacity for

¹Aristotle, Physics bk. 1, chs. 6-7, 189b30-191a23; bk. 1, ch. 9, 192a31-32; ST. Thomas, De Principiis Naturae, p. 63.

change that is rooted in his very nature. This proneness to change is something that man shares with the rest of material creation, but the forms that change takes in man considered as a moral agent, is something unique, and this will be dealt with most fully when Thomistic doctrine on man's moral powers is outlined. But already in the Thomistic treatment of man as an instance of living being, the theme of change receives development. This, as shall be shown, occurs through the introduction of the concept of human freedom.

Aquinas views man as an instance of living being. A living being is one that has within itself the principle of its own activity.² This principle, making vital action possible in a living being, is called the soul. A soul is possessed by a plant, an animal, and a man, and is the first act, the substantial form, of these naturally organized bodies.³ In these diverse living beings there are three different grades of soul, corresponding to three ascending levels of independence of activity. Of these grades of soul, that of man is the highest, and below him lie that of the plant and of the animal. In the plant the execution of the movement is from within: the plant has the minimum

²De Veritate q. 4, a. 8.

³Aristotle, De Anima Bk. 11, ch. 1, 412b5; ST 1, 75, 1.

requirement for classification as a living being. In the animal not only the execution of movement, but the principle of this movement--sense cognition, by virtue of which the agent acts--is within. In man, not only the execution and the principle of movement are from within, but also the end which moves him to act, for man has control by intellect and will over the end of his movement.⁴ Thomas sees in the soul's activity of intellection a function in which the body does not intrinsically share. The material knowing powers only afford the conditions for intellection, but do not act as the causes of intellectual activity per se. This intellectual autonomy of man lies at the root of the Thomistic doctrine on freedom, an important element in its theory of moral change. If the soul in its essential operation, which is that of intellection, is independent of matter, then man has autonomy in his moral activity. In other words, man as a moral agent has freedom of action. This theme of freedom will be pursued further in the section below on the moral faculties. Another conclusion, not immediately relevant to this thesis, arises from this Thomistic concept of man's autonomy in his intellectual activity. This conclusion is

⁴Aristotle, De Anima Bk. II, ch. 1; Physics Bk. VIII, ch. 4. On life: ST I, 18, 1; SCG I, 97. Senses of the term "life": ST I, 18, 2; SCG I, 98. Grades of being: ST I, 18, 3; SCG IV, 11.

that the human soul is immortal. That the human soul is incorruptible and survives the body, is seen to follow from the application of the principle that action follows being, that is, that the activity of a being is proportionate to its nature, and accordingly affords an insight into that nature. Since the intellect is autonomous in its activity, therefore the soul which is the seat of the intellect must be autonomous in its nature. Autonomy of activity signals autonomy of nature: what can act by itself can also exist by itself. Hence the soul of man has a power whose intrinsic independence from matter points to the immateriality and existential independence of the soul.⁵

We pass from these general remarks about the soul of man to a specific consideration of his faculties. Aquinas deduces the existence of faculties in man from the fact that the soul cannot be its own actions. These come and go while the soul itself remains. The activities then, which flow from the soul, must arise in operative potencies. These

⁵ Spirituality of the soul: Aristotle, De Anima Bk. 111, ch. 5, 430a22; Metaphysics Bk. XI1, ch. 3, 1070a26. Immortality of the soul: Aristotle, De Anima Bk. 11, ch. 1, 413a4-7; ch. 2, 413b24-7; Bk. 111, ch. 3; ST 1, 75, 6; SCG 11, 79-81; De Anima a. 14. The Substantial unity of man: Aristotle, De Anima Bk. 11, ch. 1; ST 1, 76, 1-8; De Spiritualibus Creaturis, aa. 2, 3; SCG 11, 56-57; De Anima a. 1. 2. The Nature of the soul: ST 1, 75, 1-5; De Anima a. 6; In 11 De Anima lect. 1-4; De Spiritualibus Creaturis a. 4; ST 1, 76, 3, 4, 7 & 8. Only one soul in man: ST 1, 76, 2, 3; SCG 11, 58; De Anima a. 11.

potencies are of different kinds, and are distinguished from one another by their ordination to formally distinct objects. This point will be elaborated on later. The operative potencies include sensation, the intellect, as has been already noted, and the appetites that correspond to sensation and intellection.⁶ The appetites are subdivided into the intellectual appetite, which is the will, and the sensitive appetites which follow upon sense knowledge. A consideration of man as a moral agent requires, besides, a study of the habits by which his faculties are perfected: these are the intellectual and moral virtues. Since little need be said for the purpose of this thesis about the power of sensation the other powers of the moral agent may now be considered.

a) Intellect and Will

Intellect and will cooperate in every fully human act. Such fully human acts are called "voluntary." Two conditions attend the voluntariness of an act: that the end be known, and that the act proceed from the will. When a man performs such a voluntary act he is functioning as a moral agent, that is, as one who is free and responsible

⁶On the operative potencies of the soul: Aristotle, De Anima Bk. 1, ch. 5. Distinction of the soul from the operative potencies: ST 1, 77, 1; De Anima a. 12, 13. Plurality and diversity of potencies: ST 1, 77, 2 & 3; In 11 De Anima lect. 6. Emanation of operative potencies from the soul: ST 1, 77, 4; In 1 Sentent. d. 3, q. 4, a. 2.

for his actions.⁷ Man is free both in the choice of ends, and of the means to the attainment of those ends.⁸ In this man differs from lower creation: beings lower than man are directed to their end by their instincts or by the material laws of their being.

Thomism's concept that man is free is essential to its treatment of moral change in man. It is because the will is free that man can be influenced by his passions or by moral encouragements and inducements, either to do good or to do evil and thereby to transform himself to a better or to a worse moral condition. The basic Thomistic proof for the freedom of man, besides resting upon considerations already drawn from Thomistic metaphysics, also derives from its account of the nature of his faculties of intellect and will and the manner in which they interact. What follows is a brief excursus on these points, the nature of the intellect and the will and their interaction.

The intellect.--It was mentioned above that man is a living being who has within himself the end which moves him to act. It is the intellect which brings man's end within him by allowing him to consider a variety of goals towards which to direct his being. This amplitude of the intellect,

⁷ST 1-11, 6, 1; 6, 5, ad 2; 6, 7.

⁸ST 1-11, 13, 1; De Veritate q. 22, a. 15.

as shall be shown, allows the corresponding appetite, the will, freedom of choice. We have already had occasion to note that it is precisely the immateriality of the intellect which allows the inference that the soul as the seat of man's powers need not follow the destiny of the body and is hence incorruptible. It has been said that the activity of the intellect is one in which the body, that is, the sense organs, do not intrinsically share. It was not required when this point was made to show that the intellect does indeed perform an operation in which the body does not share. Some effort at demonstration is now required in order to lend ground to that assertion, as well as to show that man does possess freedom and is accordingly to some degree capable of self-determination and of moral change along the way. This latter point is of course the one to be made about Lear.

The intellect is the power of man to grasp the universal nature of objects by uniting their essential forms to itself. The intricacies of the act of intellection need not concern us for the purposes of this presentation. Suffice it is to say that Aquinas is struck by the capacity that the intellect possesses to know all bodies. The senses, in contrast, are only capable of grasping a certain aspect of a body, and that only in a concrete and singular way. The eye, for example, does not know color. Color, as

such, is a universal nature. Rather the sense of sight grasps this instance of green or red here and now impinging itself on that sense. The same analysis could be made regarding the other senses, and could be extended to the internal senses as well. The central or common sense, for example, unifies the individual sensations of the external senses and hence produces a unified sensation of a concrete object. In contrast to this restriction to the singular, the intellect is able to grasp the abstract and universal nature of objects. Now if the intellect contained within itself an organic nature it would be unable to know the nature of bodies. Yet it is our experience that it does. Hence the intellect is not an organic power and its dependence upon the senses is of an extrinsic nature.⁹ It is precisely this factor which allows Aquinas to reach the further conclusion that because man is rational he is free. This point may be better appreciated through a brief glimpse at man's intellectual appetite, the will.

The will.--The will is one of the appetites of man. Appetite is the tendency of things to an end, as opposed to the intellect, which is concerned with the perception of the end. Appetite follows knowledge and is its natural resultant.¹⁰ Knowledge, in short, would be a dead-end if at

⁹ST 1, 75, 2. ¹⁰ST 1, 80, 1.

least in some instances it was not accompanied by an inclination that sparked action. As there are two distinct types of knowledge, that of sense and that of intellect, so there are two distinct types of appetite.¹¹ As has already been noted, the appetite which follows upon intellectual knowledge is known as the will. The inclination of the will to the end is called love. A special name, "dilection," is given to intellectual love, in order to distinguish it from love found in the sensitive appetite (which will be dealt with below in connection with the passions). Dilection is the response to intellectual knowledge, while love in the sensitive appetite is the response to sense knowledge.¹² The very opposite activity in the will to that of dilection is malice. In malice the will is completely and directly turned from the end that is proportioned to it. Malice consists in the willingness to suffer the loss of some spiritual good in order to obtain a temporal good. This amounts to a choice of evil, for evil consists in the privation of good. Malice represents the aberration of the will in its extreme form. In comparison with faults that proceed by ignorance from a defect of the intellect, or by passion from a defect in the sensitive appetite, malice is more grievous, for it affects the will itself, and ill-disposes a man in respect to

¹¹ST 1, 80, 2. ¹²ST 1-11, 26, 1 & 3.

the end itself, which is the principle in matters of action.¹³

The existence of the will does not in itself establish its freedom. Rather this follows upon the nature of the intellect. In contrast to sense knowledge, whose object has been noted to be the concrete aspects of a singular object, the intellect is capable of grasping the universal nature. Its scope is accordingly much ampler and it is precisely this amplitude which allows the intellect to consider different objects, and to circle them as it were and to view them under different aspects. Thus the intellect is capable of judging that something should be avoided or attained, and since this type of judgment is concerned with particular activities and these lie in the area of the contingent, the intellect is capable of considering different possibilities and the will as the appetite that follows the intellect is not determined to one.¹⁴

Intellect and will are jointly responsible for human activity. They interact in such a way that they move each other, but they do so in different ways. They constitute a dual causality of human actions, a causality as to specification, and as to exercise. The intellect provides the will with the specification which its act requires, by presenting to it the object apt to move it; this is the good as under-

¹³ST 1-11, 78, 1 & 4. ¹⁴ST 1, 83, 1.

stood. The will, on the other hand, acting after the manner of an agent, incites the intellect to the exercise of its functions and moves it towards its proper goal, which is a particular good, a good comprised within the good in general which is the object of the will.¹⁵ The precise way in which both intellect and will function together in such a way that their joint activity has the characteristic of freedom, a quality accounted for above in terms of the nature of the intellect, requires further precision here. In regard to the intellect, the intellect presents all ends to the will as a set of alternatives; the will can tend to whichever of these that the intellect apprehends as good. Now the judgment of the intellect is free to regard any alternative as either good or evil, for the intellect adheres naturally and of necessity only to the one kind of object, and that object is the first principles of the intellect. In regard, now to the will; nothing can force the activity of the will, either in regard to the exercise of its act, or in regard to its specification. No object moves the will to its exercise necessarily, for it is always in the power of the agent not to think of a thing and therefore not to will it. As to its specification, the will tends of necessity only to the

¹⁵ST 1, 82, 4, and, ad 1; ST 1-11, 9, 1; 12, 1, ad 4; De Veritate q. 22, a. 12.

universal good, for this is its natural object. No particular good, therefore, can compell the will. At no time, furthermore, as was indicated above, does the intellect present to the will anything but some particular good. The will therefore can always choose not to move towards that good, because there is to be found in it, along with its aspect of goodness, its aspect of imperfection.¹⁶

It will be noted from the above that the freedom which Aquinas posits in man does not argue to random activity in the moral agent. Man's activities of intellect and will, while being self-directed, still revolve about two immobile centers which provide the stabilizing elements in human moral life: these are the universal true and the universal good. Whatever the intellect grasps it clings to under the aspect of truth; whatever the particular good the will tends towards, it moves towards insofar as it participates in the universal good. This concept will be enlarged upon below, when the norms of morality are treated.

Thomism deals with several sources of restraint upon

¹⁶ST 1-11, 9, 1; 10, 2; 13, 6; 17, 6; ST 1, 82, 2; 83, 1; 80, 1; De Veritate q. 22, a. 12. Freedom: Aristotle, Ethics Bk. 111, ch. 5; ST 1, 82, 1; ST 1-11, 10, 1. Objects of the will: ST 1, 59, 1. Nature of the will: ST 1, 80, 2; De Veritate q. 22, aa. 3 & 4; ST 1-11, 9, 5. Acts of the will: ST 1-11, 8-17. Intellect and will: ST 1, 82, 3. Will as efficient cause: ST 1, 105, 4; ST 1, 115, 4; ST 1-11, 9; 10, 4. Will as commanding: ST 1, 81, 3; De Veritate q. 26, a. 10.

human freedom, two of which, divine intervention in the affairs of men, and the passions, are relevant to the play King Lear. Neither of these, according to Aquinas, constitutes an absolute block to freedom. To mention divine interventions first: the creator respects human freedom. He moves all things it is true, but he moves them in accordance with their natures. Since it is man's nature to be free, God moves the will in such a way as not to force it to one effect. To mention now the passions. The passions have some influence over the will, but they have no direct power over it. The intellect and the will retain their hegemony over the human composite, even though it be a constitutional, not a monarchical one.¹⁷ The effect that the passions have upon moral activity will be dealt with more at length in the next section.

b) The Sensitive Appetite

The Thomistic theory of the passions enables us to study bodily and emotional change in man as they relate to his moral life. The almost infinite occasions for attraction and repulsion of the will which occur in man's transactions with the physical environment and with other people, are charted in Aquinas's outline of the passions. He indicates

¹⁷SCG 111, 66 & 67; 73; 88; 94. ST 1-11, 10, 4; 17, 7, and, ad 2; 77, 1.

how the passions can produce either wholesome or harmful moral changes in man, depending upon whether or not the movement induced by the passions be in harmony with the dictates of reason. If the sensible goods which the passions seek are furthering man's attainment of his proper goal, as set forth by reason, then they reinforce the activity of the intellect, and support the movement of the will towards its end, and provide prompt bodily and sensible means of attaining it. The passions can counter the guidance of the intellect, for they may be aroused by influences that by-pass reason, such as the imagination and the dispositions of the body. Then the human personality is rent by civil war.¹⁸

The passions thus aroused can influence the will in an indirect manner. First of all, by distraction. When one power of the soul is intent on its act another power becomes weakened in its actions through a lessening of energy or of attention. Secondly, by obscuring reason. The degree of freedom enjoyed by the moral agent depends on the perfection of his rational knowledge of the end and of the things conducive to its attainment. When such knowledge is lacking, the agent is more or less lacking in freedom. This state of soul occurs when a movement of passion interferes with the act of

¹⁸Gerald Vann, Morals and Man (London: Collins, 1960), p. 91.

rational deliberation. In King Lear we will find that anger is Lear's governing passion and is strong enough to cloud his powerful intellect. The passion disturbs the imagination and the judgment of the cogitative power to the point that some sensible good or evil weakens or excludes a rational motive, and as a result the will is not offered a proper object of choice. In addition, the passions can cause bodily disturbances that hinder the functioning of the sensitive powers. Hence an antecedent passion can diminish the voluntariness of the moral agent. Anger more than any other passion can have this effect on the moral agent. Any act performed even partly as a result of passion is less than perfectly human. If such an act is morally good, it is less meritorious than if it were the result of pure reason and will. Conversely, an evil act that originates in passion will be less blameworthy.

Sense appetite is the tendency towards a good which is apprehended by the senses. This tendency comprises feelings and emotions, all of which are called "passions" in the Thomistic system. A passion is a movement of a sense appetite arising from sense knowledge of some good or evil, and accompanied by corporeal change. Aquinas divides the sensitive appetite into two powers, the concupiscible and the irascible; these again are subdivided into eleven basic passions, and all other passions are combinations of these.

Aquinas justifies his division of the sensitive appetite into two species, although it is generically one power, by the following line of reasoning. These two powers, the concupiscible and the irascible appetites, are distinguished by a difference of objects. The good of man appears under two aspects. The concupiscible appetite has for object the sensible good considered simply and absolutely. Through this appetite, the moral agent seeks out what is sensibly good, and flies from what is hurtful. The irascible appetite has for object the sensible good viewed as being arduous of attainment. In virtue of this power the moral agent strives for the difficult good, or resists the evil that is difficult to conquer. The distinctness of the concupiscible and the irascible appetites is evident from the fact that they can oppose one another: sometimes the soul busies itself with unpleasant things in order to fight an obstacle, while at the same time the concupiscible appetite moves the agent to enjoy some sensible good and repose in it. Of the two powers, the concupiscible is the more basic, and man's emotional states begin and end there. That is to say, the moral subject begins by tending to the good through the concupiscible appetite. If his way is blocked by some difficulty, it is cleared by the aroused irascible appetite, which serves, to put it briefly, as the defender of the concupiscible. After the difficulty has been removed or evaded, then the con-

cupiscible appetite returns to its movement towards the good. Ultimately the moral subject feels either the emotion of joy in the attainment of this good, or sorrow in its loss.¹⁹

Six paired passions arise in the concupiscible appetite. Love and hate are the first in the order of execution. Love is the movement towards the sought end, that is, towards the good. This is "sensible love," to distinguish it from intellectual love, or "dilection," which was dealt with earlier.²⁰ All other passions presuppose love, for they all imply either movement towards the good, or repose in it. Love as a passion is a movement towards union with a sensible good; now this union can be of a higher or of a lower kind. There is love of concupiscence, which esteems a thing for the benefits which it confers upon the agent. Of a higher degree of union is love of friendship, which esteems the object for its own sake. This love arises from some quality held in common by the agent and the object, and this causes the affections and good wishes of the agent to tend to the other as to a second self. Love of friendship involves a mutual union, in which communication, knowledge, desire and affection are shared and intermingled.²¹ When the con-

¹⁹ST 1, 81, 2; ST 1-11, 23, 1; 25, 1.

²⁰ST 1-11, 25, 2; 26, 1.

²¹ST 1-11, 26, 2 & 4; 27, 3 & 4; 28, 2; ST 11-11, 23, 1; In 111 Sentent. 7, q. 1, a. 1.

cupiscible power experiences aversion to an object, the opposite passion to love is felt; this is the passion of hatred, which consists in the withdrawal from an evil object. A second pair of concupiscible passions come into play when the object is absent, the passions of desire and aversion. Desire is the movement towards the absent good; aversion, on the other hand, is the retreat from the absent evil.²² Finally, when the concupiscible power possesses the object, the resulting passions are joy or sorrow. Joy, also called delight, results from possession of and resting in the sensible good. Sorrow arises from the presence of evil. Joy and sorrow are the fundamental concupiscible passions, for they consist in the actual possession or presence of the end that is sought or avoided.²³

A precision about the passions of joy and sorrow should be made, which is important for the interpretation of the character of King Lear. Aquinas's treatment of the passion of joy or delight offers an insight into King Lear's character. The King, as shall be shown, demonstrates a capacity to experience joy even in the presence of defeat of his fortunes and physical misery. Aquinas contrasts the delight which resides

²²ST 1-11, 23, 4; 25, 2; 26, 2.

²³ST 1-11, 31, 1, 3 & 4; 32, 1, and, ad 3; 35, 1 & 2; De Veritate q. 26, a. 4. & 5; ST 1-11, 25, 2 & 4.

in the sensitive appetite with the joy that arises from the intellectual possession of the good. Goods of the spirit which the intellect presents to the will, have more attraction for the moral agent, and give him more joy, than do goods which the sensitive appetites hanker after. This is so, he maintains, because intellectual goods are greater and more beloved than are sensible goods, greater both in intrinsic value and in duration. Spiritual joy, therefore, can have a stronger hold on a man than any passion. Still, Aquinas points out, a man can nevertheless allow himself to be so beguiled by sensible goods that he chooses repose in them to the pursuit of the higher good.²⁴

The passion of sorrow as analysed in Thomistic ethics will offer insight into the inward sorrow that so afflicts King Lear that he is oblivious to outward pain. He is eventually completely overcome in both body and mind by the effects of his sorrow. Aquinas distinguishes two forms of sorrow, sorrow properly speaking, which arises from the interior apprehension of some evil, and pain, which is caused by bodily apprehension of some evil. To the question, which of these torments is the more grave, Aquinas offers in answer the following analysis. Inward sorrow surpasses pain in intensity: of all the passions it is the most destructive

²⁴ST 1-11, 31, 5.

to body and mind. The acuteness of sorrow rests on the fact that sorrow arises from some object that is repugnant to the appetite itself; pain, on the other hand, arises from an object that is directly repugnant to the body, and only indirectly repugnant to the appetite. Sorrow, besides, depends on the apprehension of the reason and the imagination, and these are of a higher order than the sense of touch.²⁵ The effect of sorrow, therefore, on the agent is in the form of a powerful destructive force that can ravage mind and body both, as remarked earlier.

The irascible passions, it will be recalled, constitute the moral agent's response to the good considered as difficult of attainment, and to the evil taken as being laborious to overcome. The first pair of passions in this category are hope and despair. The passion of hope arises when the absent good is seen as being difficult but still attainable. On the other hand, despair arises if the difficult and absent good is viewed as being unattainable. A second pair of passions have to do with threatening evil. Fear arises when the evil is seen as being unconquerable; daring, however, is the response to the evil if it is regarded as conquerable. The fifth irascible passion, anger, concerns the evil when present and actually inflicting harm. Anger itself is a

²⁵ST 1-11, 35, 7; 37, 4, and, ad 3.

fusion of several concurring passions: sorrow at the pain being experienced, desire for revenge, and hope of attaining that revenge. If hope is not present, sorrow ensues instead of anger. This effect will be observable in King Lear, whose anger turns to sorrow when his resistance to his daughters fails. Aquinas carefully distinguishes anger, which is an irascible passion, from hatred, which arises in the concupiscible appetite. Hatred causes the moral agent to wish evil to an enemy as evil; anger, on the contrary, consists in wishing evil which is viewed as being a good since it is the means of taking just revenge.²⁶

c) The Virtues

Man's hold on a pattern of good moral actions is an uncertain thing. It is difficult in its inception, and subject always to either growth or diminution. This follows from the nature of the virtues, which are the action-patterns of which a good moral life is built. Virtue at the start is only a potency in the subject faculty, and does not grow except through the guidance of reason and by dint of repeated effort. The changeableness of the moral journey of a Lear, or of any other man, is the rule according to the Thomistic system, rather than the exception in human affairs.

²⁶ST 1-11, 23, 4; 40, 1 & 4, ad 3; 41, 2; 45, 2; 46, 1, and ad 2; 46, 6; De Veritate q. 26, a. 4.

In the Thomistic system the virtues are species of the quality called "habit." The Thomistic doctrine on the habits that follows will be an introduction to the outline of the species of habit called virtue. The remote efficient cause of human actions is the faculties of man, his intellect, his will, and his sensitive appetites. But man's faculties do not initially possess the capacity to perform easily and frequently actions that are either good or bad. That is to say, the facility for patterned and quasi-spontaneous activity is not at the beginning inscribed in their nature. What the faculties do possess initially is the potentiality for such patterned activity.²⁷ The natural disposition is there but it must be perfected. It is this potentiality of man's moral faculties that establishes a need for habits. A habit is a quality that disposes a faculty well or ill in regard to its operation.²⁸ A habit, that is to say, provides a faculty of the moral agent with the capacity to perform easily and promptly actions that are either good or bad.

Thomistic metaphysics accounts for man's openness to the growth of habits in the following way. It is the form of a being that makes it to be what it is. The form, in conferring

²⁷ST 1-11, 68, 1; 63, 1; De Virtutibus q. 1, a. 8.

²⁸ST 1-11, 49, 1-3.

being upon a creature, endows it at the same time with an inclination to the end suited to that form. With this inclination goes a power to perform acts that are conducive to the attainment of that end. The form in lower beings inclines them to one determined end; this they attain by a single pattern of activities that is dictated by internal necessity. In this man differs from lower beings. He does not have a form that is determined only to one kind of act. His faculties are not, like the powers of plants and animals, set on just one pattern of uniform action leading to a pre-determined goal. Man's rational nature, it is true, is inclined necessarily to his final end, the perfect good. But all intermediate goals serve as means to the final end, and man has the power to direct himself to these intermediate ends freely.²⁹ In virtue of this openness to diverse activities which was enlarged upon above, man can direct himself to any of various goals, including goals that lead him away from rather than towards his final end. This freedom of man, this openness of his rational powers of intellect and will to diverse activities, which serves for the faculties as a kind of active principle by which they are readied for action, is one of the two elements that makes the formation of habits necessary and possible.³⁰ The other element is a passive

²⁹ST 1-11, 50, 2. ³⁰ST 1-11, 50, 2.

principle that resides in the faculties. In virtue of this passive principle, the faculties are in potency to receive determinations that will shape and dispose them to certain specific kinds of action.

Habits are formed in the human faculties through the determination of the above-mentioned passive principle. Two formative factors are responsible for the shaping of this passive principle into the developed habit. The first factor is the guidance of reason. Reason, directing the selection of the actions to be performed, is the guide to the formation of a habit in the faculty. The second factor that develops a habit in a faculty is the repetition of an action. As the human agent determines himself to one action rather than to another, his faculty becomes somewhat disposed towards such an action, according to the Thomistic principle that everything that is passive and is moved by another, is disposed by the action of the agent. When these actions are multiplied the disposition is made firm and, in time, the superimposed disposition becomes a quasi-form.³¹ In summary, the action-pattern of a habit becomes fixed in a subject faculty through the reasoned repetition of an action.

Man's hold on a habit is never entirely secure. Habits

³¹ ST 1-11, 49, 4; 51, 2; De Virtutibus in Communi
unica qu., aa. 1 & 9.

are subject always to further strengthening, or to diminution. This follows from the nature of the process that forms the habit. Reasoned repetition forms the habit, and the same process can reverse the condition thus attained. This attrition of a habit is due also to human freedom, which permits a man always to perform isolated acts that depart from a habit engrained in his faculties. A good man therefore can commit a bad act; and a bad man may by exception perform a good act. Such isolated actions do not of course suffice to efface or establish a habit.³²

The habits that a man can develop in his faculties fall into two species: good habits, also called virtues; and bad habits, also called vices.³³ The human faculties are in potency to the reception of either kind of habit. The virtues are habits which produce good actions; the vices are habits that produce evil actions. In the section below on the norms of morality, the concept of good and evil will be made more explicit. For the present it suffices to offer this precision: the good habits, the virtues, are distinguished by the fact that they are in accord with reason; inhering in the faculty, they enable it to perform easily those actions that are in accordance with reason and lead man to his

³²ST 1-11, 51, 3; 53, 1; 71, 4; 78, 2.

³³ST 1-11, 54, 3.

end.³⁴ As such they represent a victory in the intellect's struggle to equip itself and the other faculties with the capacity to perform actions that are guided by reason and that lead the moral agent to his final end. Vices, on the contrary, incline the faculty of the moral agent to the performance of acts that are against reason. It follows that virtues are in harmony with human nature; and that vices are out of harmony with man's rational nature.³⁵ Man, then, to be true to his nature, must follow reason, which dictates that he act virtuously.³⁶

There is a plurality of virtues, even though there is but one formal principle of virtue, namely, the good as defined by reason. This formal principle has to be imprinted in each of the faculties of the moral agent: his intellect, his rational appetite, which is the will, and his two sensitive appetites, the concupiscible and the irascible. Each of these faculties must be fitted to attain a distinct object, and to each object there is a corresponding virtue. Right knowledge is the object that fits the intellect: to this correspond the intellectual virtues. External goods, especially goods belonging to others, is the object of the

³⁴ST 1-11, 49, 1 & 3; 55, 1-4; De Virtutibus q. 1, a. 1.

³⁵ST 1-11, 18, 5; 54, 3; 71, 2.

³⁶ST 1-11, 18, 1; 94, 3; ST 11-11, 25, 7; SCG 111, 129.

will, and to this corresponds the virtue of justice. A third object concerns sensible goods, which is the object of the concupiscible appetite, and to this pertains the virtue of temperance. A fourth object, attained by the irascible appetite, is constituted by sensible goods that involve struggle, for which man is armed by the virtue of fortitude.³⁷ Hence each faculty is perfected by a separate virtue. :

A summary treatment of the virtues in more detail now follows with these Thomistic divisions: The Intellectual Virtues, that is, the virtues that primarily concern knowledge; and The Moral Virtues, that is, the virtues that are primarily concerned with the application of reason to action.³⁸

The Intellectual Virtues

The intellectual virtues are the noblest because the faculty that they inform has the noblest object. Reason seizes something of the universal nature of things; desire, on the other hand, tends to things in their particular being. Still, from the standpoint of action the moral virtues are nobler, because they perfect desire, whose function it is to move the other powers to action.³⁹

The five intellectual virtues are distinguished

³⁷ST 1-11, 54, 2; 60, 5. ³⁸ST 1-11, 58, 3.

³⁹ST 1-11, 66, 3.

according to the diversity of their objects.⁴⁰ The objects of the intellect have two divisions, ideas which are purely speculative in nature, and ideas which have to do with concrete particular actions. The former pertain to the speculative intellect, the latter to the practical intellect.

The three virtues which perfect the intellect for the apprehension of speculative truth are understanding, science and wisdom. Aquinas derives the distinction between these likewise from a difference of objects. Truth may be dealt with either as known in itself, or as known by means of other truths. To apprehend by intuition the truths that are known in themselves and understood at once by the intellect, rather than being arrived at by means of deduction, there is the habit of understanding. In virtue of this, the intellect apprehends the intuited truths that serve as first principles for the attaining of further truths by a process of deduction. Aquinas divides the virtue of understanding into two sub-virtues, since some principles of reason are purely speculative, and some are practical. The latter principles are apprehended by the practical reason through the habit called synderesis. Synderesis will be discussed further below in connection with the virtue of prudence, of

⁴⁰ST 1-11, 57, 2.

which it is an essential cohort.⁴¹ When the intellect seeks truths that are learned by means of other truths, going in this way from the known to the unknown, the intellect is perfected by the virtue of science. Science itself is of divers kinds, answering to the divers sorts of knowable matter, and each kind of knowable matter forms a different genus of science. When the intellect attains a firm grasp of the knowledge of a particular genus, it is informed by the habit of the science of that genus. The third and highest speculative habit of the intellect is wisdom. Wisdom is like the sciences in that it perfects man so that he may reason to true conclusions; but it is unlike the sciences in that it reasons in terms of the first and highest causes, not in terms of the causes of a particular genus of knowledge. Wisdom ultimately considers the very object of happiness, the supreme intelligible. It is the function of wisdom to judge, guide and regulate the other sciences; this it does by mastering the conclusions of each, and then rendering universal judgments about these conclusions.⁴²

By the above three virtues the intellect is perfected for the attainment of theoretical knowledge. The second kind of knowledge, practical knowledge, that is, knowledge ordained

⁴¹ ST 1-11, 58, 4; De Veritate q. 11, a. 1.

⁴² ST 1-11, 66, 5, and, ad 1 & ad 2.

to action, is open to the intellect through the virtues of art and of prudence. Art perfects the intellect for the making of things.⁴³ Prudence is the virtue which enables a man to know how to act well. Prudence is an intellectual virtue, but Aquinas considers it among the moral virtues. It is both an intellectual and a moral virtue, in that it disposes the moral agent both for right thinking and for right action. In essence it is an intellectual virtue since it perfects the intellect. But when it is considered in terms of its subject matter, namely, concrete human actions, then it stands among the moral virtues.⁴⁴

The Moral Virtues

The virtue pertaining to the intellect that regards practical reason, that is, prudence, and the three virtues that inform the appetites of the human agent, are called moral virtues because they are concerned with moral action. Aquinas calls these four virtues "cardinal" virtues, because on them man's moral life depends.⁴⁵ Aquinas assigns a more important role in man's moral life to several of the cardinal virtues, but he shows the importance of all of them. Prudence and justice are the chief virtues, for they perfect the two

⁴³ST 1-11, 57, 3. ⁴⁴ST 1-11, 57, 4; 58, 3, ad 1.

⁴⁵ST 1-11, 61, 2; De Virtutibus Cardinalibus q. unice, 1.

highest faculties, the intellect and the will.⁴⁶ But all the virtues are closely connected and mutually dependent on one another, so that if even one of the virtues is to exist in a perfect state, it must be supported by the other three. Aquinas inserts into this discussion the following line of argument: for good moral choices to be made by the moral subject, first of all prudence is required, in order that man may choose rightly those means which lead to the end. Man cannot do this unless he reason, counsel, judge and command aright, and this is the office of prudence. Secondly, the other moral virtues are required, in order that the moral agent's intention be directed to the due end, for these virtues incline the appetites to the good that is in accord with reason. It is to be recalled here that the sensitive appetites do not obey reason blindly, but with a certain power of opposition; they may hinder the intellect's grasp of the morality of a particular act, so that the object of desire seems good to the intellect, even though it is opposed to the universal judgment of reason. Any moral act, to attain the mean of reason, must make reasonable use of sensible goods, and this requires the virtue of temperance; must respect the rights of others, and this demands the

⁴⁶ST 1-11, 58, 3; 61, 2; Josef Pieper, The Four Cardinal Virtues (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965), p. 67.

virtue of justice; and must remain firm in the face of difficulties, and this falls within the ambit of the virtue of fortitude.⁴⁷

The four moral virtues will now be seen in detail, beginning with the virtue of prudence. In the drama King Lear all these virtues will be seen to enter into the characterization of the King.

1) Prudence

King Lear's moral lapses involved imprudence, and his regeneration, as will be shown, is attributable to a renewal in him of the virtue of prudence. A man's stability in virtue, according to the Thomistic ethics, depends primarily upon his possession of the virtue of prudence. Prudence, to repeat the definition, is the virtue which enables a man to know how to act well. Just as science perfects speculative reason, so prudence perfects practical reason, so that one can judge correctly what is good to do in each particular instance. Prudence, besides perfecting the intellect, also directs the formation and exercise of the other moral virtues, since these consist in nothing other than the performance of actions that are in harmony with

⁴⁷ST 1-11, 56, 4; 57, 5; 58, 2-5; 65, 1.

right reason.⁴⁸ Prudence governs the actions of the other virtues by selecting a path for them which strikes a mean between excess and defect in relation to right and wrong. A virtuous act, as far as the moral virtues are concerned, is always characterized by this adherence to the mean.⁴⁹ The mean exacts great precision of action of each virtue; it is a narrow path of rectitude between two extremes that are easily transgressed. Therefore reason's mastery over the faculties of man demands great care.

* Several forms of prudence may be exercised by the moral agent. What is being referred to here is what Aquinas calls the subjective parts of prudence. The subjective parts of a virtue are species of a particular virtue in which the whole power of the main habit are realized. The two subjective parts of prudence are, the virtue whereby a man rules a multitude, and the virtue whereby a man rules himself. The former virtue includes military prudence, and regnative prudence, which is the form of prudence exercised by a ruler. The latter form of prudence includes political prudence, whereby a citizen directs himself in obeying his superiors; and the virtue termed simply prudence, to desig-

⁴⁸ST 1-11, 57, 4 & 5; ST 11-11, 47, 7; De Virtutibus q. 1, a. 6.

⁴⁹ST 1-11, 64, 1.

nate the virtue whereby a man rules himself.⁵⁰ Regnative prudence and simple prudence are of special importance in the analysis of the character of King Lear.

Aquinas has determined what dispositions the intellect must have in order to possess the virtue of prudence. These dispositions, which are essential elements in the perfection of the virtue of prudence, are called the integral parts of the virtue.⁵¹ The intellect, to attain these dispositions, faces an immense labor of unification in regard to its own make-up. Unless the intellect in this way is internally united and focused into a sharp probing instrument of apprehension, it cannot unify under its rule the other faculties by discerning the narrow mean to be followed by their virtues. These dispositions which the intellect requires in order to be informed by the virtue of prudence are eight in number. Each of them assists the intellect in its work of unification of data present and past and future into one synthesis that illuminates the projected choice. Five of these integral parts belong to prudence considered as a cognitive virtue: these are memory, understanding, reason, docility and shrewdness. Three of them refer to prudence as a practical virtue that applies knowledge to action; these

⁵⁰ST 11-11, 48, 1; 50, 1, and, ad 1; 50, 2.

⁵¹ST 11-11, 48, 1.

are foresight, circumspection and caution. With respect to the cognitive parts: memory recalls the precepts of syn-deresis, which will be dealt with below, and contingent past actions which throw light upon the decision now being taken. Practical understanding gives the moral agent the capacity to grasp the moral significance of a concrete situation: this forms the minor premise of the syllogism of prudence, of which some universal principle is the major. By reason the moral subject applies the universal principle to the particular action. Docility enables man to gain knowledge through being receptive to the moral teaching of others: man needs instruction and guiding discipline from others in order to grow in virtue, due both to the vastness of the subject matter of prudence, and to the pressures the passions can impose upon reason. Finally shrewdness, like docility, leads to the attainment of knowledge, but shrewdness enables the moral agent to gain it by his own efforts rather than by instruction from others. The integral parts of prudence taken as a practical virtue include foresight: by this the moral subject foresees and orders the things that assist him to attain the end. By circumspection the agent can attend to the circumstances of the matter in hand. By caution he has skill in avoiding obstacles.⁵²

⁵²ST 1-11, 95, 1; ST 11-11, 47, 9; 48; 49, 1, 3, 4, 5, ad 2, 6--8; SCG 111, 128.

The above integral parts of prudence fit the moral subject for the laborious process of reaching a decision in matters of concrete moral action. This process moves through three steps: deliberation; judgment; and preception.⁵³

a) Deliberation: the intellect takes counsel concerning the proposed act and considers it in relation to the ultimate end of the agent. Reason uses for materials of its deliberation two sources, the universal principles of practical reason, and the singulars with which ethical actions are concerned.⁵⁴

These universal principles, it will be recalled, are the primary precepts of the natural law, the first principles of human action.⁵⁵ These principles will be discussed more fully in the section below on the norms of morality. These first principles are available to the reason through the special form of the habit of understanding called synderesis, which moves prudence just as understanding of first speculative principles moves science.⁵⁶ Prudence applies to the particular action the principles supplied by synderesis. The prudent intellect is thus in contact with the intuited self-evident

⁵³ST 11-11, 47, 8.

⁵⁴ST 11-11, 49, 2, ad 1; Pieper, The Four Cardinal Virtues, p. 10.

⁵⁵ST 1-11, 94, 1, ad 2.

⁵⁶ST 1, 79, 12; ST 11-11, 47, 6, ad 3.

truths upon which all knowledge rests, and with the realities of human experience. In other words, as was noted above in the section on the intellect, the intellect that is informed by prudence unites man with reality about him in order that he might know it as it is, and in this way be able to utilize creatures as means to union with his final end. b) Judgment: in the process of applying the first principles to the concrete situation at hand, the intellect arrives, through a series of more and more particular judgments, at a judgment that is both particular and personal. Then we have a dictate of moral conscience: "I should do (or not do) this particular action." Conscience, besides performing this function of judging that something should be done or not done, renders supplementary services to the agent: it witnesses to him whether or not he has done something, and it judges whether it has been well or ill done.⁵⁷ c) Preception: after the act of conscience the intellect makes its last practical judgment, called the judgment of choice, by which it finally presents to the will the means it judges fit for the attainment of the end in view. The proposed object of choice is presented to the will as a real or apparent good. This judgment of choice is called "preception" when the intellect is informed by the virtue of prudence and the

⁵⁷ST 1, 79, 13; De Veritate q. 17, a. 1 ad 4.

judgment therefore is in accord with conscience. Preception is the chief act of prudence. It is the very crux of the struggle whereby the intellect would guide the other faculties of the moral agent to actions that foster man's internal unity and his future union with his final end.⁵⁸

Potential virtues attached to prudence are of interest here, for they illustrate stages that a moral subject might pass through on his way to the attainment, by persistent effort, of the virtue of prudence itself. Aquinas calls potential virtues those virtues which are directed to secondary matters and do not have the whole power of the main virtue. The potential virtues of prudence are: good counsel, synesis and gnome. These cover the first two steps out of the three outlined above in the intellect's process of making a prudent decision: good counsel is self-explanatory, while synesis concerns judgment in matters of ordinary occurrence, and gnome assists judgment in matters of some difficulty where there is question of exception to the law.⁵⁹

Reason, besides being informed by the virtue of prudence, is open to being informed instead by one of the vices of imprudence. Aquinas charts these vices as victories of the lower faculties over reason in man's struggle for integrity. By these vices of imprudence reason abdicates its

⁵⁸ST 11-11, 47, 8. ⁵⁹ST 11-11, 48, 1; 51, 3 & 4.

hegemony in failing to forge the other faculties into a unity under the direction of right reason; and it fails to lead man to unity with his final end. As noted above, vices consist in a swerving from the mean assigned by reason. Several of the vices of imprudence err by defect; several of them consist, on the other hand, in some excess in regard to things required for prudent action. Four vices consist in a departure from the mean by way of defect, in that they illustrate a lack of integral parts required for the virtue of prudence. Precipitation consists in omitting some of the necessary steps in the process of moral deliberation: in good deliberation one must remember past experiences, understand the present situation, make an estimate of future consequences, and bring all these factors together in an orderly sequence of inference. Inconsideration is a habitual failure to make good practical judgments, a defect in the second act of prudence, the act of good judgment. Inconstancy is the defect of prudence which consists in the habit of failing to carry through a moral act to its proper conclusion. This is due to a defect of the practical intellect in regard to the third act of prudence, that of preception. Inconstancy is due to some interference on the part of other powers of the agent, chiefly the passions. This vice is important to the study of the character of King Lear. The fourth vice that errs by defect is negligence: this, like incon-

stancy, is a defect of the practical intellect in regard to the act of preception, but it arises from inertia of the will, rather than from the pressure of passion.⁶⁰

Several vices opposed to prudence represent aberrations by way of excess from the mean. These consist in an abuse of things required for prudence, rather than in a deficiency. There is, first, prudence of the flesh: an esteem for goods of the body as though they were the last end of man. Second, solicitude for temporal things; this is a habit of giving excessive consideration to the finite goods of this world. Third, craftiness, the use of fictitious or counterfeit means to attain ends either good or evil. And fourthly, guile or fraud, whereby plans hatched by the vice of craftiness are executed by means of word or deed.⁶¹

2) Justice

Justice perfects the faculty of the will. It is therefore next in excellence to prudence, for the will is a rational appetite, while the appetites perfected by the remaining moral virtues are sensitive powers.⁶² The object of justice is the operations that rule man in his conduct

⁶⁰ST 1-11, 64, 1, ad 2; ST 11-11, 53, 2--5; 54, 2, and, ad 3; 54, 3.

⁶¹ST 11-11, 55, 1, 3--5. ⁶²ST 11-11, 58, 12.

towards others. Justice perfects the will so that man can resist his tendency to oppose reason by placing his own interests ahead of those of his fellow man. Justice enables a man, therefore, to fulfill his obligations as a social being.⁶³

Two aspects are involved in this notion of man's social nature. There is, first, the aspect of need: mutual need draws man into communal living, where for his physical, mental and moral life he has the support of others. The second aspect is linked to the notion of right. This is derived from the definition of justice. Justice is defined as the habit of rendering to every man his due. The word "due" refers to the formal object of the virtue of justice, which is the "right."⁶⁴ Right consists in the inviolable power that a man possesses of determining something to his exclusive use, the notion of which is implied in Aquinas's article on property.⁶⁵ Now the existence of rights in man arises from his obligation according to natural law to freely tend towards his end. This natural obligation is matched by the natural right man has to possess the necessary means to the end.⁶⁶ It follows equally from this right that

⁶³ST 1-11, 66, 4; 72, 4; SCG 111, 129.

⁶⁴ST 11-11, 57, 1; 58, 1. ⁶⁵ST 11-11, 66, 2.

⁶⁶SCG 111, 112-113.

other men have the obligation to respect it, it being evident that one man's right and other men's obligation to yield to that right are correlative. Men are bound together in community, it follows from the above data, first, by mutual need, and secondly by interlocking rights and obligations. If these latter are not maintained by the virtue of justice, the human community is dismembered, and the individuals within it also find their integrity threatened.

There is one integral part of the virtue of justice: this is the habitual will to give each man his due. But because this habitual will may be expressed in two ways, there are two quasi-integral parts: these are, the habitual will to do what is good for others; and the habitual will to avoid doing evil to others.⁶⁷

The subjective parts of justice are legal justice and particular justice. Legal justice has for its object the common good, and to this end it directs the other virtues. Legal justice stands foremost among the moral virtues due to the fact that the common good transcends the individual good.⁶⁸ It maintains the unity of the community and thereby safeguards the efforts of the individual to attain his own inner integrity and his movement towards his end. Particular justice regulates relations that concern individuals, and com-

⁶⁷ST 11-11, 79, 1. ⁶⁸ST 11-11, 58, 6 & 12.

prises two virtues, distributive justice, and commutative justice. Distributive justice concerns relations between the community and the individual, and distributes goods proportionately. Commutative justice governs relations among individuals.⁶⁹

The potential parts of justice number the following that are of interest in the study of the character of King Lear: religion; respect for persons; gratitude; vindication; truth; piety; and friendliness.⁷⁰ Religion excels the other moral virtues because by it man attains to unity with his final end insofar as this is possible in this life. It is therefore closely linked with the virtue of wisdom. Religion perfects the will so that the intellect may attain to its perfection in the acquirement and exercise of the virtue of wisdom. The actions fostered by religion are directly and immediately ordered, therefore, to the honor of God. This virtue prescribes latria, which is the special service of worship and subjugation that is due to God because he made all things and has supreme dominion over them. The acts of religion involve the whole man, body and spirit. The interior acts are meditation, devotion and prayer; the external acts, adoration, sacrifice, vows, and oaths.⁷¹

⁶⁹ST 11-11, 61, 1. ⁷⁰ST 11-11, 80, 1.

⁷¹ST 11-11, 81, 1; 81, 3, and, ad 2; 81, 6; 82, 1, and ad 1; 82, 3; 83, 1 & 17; 84, 2; 88, 1 & 2; 89, 1.

The other potential virtues respect the rights of certain classes of individuals in the community, or have to do with things owing that do not fully qualify as being debts. Respect for persons concerns respect for individuals who occupy positions of dignity. This virtue requires that we give them honor and reverence on account of their excellence; that we also render them service because of the office which they exercise, and obedience besides; and that we repay them for benefits received.⁷²

• Piety is the habit by which a man pays honor to the members of his family, and to the members of the state in which he lives. Hence filial piety, the honoring of parents and relatives, and patriotism, are the two subdivisions of piety.⁷³

Gratitude is the virtue by which we thank our benefactors. This involves several acts: a recognition of the favor received, an expression of appreciation, and repayment of the favor.⁷⁴

Vindication is the virtue by which one inflicts just punishment on someone who has done evil.⁷⁵

Truthfulness is the habit by which one pays the moral

⁷²ST 11-11, 102, 1 & 2; 103, 3; 104, 1 & 3.

⁷³ST 11-11, 101. ⁷⁴ST 11-11, 106, 1; 107, 2.

⁷⁵ST 11-11, 108, 1.

debt that one man owes another by way of manifestation of the truth. Man is a social animal and could not live with others unless he could believe their word.⁷⁶

Friendliness is the good habit in the will by which a man behaves in a becoming manner towards one's fellow-man in word and in deed. There are two vices that go contrary to this virtue, one that sins by excess, the other by defect. Flattery is the habitual will to give excessive praise, or to give praise where it is not deserved. Quarrelsomeness, the opposite vice, is the habitual will to be displeasing to others by continually contradicting them.⁷⁷

Vices against justice that are pertinent to this thesis are those which are opposed to commutative justice. A peculiarity of these vices is, that they represent, first, a capitulation of reason in the struggle for the goodness of the moral subject; secondly, that the results of this inner defeat overflow into the community, and cause a threat to the rule of reason in other individuals and in the whole state. For other men find themselves deprived of their means to attain their end; and the injustice committed against them can provoke in them the arousal of passions that militate against reason. What is at stake then, when a man struggles to remain just, is his own inner integrity, his own tending

⁷⁶ST 11-11, 109, 3, and, ad 1. ⁷⁷ST 11-11, 114-116.

to his final end, the moral goodness of his fellow citizens besides, and over and above this the integrity of the whole community.

Acts against commutative justice may be committed in either word or deed. Acts in deed against the life, property and reputation of the other include murder; bodily injury; theft; property damage; and unjust judgment. Faults against justice in word include reviling, which is the publishing of something against the honor of another; derision; and cursing. Aquinas points out in connection with reviling, that this offense against justice is closely connected with anger, for by reviling the angry man seeks to take revenge.⁷⁸

3) Fortitude

Fortitude is the virtue that perfects the irascible appetite. Since the object of the irascible is the sensible good considered as difficult of attainment, this faculty is, when perfected by the virtue of fortitude, the intellect's tool par excellence for mastery in conflict. These conflicts, it is to be recalled, centre around the moral agent's attainment of goodness through the dominance of reason over the other faculties, and the external unity of man with his final end, at least in inclination and intention.

⁷⁸ST 11-11, 72, 1 & 4; 75, 1; 76, 1.

There is really only one subjective part to fortitude: that is the virtue whereby one reasonably withstands aggression with a view to preserving one's life, and undertakes reasonable aggression for the same purpose. Potential virtues connected to fortitude have to do with evils that are less severe than death. In this connection it is worth noting that the virtue of fortitude offers more assistance to man at times in moral striving through some of its potential parts, than in its subjective part.

Fortitude, whether in its subjective part or in its potential parts, is concerned with two acts: the restraining of unreasonable fear, so that one may firmly bear the assault of difficulties; and the moderation of daring. Either of these passions if unregulated by reason, would turn man either from seeking the final end, or from employing the intermediate ends as means to reaching his final end. The principle acts of fortitude, therefore, are aggression and endurance.

Prudence forges the virtue of fortitude in the irascible faculty by developing there four integral parts of the virtue: these are four dispositions or feelings that comprise the perfected virtue. Two of these are concerned with the act of aggression: the first of these is confidence-as-a-feeling, which is a strong hope, based on firm opinion, that prompts the moral agent to attack a danger. The second of these feelings is magnificence-as-a-feeling, a strength with-

in the irascible appetite that impells one to execute a great deed. Two other feelings prepare the irascible faculty for endurance. Patience-as-a-feeling is a condition of the concupiscible appetite, where sorrow is felt: this moderates feelings of sorrow as a sort of concupiscible adjunct of the irascible faculty. Perseverance-as-a-feeling is a condition of the irascible appetite which enables the moral agent to resist firmly the special difficulties involved in a long period of trial.⁷⁹

* Among the potential virtues of fortitude it is the group that includes patience that is significant in the study of King Lear. These virtues bear on the act of endurance, which, Aquinas avers, is more difficult than fortitude's other act, the act of aggression: more difficult, because endurance implies that one is being attacked by a stronger person, that the danger is already present, and that the ordeal sustained is more prolonged than aggression. Patience is the voluntary and prolonged suffrance of arduous and difficult things for the sake of virtue or profit. Patience serves to regulate two emotions that are destructive of man's inner integrity and external unity with his end; namely, sorrow, which resides in the concupiscible appetite, and despair, an irascible passion. Sorrow can destroy the mind

⁷⁹ST 1-11, 66, 1, 4; ST 11-11, 136, 3; 128, 1.

outright and sap the vigor and even the life of the body. Despair robs the moral agent of the will to strive for his final end, or to struggle for the means necessary to its attainment. Patience is also essential to man's moral growth in view of the potential nature of the virtues, and the length of time and strenuousness of effort that their development entails. Unless the virtue of patience is well formed, to give man time for growth, no virtue will have the chance, in the face of hard odds, to emerge from potentiality. Allied to patience are, first of all, perseverance, which arms the moral agent for continued struggle against obstacles that are long-lasting; secondly, constancy, which prepares a man to contend with difficulties arising from external circumstances.⁸⁰

Two vices opposed to fortitude that are pertinent to the thesis are, first, ambition: this is an unreasonable desire for honors that one does not deserve, or for honors that one does not refer to God and to the profit of others. Second, vainglory, which concerns an irrational attachment to glory. Both ambition and vainglory are opposed to the potential virtue of magnanimity, which is a reasonable aspiration to important honors.⁸¹ Both vices consist in a

⁸⁰ST 11-11, 123, 1, 3, 5, 6, and, ad 1; 128, 1; 136, 1 & 4; 137, 2 & 3.

⁸¹ST 11-11, 131, 1 & 2; 132, 1 & 2.

search for temporal goods that ill serve a man's striving for his proper end.

4) Temperance

Temperance is the moral virtue that perfects the concupiscible appetite. The object of this appetite is the sensible good. Temperance removes obstacles that hinder the will from following reason by some object of pleasure. Unchecked, the concupiscible appetite can cloud reason and stimulate the moral agent to seek sensible goods to the exclusion of his pursuit of his final end.

The integral parts of temperance are two feelings that reason perfects in the concupiscible faculty. One of these is shame: this is the fear of what is ugly and morally reprehensible. The other is uprightness: this is a love of the spiritually beautiful for its own sake, a beauty that arises from its harmony with reason.⁸²

Temperance has for subjective parts virtues that enable man to use nourishment and sex in accordance with reason. Abstinence moderates the use of food; sobriety, the taking of drink. Chastity regulates the tendency to seek pleasure in the act of sex, and purity regulates the use of pleasures that are incidental to the sex act.⁸³

⁸²ST 11-11, 143, 1; 144, 1; 145, 3.

⁸³ST 11-11, 141, 3, and, ad 1; 143, 1.

Of special importance to the study of the character of King Lear are several potential virtues attached to temperance that restrain certain inner movements of man. The virtue of humility moderates the moral subject's movements towards some excellence or other.⁸⁴ By means of humility a man is aware of his deficiencies while having a true self-esteem, and he restrains himself from being borne towards things that are above his capacity. The vice that humility restrains is pride. Pride is an inordinate desire for one's own excellence that leads a man to esteem himself as being greater than he really is. It is evident how pride interferes with a man's search for his final end: pride causes a man to make of himself his final end. As such, pride is the beginning of all vice, because the formal element of vice, the aversion to the final end who is God, belongs to pride in an essential manner. There is another way in which pride hampers a man's struggle for moral integrity: pride obstructs knowledge. It blocks speculative knowledge, for the proud man does not want to learn from either man or God. Pride also curbs affective knowledge, and this in a direct manner, for the proud man takes delight in his own excellence to the point of having a disdain for the excellence of truth.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ST 11-11, 143, 1; 160, 2; 161, 2; 162, 3, and, ad 2.

⁸⁵ST 11-11, 162, 2; 162, 3, ad 1 & ad 2; 162, 7.

A second movement of the soul that is moderated by potential virtues of temperance is anger. Anger, which is the desire for revenge, can obstruct reason more than any other passion, as was seen above in the discussion on the sensitive appetite. Anger can be wayward in the mode of being angry, and then its fierceness is cooled by the virtue of meekness. Or anger can be wayward in its desire to inflict unreasonable punishment, and it is the virtue of clemency that restrains this aberration. Moral faults that arise from anger include the following and these are restrained by the above virtues: feelings of indignation; vengeful plottings; clamor, which is confused and disorderly speech; blasphemy; contumely, which is harsh words against one's neighbor; and quarreling.⁸⁶

2. THE NORMS OF MORALITY

The standard for the goodness of human acts and habits is reason. This role of reason as the norm of morality is of course a central point in Thomistic ethics. The line of reasoning that leads to this concept can be derived from two starting points, the notion of the good, and the notion of the end. In his metaphysics Aquinas deals with the notion of the good as follows. The good of a thing derives from the

⁸⁶ST 11-11, 143, 1; 157, 1; 158, 1, 2 & 7.

being that it possesses, since being and the good are convertible.⁸⁷ God alone has fulness of being, so He alone is complete goodness, indeed Goodness itself. A creature like man has only a participated being, and has therefore only a partial goodness. But every creature can have a relative fulness of being, that is, the degree of being that is suited to its nature. Therefore every creature can possess a relative goodness; it has this relative goodness, and is termed "good," when it has the degree of being that its nature demands. A creature lacking the degree of being that its nature demands, falls short of the goodness that is owing to it, and to that extent is evil, and is to be called "evil." What is said here about the nature of a creature applies to its actions, for actions that flow from a thing possess the degree of being that pertains to the thing itself. Actions, then, that are lacking in some quality demanded by the nature of a moral agent, will thereby fall short of being, and to that extent be evil. Actions, too, that fully answer to the exigencies of the nature of the agent, will have relative fulness of being and deserve the designation "good."⁸⁸ Man's relative fulness of being, and the fulness of being that accrues from this to his actions and habits, rests upon the dominance of reason over his faculties, for only then does

⁸⁷ST 1, 5, 1 & 3. ⁸⁸ST 1-11, 18, 1.

his form, the rational soul, give full determination, that is, relative fulness of being, to his essence.

The notion of the end also leads Thomism to assign to reason the role of ethical norm. Thomism is a teleological ethics.⁸⁹ It sees in the end the factor that determines the morality of an action. This follows from the fact that the free human agent acts on account of an end. It is towards a particular end that his action is directed; and therefore the nature of the end determines the moral quality of the action. The sort of end that makes the action good that is directed towards it, is an end that is in accord with the nature of man. Now in Thomistic ethics the final end of man is God, for he is the perfect good, the perfect truth, who fully satisfies the tendencies of the intellect and the will. These have God for their natural object. When man by his intellect will have possessed God the perfect good, he will have attained his final end. He will be in possession of perfect happiness (which, by definition, is the condition that involves the possession by the intellect of the perfect good). Therefore any human action that is directed to the final end of man is good; furthermore, any intermediate end that assists man's attainment of his final end, is likewise good. On the other hand, any intermediate end that turns man

⁸⁹Vann, Morals and Man, p. 86.

away from his pursuit of the end, is evil.⁹⁰ Since it is the end that determines the morality of human action, the norm of morality will inhere in that faculty by which man perceives the end. This is the faculty of reason.

Human reason, therefore, is the norm of morality. But human reason is not, in the Thomistic scheme, the sole norm of morality. This would cut man off from his roots, the source of his nature and of his existence. Beyond man, the ultimate norm of morality must be sought in the divine reason. There are then two norms of human morality, a proximate norm, human reason, and the ultimate norm, the divine reason.

In order to develop the relationship between the two norms, a brief reference to Thomistic metaphysics is required. Thomas, like Aristotle, was led by the study of corporeal being to the conclusion that an uncaused cause exists. But going beyond Aristotle in his concept of the relationship of this cause to lesser beings, Aquinas saw in their metaphysical poverty an indication that the uncaused cause was a providential being who gives existence to a universe whose nature does not of necessity demand that it exist. This concept of the uncaused cause of existence, who has conferred upon man his nature and his existence, is the cornerstone of Thomistic

⁹⁰ ST 1, 82, 3; ST 1-11, 1, 1--3; 2, 2, 6, & 8; 3, 4; 5, 3; 90, 2; SCG 1, 100; 111, 26, 48; 1V, 54.

ethics.⁹¹ Aquinas traces the origin of man's nature to the efficient cause of his existence who is God; or, more specifically, to the divine reason. The divine reason, therefore, constitutes the ultimate norm for the rectitude of human actions, for it is to the divine reason that man owes his nature, and that nature's tendency to an end. The divine reason is referred to as the eternal law by Aquinas, and for the following reasons. Thomistic metaphysics, it is recalled, holds that all reality was created by a supreme and providential being. It follows that the world is governed by divine reason, for it is the reason that directs things to their proper end. Divine reason has the formal nature of law: the essential notes of human law apply to the divine reason. Human law, according to Aquinas, is an ordinance of reason which is made for the common good and promulgated by the ruler of the community.⁹² The notes in this definition, "ordinance of reason," "for the common good," and "promulgated" all apply to the divine governance. Now, this law is to be denominated "eternal" because the divine reason conceives of nothing from the point of view of time, but rather from the point of view of eternity.⁹³

Human reason is the proximate and secondary standard

⁹¹ST 1, 2 & 3; SCG 1, 75; 11, 6, 15 & 16.

⁹²ST 1-11, 90, 4. ⁹³ST 1-11, 91, 1.

of the good and evil of human acts. Man apprehends by his reason that an act leads to his end, and therefore accords with his nature and is good; or he apprehends that an act leads him away from his end, and is therefore against his nature and is evil. Two things here require further precision, namely, the relationship of the human reason to the divine reason; and the manner in which the reason uses primary precepts in giving directions to the human composite. The relationship existing between human and divine reason is one of harmony; they are conjoint norms. This flows from the fact that the human reason is but a participation of the divine reason. All creatures share to some degree in the divine reason; for it is by disposition of the divine reason that they receive their forms. With their forms they receive their natures, and the tendency to the end that is proper to these natures.⁹⁴ Since this tendency to an end derives from the divine reason, it is a participation in the divine law, which is, as it were, imprinted in their natures. Things prescribed therefore, by divine law for a creature are right not only because they are in accord with the nature of the creature, but also because they are in accord with divine law.⁹⁵ Natural law refers specifically to the way in which man participates in the eternal law. It is a way unique to

⁹⁴ST 1-11, 91, 2. ⁹⁵SCG 111, 129.

him, for in man the form he receives is the rational soul. The natural light of reason, whereby a man discerns what is good and what is evil is a closer sharing in the divine reason than obtains with other creatures; it is an imprint in man of the divine light. The result of the above line of reasoning is, that by reason man possesses a law, natural law, which is no other than a participation in the eternal law. When man follows reason, therefore, he is at one and the same time acting in accordance with his nature, and with the eternal law. Here then are man's two moral standards, the proximate standard of human reason, and the supreme standard of eternal law.⁹⁶

The second point to be clarified was reason's use of primary precepts in issuing moral directives. These moral directives constitute what Aquinas calls natural law. The adjective "natural" underlines the point that this law is inscribed in man's nature; it is not an arbitrary directive proceeding from an outside intelligence and imposed by force of an exterior will. Aquinas reasons as follows to the fact that natural law is indeed rooted in human nature. Primary self-evident principles are the basis of man's intellectual operations in two fields, the field of speculative truth, and

⁹⁶In 11 Ethic. lect. 2, n. 257; ST 1-11, 19, 4; 21, 1; 63, 2; 68, 1; 71, 6; 72, 4; De Virtutibus q. 1, a. 8.

the field of ethical activity. Just as the first thing that falls under the apprehension of the speculative intellect is being, so good is the first thing that falls under the apprehension of practical reason. The speculative intellect draws from its apprehension of being the first principle, called the principle of contradiction, which is the basis for the attainment of all other truths in the speculative order. The practical reason draws from its apprehension of the good the first principle "the good is that which all things seek after." From this principle the practical intellect draws the first precept of natural law, "the good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided." All other precepts of the natural law flow from this precept.

Natural law in man works at three levels, the level of substance, of animal, and of man. In man there is first of all an inclination to the good according to the nature which he has in common with all substances. Every substance seeks the preservation of its own being; because of this inclination, whatever is a means of preserving human life and warding off its obstacles, belongs to natural law. Secondly, there is in man an inclination to things according to his animal nature; in virtue of this inclination natural law turns man towards sexual intercourse, the education of offspring, and other properly animal activities. Thirdly, man has inclinations which follow upon the nature that is proper

to him, that of a being endowed with reason. In virtue of this rational nature man is inclined to know the truth about God, to shun ignorance, to live in society, to avoid offending those among whom he has to live, and to follow other inclinations to which his reason bends him.

It follows from the above that man, by carefully examining his own nature, and taking note of his natural inclinations, has a sure guide to the good he must do and the evil he must avoid. This scrutiny of man's own nature brings him into intimate contact with the precepts of divine reason, because the nature that man possesses, with its natural inclinations included therein, is itself of God's fashioning. If man does evil, it likewise follows, man is not only contravening a precept emanating from the divine reason, he is also acting against his own nature. In electing an evil action he is moving towards a kind of non-end, a goal to which no natural human inclination turns him. In doing evil, in other words, man ignores the directive of his practical reason. Therefore a man must struggle to maintain the rule of reason within himself if he is to maintain his full being as a man. If reason ceases to inform the actions of the human composite, man declines from human integrity.⁹⁷

A corollary of the above Thomistic conception of

⁹⁷ ST 1-11, 94, 2.

natural law concerns the stability of the presence of its precepts in human reason. The general principles of the natural law cannot be blotted from the human mind. But refer above to the section on the passions in relation to freedom, in regard to the way in which the passions can for a time obscure reason in regard to secondary precepts of the natural law, or to the application of primary precepts to a particular instance of human action.⁹⁸

The norm by which man determines whether an action accords with his end, therefore, is right reason. Now when reason considers an action in relation to the end, there are several factors it must examine in regard to the action: these are the object, the end, and the circumstances. The end is the motive of the will that directs it to choose the particular action. The object is the action itself, externally considered; it is that on which the action is brought to bear: for example, the object of an act of unjust taking is stealing. Both motive and object affect the morality of the action. The object offers a more specific determination; but the end is preponderant in fixing the morality of the action. In Thomistic terms, the species of the action is considered formally with regard to the end, but materially with regard to the object of the external action. This is illustrated every time an agent performing an outwardly good action

⁹⁸ST I-II, 94, 6.

renders it evil by a bad motive. The third factor which the intellect considers in assessing the relation of an act to the end, is the circumstances of the action. All three of the above factors, object, end and circumstances, must be good, if the action itself is to be good.⁹⁹

SYNOPSIS

The task of this chapter was focused on the question "What does the ethical system of Aquinas say about man as a moral agent capable of moral actions, and as the subject of the moral character that arises from these actions?" The answer to this question provides the material required for an approach to the specific topic of this thesis, namely, the credibility of the moral development of King Lear from a state of viciousness to a state of relative moral nobility.

1. Man the Moral Agent.--Thomism conceives a profile of the moral agent in dynamic terms. A ceaseless state of change is imposed upon him by his orientation to a final end. Man's final end, God, is the ultimate goal implicit in every instance of human intentionality. All his earthly life he never reaches this end. What he does achieve is one intermediate goal after another, all of them stages on the road to the final goal. Therefore man by his nature is a being always on the move morally speaking. He is either in a

⁹⁹ST 1-11, 1, 3; 18, 2--4, 6 & 7.

state of progress towards his final end, or, if he resists this destiny, he is always moving further away from his final end through the choice of means that are inappropriate to that end.

The metaphysical roots of this changeableness lie in man's composition of prime matter and substantial form. In man the prime matter, pure potency, has been actualized by his form, but he retains the capacity to become other than what he is. Man shares this changeableness with all creatures; in man this quality manifests itself chiefly in his moral changeableness. In the psychological sphere, man's ability to change results from his freedom. His intellect and will are essentially free from material restraints in their making of ethical decisions. Together they have the power to rule the other appetites and to make choices that are not swayed absolutely by the inclinations of the passions. The human agent retains this freedom in spite of the habits that inform his faculties. Whether it be virtues or vices that actualize his faculties, man retains the ability to perform actions that go counter to the habit in question. Because of his freedom man as a moral agent is responsible for his acts. Their moral quality of being good or evil is attributable to him, not to his passions, or to outside influence.

Two factors that have an influence on human choices, without however determining them absolutely, are divine

providence and the passions. God's rule in regard to human freedom is paradoxical. On the one hand, God as creator and provident ruler of his creatures, exercises absolute dominion over all beings. He is the first mover and final end; from his omnipotence comes all the power that man utilizes in making free choices. Yet God leaves man free. He so moves him as to respect the freedom of his nature. The passions exert an influence upon the reason and the will, an influence sufficient at times to overturn reason, but their effect is not absolute. Among the passions anger has the most harmful effect on the reason. This, significantly, is Lear's besetting passion. Sorrow is the passion with the most damaging effect upon the physical and mental health of the agent; this is apparent in regard to King Lear.

Moral change in man is guided and directed by the intellect. For Aquinas this is the most distinctly human faculty. It is by this faculty that man will apprehend the final end and attain happiness. It is by the intellect that man grasps intermediate ends and judges of their suitability as means to the reaching of the final end. When the intellect, in conjunction with the will, apprehends and moves towards a goal that leads to the final end, then the noblest activity of the moral agent occurs, that of intellectual love, also called dilection. On the other hand, if intellect and will reject the good that leads to the final

end, and instead, without pressure from the passions, tend towards a temporal goal that ill sorts with the final end, the resulting activity is malice. This is the most heinous action of the moral agent, for malice amounts to a choice of evil.

Moral change that involves the tending to sensible good is the work of the appetites that follow sensory knowledge. These are the concupiscible and the irascible appetites. By the concupiscible appetite man tends towards the sensible good, or turns away from the sensible evil, each of these goals being absolutely considered. The irascible appetite has to do with the sensible good or evil considered as arduous of attainment or avoidance. The passions are good and lead man to his end when they are subject to reason. But when they depart from the rule of reason, they incline the agent away from his end and lead to evil acts. Since the passions are not subject to easy control by reason, the possibility of their rebellion is always present. Two passions of special importance, in addition to anger, mentioned above, in the character of Lear, are joy and sorrow. Aquinas outlines the theory, which is demonstrated in Lear, that sorrow outweighs physical pain in its effects upon the moral agent. Aquinas elucidates a fact about joy that is apparent in the character of the King, that joy in spiritual goods can outweigh any attraction of temporal benefits. Another distinct-

ion important for Lear's characters is that which Aquinas makes between anger and hate.

The Thomistic doctrine on the virtues is a study of the way in which man brings his faculties under the dominion of reason in such a way that good choices, choices that lead man to his final end, become frequent and easy for his faculties. The virtues are good habits. Habits in turn are qualities that dispose a faculty well or ill in regard to its operation. Man's faculties have the capacity for good actions, a capacity that must be developed if it is to achieve actuality. That state of actuality is what constitutes virtue. The virtues are developed by two factors, repetition of good actions, and the guidance of reason. In the good man the virtue of prudence informs his intellect, the virtue of justice his will, of fortitude his irascible appetite, and of temperance his concupiscible appetite. Prudence is the key virtue for it informs the directive faculty of man, and is responsible for the development and guidance of the other virtues.

In view of the frequent beast images that Lear uses to describe human vice, the above material on Thomistic virtue may be interpreted as follows. It is through virtue that the human agent attains his fulness of humanity. Man is only human to the extent that he acts in accordance with reason, that is, when he acts in view of his final end. To

practice virtue is to live by reason. When man ignores the directives of reason, he abdicates his specifically human dignity, and descends to the level of the animals.

The doctrine of the virtues must be seen in terms of the unity of the human agent. The virtues serve to unite man's powers, not to separate them. This happens for two reasons: the virtues reinforce the hegemony of reason over the human composite. Secondly, the virtues themselves form a unity. There is but one formal principle of virtue, that is, the good as defined by reason, one principle differently realized in the distinct faculties. Again, the presence of one virtue in perfection requires the presence of the others. It is vice that splinters the human personality: it removes the passions from the rule of reason, it separates man from union in intentionality with his end, and it sets him at odds with his fellow man by sins of injustice.

2. Norms of Morality.--The norm of morality in Thomistic ethics is right reason. Divine reason is the supreme and remote norm. In harmony with it, because it is a participation in the divine light, is human reason, the proximate and secondary norm. Whether or not Lear guides his moral judgments by the norm of reason divine and human will be of importance in determining whether he does indeed possess and develop the virtue of prudence. If the demands of reason rather than personal advantage dictate his judgments

about morality, then Lear has a prime requisite for the virtue of prudence.

CHAPTER THREE

AN ETHICAL APPRECIATION OF KING LEAR

In this chapter an ethical appreciation of the character of King Lear will be made in the light of Thomistic ethics. The particular aspect of the King's character that will be scrutinized, as was underlined in the Introduction, is the moral development that occurs in the King in the course of the play, a change that in the beginning finds Lear a vicious man, and at the end leaves him a man that has made significant strides in moral regeneration. An attempt will be made, and this is the precise focus of the thesis, to evaluate the credibility of this moral transformation of the King, in the light of Thomistic ethics. This moral maturation of Lear is well-founded in the text, and attested by a body of sound critical opinion.¹ But several preliminary difficulties that would seem to render such change in Lear unreasonable, must be cleared away. A cursory reading of King Lear easily leads a reader to the judgment that the moral change of King Lear as depicted in the play, represents a moral miracle, an event that might serve some dramatic purpose, but that is devoid of any foundation if viewed from the standpoint

¹Conf. below nn. 3, 4 & '39.'

of moral philosophy. Several elements in the play lend this view a certain weight: the advanced age of the King when he enters into the process of moral development; the shortness of time allowed to Lear for his inner growth; the fact of Lear's madness, which would prevent him from undergoing moral growth at all; and, finally, the radical discontinuity between the early Lear and the Lear of the last scenes of the play, from the point of view of moral quality. These difficulties require at this point no more than a brief treatment by way of preview to what appears below in the body of the chapter. In regard to Lear's great age, it is true enough that we are invited to believe by the dramatist that a choleric old man of eighty years is still capable of undergoing moral change. But it is to be noted that Lear, besides being a realistic presentation of the character of an individual man, is also a dramatic character. As a dramatic personage Lear presents the poetic insights of the author into Lear as a representative of mankind.² Again, normally, it is not likely that an aged person will undergo radical character change. But what is to be said of an individual who is not normal? Lear in old age has the capacities which would be normal only in a younger man. Physically, emotionally, intellectually, Lear's energy matches

²Conf. Heilman's statement below, n. 5.

that of any other character in the play. An improbability in terms of normal life, surely. But given that improbability, by decree of the dramatists's creative will, then Lear's capacity for moral change fits that of a man of younger years. Concerning, now, the problem of the short time interval covered by the play. Here the matter of dramatic convention must surely be invoked. The dramatist must be permitted the use of a convention essential to his metier, that of compressed dramatic time. The question, now, of Lear's madness. Literary analysis suffices to settle this point, therefore little space is given to it in this chapter. The mental derangement of the King is presented by the dramatist as a mere case of emotional and nervous exhaustion (in the play both Kent and Cordelia state that sleep is the cure for Lear's condition: III.vi.100-103; IV.vii.12-17). Lear's mental collapse is therefore temporary, and does not involve a personality deterioration such as would render moral growth impossible. Indeed, in his madness Lear is shown to make progress in moral insight.³ Finally, there is the problem of a radical discontinuity between the early and the later

³P.A. Jorgensen, Lear's Self-Discovery (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 81: in madness Lear begins to probe into the nature of man and the world; L.C. Knights, "King Lear," Shakespeare Criticism 1935-60, ed. A. Ridler (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 276: by his madness Lear is freed to express attitudes previously concealed from himself.

Lear. At the proper place in this chapter it will be shown that the character changes that occur in Lear are all the flowering of moral strengths which he possessed previously.

To re-phrase more sharply now the question that this chapter discusses, "Does the moral change that occurs in King Lear find justification, within the web of the play, in terms of Thomistic ethics?" The approach to this question involves several steps. The nature of the change that occurs in Lear must be charted; this involves a description, in terms of Thomistic virtues and vices, of Lear's state before and after his change. The factors, besides, that produce this change, as the drama presents them, must be analyzed in the light of the Thomistic theory of moral change. Then an evaluation can follow in Thomistic terms of the credibility of the moral change in Lear.

To accomplish the above program of analysis, this chapter will contain the following divisions: 1. A Summary of the Play. This summary will emphasize the moral profile of the King, and the unfolding of his character under the stress of the dramatic action. 2. Lear as a Moral Agent. Lear is presented in the play as a moral agent: that is to say, as a being endowed with freedom, and therefore responsible for his acts; and, furthermore, as a being who follows moral criteria by which he judges his actions and those of others as being either good or evil. 3. Lear's Early Moral

State. This division will outline Lear's character as it appears in the early part of the play. Lear as a moral agent will be examined for his possession of the Thomistic virtues and vices. This division will present, besides, factors which had an influence in the creation of Lear's early moral condition. 4. Lear's Later Moral State. This division will treat of the change that occurs in Lear's moral condition, and outline the factors that affected that change. 5. As Assessment of the Credibility of Moral Change in Lear. This will proceed in the light of Thomistic ethics.

Throughout the development of the above schema, frequent reference will be made to characters in the play other than Lear. This is done because through comparison and contrast other characters reinforce or clarify basic features of the moral history of King Lear. An entire moral atmosphere is built up by the dramatist in his play, and its leading character can be understood in ethical terms only in his relationship with other characters.

1. A SUMMARY OF THE PLAY

In its presentation of Lear's character the play follows this profile: his vices, revealed in the opening scene, cause his downfall--some of his virtues are revealed--he struggles to overcome vice--he partially succeeds in gaining

virtue.⁴

In the opening scene King Lear of Britain prepares to resign the throne in favor of his three daughters, Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia. Determined to endow them according to their love for him, he has devised a love test by which to arrive at the portion of the realm that each daughter will receive. Goneril and Regan readily accede to his wishes, and each of them makes a fulsome speech on the greatness of their love for Lear. The youngest daughter, Cordelia, Lear's favorite, refuses to take part in the speech-making. Lear is highly displeased with Cordelia and interprets her silence as a sign of an unfilial heart. Flying into a rage, he curses her and disowns her. Then he assigns her portion of the kingdom to her sisters. Lear's loyal courtier, Kent, tries to dissuade Lear from committing this folly. But he falls victim, like Cordelia, to the King's wrath and is banished. Lear next negotiates with Cordelia's two suitors, the King of France and the Duke of Burgundy. The latter declines to accept the dowerless Cordelia, but the King of France, enamoured of her virtue, joyfully takes her as his bride.

⁴J.M. Lothian, King Lear (Toronto: Clark, Irwin, 1966), p. 27: the spire of meaning of the play--it is a spiritual history of the regeneration of Lear, and of the tremendous wrench with which it is effected; Ribner, "The Gods . . .," p. 35; Whitaker, The Mirror up to Nature, p. 216: the fundamental action of the play is Lear's moral awakening.

Goneril, in the next phase of the action, finds Lear's stay in her household, attended by his hundred knights, a source of irritation and unrest. Desiring to bring matters to an issue, through open conflict, she directs her steward, Oswald, to stir up trouble between her men and Lear's. Goneril and Lear quarrel violently about the conduct of his knights. She accuses his men of riotous and immoral behaviour. Lear to no avail defends the propriety of his men, for Goneril deprives him of fifty followers. Lear curses his daughter and makes ready to set out for Regan's palace. He begins to lament and repent of his treatment of Cordelia.

Kent, secretly returning from banishment, has taken on a disguise and applied to Lear for employment. Lear takes to the bluff and honest stranger and hires him. The Fool appears and Lear welcomes him affectionately. The Fool begins at once to mock Lear for his folly in giving up his kingly power and possessions to his daughters: in turning power over to them he has made them his mothers.

Lear sends Kent on ahead to Regan's palace; on arriving there himself he finds Kent in the stocks. Lear is enraged against Regan's husband, Cornwall, for this insult against his own dignity in the person of his messenger. He is further provoked by the refusal of his daughter to grant him audience, putting him off with the excuse of illness. Regan finally appears, and Lear seeks hospitality from her,

and complains of Goneril's unkindness. But Regan instead defends the propriety of Goneril's actions in regard to Lear's train. At this moment Goneril arrives and Lear confronts now two daughters that are united in their opposition to his demands. They deprive him of his entire entourage. Lear struggles to contain his grief and rage. He makes efforts towards a patience that will staunch his humiliating tears. The daughters coldly remind Lear of his dotage. Lear prays for the aid of the gods. He is fearful of the onset of madness in the wake of his overpowering grief. Impotent with frustrated wrath and sorrow, Lear seeks refuge in the storm. The gates are closed upon him.

In the storm Lear is accompanied and aided by the Fool and by Kent. Lear rages against the ingratitude of his daughters and of the whole human race. Complaining of the prevalence of unpunished evil in the world, he warns sinners about divine sanctions. He renews his attempts to be patient. Then Lear experiences feelings of compassion towards the Fool. Swept by an emotion of pity for the wretched everywhere, and awakened to the obligations of the rich towards the poor, he addresses a prayer to the houseless poor.

At this point Lear contacts a character from the subplot, Edgar son of Gloucester. Early in the play the conflict between Gloucester and his two sons, Edgar and Edmund, is introduced as a mirror to the interaction of Lear and his

daughters; and throughout the play the dramatic action in the subplot runs parallel to that of the main plot, reinforces themes sounded there, and serves to universalize the tragedy of Lear.⁵ When Edmund laid a plot to steal his brother's property and title, Gloucester like Lear, credited the words of the unfaithful offspring, and turned against the loyal one. Gloucester like Lear outlawed his worthy progeny; he disowned Edgar and conferred his land upon Edmund.

* Edgar had assumed the disguise of a Bedlam madman, and in the hovel where he is hidden, Lear, seeking refuge from the storm, finds him. At the sight of the wretched Edgar Lear himself finally turns temporarily mad. Gloucester enters and brings Lear to a farmhouse for shelter. He had determined to aid the King even at the risk of his own life. For Lear's greater safety, hearing of a plot on the King's life, Gloucester sets him on the road to Dover, where Cordelia is landing with an army to liberate her father. Gloucester, betrayed to Cornwall by his own son Edmund, subsequently is arrested, and the enraged duke savagely blinds him.

Cordelia receives tearfully a report of Lear's

⁵J.K. Lowers, King Lear: Notes, Introduction, Sources (Lincoln; Nebraska, 1968), p. 9.

sufferings in the storm. While she seeks him Lear himself keeps shy of her out of a deep sense of shame. Lear wanders about raving, but in his disturbed mental state he shows flashes of moral insight. He reprobates unjust exercise of authority, and all miscarriage of justice in the courts. Cordelia finds Lear and gives him medical care and opportunity for repose. Lear awakens, freed from his madness. In a touching scene he recognizes his daughter. Humbly confessing his old age and his foolishness, he apologizes to Cordelia for his injustice to her.

Goneril and Regan, along with Albany, husband to Goneril, and Edmund, prepare to meet the invading army of Cordelia. At the same time the daughters are plotting against one another for the hand of Edmund, while Edmund is making dupes of them both to secure his own advancement to power. Edgar appears when Albany is alone, presents to him the treasonable letter that Goneril had intended for Edmund, and asks that Albany, if he wins the battle, should call for a champion who will support a charge of treason against Edmund.

The daughters' forces under Albany win the battle. Edmund sends Lear and Cordelia to prison under a writ of execution. Lear comforts Cordelia on their way to the cell: together in prison, their love for one another will give them a joy surpassing all that court life could offer.

Albany charges Edmund with treason, and Edgar answers

the trumpet summons to prove the charge in single combat. Edmund falls in the duel. In his last agony he acknowledges his crimes. Meanwhile the death of the two sisters is announced; Goneril had poisoned Regan, and afterwards perished by her own hand. Edgar recounts how his father had died in his arms. At this point the absence of Lear and Cordelia is noticed. Edmund in his death throes reveals that they are under sentence of instant death. Someone is sent to forestall execution. Lear enters carrying the dead Córdelia in his arms. He laments her death, and expires over her corpse.

2. LEAR AS A MORAL AGENT

Moral change can occur in Lear only if he is an autonomous agent. The Thomistic concept of human freedom is pertinent here.⁶ Moral change in Thomism is not random movement, it is action that is directed towards an end. The norm of human reason (acting in subordination to the Divine reason) determines whether the end sought by the agent is indeed the true end of man, or, at least, a means instrumental to its attainment. What follows, then, is a treatment of these two concepts as they appear in King Lear: A. Freedom; B. Norms of Human Action.

⁶Conf. ch. 2, pp. 27-28 & 30-36.

A. Freedom

An implicit affirmation of freedom is contained in the many acrimonious criticisms that the characters make of one another: this bitter displeasure in moral evil is attributable to their belief in the autonomy of the human agent.

Among explicit references to freedom, those of Edmund are the chief. These serve both as an expression of his own opinion, and as a choric comment upon the whole action of the play:

This is the excellent foppery of the world; that, when we are sick in fortune, often the surfeits of our own behaviour, we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and stars; as if we were villains on necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance, drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforc'd obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on. An admirable evasion of whoremaster man . . . (1.ii.124-33).

Edmund attributes both our "disasters" and "all that we are evil in" to human responsibility, and brands attempts to evade this by an appeal to astral influence as "foppery" and as an "evasion."

Gloucester appears to uphold a limitation upon human freedom by the heavenly bodies:

These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us: though the wisdom of Nature can reason it thus and thus, yet Nature finds itself scourg'd by the sequent effects. Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide: in

cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond crack'd 'twixt son and father. (1.ii. 106-14)

The words "sequent effects," and the bearing of Edmund's remarks that immediately follow, as quoted above, make it likely that Gloucester is ascribing real influence to the heavenly bodies, and not only the power to portend. Later on he complains that the gods manipulate mens' lives: "As flies to wanton boys, are we to th' Gods:/ They kill us for their sport." (1V.i.36-37) But these statements of Gloucester are best interpreted as expressions of the emotions of sorrow and despair, rather than of fixed belief in the lack of human freedom: other events and words in Gloucester's life indicate his strong belief in human responsibility. In repenting of his folly towards Edgar he admits to this: "O my follies! Then Edgar was abus'd./ Kind Gods, forgive me that, and prosper him!" (111.vii.90-91) Before he attempts suicide he states that he is loth to quarrel with the "great opposeless wills" of the gods (1V.vi.38); he implies therefore man's capacity to go counter to the divine will. Man's inner freedom enables him to resist the pressure of affliction: ". . . henceforth I'll bear/ Affliction till it do cry out itself/ 'Enough, enough', and die." (1V.vi.75-77) His "worser spirit," the passion of despair, has the power to "tempt" but not to force his will: "You every-gentle Gods, take my breath from me:/ Let not my worser spirit tempt me

again/ To die before you please!" (1V.vi.217-19)

Kent, Albany and Lear uphold human freedom. Kent's strong attacks on folly in Lear and on servility in Oswald are an implicit affirmation of freedom. One remark of Kent's seems to ascribe to astral influence the direction of human acts:

It is the stars
The stars above us, govern our conditions;
Else one self mate and make could not beget
Such different issues. (1V.iii.33-36)

But these words, taken in the light of Kent's other acts and sayings, are intended to convey a sense of dismayed wonder, rather than a conviction about the power of the stars over the human will. Lear, in granting to Goneril leisure to mend her character, indicates a belief in human freedom: "Mend when thou canst; be better at thy leisure." (11.iv.231) Albany refers also to Goneril's freedom: "Thou changed and self-cover'd thing, for shame,/ Bemonster not thy feature . . ." (1V.ii.62-63) "Shame" and "self-cover'd thing" imply that Goneril is responsible for her evil deeds.

Nothing in the text of King Lear demonstrates that either the gods or human passion remove human freedom and cancel out, thereby, human responsibility. It is plain in the text that whereas the characters acknowledge the creative role of the gods, their authorship of the moral law, and their capacity to distribute aid, punishments and rewards, they are given no

title to absolute lordship over mens' actions. Further, in regard to the passions; their strong influence upon human activity is in frequent evidence, but their ability to deprive men of freedom is explicitly denied.

B. Norms of Human Action

Under this topic the following points will be treated:

a) Norm of the Will of the Gods; b) Norm of the Nature of Man; and c) A Contrasting Norm: the Norm of Self Interest.

a) Norm of the Will of the Gods

Personal displeasure alone does not account for Lear's rancour towards his daughters' conduct.⁷ In spite of his faults Lear is a man who guides his life by moral norms. By these he judges human actions, both his own and others'. The norm of the will of the gods is the first of two guides by which Lear judges conduct.

The rectitude of human acts consists, according to St. Thomas, in their aptness to lead men to their goal of

⁷Patrick Murray, The Shakespearean Scene (London: Longmans, 1969), p. 105: theodicy is a central issue of the play; Theodore Spencer, Shakespeare and the Nature of Man (New York: Macmillan, 1949), p. 142: natural law, justice and religion are concepts that permeate the play; Ribner, "The Gods . . .," pp. 35, 40: King Lear is essentially a Christian comment on man's world; it uses terms and formulations of Christian tradition. King Lear affirms that there is justice in the world, and a harmonious system ruled by a benevolent god. This view is contradicted by G. Wilson Knight, The Wheel of Fire, (London: Methuen, 1949), pp. 187-89. the gods in King Lear are unreal figments of the mind, and not omnipotent ruling powers.

happiness through possession of the perfect good, who is God.⁸ God, who is the efficient cause of man's nature, or more specifically, the divine reason, constitutes the ultimate norm of human action. Divine Law, then, the expression of the divine reason, is the primary rule of human action.

Lear believes that man is made by the gods, that they are authors of the moral law, and that they uphold it by punishment of sinners and rewarding of the good. When Cordelia incurs his displeasure he curses her in terms that express belief in the creative lordship of the gods:

For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,
The mysteries of Hecate and the night,
By all the operation of the orbs
From whom we do exist and cease to be,
Here I disclaim all my paternal care. (1.i.109-13)

Cordelia is, Lear tells France " . . . a wretch whom Nature is ashamed/ Almost to acknowledge hers." (1.i.212-13) He holds sacred his oaths to the gods (1.i.168-9). He exclaims to Burgundy: " . . . by the power that made me,/ I tell you all her wealth." (1.i.207-208) In heaping curses on Goneril he pays tribute to the divine power to punish:

Hear, Nature, hear! dear Goddess, hear!
Suspend thy purpose, if thou didst intend
To make this creature fruitful! (1. iv. 284-86)

When he curses Goneril, "All the stor'd vengeance of Heaven fall/ On her ingrateful top! (11.iv.163-64), or when he with-

⁸Conf. ch. 2, pp. 78-79.

holds a curse , "I do not bid the thunder-bearer shoot,/ Nor tells tales of thee to high-judging Jove" (11.iv.229-30), he is giving evidence to his belief in divine sanctions. He warns sinners of the heavenly wrath that awaits infractions of divine law, and he summons the gods to their task of enforcement of their laws:

Let the great Gods,
That keep this dreadful pudder o'er our heads,
Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch,
That hast within thee undivulged crimes,
Unwhipp'd of Justice . . .

• . . . and cry
These dreadful summoners grace. I am a man
More sinn'd against than sinning. (111.ii.49-60)

Lear implies here that those who offend him are the Gods' enemies besides; and his term "sinning " lumps his offences together with those of his oppressors, as infractions of divine law. To the gods as rewarders and helpers of the good Lear also makes reference:

O Heavens
If you do love old men, if your sweet sway,
Allow obedience, if you yourselves are old,
Make it your cause; send down and take my part! (11.iv.191-94)

He prays to the gods to preserve his sanity (1.v.46-47).

In prison prayer will be one of his occupations (V.iii.12).

Lear tells Cordelia that rewards for upright action come from the gods: "Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,/ The Gods themselves throw incense." (V.iii.20-21)

Lear's use of the norm of the divine will is seconded by other characters, who in this way make the theme pervasive

in the play. Albany finds in Cornwall's death a proof of the existence of the just gods above (1V.ii.78-79). He intervenes in the quarrel between Lear and Goneril with the exclamation "Now, Gods that we adore " (1.iv.299). The deaths of Goneril and Regan are "This judgment of the heavens" (V.iii.231). Albany feels moved to offer a prayer for Cordelia as aid is sent to her (V.iii.255). Gloucester is loth to quarrel with the gods' "great opposeless wills" (1V.vi.34-41). After his suicide attempt fails he prays "Let not my worser spirit tempt me again/ To die before you please" (1V.vi.219-20). He expresses his belief in divine providence by blessing Edgar with the bounty and the benisson of heaven (1V.vi.226). Edgar accuses Edmund in the final duel scene of being "false to thy Gods" (V.iii.134). He ascribes his father's misfortunes to a visitation of divine justice, in a remark to which Edmund adds a word of assent:

The Gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
 Make instruments to plague us;
 The dark and vicious place where thee he got
 Cost him his eyes. (V.iii.170-73)

Edgar pays homage to the Gods: he tells his father that they make honours of mens' impossibilities (1V.vi.73-74). "Pray that the right may thrive," he asks his father (V.ii.2). Kent prays that the Gods to their dear shelter may take Cordelia (1.i.182). Cordelia beseeches the kind Gods to cure the great breach in Lear's abused nature (1V.vii.14-15). The Third Servant of Cornwall prays for Gloucester: "Now heaven

help him" (111.vii.106).

b) Norm of the Nature of Man

Human reason is, in Thomistic ethics, the proximate norm of the good and evil of human acts; it forms along with the divine reason a conjoint and subordinate criterion. This flows from the fact that the human reason is a participation of the divine reason.⁹

The proximate norm of Thomistic morality is presented in King Lear in indirect terms only. Vices are spoken of in the play as being evil, not precisely because they are opposed to reason, but because they reduce the agent to the level of the beast. These beast images do hint, however, at the Thomistic norm. A man who has descended to the animal level has obviously forfeited his rational endowment.

The norm of the nature of man, as referred to by Lear, might be entitled, "the demands of human integrity" for he sees in human evil an abasement of man to the level of the beasts. This concept occurs in the speech of Lear and other characters in connection with the word "nature," a term that refers to the creative principle to which man owes his human endowments, and with that, his obligation to live a life

⁹Conf. ch. 2, p. 82.

worthy of them.¹⁰ Cordelia, Lear charges, sins against nature. She is "a wretch whom Nature in asham'd/ Almost t'acknowledge hers" (1.i.212-13). He expresses the same idea by linking her to a debased practice of barbarians:

. . . The barbarous Scythian,
Or he that makes his generation messes
To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom
Be as well neighbour'd, pitied, and reliev'd,
As thou my sometime daughter. (1.i.116-19)

Lear finds that the vices of Goneril and Regan oppose human nature. His question, "Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard hearts?" (111.vi.78-79) intimates this. He calls them "Unnatural hags" (11.iv.280). Obligations accrue to them from their blood relationship to him, so that were

¹⁰Heilman, This Great Stage, p. 314, n. 17: the definition of man as human is the function of the play as a whole; Whitaker, Shakespeare's Use of Learning, pp. 173, 276, man must be part of a stable moral order that derives from a stable universe, in order to reach his human potential. This theme starts in Hamlet and Troilus and Cressida; it finds its finest expression in King Lear . . . Lear removes us from the specifically Christian atmosphere of Macbeth, even of Othello, to a world where morality is based on nature as apart from revelation; Edward Dowden, Shakespeare: A Critical Study of His Mind and Art (London: Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1901), p. 239: in Lear we feel that the good is normal and that evil is abnormal and self-destructive; Heilman, This Great Stage, p. 116: nature to most of the characters is the fundamental principle of order, *lex naturalis*; it implies a distinction between good and evil; Ornstein, The Moral Vision, p. 260: stark Morality-like characterization defines sharply the elemental good and evil in man; Knight, Wheel of Fire, p. 184-85: vice is referred to as unnatural, making man a beast; nature and goodness are akin; John Lawlor, The Tragic Sense in Shakespeare (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969), p. 143: if man disobeys laws made for man, he will have to obey those made for beasts.

Regan unkind to him, this would prove that she was illegitimate, and he would divorce himself from his wife's tomb as sepulchring an adultress (11.iv.131-33). Lear praises Regan for knowing "The offices of nature, bond of childhood" (11.iv.180). The filial bond creates a demand for the virtues of gratitude and kindness, Lear is saying.¹¹ Regan and Goneril falling short of these demands of their nature, Lear expresses their betrayal of their nature in vituperative animal and disease images. Goneril's ingratitude is like a serpent's tooth; may she have an ungrateful child, as unnatural and grief-causing as herself:

If she must teem,
 Create her child of spleen, that it may live
 And be a thwart disnatur'd torment to her!

 . . . that she may feel
 How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
 To have a thankless child! (11.iv.290-98)

She has a "wolfish visage" (11.iv.317), and the words "serpent" and "vulture" express his feelings towards her, for she "struck me with her tongue,/ Most serpent-like, upon the very heart" (11.iv.161-62), and "she hath tied/ Sharp-tooth'd unkindness, like a vulture, here." (11.iv.135-36) He calls Goneril a disease in his flesh, a boil in his

¹¹Honor Matthews, "Pardon and Punishment," Character and Symbol in Shakespeare's Plays (Cambridge: University Press, 1962), p. 145: Lear finally understood what Cordelia meant by bond and he uses the word in her sense.

corrupted blood (11.iv.225-27).

Lear uses a beast image to express his own faults. He describes how he yielded to flattery: "They flattered me like a dog " (1V.vi.97). Of oppressive rulers he says (and the image would apply to his treatment of Cordelia and Kent): "The great image of Authority:/ A dog's obey'd in office." (1V.vi.160-61). Lear conceives of the vices of the human race as a whole in terms of the unnatural, the beastly. In the storm he invokes the powers of nature that they may destroy man for his ingratitude: let things change or cease (111.i.7). He cries: "Crack Nature's moulds, all germens spill at once/ That makes ingrateful man!" (111.ii.8-9). After he turns mad he fantasizes about sexual immorality in women. St. Thomas states that sexual intemperance concerns pleasures that are common to man and beast, and that therefore this evil has a special disgrace attached to it. Lear raves that in chastity makes women like centaurs, half-women, half-beast, half-divine, half-fiend (1V.vi.126-29).¹²

It becomes man, Lear sees, in both his physical and

¹²ST 11-11, 142, 4; Heilman, This Great Stage, p. 92: sex is used to show the descent of man from high spiritual potencies to animal will and appetite; Jorgensen, Lear's Self-Discovery, p 126: Lear fixes on sex as an example of the depravity of man: this is part of his self discovery; Whitaker, Shakespeare's Use of Learning, p. 312: lust is generalized into a symbol of sin itself, and used to typify revolt of the flesh against God's ordered nature.

his moral condition, ~~to~~ live at a higher level than the beasts. When he finds Tom deprived of raiment and shelter, he asks: "Is man no more than this . . . Thou wert better in a grave" (111.iv.103-105). In this same line of thought he reasons with his daughters for possession of his train:

O! reason not the need; our basest beggars
Are in the poorest thing superfluous:
Allow not nature more than nature needs,
Man's life is cheap as beast's. (11.iv.266-69)

Lear's use of the norm of human integrity to judge the value and goodness of human actions is part of the moral framework of the play. Other characters also see selfish acts in terms of unnatural action, and express this in animal metaphors. Albany accuses Goneril of unnatural deeds in her treatment of Lear; these will lead her to her own destruction, and if unchecked, involve the whole human race in disaster. She is separating herself from her father by her unfilial conduct, and will, like a dismembered branch, soon wither. The daughters are tigers, fiends, not women, in their barbarous degeneracy. If the heavens do not tame these offenses, humanity must soon prey on itself like monsters in the deep (1V.ii.30-49, and 66). Kent refers to Oswald, on account of his disloyalty, as "You whoreson dog! you slave! you cur! (1.iv.85-86). He speaks of Lear's "dog-hearted daughters" (1V.iii.46). The Gentleman pictures the conduct of Goneril and Regan in terms of a curse on the

whole human race, a curse from which the virtue of Cordelia has redeemed it (IV.vi.206-208). Gloucester calls unfilial conduct of the daughters "unnatural dealing" (III.iii.1-2). By such deeds "Our flesh and blood, my Lord, is grown so vile,/ That it doth hate what gets it" (III.iv.149-50). His comment on Lear's treatment of Cordelia speaks of the same departure from the way of nature: "The King falls from the bias of nature; there's father against child" (I.ii.115-17). Edgar, in the guise of Tom, lists lust and other crimes as the cause of his wretched condition, his half-human state, in answer to Lear's question: "what hast thou been"--he was "Hog in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in madness, lion in prey" (III.iv.84-101 and IV.i.58-60). He refers also, as Lear will do, to the dehumanizing effect of poverty: "That ever penury, in contempt of man,/ Brought near to beast" (II.iii.8-9). One can deduce from this that the unnerving visible effects of poverty upon man are but a hint of the greater interior ravages effected by vice.

Lear's moral depth, the tenacity of his commitment to a life directed by the norms of morality, is demonstrated by the strength of his emotional reaction to the evil of his daughters. His grief is so intense that it exceeds the physical torments he undergoes in the storm, and leads to mental breakdown. Aquinas, it was noted above, states that sorrow can exceed pain in intensity, and that it does more

damage to mind and body than any other passion.¹³ Lear's displeasure in the evil deeds of his daughters provokes a grief of such proportions that it wastes his physical strength and unhinges his mind. This grief is due in part to unwarranted personal chagrin; but it is also the fruit of legitimate moral outrage. This fact is born out by the compassion that Lear receives from Cordelia, and others of her quality, for whom self-pity would not make of Lear a man deserving of their tears. Cordelia speaks of Lear as a child-changed father, his senses jarred by sorrow (1V.vii. 16-17). To the Gentleman Lear is a sight pitiful in the meanest wretch, past speaking of in a king (1V.vi.205-206). Gloucester refers to Lear's unnatural and bemadding sorrow (111.i.38). Lear's grief makes him consider his physical sufferings paltry: the storm even assuages his torment by taking his mind off moral anguish that hurts him more: "But where the greater malady is fix'd,/ The lesser is scarce felt" (111.iv.8-9). He is reduced to "a poor old man, as full of grief as age, wretched in both . . . a poor, infirm, weak and despised old man" (11.iv.274-75 and 111.ii.19-20). Madness ensues: He pleads with Goneril: "I prithee, daughter, do not make me mad" (11.iv.220); and he tries to save his mind by confining his grief: "O! that way madness

¹³Conf. ch. 2. pp 43-44.

lies; let me shun that" (111.iv.21). Lear testifies to the destructive effect of grief by assigning this as the root of Tom's wretched state: his condition could only result from grief caused him by unkind daughters (111.iv.70-71). Lear is brought to the abyss of woe by the loss of Cordelia, so esteemed by him for her virtue--had he the eyes and tongues of the onlookers he would crack heaven's vault with his lament (V.iii.257-59).

c) A Contrasting Norm: The Norm of Self-Interest

Lear, in spite of his faults, which will be elaborated on below, makes divine and human reason the norm of his acts, as was shown above. In this he differs from four characters, Edmund, Goneril, Regan and Cornwall, for whom self-interest was their criterion of action. The wrong they do proceeds from a deliberate seeking of evil ends. The Thomistic vice of malice best designates the nature of their evil-doing. Malice, according to Aquinas, is a will to suffer the loss of some spiritual good in order to obtain a temporal one.¹⁴ This amounts to the choice of evil, for evil is the privation of some good. Lear differs from these persons in the fact that he sins out of passion and folly,

¹⁴Conf. ch. 2, p. 33.

not malice.¹⁵ Self-interest and pride Lear has, but passion bears a major share of the blame for his faults. He does not deliberately set aside the norms of morality. Deceit and malice are faults of which even his ill-wishing daughters never accuse him.¹⁶ The rapidity with which Lear passes from vindictive cruelty against Cordelia, to repentance, is due to the fact that his outrageous treatment of her arises from passion, rather than from a malice-infected will.

Lear is contrasted with characters who make self-interest their guiding principle of action. Acts that Lear does in the heat of passion are committed by Edmund, Goneril and Regan in cool cunning. Their moral insensitivity, caused

¹⁵Ribner, Patterns, pp. 123-24: the two sets of characters embody two philosophies of life. Edgar, Cordelia, Kent and the Fool represent the Christian humanistic view, for which all nature is a harmonious order controlled by a benevolent God. Opposite to this is the Renaissance scepticism of which Edmund is the chief symbol. He sees nature as a godless mechanism: the mind can control nature to a certain extent and manipulate men and things for selfish ends; Knight, Wheel of Fire, p. 186: Edmund follows nature and rejects custom. He takes nature to mean selfishness and ignores the fact that kindness is part of man's nature; Duthie, "Introduction," p. xliv: Edmund's nature is a force encouraging the individual to think only of himself; Knights, "King Lear," p. 267: Edmund, Goneril and Regan adhere to unrestrained self-seeking; Edmund is their spokesman. One side of Lear's nature is committed to Edmund's kind of nature; Ribner, "The Gods . . .," p. 42: Lear and Gloucester are shown to reject the philosophy of Edmund and to accept that of Edgar.

¹⁶Alfred Harbage, "King Lear: An Introduction," Shakespeare, the Tragedies, A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. A. Harbage (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), p. 119.

by a pre-occupation with self, is depicted by Albany:
 "Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile;/ Filths savour
 but themselves" (IV.ii.38-39). This moral insensitivity
 makes moral activity, when they encounter it, incom-
 prehensible to them. Edmund and Oswald are at a loss to
 account for the actions of Albany, because he follows objec-
 tive norms. Oswald complains to his mistress about Albany:
 "Madam, . . . never man so chang'd./ . . . / What most he
 should dislike seems pleasant to him;/ What like, offensive"
 (IV.ii.3-10). Edmund remarks about Albany with similar lack
 of understanding: " . . . he's full of alteration ./ And
 self-reproving" (V.i.1-4).

Edmund tramples upon those who block his way to
 wealth and power, the very goods that Lear had laid aside.
 Malice shows its mark in his pre-occupation with temporal
 goods to the neglect of moral and human values. He rejoices
 in a credulous father and a noble brother on whom his practices
 ride easy (I.ii.187-89). He formulates a plot against Edgar:

. . . I see the business.
 Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit:
 All with me's meet that I can fashion fit. (I.ii.189-91)

Anything is "meet" if it serves self-advancement; and the
 light Edmund travels by is a "wit" that discerns a path
 thereto by whatever means will serve. Preparing to betray
 his father, Edmund exults, "This seems a fair deserving . . .
 The younger rises when the old doth fall" (III.iii.25-27).

Edmund covers his self-interest with a hypocrisy that emphasizes its deliberateness; fully conversant with the moral code, he paints himself in its colours. He refers with mock horror to the unnaturalness between child and parent (1.ii.151), and expatiates on the strong bonds that bind father and child, on the avenging Gods that punish parricides (11.i.45-48), and on the "savage and unnatural" behaviour of Goneril and Regan (111.iii.7). His underhanded action against his brother is his "duty" (11.i.106). He apologizes with feigned torment of conscience to Cornwall for putting loyalty to the duke ahead of duty to his own father (111.v.1-14). He offers Albany compassionate and prudent reasons for the imprisonment of Lear and Cordelia (V.iii.41-59). With the hell-hated lie he would overwhelm Edgar's heart (V.iii.147). Edmund's instructions to the captain for the disposal of Lear and Cordelia bring into sharp contrast the crassness of his norm of action, and the elevated terms by which he designates it:

One step I have advanced thee; if thou dost
 As this instructs thee, thou dost make thy way
 To noble fortunes; know thou this, that men
 Are as the time is; to be tender-minded
 Does not become a sword; thy great employment
 Will not bear question; either say thou'lt do't,
 Or thrive by other means. (V.iii.29-35)

To obtain "noble fortune" any means are optional, because "men are as the time is."

Goneril and Regan pursue self-interest with all of

Edmund's callous skill. Goneril of set purpose quarrels with Lear. She directs Oswald:

. . . When he returns from hunting
 I will not speak with him; say I am sick:
 If you come slack of former services,
 You shall do well; the fault of it I'll answer.

 Put on what weary negligence you please,
 You and your fellows; I'd have it come to question:
 If he distaste it, let him to my sister,
 Whose mind and mine, I know, in that are one,
 Not to be over-rul'd. (1.iii.8-17)

The semblance of right that invests the daughters' cause is speedily dissipated as their ruthless cunning is unveiled.

Goneril instructs Oswald to use deceit against Lear:

Inform her full of my particular fears;
 And thereto add such reasons of your own
 As may compact it more. (1.iv.347-49)

She expresses to Albany a complete detachment from objective moral norms: "The laws are mine . . . who can arraign me for't?" (V.iii.158). Like Edmund, both Goneril and Regan mask policy under hypocrisy. They offer upright definitions of love (1.i.54-61 and 69-76). Goneril reproves Cordelia for disobedience to Lear, and preaches on her duty to her husband (1.i.178-79). Regan offers sound moral grounds for Goneril's harsh treatment of Lear (11.i.143-46).

Cornwall shares his wife's code. He mixes Lear's passion with Regan's disregard for objective norms. This lends to his passions an unyielding character that is foreign to Lear's nature. Gloucester says of him to Lear:

My dear Lord,
 You know the fiery quality of the Duke;
 How unremovable and fix'd he is
 In his own course. (11.iv.91-94)

Such passion leads Cornwall to a circumspect and ruthless
 vengeance on Gloucester:

Though well we may not pass upon his life
 Without the form of justice, yet our power
 Shall do a court'sy to our wrath, which men
 May blame but not control. (111.vii.24-27)

3. LEAR'S EARLY MORAL STATE

Of concern in this section is : A. Lear's Vices; and
 B. The Cause of Lear's Early Moral State.

A. Lear's Vices

Lear's vices will be dealt with under the following
 headings: a) Imprudence; b) Injustice; c) lack of fortitude;
 and d) Intemperance.

a) Imprudence

The role of imprudence is given predominance in the
 presentation of Lear's fall into moral disaster. Folly
 occasions his evil courses. The opposite virtue to imprud-
 ence, prudence, is, according to the interpretation adop-
 ted by this thesis, given a decisive function in Lear's
 moral recovery. In the Thomistic system prudence is the chief
 of the moral virtues.¹⁷ This follows from the fact that

¹⁷Conf. ch. 2, pp. 56-57.

prudence is right knowledge about how to act well, and the formal principle of all virtue is the good as defined by reason.¹⁸

Lear failed in regard to the two subjective parts of prudence, the virtue whereby a man rules a multitude, and particular prudence, whereby a man rules himself. In regard to the former, it is in regnative prudence that Lear errs, that prudence which enables a man to rule a kingdom well.¹⁹ Lear chooses a foolish method of achieving the division of the kingdom, the love-trial, which is ill-suited to determining the worth of his daughters. A further fault against regnative prudence is Lear's misuse of kingly power to despoil and banish Cordelia and Kent. Against particular prudence Lear errs by his ill judgment in planning his future, and by his mistreatment of his daughter Cordelia and his subject Kent.

Thomistic doctrine indicates four main vices into which the foolish man falls. Of these, three apply to Lear: precipitation; thoughtlessness; and inconstancy. These vices involve a neglect of the eight integral parts required for the perfection of the virtue of prudence.²⁰ The vices as seen in greater detail are as follows:

¹⁸Conf. ch. 2, p. 50. ¹⁹Conf. ch. 2, p. 57.

²⁰Conf. ch. 2, pp. 58-59 & 62-64.

1) Precipitation.--this is a lack of good counsel; it arises from a defect of the integral parts, memory, reason, and docility. Memory, it is recalled, consists in a mindfulness of the precepts of synderesis, and of the contingent past actions which illuminate decisions now being taken. Lear possessed the principles of synderesis, but he was unmindful of his past knowledge of the character-traits of Cordelia and Kent. Reason enables one to apply universal principles to particular actions. Lear understood that love is a person's chief moral adornment, that oaths must be kept, that daughters should be kind and just; but he failed to apply this knowledge to his actions. Docility serves man's need to be taught by others. Man needs help from others in order to make prudent decisions, but Lear rejected the advice of Kent and of France at the time he was making his rash judgment of Cordelia's character (1.i.166-67; 262-63).

2) Thoughtlessness.--this comprises a lack of caution and circumspection, and is a defect of judgment: once reasoning has completed its research, this vice causes a man to fail in judging the truth of the results, through neglect or contempt of those things on which right judgment depends. Caution is required in prudential matters, due to their contingency, and to their mixture of false and true, good and evil. This gives an agent such a grasp of the good that he avoids the evil. Lear in his thoughtlessness failed to

allow for the delicacy of the situation, which involved plans for the succession of rule and the division of the realm, provision for his future maintenance in kingly dignity, and the giving of a daughter in marriage. Circumspection gives man capacity for attention to the circumstances of an action which alter the moral quality. Cordelia's silence was provoked by circumstances surrounding Lear's request for an avowal of her love; she found herself obliged to make a choice between silence and flattery, but this fact escaped Lear's attention (1.i.223-33).

3) Inconstancy.--this is a defect in the act of command; it consists in a lack of shrewdness, foresight, and understanding. Inconstancy is caused by an inordinate appetite that influences the will to withdraw from a good purpose. Lear's appetite for revenge on Cordelia turned him from his good purpose of rewarding her virtue, and spending his final years with her (1.i.120-23). Shrewdness yields, in contrast to docility, right estimates about an action by virtue of one's own efforts. Its lack is evident in the Lear of the opening scene, where he misjudges his proper course in regard to the dividing of his realm and conduct towards his daughters. Foresight concerns future acts. Lear fails to foresee the civil war that will arise from his division of the kingdom. He errs in anticipating a life crowned with honour after he has surrendered the power and

revenue of a king. He secures the bankruptcy of his fortunes when he confides himself to the care of his daughters.

Understanding is a right estimate of a particular end, of a primary singular and contingent practical matter; this is the minor premise of the syllogism of prudence, of which some universal principle provides the major. It is chiefly through lack of understanding that Lear errs against prudence and deserves the charges of folly that are leveled against him. Lear fails to understand the weakness of the love test as a means of determining the love of his daughters. When Goneril and Regan speak of their love, Lear is unable to penetrate to the flattery that underlies their words. Lear misunderstands Cordelia's references to love as a bond and calls her untender:

Cor. . . . I love your Majesty
 According to my bond; no more nor less.
 Lear How now, Cordelia! Mend your speech a little
 So young, and so untender?
 Cor. So young, my Lord, and true. (1.i.92-94 & 106-107)

Lear follows with the charges of pride, and of unnatural vice: he says, "Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her" (1.i.129); she is "a wretch whom nature is ashamed/ Almost t'acknowledge hers" (1.i.212-13). Kent uses the words "mad," "rashness" and "folly" to name Lear's moral blindness: ". . . be Kent unmannerly,/ When Lear is mad . . ./ . . ./ . . .To plainness honour's bound/ When Majesty falls to folly . . ./ . . check/ This hideous rashness" (1.i.145-51). Kent's

charges are not immoderate: Lear turns a deaf ear while Kent defends Cordelia to no effect:

The youngest daughter does not thee least;
Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sounds
Reverb no hollowness. (1.i.152-54)

Kent pleads with Lear to use moral insight; otherwise, he is doing evil: "See better, Lear . . . I'll tell thee, thou dost evil" (1.i.157, 166). Lear misinterprets Kent's wisdom and good will as pride, and as an impious attempt to make Lear cancel his sacred oaths (1.i.168-69)

After Kent upbraids Lear for his lack of understanding, this moral failing is decried by France, Goneril and Regan, Gloucester and the Fool. France's astonishment at Lear's behaviour towards Cordelia emphasizes an obviousness in her virtue that renders Lear's folly all the more preposterous:

This is most strange,
That she, whom even but now was your best object,
The argument of your praise, balm of your age,
The best, the dearest, should in this trice of time
Commit a thing so monstrous, to dismantle
So many folds of favour . . .

Is it but this? a tardiness in nature
Which often leaves the history unspoke
That it intends to do? (1.i.213-37)

Goneril and Regan are speaking abusively, but also truly, when they complain of his lack of self knowledge, his poor judgment in the treatment of Cordelia and Kent, and his rashness and dotage (1.i.288-301). Gloucester adds his indictment of a king who has acted "upon the gad" (1.ii.23-26 and 115-122).

The Fool keeps green the theme of Lear's folly: "Lear. Dost thou call me fool, boy?/ Fool. All thy other titles thou hast given away; that thou wast born with" (1.iv.154-56). He centers his jibes on Lear's lack of understanding in the management of his own interests: "thou hadst little wit in thy bald crown when thou gav'st thy golden one away . . . thou mad'st thy daughters thy mothers" (1.iv.169-71 and 179-80).

b) Injustice

Thomas defines justice as "a habit whereby a man renders to each one his due by a constant and perpetual will."²¹ Lear errs by the vice of injustice. The way for this was prepared when Lear failed to guard in himself the virtue of prudence. He lacks the quasi-integral parts of justice, which are the dispositions to do good and to avoid evil. Kent makes this the subject of his charge against the King: "I'll tell thee thou dost evil" (1.i.166). Lear offends against legal justice, which concerns the common good, by dividing the realm foolishly among his daughters, and in this way imperilling the peace and proper government of the country. Albany adverts to the subsequent injustices that caused Lear's subjects to rebel: "the rigour of our state" (V.i.22-23).

²¹Conf. ch. 2, p. 65.

Under the heading of particular justice, Lear offends against distributive justice and commutative justice. As concerns the former, he fails to apportion the realm according to the merits of his daughters, and he deprives Cordelia and Kent of their property and citizenship. Under commutative justice, Lear offends his daughters and Kent, first of all, by unjust judgment: he judges Cordelia and Kent worthy of punishments that ill sort with their obvious integrity (1.i.108-116; 173-79). By reviling he heaps abuse on Cordelia, Kent, the other daughters, and Oswald (1.i.212-13; 166-79; 1.iv.271; 11.iv.280; 1.iv.85-86). The prime instance of this fault of reviling, which consists in publishing something against someone's honor, is Lear's vilification of Cordelia in the presence of France and Burgundy. Reviling is closely connected with the end that anger seeks: the end that anger seeks is revenge, and reviling is the easiest means to attain this end.²² So reviling, although it is a vice against justice, arises chiefly from anger. This vice represents therefore a defect both of the will and of the irascible appetite. By cursing Lear wishes evil to his daughters (11.iv.164-69). It follows from the above defects, that Lear is also lacking in the virtue of friendliness, a potential part of the virtue of justice, by which he should

²²Conf. ch. 2, p. 70.

have behaved in a becoming manner towards his daughters and courtiers in word and in deed.

c) Lack of Fortitude

Lear errs against the virtue of fortitude by sinning against two of its potential parts, patience and magnanimity. He sins against the former by impatience, and against the latter by the vice of vainglory.²³ Impatience appears in Lear's character from the start, by the rapidity with which he condemns Cordelia after she offends him by her silence (1.i.94-120). To take but two further examples early in the first act, he strikes Oswald for chiding the Fool, and he orders up his dinner in sharp terms (1.iii.1. and 1.iv.8). Vainglory appears in the public avowals of love that Lear exacts of his daughters (1.i.).

d) Intemperance

Pride, in the Thomistic system, is a vice associated with the potential parts of the virtue of temperance.²⁴ This vice, an inordinate desire for one's own excellence, leads Lear to esteem himself as greater than he is. His pride shows itself in his manner of dividing the kingdom: he wants to listen to public acknowledgements of his daughters' love for him, a fault that reveals both vainglory, as mentioned

²³Conf. ch. 2, pp. 72-74. ²⁴Conf. ch. 2, p. 75.

above, and the vice of pride. Pride shows in his penchant for flattery, a weakness that Kent refers to in the words: "When power to flattery bows" (1.i.148). Cordelia on this account states that she lost her father's favour because she lacked the art of speaking and purposing not (1.i.224-33). Lear proudly bristles at the notion that Cordelia could have a place in her heart, not only for Lear, but for her future husband: because of this he brands her as being "So young and so untender" (1.i.106). Lear places the fulfilment of his own whims above his regard for his daughter: "Better thou/ Hadst not been born than not t'have pleased me better" (1.i.233-34). Cordelia's value falls in Lear's eyes when she ceases to be dear to him:

Right noble Burgundy,
When she was dear to us we did hold her so,
But now her price is fallen. (1.i.195-97)

Ironically, pride is the very vice of which he accuses Cordelia and Kent (1.i.129 and 169).

This vice of pride has the effect of preventing Lear from correcting his imprudence by the acceptance of correction from Kent and from the king of France. We recall from the Thomistic ethics that pride has the effect of blocking a man's openness to knowledge.²⁵ Lear is lacking in the virtue of meekness, which controls waywardness in the form of angry

²⁵Conf. ch. 2, p. 75.

outbursts. He is lacking, besides, in clemency, the virtue that tempers the revenge an angry man desires. Lear errs against these virtues by the vice of feelings of indignation; by clamor, in which a man manifests anger in disorderly and confused speech; by contumely, which indulges in harsh words against a neighbor; and by quarreling. Against clemency Lear commits the fault of cruelty, which is a hardness of heart which makes one ready to exact harsh punishments. The above vices opposed to meekness and clemency are displayed in the opening scenes of the play in Lear's behaviour towards Cordelia and Kent.

B. The Cause of Lear's Early Moral State

The play indicates that Lear's imprudence is due especially to the vice of uncontrolled anger. In Thomistic ethics anger is a passion. A passion is a movement of a sense appetite arising from sense knowledge of some good or evil, and accompanied by corporeal change. Anger belongs to the irascible passions, which resist attacks of an evil that hinders what is suitable and inflicts harm. Like the other irascible passions anger arises from and terminates in the concupiscible passions; it is initiated by a present evil, takes revenge, and terminates in joy. Anger arises from the concurrence of several passions: sorrow at the pain which has been inflicted, desire for revenge, and a hope of its attainment. If hope is absent, sorrow ensues instead of

anger. If the passion of anger is in accord with reason, then it is a virtue.²⁶

Man is free, but the passions can influence the actions and cause him to do what otherwise he would not do: for the passions disturb and obscure reason, by upsetting the imagination and the judgment of the cogitative power. The latter, colored by the nature and violence of the passions, influences the practical judgment of the reason, either directly, or, as in the case of anger, through bodily disturbances which hinder the functioning of the sensitive powers.²⁷

Lear's anger is repeatedly referred to both by himself and by others, and various elements that characterize it are discernible: that it is uncontrolled; that it seeks revenge and takes delight in it; and that sorrow replaces this anger when the hope for vengeance evaporates. In his attack on Kent, Lear speaks of his own wrath: "Come not between the Dragon and his wrath" (1.i.121). Kent calls Lear's

²⁶Conf. ch. 2, p. 38; Campbell, "The Salvation of Lear," p. 93: Hazlitt calls King Lear one of the master pieces of the logic of passion; Whitaker, Shakespeare's Use of Learning, p. 310: in King Lear Shakespeare selects passions most representative of the two groups of passions, the concupiscible and the irascible. He selects wrath and lust for detailed illustration. Through these the destruction of the natural order is described.

²⁷Conf. ch. 2, pp. 38-39.

transport a "Hideous rashness" (1.i.151). Goneril complains that "The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash" (1.i.295), speaks of his "changes" (1.i.287), and asks him to control his fits of anger: ". . . put away/ These dispositions which of late transport you/ From what you rightly are" (1.iv.229-31). When Lear rushes out into the storm, Gloucester says: "The King is in a high rage" (11.iv.298). Indicative of Lear's anger is the suddenness of his shift from love of Cordelia to displeasure, in what France refers to as "this trice of time" (1.i.216). This was one of the "unconstant starts" which displeased Regan (1.i.300). The vengeance that Lear seeks in his anger includes the disownment of Cordelia, the banishment of Kent, physical assault upon Oswald, and abusive language uttered against his daughters, and even against the elements. Goneril charges Lear with striking her gentleman for chiding his fool (1.iii.i). He strikes Oswald for his insolent replies (1.iii.89). Anger causes him to unleash a flood of threats, curses and abuse, at times incoherent, on Goneril and Regan. He falls into disconnected speech when denied audience with Regan and Cornwall: "Vengeance! plague! death! confusion!/ Fiery! what quality? . . ." (11.iv.95-96). In the wilderness Lear shouts out his defiance to the storm. To the very end Lear is a man easily swept away by anger, and delighting in vengeance: after killing the fellow that was hanging Cor-

delia, he takes a moment from his grief to exult in this resurgence of youthful, vengeful prowess. Lear's anger turns into crushing sorrow when all means of vengeance are denied him.

Lear declares that he exercises the passion of hatred towards Cordelia and Kent. St. Thomas teaches that hatred is a disharmony between the appetite and that which is apprehended as harmful and evil. It is one of the concupiscible passions. Hatred and anger differ in this: the one who hates wishes evil as evil, while the angry man wishes evil as a thing that is just and good since it is a means of revenge.²⁸ If some of Lear's statements are taken at face value he indeed hated Cordelia and Kent. He totally rejects Cordelia in these words:

Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
Propinquity and property of blood,
And as a stranger to my heart and me
Hold thee from this for ever. (1.i.113-16).

He says to France:

I would not for your love make such a stray
To match you where I hate . . .
Thou hast her, France; let her be thine, for we
Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see
That face of hers again; therefore be gone
Without our grace, our love, our benison. (1.i.209-10
and 262-65).

Towards Kent Lear directs a word that suggests the same

²⁸Conf. ch. 2, p. 45.

hatred: "thy hated back" (1.i.175). But it would appear that Lear's expressions of hatred are rather a means of taking revenge than an indication that hatred has actually taken possession of him. Lear's rapid changes of feeling towards Cordelia, from love to displeasure, and then to repentance, are more indicative of anger than of hatred. Lear himself confessed his recent preference for Cordelia: "I lov'd her most" (1.i.123); and the swiftness of his change of feeling towards her: "Unfriended, new-adopted to our hate,/ Dower'd with our curse and stranger'd with our oath" (1.i.203-204).

Lear in his anger-fed folly represents a weakness for passion-induced vices that occurs among other characters in the play. In this way Lear serves as a type of mankind. The play demonstrates this universal aspect of Lear's character by showing the power of four passions, anger, sorrow, despair, and lust, to overstay reason in others, and work harm on mind and body. Gloucester's rage parallels Lear's: he refers to his own rage when he speaks of Edgar as "the food of thy abused father's wrath" (1V.i.22). Edmund notes the heat of displeasure that rages in him (1.ii.167). Gloucester speaks of the passion of despair as his "worser spirit" (1V.vi.219-20): like anger, it had robbed him of the power for sound moral judgment. Grief cracks his heart (11.i.90), and almost crazes his wits (111.iv.74). Between

two passions, grief and joy, Gloucester yields up his spirit (V.iii.198-99). The passion of lust bemuses Goneril and Regan; their cunning plans for self-advancement move steadily ahead until they both are smitten with passion for Edmund. Then, like their father, they lose all through passion-induced folly. The daughters become Edmund's dupes and gage all in a struggle to death for his possession. Goneril vows: "I had rather lose the battle than that sister/ Should loosen him and me" (V.i.18-19). Regan, even then in the grip of a poison, surrenders to Edmund:

General,
 Take thou my soldiers, prisoners, patrimony;
 Dispose of them, of me; the walls are thine;
 Witness the world, that I create thee here
 My Lord and master. (V.iii.75-79)

This power of the passions over other characters makes Lear's weakness appear less condemnable; and it highlights the achievement by which he partially gains control over his passions.

4. LEAR'S LATER MORAL STATE

This division will deal with, A. The Virtues of the Changed Lear, and B. The Contributing Causes of Lear's Transformation. In the first division, prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance will be studied as they develop in Lear, until they culminate in Lear's great moral achievement, which is a joint exercise of the passion of love of friendship, and of the activity of the will called dilection.

A. The Virtues of the Changed Lear

a) Prudence

Lear's chief fault was imprudence. His maturation in virtue results from a growth in moral insight. Through this he achieves a stronger grasp on the virtue of justice and the other cardinal virtues. His capacity for the love of friendship and of dilection has the way cleared for it in this way.²⁹

The first work of prudence in Lear is repentance. Lear achieves repentance through a growing self-awareness that is activated by his trials.³⁰ This awareness manifests itself early, in a consciousness of the moral quality of his acts, and of the factors that influenced them. In his first encounter with the disguised Kent, he replies to Kent's remark with a self-deprecating insight--if Kent is as poor for a subject as Lear is for a king, he is poor enough (1.iv.20-22). Shortly after, in reply to the knight's complaint about Goneril's hospitality, he promises to look further into the question, for, although he had remarked on a coldness in the house, he took it rather for his own jealous curiosity:

²⁹Heilman, This Great Stage, p. 193: the problem of wisdom is the structural center of the play.

³⁰Eddy, The Worlds of King Lear, p. 21: all men, Lear himself points out, are born fools and their lives therefore are a search for awareness of self.

I have perceived a most faint neglect of late;
 which I have rather blamed as mine own jealous
 curiosity than as a very pretence and purpose of
 unkindness: I will look further into't. (1.iv.71-74)

Lear's repentance is built on this moral sensitivity. After his first rebuff by Goneril he is stung into a re-assessment of his attitude to Cordelia. He regrets his treatment of her as a moral blemish, not only as a cause of his own disaster: "woe, that too late repents" (1.iv.266) . . . "I did her wrong" (1.v.24). He evaluates his fault by the same norm of nature that he had applied to Goneril's vice.³¹

O most small fault,
 How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show!
 Which, like an engine, wrench'd my frame of nature
 From the fix'd place, drew from my heart all love,
 And added to the gall. O Lear, Lear, Lear!
 Beat at this gate, that let thy folly in,
 And thy dear judgment out! (1.iv.275-80)

He shows here deeper insight into his fault than does the Fool, who stressed the personal loss that Lear had brought on himself. For Lear there is a graver error: it is a question of "wrong," and "folly," and of a loss of "dear judgment." His sense of guilt becomes so strong that shame keeps him from seeking Cordelia in his time of need (1V.iii.47-48). In the reconciliation scene he kneels to Cordelia in repentance; he would drink poison if she offered it to him. In the pattern of prison life that Lear envisages for Cordelia and himself, he will repeatedly seek her forgiveness. His regret

³¹Lowens, King Lear, p. 38.

at past error extends to the weakness for flattery that contributed to his downfall. He renounces the adulation he had demanded and received at court as being evil and as deceiving him about his human weakness:

They flattered me like a dog, and told me I had
the white hairs in my beard ere the black ones were
there. To say "ay" and "no" to every thing that I
said! "Ay" and "no" too was no good divinity . . .
Go to, they are not men o' their words: they told me I
was every thing; 'tis a lie, I am not ague-proof.
(1V.vi.97-107).

Lear grows, then, in prudence. And prudence dictates the development of the other moral virtues.

b) Justice

Lear has a growing insight into his former duties of wielder of authority and dispenser of justice. Authority is like a dog when it is misused to harry subjects instead of support them: "The great image of Authority:/ A dog's obey'd in office" (1V.vi.160-61). He inveighs against injustice in the courts, where guilty judges condemn; where wealth protects the guilty; where politicians seem to see but do not:

Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand!
Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back;
Thou hotly lusting to use her in that kind
For which thou whipp'st her. The usurer hangs the cozener.
Thorough tatter'd clothes small vices do appear;
Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,
And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks:
Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw does pierce it.
: : : . . .
: : : Get thee glass eyes;
And, like a scurvy politician, seem
To see the things thou dost not. (1V.vi.162-74)

The rich have a debt in justice to pay to the houseless poor:

O! I have ta'en
 Too little care of this. Take physic, Pomp;
 Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
 That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,
 And show the Heavens more just. (111.iv.32-36)

Lear expresses in poetry an idea found in Aquinas's treatment of the vice of covetousness: that this vice closes the heart to the misery of the needy.³²

c) Fortitude

Of the two works of fortitude, aggression and endurance, there is more worth and more difficulty in endurance. Patience is a potential part of fortitude that is allied to endurance. Patience is the prolonged and voluntary suffrance of arduous and difficult things, for the sake of virtue or profit. Patience prevents sorrow from overcoming reason.³³ Had Lear not begun to develop the virtue of patience, the ravaging effects of sorrow upon his mind and body would have put an end to his hopes for moral growth.

Lear strives to attain the virtue of patience. His

³²ST 11-11, 118, 8.

³³Conf. ch. 2, pp. 72-73; Duthie, "Introduction," p. xxxv: need stoicism be brought in at all? Danby suggests in "King Lear and Christian Patience" that the stoicism in Lear is Christian Patience. Lear never becomes impervious to feeling. He comes to self-abnegation that grows from awareness of love.

motives are, besides a fear that grief will sap his mind, and the humiliation he suffers on account of his tears, the knowledge that impatience interferes with his judgment. He controls himself for a moment when he is frustrated in his attempt to have audience with Regan and Cornwall: perhaps they are not well--"I'll forbear," he says, and he reins in "my more headier will" (11.iv.104-13).³⁴ On another occasion he affirms that he will not chide Goneril further, nor accuse her before Jove, but will give her time to repent: "I can be patient," he promises (11.iv.227-33). At this time, however, such talk is partly a means of obtaining concessions from his daughters, a ploy in his tactics to retain his knights. Lear's efforts at patience are a mixture therefore of motives high and low, with attendant reverses, which finally arrive at the attainment, in some degree, of the virtue itself. He prays to the Gods for patience, his true need. Let them touch him with a noble anger that does not give way to unrestrained grief:

. . . But, for true need,--
 You Heavens, give me that patience, patience I need!--
 : : : touch me with noble anger,
 And let not women's weapons, water-drops,
 Stain my man's cheeks! . . .

³⁴Helen Gardner, King Lear, The John Coffin Memorial Lecture (London: Athlone Press, 1967), p. 20.

. . . You think I'll weep; . . .
 No, I'll not weep: . . .
 I have full cause of weeping, but this heart
 Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws
 Or ere I'll weep. O Fool! I shall go mad. (11.iv.272-89)

In the storm Lear determines to be a pattern of all patience (111.ii.37). Kent remarks at Lear's death on how much the King had endured: "The wonder is he hath endur'd so long" (V.iii.316). Lear became accustomed to physical deprivation: "The art of our necessities is strange,/ And can make vile things precious," he says, as he welcomes the straw thankfully (111.ii.70-71). Lear had set-backs in his struggle for patience:

. . . But I will punish home:
 No, I will weep no more. In such a night
 To shut me out? Pour on; I will endure.
 In such a night as this? O Regan, Goneril!
 Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave all,--
 O! that way madness lies; let me shun that;
 No more of that. (111.iv.16-22)

Kent records these reverses; he says that Lear's madness is due to his impatience (111.vi.4-5), and he asks Lear chidingly where is the patience he so oft had boasted to retain (111.vi.58-59). But eventually Lear feels he has reached the point where he has something to teach about patience; this he tells Gloucester (1V.vi.180-86). He almost off-handedly refers to the injuries done him by Goneril and Regan: ". . . your sisters/ Have, as I do remember, done me wrong" (1V.vii.73-74).

Lear's struggle for patience stands in contrast to the control of Cordelia and Albany, and to the despair of

Gloucester. He is set between the ideal he strives for, and the abyss from which he escapes. Cordelia is queen over her passions, that rebel-like sought to be king over her (1V.iii.14-16). Albany checks his rage against Goneril when he feels incited by her callous cruelty to lay violent hands on her (1V.ii.63-67). Gloucester, on the contrary, seeks refuge from his misery in suicide (1V.vi.34-40). He longs for solace in the very madness that the King strove to avoid (1V.vi.281-86). Gloucester, like Lear, achieves patience at last; after his suicide-attempt miscarried, he resolves: ". . . henceforth I'll bear/ Affliction till it do cry out itself/ 'enough, enough,' and die" (1V.vi.75-77).

d) Temperance

Lear comes to achieve in some degree the virtue of humility, a potential part of the virtue of temperance. By means of this virtue a man, aware of his deficiencies, restrains himself from being attracted to things that are above his capacity.³⁵ Several events in Lear's story, touched on already or to be mentioned below, signal the presence of the virtue of humility. The process of repentance first of all. Then, Lear's stubborn attentiveness to the humiliating criticisms and verbal barbs of the Fool. In the reconciliation

³⁵Conf. ch. 2, p. 75.

scene, finally, Lear would kneel to Cordelia for forgiveness. He is ready to accept poison from her as an act of expiation for his injustice towards her. He acknowledges the deficiencies of his old age in the same scene, and his foolishness (1V.vii.59-84).

e) Love of Friendship and Dilection

Love of friendship for his fellow-sufferers, and dilection towards Cordelia are the peak of Lear's moral change. To deal first with the union in the love of friendship with his fellow-sufferers. Aquinas says that this emotion in the concupiscible appetite consists in the love of someone for his own sake, a union that is based on the recognition of a certain common ground of interest which makes one treat the other as a second self.³⁶ This occurs in Lear's relationship with the suffering people he encounters, in the form of a new-found feeling in Lear of a kinship in suffering with the wretches before him. But before Lear himself becomes capable of exercising this combination of compassion and love of friendship, he first must experience it from his friends. It is important to note this emphasis that the dramatist places upon the exercise of this passion in the play. Lear can attain to this state of soul partly because of the moral support for this condition

³⁶Conf. ch. 2, p. 41.

that he finds among people around him. Several instances are here given. Gloucester laments Lear's exposure to the storm (11.iv.302-304); he risks Cornwall's displeasure in order to give Lear shelter; and he suffers mutilation for effecting the King's rescue. Kent seeks out Lear in the storm: "Alack! bare-headed," he exclaims (111.ii.60). He would rather have his own heart break than Lear's (111.iv.5). In recounting Lear's sorrows he bellows as though he would burst heaven, and the strings of his life begin to crack (V.iii.216-17). Albany is moved to pity for Gloucester: let sorrow split his heart if he ever hated him or Edgar (V.iii.177-78). His heart is ready to dissolve on hearing of Gloucester's trials (V.iii.202-204). Cordelia weeps over the account of Lear's ordeal in the storm (1V.iii.29). May the virtues of the earth, she prays, spring from her tears to heal her father (1V.iv.15-17); and may her kiss repair the harms he has endured (1V.vii.27). She is oppressed by the condemnation to prison, not on her own account, but out of concern for Lear (V.iii.5-6). Edgar's tears flow for Lear: he is a "side-piercing sight" (111.vi.60 and 1V.vi.85). Let his heart break in witnessing it (1V.vi.143). In encountering his stricken father Edgar feels worse than ever he has been (1V.i.26). "Bless thy sweet eyes, they bleed," he cries (1V.i.52-53). He trifles with his father's despair in order to cure it (1V.vi.33). Let his heart burst, he asks,

after telling his father's woes (V.iii.182). The First Servant seeks to rescue Gloucester from the maiming wrath of Cornwall, and pays with his life. His fellow servants give the old man aid and set him on his way towards Dover (111.vii).

Neither pride of rank nor concern for his own trials keep Lear from matching by his own actions towards the miserable of all classes, the compassion he found in his companions. He commiserates the Fool in the storm: "Poor Fool and knave, I have one part in my heart/ That's sorry yet for thee" (111.ii.72-73). He notes that the Fool is cold, and would cheer him up: "Come on, my boy. How dost, my boy? Art cold?/ I am cold myself" (111.ii.68-69). He hurries the Fool into the hovel before himself: "In, boy, go first" (111.ii.26). Filled with dismay at the sight of the wretched Tom, Lear yet identifies with him and strips to imitate him: "Thou wert better in a grave than to answer with thy uncover'd body this extremity of the skies . . . Off, off, you lendings! (111.iv.103-11). Lear says on awakening in Cordelia's camp that he would die of pity to see another thus (1V.vii.53-54). He comforts Cordelia then, and later when they are prison-bound: "Be your tears wet? Yes, faith. I pray, weep not" (1V.vii.71) . . . "Wipe thine eyes" (V.iii.23).

Lear reaches the culmination of his moral growth in

the exercise of the love of dilection towards Cordelia. Here he achieves the "ripeness is all" state of which Edgar spoke to Gloucester. Ironically, it is Goneril who provides the plays's definition of this love--a love that exceeds every other value, even life itself, a love beyond words to describe:

Sir, I love you more than word can wield the matter;
 Dearer than eye-sight, space and liberty;
 Beyond what can be valued rich or rare;
 No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour;
 As much as child e'er lov'd, or father found;
 * A love that makes breath poor and speech unable;
 Beyond all manner of so much I love you. (1.i.54-61)

The closing scenes of the play are to be compared with the opening scene in order to measure the striking contrast that marks Lear's moral growth. In the opening scene Lear does not even really know his daughter, because he has no appreciation of her virtues. What interests him is the adulation she can bestow on him. He is rebuffed by her taciturnity and fiercely reacts to this by a rejection of his daughter. When Cordelia has ceased to please him, he says, then it were better had she not been born (1.i.233-34). His earlier love for her therefore, was a love of concupiscence, a love based on self-interest: "I lov'd her most, and thought to set my rest/ On her kind nursery" (1.i.123-24). In the recognition scene the changes in his relationship to Cordelia are evident. Self-aggrandizement is not the motive of his esteem for her now. Instead he humbles himself before her

and asks her forgiveness. He is cognizant of her virtues: this is implied by his reference to her as a "soul in bliss." Here we have indeed an instance of the conditions for love of friendship, and of dilection--that tendency of the will towards a good apprehended by the intellect. In the recognition scene the role of the intellect in the act of dilection is put foremost. This offers a contrast to the opening scene of the play, in which Lear expells Cordelia as an unknown, uncomprehended stranger. Cordelia's question, "Sir, do you know me?" focuses attention on this, and several phrases portray it symbolically: Lear speaks of "fair daylight"--he feels he is being taken from the grave--and he calls Cordelia a soul in bliss. The knowledge implicit in Lear's love includes, besides an awareness of Cordelia's virtues, a recognition of his own faults past and present: this is expressed by Lear's illusion that he is undergoing punishment on the wheel; by his references to his old age and weakness of mind; and by his apologies to Cordelia for the wrong he has done her. Part of Lear's intellectual awareness of the import of the recognition scene consists, as Goneril had stated about love, in knowing that it has a magnitude beyond words to express: "I know not what to say."

Lear. You do me wrong to take me out o' th' grave;
Thou art a soul in bliss, but I am bound
Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
Do scald like molten lead.

Cor. Sir, do you know me?

Lear. You are a spirit, I know; where did you die?

Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight?
 . . . I know not what to say.
 Methinks I should know you and know this man;
 Yet I am doubtful . . .
 . . . Do not laugh at me;
 For, as I am a man, I think this lady
 To be my child Cordelia. (IV.vii.45-70)

Can "as I am a man" be obliquely indicating that now Lear has arrived at the moral stature of an integrated man?

Aquinas holds that the possession of the sought end is attended by the emotion of joy in the concupiscible appetite, and by the activity of happiness in the intellect. Lear experiences this joy and this happiness in his union with Cordelia by the love of friendship and by dilection.³⁷ Lear's love for Cordelia is attended by the greatest joy experienced by any character in the play. This theme, love as the chief source of joy, was sounded by Regan in the opening scene:

. . . I profess
 Myself an enemy to all other joys
 Which the most precious square of sense possesses,
 And find I am alone felicitate
 In your dear highness' love. (I.i.72-76)

Here an explicit distinction is made between pleasure of sense and of intellect. Aquinas discusses this in his treatment of the two kinds of pleasure. He there distinguishes

³⁷ Conf. ch. 2, pp. 41 & 78.

the delight which arises from the presence of the sensible good, from the joy which follows rational desire. Joy is greater than delight, because intellectual knowledge and intellectual goods are greater and more noble than sense knowledge and sensible goods. The greatest joy on earth consists in the contemplation of the good, joined with a life of virtue.³⁸ Lear's words to Cordelia as they are conducted to prison give expression to this joy of the spirit:

. . . Come, let's away to prison;
 We two alone will sing like birds i' th' cage:
 . . . so we'll live,
 And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
 At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
 Talk of court news . . .
 . . . and we'll wear out,
 In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones
 That ebb and flow by th' moon. (V.iii.8-19)

When Lear enters at the end of the play with the dead Cordelia in his arms, he has lost her for a second time, but now his sense of enormous loss is a sign of fulness of love born of enkindled moral vision.

B. The Contributing Causes of Lear's Transformation

a) Suffering

The key development in Lear is the growth of the virtue

³⁸Conf. ch. 2, pp. 42-43; ST 1-11, 3, 2, ad 4; 4, 3 & 4; SCG 1, 100; 111, 48.

of prudence upon the foundation of the dispositions to that virtue which he already possessed. The latter point is treated below; but it is well to begin with the role that suffering played. That men in general and Lear in particular can gain virtue through insight achieved by suffering, is a recurring theme of the play.³⁹ Edgar is the chief spokesman of this theme, but other characters echo it. Goneril says that Lear must taste his folly; Regan, that the injuries wilful men suffer are their schoolmasters (11.iv.292-93 and

³⁹Bradley, Shakespearian Tragedy, p. 235: suffering revives the greatness of Lear and elicits sweetness in his character; his sight is purged by scalding tears: he sees that all that the world offers is vanity except love; p. 273: in the Third Act the good are seen growing better through suffering, the bad worse through success; Heilman, This Great Stage, p. 30: fundamental to Lear is the truth that he can learn by suffering; Maynard Mack, "We Come Crying Hither . . .," Essays on Shakespeare, ed. G. W. Chapman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 176: it is a greater thing to suffer than to lack the feelings and virtues that make suffering possible: this is a message of the play; Ribner, Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy, pp. 116-17: King Lear shows that the process of regeneration is a purgatorial one. To show the power of man to overcome evil, evil is presented at its worst. The theme of regeneration dominates the play; W.H. Clemens, The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery (London: Methuen, 1951), p. 152: by his sufferings Lear gains insight into the injustice, frailty of all mankind; Nowotny, "Lear's Questioning," p. 92: Lear learns that knowledge is from pain; R.B. Heilman, "The Lear World," English Institute Essays (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), p. 42: Gloucester gains vision in blindness; Lear gains it by madness; Muir, William Shakespeare, p. 29: Edgar, like Lear and Gloucester, learns by suffering, and grows wise, heroic. The above views are opposed by Elton, King Lear, p. 3: there is no regeneration in Lear, and no teleological view of the cosmos that applies a providential meaning to the tragedy.

304-306). Lear comes to this insight himself, and counsels the rich to learn from suffering what are their duties of compassion and justice towards the poor:

Take physic, Pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,
And show the Heavens more just. (111.iv.33-36)

Gloucester, after his mutilation, repents of his folly towards Edgar: "O my follies! Then Edgar was abus'd./ Kind Gods, forgive me that, and prosper him" (111.vii.90-91). His sorrows brought him this power of moral vision, a fact he hints at in his remark "I see it feelingly" (1V.vi.150), and in his previous confession:

I stumbled when I saw. Full oft 'tis seen
Our means secure us, and our mere defects
Prove our commodities. (1V.i.19-21)

Gloucester attributes the prosperous man's moral blindness to the fact that he has not suffered:

Let the superfluous and lust-dieted man,
That slaves your ordinance, that will not see
Because he does not feel, feel your power quickly;
So distribution should undo excess,
And each man have enough. (1V.i.67-71)

Gloucester's sufferings, after leading him to an attempt at suicide, bring him beyond this moral reversal to a repentance of his weakness, and a resolve to be patient (1V.vi.75-77). Edgar offers the fullest explanation in the play of the curative effects of suffering. His words serve as a commentary on Lear's growth through trial. Edgar is not himself insensitive to misery: when he sees his father

blinded and being led by the old man, he exclaims:

World, world, O world!
 But that they strange mutations make us hate thee,
 Life would not yield to age. (1V.i.10-12)

But Edgar is a man who is given to seeking consolation: in the midst of sorrow he notes, for example, that the griefs we witness in our betters lessen the sting of our own (111. vi.105-106). Life, he has found, is sweet, no matter what its burdens:

O! our lives' sweetness,
 That we the pain of death would hourly die
 • Rather than die at once! (V.iii.184-86)

When his father protests, "No further, sir; a man may rot even here" (V.ii.8), Edgar urges him on; and he tries to revive the dying Lear: "Look up, my Lord" (V.iii.312). Edgar offers the rational foundation for his optimistic view of suffering. He avows that he himself had by his sufferings gained the virtue of pity :

Glou. Now, good sir, what are you?
 Edg. A most poor man, made tame to Fortune's blows;
 Who, by the art of known and feeling sorrows,
 Am pregnant to good pity. (1V.vi.222-24)

He provides a universal application of his personal experience: it is the lot of all men to suffer and thereby to grow inwardly:

Men must endure
 Their going hence, even as their coming hither:
 Ripeness is all. (V.iii.9-11)

b) Lear's Previous Moral Endowments

Our opening view of Lear is a demonstration of his inner moral life in the very process of breaking up: the imprudence, the anger, the vainglory, the cruelty, explode in line after line in the dialogue. But later on in Act 1 evidence peeps through of a different Lear, a Lear who possessed excellent moral qualities. It becomes evident as the drama unfolds that the opening of the play does not present the typical Lear. It could be conjectured that the dramatist meant to open the play with a picture of a moral agent in the midst of a moral crisis in which he goes down to resounding but temporary moral defeat. He then for contrast allows the real Lear to reveal himself, a man with sufficient moral fibre to grow in his time of trial rather than be permanently crushed. It is an error then, in this reading of the play, to see in the early Lear a complete moral cripple, and in the later Lear a being ethically transformed to the roots of his being. A close reading of the play shows that we are dealing with a man whose inner growth rests upon a solidly-laid moral foundation.

Habits good and bad dispute for mastery in Lear's character. His vices become evident early in the play. Later, under the influence of reason, and by dint of repeated efforts that his loyal friends encourage, Lear makes some progress towards the development of virtue. Lear already possessed

a significant endowment of moral virtue, but through passion his vices dominated. Two factors in the drama indicate the basic moral worth in Lear. These factors are: the respect and love that is given him by persons of great moral integrity throughout the play, when he no longer has the means to demand or reward their services; and early evidence of excellent moral qualities in his character.

To deal with the first point: Lear's friends, Kent, Cordelia, the Fool, Gloucester and Edgar, adhere to him staunchly. This is in notable contrast to the divisions that soon spring up among Lear's enemies, in accordance with Gloucester's observation that cleavage among persons results when love cools (1.ii.110-20). Kent has moral qualities that make it incredible that he should have respect for a vicious man. He is a lover of truth whose occupation it is to be plain (11.ii.93). He hates flattery as a form of knavery (11.ii.111-14). No contraries hold more antipathy than he and a knave like Oswald (11.ii.88); he detests Oswald for his blind loyalty to an immoral mistress, and for his disloyalty to the King. It is this man that has honored Lear as a king, loved as a father, and followed as a master (1.i.140-42). He seeks service with Lear after the King has banished him, and offers him devotion and love. He has, it would seem, faith in a better nature in Lear, a nature he refers to when he summons Lear to use his "best consideration"

in his treatment of Cordelia (1.i.150). Kent reinforces with his expression, "the old, kind, King" (111.i.28) the credibility of Lear's own claim to be "the old kind father, whose frank heart gave all" (111.iv.20), and the "dear father" (11.iv.101-102). The Fool, who loved Cordelia and pined for her, who courageously speaks the truth about Lear's faults, yet stays by the King. He may reprove Kent for following a man who is out of favour; but he himself would consider himself a knave if he abandoned him (11.iv.66-77). Gloucester is not blind to Lear's faults, but he serves him with loyal courage. He may be shocked at Lear's rashness and injustice: "And the noble and true-hearted Kent banish'd--his offense, honesty! 'Tis strange" (1.ii.121-23). Yet, even if he die for it, he must aid the King (111.iii.18-20). His respect for Lear is undiminished in the King's degraded and maddened state: he would not let Goneril in his anointed flesh rash boarish fangs (111.vii.57)--he would kiss Lear's hand (1V.vi.134)--for him Lear has a cosmic grandeur even in ruin: he is a "ruined piece of nature," and, like the universe, great though in dissolution (1V.vi.136-37). France, by his surprise at Lear's treatment of Cordelia, his most-beloved daughter, indicates belief in a power of moral insight in Lear, that his banishment of Cordelia ill does justice to. France's shocked reaction to Lear's behaviour argues to a pattern of rational action from which the King is abruptly departing

(1.i.213-21). Cordelia's witness to Lear's basic moral worth is especially valuable, because of her high moral qualities of truth, courage, and wisdom, and because she was the chief victim of his anger. She rejects the pretense of the love trial; she sees through Burgundy's false avowal of love. To her sisters she can say: " I know you, what you are" (1.i.269). She foresees the neglect they will visit upon their father, and the eventual disclosure of their deceit (1.i.280-81). Yet Cordelia, no respecter of persons, and one who places moral ideals ahead of personal advantage, never withdraws from Lear her affection, her loyalty, or her respect. She recommends him to the care of her sisters, while regretting the sombre future she foresees for him. She does not find Lear contemptible in his madness but expresses his condition in a mighty image: "Mad as the vexed sea" (1V.iv.2). Cordelia values Lear above her every possession: let him who aids Lear take all her outward worth (1V.iv.10). She greets Lear with respect and love in the reconciliation scene: "How does my royal Lord/ How fares your Majesty?" (1V.vii.44). On the way to prison she avers that it is for Lear that she is sorrow-struck; for her own part she could outfrown false Fortune's frown (V.iii.5-6).

The second fact that argues for a sound moral foundation in Lear is early evidence of excellent moral qualities in his character, the good traits upon which his

friends based their regard for him. We find in the Lear of the early scenes a man with the capacity to make good moral judgments of character, with an attraction to persons of fine moral temper, and possessed of a concern for persons and a sensitivity to their feelings. This leads one to suspect that Lear had a potential for good, but that through the passions, the vices dominate.⁴⁰ His preference had always been for Cordelia among his daughters, and for Albany among his sons-in-law; judgments that the events of the play confirm (1.i.1 & 1.i.290). To the disguised Kent, after he has listened to his self-evaluation, Lear gives immediate approval: "Follow me; thou shalt serve me; if I like thee no worse after dinner I will not part from thee yet" (1.iv.43-45). He expresses his thanks to Kent with a gift for chastising Oswald (1.iv.92 and 98). Lear's relations with the Fool are an important gage of his character. The Fool is merciless and persistent in his attacks on Lear's folly: ". . . thou hadst little wit in they bald crown when thou gav'st thy golden one away" (1.iv.169-71). But Lear, while recoiling from this harsh truth, still demands it of the Fool, banters with him, and gives him careful hearing. In his train of knights it is their moral fibre that he esteems them for: they know their duty and support the honour of their

⁴⁰Lowers, King Lear, p. 29.

name (1.iv.271-75). Oswald he attacks for his lack of moral worth: here is a knave who puts service of his mistress's whims ahead of moral integrity. Lear is a king who demands obedience yet detests a servant who lacks principles:

This is a slave, whose easy-borrow'd pride
Dwells in the fickle grace of her he follows.
Out, varlet, from my sight! (11.iv.187-89)

An endearing quality in Lear from the beginning was his sensitivity to the feelings of others, and capacity for affection. He noted Goneril's displeasure: "How now, daughter! what makes that frontlet on? You are too much of late i' th' frown" (1.iv.197-98). He had perceived the pining looks of the Fool, who was grieving at the absence of Cordelia: "No more of that; I have noted it well" (1.iv.79). He called repeatedly for the Fool, from a desire for amusement perhaps, but also out of warmth of feeling towards him: "How now, my pretty knave! how dost thou?" (1.iv.101). Later on Lear builds on this disposition a series of compassionate words and gestures.

Four potential parts of the virtue of justice are esteemed by Lear although he does not directly practice them. They do illustrate however the presence in him of dispositions that prepare for the virtue of prudence, dispositions of understanding, reason, shrewdness and circumspection.⁴¹

⁴¹Conf. ch. 2, pp. 58-59 & 67-69.

Lear expects from his daughters the duties implicit in the virtue of gratitude. He seeks lodging of them and maintenance of his status. He reminds them of the favours he has granted them: "I gave you all" (11.iv.252)--"the old kind father, whose frank heart gave all" (111.iv.20). Lear esteems truth in the Fool (1.iv.188). He demands piety of his daughters. In Regan Lear looks for a kind welcome by title of her filial bond:

Regan. I am glad to see your Highness.

Lear. Regan, I think you are; I know what reason
 I have to think so; if thou shouldst not be glad,
 I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb,
 Sepulchring an adult'ress. (11.iv.129-33)

Regan, he says, knows better "The offices of nature, bond of childhood,/ Effects of courtesy, dues of gratitude;/ Thy half o' th' kingdom hast thou not forgot,/ Wherewith I thee endow'd" (11.iv.179-83). Lear shows a jealous concern for the respect which the virtue of respect of persons entitles him to as a king and master. So Lear orders Kent on his allegiance to hear him (1.i.167). He takes obvious pleasure in the disguised Kent's remark that in Lear he finds the authority that he respects:

Lear. Dost thou know me, fellow?

Kent. No, Sir; but you have that in your countenance
 which I would fain call master.

Lear. What's that?

Kent. Authority.

Lear. What service canst thou do?

Follow me; thou shalt serve me; if I like thee
 no worse after dinner I will not part from thee
 yet. (1.iv.28-45)

The contrasting insolence of Oswald incenses Lear: "Why came not the slave back to me when I call'd him? (1.iv.55-56). When Regan and Cornwall refuse to see him, this is "The images of revolt and flying off" (11.iv.90).

5. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE CREDIBILITY OF MORAL CHANGE IN LEAR

This thesis has presented the view that, examined by the light of Thomistic ethics, the moral change that occurs in King Lear possesses philosophical credibility. What follows is a summary of the findings of this analysis. The procedure to be followed consists in a pairing of the Thomistic doctrine on moral change with the textual evidence in King Lear under two headings: 1. The Foundations of Moral Change; 2. The Process of Moral Change.

1. The Foundations of Moral Change

In Thomistic doctrine the possibility of change is ultimately rooted in the composite nature of man's essence. Man is composed of matter and form. Matter is precisely a potentiality for determination, for the reception of forms.⁴² This ultimate foundation for change finds its more proximate expression in man's powers.⁴³ There is a distinction between the form of man, the soul, and his powers. His powers are

⁴²Conf.ch. 2, p. 25. ⁴³Conf. ch.2, pp. 30-31.

intermittently realized. The powers that were discussed for the purposes of this thesis were those of intellect, the will, and the sensitive appetites.⁴⁴ These powers have a certain amplitude; that is to say, they must be channeled and perfected so as to bring about human self-realization.⁴⁵ Since the concern of the thesis has been the moral character of King Lear, the self-realization focused upon has been that of Lear as a moral agent. This preoccupation resulted in the study of the virtues and vices both as uncovered by Aquinas, and as discovered in the examination of the character of Lear. The basis of moral development in the Thomistic scheme then consists in the initial moral neutrality in human nature. Man may go one way or another morally speaking. This is possible in view of the versatility of man's powers, it being the passions that are demonstrated to have that quality in King Lear. This versatility includes, besides a certain partial autonomy, capacity to be given direction through knowledge and freedom, and ability at any time to shake free from habits of either virtue or vice.

The passions may act in harmony with reason, and then they add swiftness and force to the pursuit of the end pointed out by reason. Or the passions may be in disharmony with reason, and in the internecine strife that ensues a

⁴⁴Conf. ch. 2, pp. 29-45. ⁴⁵Conf. ch. 2, pp. 46-49.

man's normal course of reasonable action may be replaced by passion-fed abandonment to the courses of vice. In Lear, his pattern of reasonable action is thwarted by the onset of the passion of anger. He acts towards Cordelia in a fashion that is out of accord with the dictates of his conscience, and the patterns of his previous life. Later on, the passion of sorrow also attacks his mind, and brings about a temporary derangement.

As has already been suggested, a further Thomistic insight into the nature and basis of moral change in man derives from the doctrine on the virtues. Virtues are good moral habits which man possesses only in potency in the beginning. This capacity he must actualize under the guidance of reason by repeated acts of virtue. Lear's reason incites him to develop virtues that will alter his wayward moral course. His feelings of repentance for his mistreatment of Cordelia, a growth in patience that will staunch his tears and enable him to bear his trials, a greater sense of the demands upon him of justice towards the poor, all these are virtues towards which Lear struggles by repeated efforts, and, in the case of patience, amid frequent failures. What man is not, he can become, is the truth implicit in Lear's moral struggle.

2. The Process of Moral Change

The moral agent in Thomism directs all his actions by the power of reason, and if reason is to direct a man's actions in accordance with his final end, it must be informed by the virtue of prudence. Prudence will direct a man's actions by means of the first principle of the moral life, that good is to be done, and evil avoided. Prudence will take for guide the ultimate norm of morality, the Divine Law, and the proximate norm, which is natural law, that is, the demands of reason. Prudence cannot perfect the faculties for good actions without the aid of the moral virtues; so it forms and develops them until justice informs the will, fortitude the irascible appetite, and temperance the concupiscible appetite. Lear fell by a defect in prudence. He had the universal principles needed for prudent decisions, but his conscience failed him in the application of these principles to concrete actions. He erred against regnative prudence, by the method he chose for the division of the kingdom: the flawed character of the love test as a means of determining the worth of his daughters escaped him, and he accepted the flattery of his daughters as a true avowal of love. But Lear's headlong plunge into imprudent acts occurred through his surrender to the passion of uncontrolled anger. He erred then through inconstancy: his appetite for revenge, influencing his will to withdraw from the good

purpose of properly rewarding his daughters, obscured his understanding and thereby affected his capacity to determine the moral quality of concrete actions. Other lapses in moral insight followed. Against particular prudence, Lear mistook the reason for Cordelia's silence, and the motive for Kent's intervention on her behalf. He threw caution to the winds when he entrusted himself to the care of Goneril and Regan. Setting docility aside, he paid no attention to the good counsel of Kent and of the King of France.

Lear's offenses against prudence soon led to other vices. Against legal justice he divided the realm in such a way that its peace and proper government were endangered. Against distributive justice, he failed to apportion the realm according to the merits of his daughters, and he robbed Cordelia and Kent of their possessions and of their citizenship rights. Against commutative justice, Lear offended Kent and his daughters by unjust judgment, by reviling, and by cursing. In addition, Lear committed acts of vice against temperance by pride, by feelings of indignation, by clamor, contumely, quarreling and cruelty.

Lear had possessed a foundation of basic moral goodness, and from this arose Lear's inward renewal. Lear possessed an extraordinary disposition for the virtue of prudence. He had the ability to universalize his individual moral experience. He could see beyond the particular action

to its relationship to the will of the gods, and the demands of human nature. By these two norms he judges the moral quality of human acts, rather than merely by their effects on his personal convenience. Lear's leaning towards prudence is further shown by his docile attention to the Fool's comments; by the caution and circumspection with which he prepares to assess Goneril's hospitality; and by the understanding he brings to the evaluation of the character of the disguised Kent and of Oswald. He is sensitive to the demands that justice makes upon his daughters and subjects in regard to gratitude, piety, observance, obedience and truth. His growth in virtue was occasioned by an increase in the virtue of prudence. This, in turn, he gained as a result of his sufferings, and through the counsel and example of his friends, to which he gave a receptive mind. Prudence leads Lear first of all to repent of his folly, and of his injustice towards Cordelia. He is led from there to an insight into the demands of other moral virtues, and to a desire to perfect himself in those which touch on his own condition. Under the heading of justice, he sees the requirement for justice in the courts, and for the enlightened exercise of authority on the part of rulers, and the duty incumbent on the rich to give aid to the poor. Under the heading of fortitude, Lear struggles for, and in part attains, the virtue of patience. In regard to temperance,

he is alive to the dehumanizing effects of the vice of sexual licence; and he embraces the virtue of humility. Lear reaches the culmination of his moral growth in the virtue of love. This he exercises through an all-embracing compassion for people in need; but chiefly, through his love for Cordelia. Here Lear exercises the love of friendship and dilection in such a way that it brings him to the "ripeness is all" moral triumph to which Edgar had referred.

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APPENDIX

ABSTRACT OF

AN ETHICAL APPRECIATION OF THE CHARACTER OF THE KING IN SHAKESPEARE'S KING LEAR

The aim of this thesis is to make an ethical appreciation of the character of the King in Shakespeare's drama, King Lear. The instrument to be employed in this analysis is the moral philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas. This ethical appreciation treats of the King as a moral agent; his character and actions are studied in terms of good and evil--more specifically, in relation to the virtues and vices of the Thomistic system.

The work of the thesis, to define it more specifically, is to address itself to an ethical problem which arises in connection with Shakespeare's development of Lear's character, a problem which has much exercised the literary scholars. This is the question of the continuity of identity between the Lear of the early part of the play, and the Lear that emerges out of emotional and physical prostration into seemingly regenerated moral greatness in the final scenes of the play. The question can be formulated in this way: does

the dramatist in fact depict a case of moral growth in Lear, and further, does he adequately account for it?

There is no intention of attempting to prove that Shakespeare is a conscious Thomist, even though to attack the above question the ethics of St. Thomas is employed. That Shakespeare might have been in some direct way influenced by Thomistic philosophy is a question that is beyond the ambit of this thesis. But in view of the philosophical climate that prevailed in Shakespeare's England, it is accepted that the ethics of St. Thomas is a suitable tool for the ethical appreciation of a Shakespearean character.

The thesis comprises three chapters. Chapter One, A Historical Survey, provides, first of all, justification for an ethical appreciation of a dramatic character such as King Lear. Secondly, this chapter establishes the suitability of the ethics of St. Thomas as a basis for an ethical appreciation of King Lear. Chapter Two, The Moral Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, presents in summary form the ethical doctrine of Aquinas and its philosophical foundations, with special emphasis on the Thomistic theory of ethical change. Chapter Three, An Ethical Appreciation of King Lear, applies the ethics of Aquinas to the problem of moral change in King Lear. The conclusion to the thesis as a whole ends up this chapter.

The thesis reaches the following conclusion about the problem of moral change in King Lear as viewed in the light of Thomistic ethics. The drama presents Lear as a person who possesses some moral goodness, but who falls through one basic vice, the vice of imprudence. The root cause of this imprudence is the King's uncontrolled passion of anger. This vice of imprudence leads Lear into the commission of other faults, particularly against the virtues of justice and temperance. A moral renewal begins in Lear's character after he experiences the downfall that his vices occasioned. This inner growth takes the form of a re-awakening of his capacity for moral insight. The virtue of prudence develops in him- under the agency of healing suffering, and with the aid of the counsel and support of his friends. Other virtues develop in his character under the guidance of prudence. Lear reaches the culmination of his moral growth in the virtue of love. This he exercises towards all persons who are in need, but in a special way towards his daughter Cordelia.

The thesis suggests that the above growth-profile of King Lear is a reasonable interpretation of the dramatic text; and that it likewise reflects a growth-pattern of the human agent that finds adequate support in the ethics of St. Thomas Aquinas.