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PLEASURE AS A PRACTICAL ACTIVITY OF THE INTELLECT IN SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

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ABSTRACT : Pleasure is a prominent theme in the understanding of man and his respective activity of the highest faculty, that is, the contemplation, in the future life, of God, according to the Thomasian philosophy. It is a way of partially granting man a contemplation of goodness, of the immutable joys, in himself. What is appetizing becomes an object of delight when it fits the idea of good. Starting from this assumption, I will approach the Aristotelian-Thomasian perspective (13th century). The medieval master will present a theoretical apparatus that tends to redirect existence by containing human passions. Man still communes, in this world, with perfect goodness through contemplation and, also, through the practical activity of the intellect that orders the actions and passions proper to men, passing them through the sieve of virtue.

Keywords : Pleasure; Friendship; Action; Ethics; Thomas Aquinas.

RESUMEN: El placer es un tema destacado en la comprensión del hombre y la actividad de su facultad suprema, es decir, la contemplación de Dios en la vida futura, según la filosofía tomista. Es una forma de conceder al hombre una contemplación parcial de la bondad, de los goces inmutables, en su interior. Lo apetitoso se convierte en objeto de deleite cuando se ajusta a la idea del bien. Partiendo de este supuesto, abordaré la perspectiva aristotélico-tomasiana (siglo XIII). El maestro medieval presentará un aparato teórico que tiende a reorientar la existencia al contener las pasiones humanas. El hombre aún comulga, en este mundo, con la bondad perfecta mediante la contemplación y, también, mediante la actividad práctica del intelecto que ordena las acciones y pasiones propias de los hombres, pasándolas por el tamiz de la virtud.

Palabras clave: Placer; Amistad; Acción; Ética; Tomás de Aquino.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Pleasure is one of the themes addressed by Thomas Aquinas. It is in the third volume of the *Summa Theologica* that, when dealing with the passions of the soul, the medieval philosopher will explain how the individual must have a mature and understandable view of it, since it encompasses human relationships and joy when directed towards good. When dealing with pleasure, Thomas takes into consideration the present human condition, that is, a means by which man can overcome his temporal condition and redirect his existence, understanding the theme under discussion as an effect of happiness.

All the themes that are dealt with by Thomas Aquinas, works of a theological and philosophical nature, are of remarkable esteem. He brings up themes that allow for a fruitful dialogue with the ethical and philosophical plane. Therefore, we will resort to three questions unfolded in three specific articles of the *Summa Theologica*, in addition to the commentaries and other primary works. These articles are: a) Is action the proper cause of pleasure? b) Is movement the cause of pleasure? c) Is doing good to another the cause of pleasure? Inserted in his theological-moral treatises, the pertinent reflection on pleasure allows

us to perceive an originality.

Pleasure is not a new topic, but it had already been addressed from a philosophical perspective by other philosophers, such as Epicurus, Boethius and Aristotle himself. Thomas overcomes the erroneous understanding of pleasure as a desire that seeks momentary satisfaction. Following Aristotle, the Silent Ox of Sicily shares the same idea that human beings mature and consequently their mentality adapts to new ways of being, since a life based solely on the pursuit of constant pleasure is unacceptable.

Thomas will reconsider the purpose of our existence, that is, what our practices lead us to. He will take the Greek concept of good, which, in turn, overcomes individual evil. However, Aquinas will understand physical pleasure as being, in most cases, contrary to the guidance of the truth contained in the intellect; what allows us to analyze what we desire is whether or not the delightful object is in line with the expected good. The Silent Ox of Sicily states: “While hope aims at the expected good, hope is caused by love; because there is no hope of the good that is desired and

loved¹. ”

Pleasure consists of the consequence of our life with the presupposition of a good. Thomas proposes an itinerary that alludes to the formation of the human being in its integrity, which does not reject the practical or theoretical horizon. Thus, it promotes an abandonment of people to bad habits that denigrate the dignity of their nature in an attempt to not allow the same pleasure to veil the lights of truth. Chesterton tells us, referring to Saint Thomas: “His Aristotelianism simply meant that the study of the most modest fact will lead to the study of the highest truth” (2015, p. 78). If pleasure is accompanied by prudence, it will be an instrument of good for people. And the degree of honesty, contained in pleasure through a straight and clear conscience, will provide joy. Therefore, the Medieval Master will share pleasure as a disposition that can give continuity to good; and the perception that good was intentionally apprehended.

The path to discuss this article was taken through bibliographical foundations, based on primary and secondary works. With the aim of making Aquinas' thought accessible, reproducing the thought of the aforementioned philosopher. The construction process was carried out

systematically with the intention of contributing to readers a foundation that has credibility due to the theoretical framework. The first is Aquinas' most propagated work: *Summa Theologica*, which in the third volume alludes to the passions of the soul. Among others, the following stand out: *Initiation to Saint Thomas Aquinas*, by Jean-Pierre Torrel; *The New Age of the Spirit* (Frei Carlos Josaphat); *Reason Service of Faith* (Carlos Costa). *Saint Thomas Aquinas* (Chesterton).

Regarding the ethical concepts of Saint Thomas and Aristotle, the following works are used as a basis: *Ethics of the Greatest Masters* (Olinto Pegoraro); *Nicomachean Ethics* (Aristotle). The latter was adapted to the Thomasian view with regard to Christian ethics, which in turn permeates the discussion of this article. *Nicola Abbagnano's dictionary of philosophy* for the conceptualization of philosophical terms.

2. THE PRACTICAL HORIZON AND THE CAUSALITY OF PLEASURE

As every theory admits a specificity when trying to answer certain questions about a problem, it is no different in Thomas' philosophy. We notice that, given

¹ Cf. *S. Th.*, III, 3.q. 40, a.7,r.

the various areas covered by Aquinas, he formulates a conception to explain whether or not pleasure comes from an action ².

Given that human history goes through the process of organization and civilization, ethics is considered as a link that unites the first impulse that is reflected in the particular behavioral actions and culture of each era. However, let us consider each philosophical period as an expansion of an ethical particle. In this case, medieval ethics, detected in Thomist philosophy. Its practical function is to make man good.

Regarding the philosophy that arises from the reality posed by experience, pleasure appears as a motivating and determining principle that aims at well-guided action. Acting after moderate reflection and the sensitive element are

composed of two indispensable components for understanding pleasure in the practical horizon ³. Given that men aim at an excellent level when they are aiming at the most beautiful and most adaptable. The most coherent action is the one most completely disposed towards the most important material thing perceptible to the senses, and this is subject to the reason of the agent. It is through performance that we achieve the good ⁴that suits us. As Thomas Aquinas tells us: “Since reason is like the root of good in man, this good will be all the more perfect the more it can extend to more things that are convenient to man ⁵. ”

Pleasure consists of a natural potential that also resides in human beings. This element, intrinsic to the individual, makes him susceptible to changes in his

² Action begins with the human being himself. Without the human being's disposition to do so, there will be no action. He motivates action and is its final cause in terms of practical meaning. Acting means excellent activity that directs man to the understanding of the ethical being. The awareness of action reflects a disposition that overcomes obstacles and guides movements, giving them meaning. For Abbagnano (2007), there are two types of action for the scholastics. They are: “elicit voluntary action”, which corresponds to the *operation of the will* (wanting); and “commanded action”, which is directed by the will, has as its principle and is directed by the will.

³The practical horizon is variable in terms of its structure. Its founding basis differs from that which guides the theoretical horizon. Its possibility consists of the orientation that provides a differentiated manner consistent with accessibility to the object. Its aspect is centered on concrete situations, which, in

turn, act in common agreement between the situation in which we find ourselves and the guiding sense that enables, leads and provides us with action. See MONTE ESTORIL Presentation . In: ARISTÓTELES (2009). Nicomachean Ethics.

⁴In the conception of Faitanin and Veiga (2015), good is conceptualized through its connection with appetite in reality. It resides in the object itself, since good leads to the appetibility of the being that exists in the object of apprehension. Good is a flexibility of being towards the appetizable being, as much as it can be distinguished by the sieve of goodness present in the decision-making power of the metaphysically good. God provides goodness in things that at the same time resembles divine goodness, and as creatures, aiming at the desire to preserve goodness, Thomas highlights the good to which things tend. For this understanding, Thomas will dialogue with Platonic and Aristotelian thought.

⁵ Cf. S. Th. ,III, 3, q. 25, a.1, r.

behavior in relation to the *microcosm* (self-view), the *macrocosm* (worldview), and the contemplation of the sacred, with a view to the definitive end of human existence. Thus, human operation is implicit in the sense that pleasure justifies behavior, and explicit in the possibility of the same pleasure guiding or resulting from an action. For adequate execution is already an appetizing good.

2.1 THE QUALITY OF ETHICAL ACTION IN THOMAS AQUINAS

Thomas Aquinas' ethical conception derives from Aristotle's perspective on naturalness, but with an addendum: the universe and man were created by God, and thus, the Thomasian ethical plan is not restricted to the natural, but consists of a transcendental law, the eternal law. God's creative principle is the ordering principle of men, created in his image and likeness and led to their respective ends by the action of the first cause manifested by divine providence.

Man, endowed with autonomy in his actions, endowed with reason, prioritizes the One from whom he comes as a derivative, consequently, he shifts his gaze onto himself, that is, as an individual who carries the capacity to choose without external interruption. Let us therefore consider the ultimate end as the mediator of

our actions, given that bad choices may leave us exempt from the affirmation of what is divine in us. Costa states: "This is the core of Thomist ethics: its contextualization in the real world of human life directed towards its Creator" (2013, p. 84).

Furthermore, people who direct their lives according to Thomas Aquinas' ethical horizon give themselves the opportunity to actualize their primary characteristic, freedom and rational capacity; becoming capable of directing their existence towards the supreme good, that is, perfect happiness. The core of all philosophical and theological reflection on Christianity contributes to revelation. Consequently, such a mystery leads, according to philosophical means, to an idea of happiness that implies a correspondence to the idea of good that has a perfect organization and durability. This good exists, and in Aquinas' understanding it is God, to whom man is centered regarding his necessary ordering according to Costa (1993). In this case, the manifestation of the ethical nature that is intrinsic to man is already perceptible, acting after reflection, not being impulsive and much less unpredictable.

Thomas' ethical perspective becomes possible in every ethical horizon, worthy of being accepted and observed as a

plausible theory. Here is an addendum to the aforementioned ethics: even abstracting many qualities of Aristotle's practical horizon, Thomas, unlike the Greeks, elaborates such a practical plan aiming at a bias that encompasses anthropology, metaphysics and politics. However, the basis for such proceeding consists in the admission of the following maxim: the universe was created by God and is directed towards eternity. Action must take into account the eternity to be achieved. "It came from God and will return to Him. It is up to man to find the way back [...]" (PEGORARO, 2013, p. 91).

Happiness or satisfactory reward for those who adhere to Aquinas' ethical plan is extracted from the innermost part of the individual, as he or she is in a constant search for divinity through a demanding transformation of the continuous conquest of good habits. "Therefore, man's journey demands a set of virtues" (idem). But this happiness goes beyond historical temporality; Aquinas supersedes the Aristotelian vision, since he places it in eternity.

Thus, human virtues and faith, both walk hand in hand with reason, according to the Angelic Doctor. They are indispensable

prerequisites for understanding this ethical aspect. Thomas appropriates conditions from the Christian faith, from the Stoics⁶ and from the works of the Stagirite, and also uses some works of a doctrinal, Platonic and Neoplatonic nature. Aquinas will conclude that there is a unity between time and eternity, considering Christian concepts and their complement in the citizen and in the exercise of citizenship. This unity is distinct as each one occupies the space that is appropriate to it, but tends towards the same end, God, the supreme creator. Regarding this, Pegoraro says:

Finally, Thomas, without ignoring the limits of reason, thinks that the truths of faith (object of revelation) and the truths of reason (constructed by philosophy) are two paths, two focuses of light that God gave to man so that he may know the eternal plan, inscribed in nature and, therefore, accessible to intelligence, but not fully. Thus, reason can help to recognize the existence of the creator and to recognize the world as his creature (2013, p. 86).

Man is a political and logical animal and, consequently, is not a stranger to society and its circumstances, much less to what is knowable. Saint Thomas' epistemology is interconnected with the

⁶ Philosophical doctrine of Ancient Greece. It stood out for prioritizing knowledge over external

influences and feelings, that is, remaining faithful to knowledge.

idea that he conceives of man, as a substantial unity of sensitive corporeal elements and the *intelligible* (rational) soul, according to Costa (1993). Given that knowledge arises from experience through the senses and its relationship with reason and intellect, nothing is configured in an individual who has not undergone sensitive or intellectual knowledge. In the senses is *reality* (concrete forms); in reason, critical activity and the apprehension of abstract forms. Thomas identifies reason with transcendence, faith that is placed in an attempt to seek understanding.

The medieval master mastered a philosophical-ethical conception centered on human issues, based mainly on Aristotle's philosophy and faith. For Aquinas, reason has much to demonstrate in its coherence with faith, since it is noticeable that he tried not to make a sneaky speech about God. Above all, for Aquinas, the reason contained in man is an image of divine reason, as Costa (1993) presents. The discourse that comes from the followers of faith about God is enhanced, leading them to the possibility of abstracting something from the world of faith. The consistency of

the discourse is guaranteed through the complement that philosophy provides to theology and theology to philosophy. "If the knowledge of the natural order corresponds to a science – philosophy –, the knowledge of this new supernatural order, founded on revelation, corresponds to Theology" (COSTA, 1993, p. 44). Given that the Christian instruction book, the Bible, was written by observing human reality, it follows that there is a close relationship between the *corporal* (matter) and *spiritual* (spirit) complex.

2.2 KNOWING IN THOMAS AQUINAS: IMPLICATIONS IN THE SCOPE OF HUMAN EXISTENCE

As for the visibility of the good intentionality of the action, we find that it arises, as in every vast philosophical field, from the achievement of an ultimate and satisfactory objective. Given the fact that every action is executed in accordance with the guiding and promoting principle *par excellence*, the theoretical horizon⁷, that is, the apprehension of the object by the intellect. As man becomes aware of the

⁷The theoretical horizon is identified as the constitution of a formation that allows us to contemplate the truth, which resides in the intellect for Aquinas. The being that resides in the theoretical horizon differs from the being that is found in the practical horizon, as it is unchangeable. The

theoretical one admits an understanding through wisdom of the principle and cause of things. It is the meaning that guides us in our actions, that is, the guiding meaning is present in the different situations in which we find ourselves.

noble part of the soul contained within him, reason, the challenging possibility of being the controller of his desire appears to him.

Reason begins life and shapes it to educate desires. It is inconceivable, in this philosophical perspective, to separate life from pleasure. Thus, *existence* (life) is an exercise of the practicality that is intrinsic to it over the object and, consequently, over its dispositions.

We come to the question of improving human practicalities. We keep in mind that life must be understood in its entirety, provided with biased elements that drive us to adopt a measured stance in all situations, whether active or passive. We give meaning to our activities by conceiving pleasure as an indispensable quality for their improvement.

The feasibility of the subject's action provides a connection between the individual who acts and the object. Therefore, the beginning of the operation, through the senses, is considered to be a fundamental segment for the concretization of an operationalization. For the movement to be well guided, it is necessary that the two qualities are arranged in harmony with perfection. The *intellect* (reason) and the *disposition* (to act) must be improved in terms of the apprehension of the object, with a perceptive impression of whether it is delightful or not.

When we set out to take action, we identify in the disposition of the sensitive and the agent a straightforward precision of the potentiality contained in our being. All the elements that are placed at our disposal assume a subservient position. The most suitable object is in the tendency of the most beautiful and most convenient. The perfect action is that which demonstrates a relationship with the sense equated to a certain degree of perfection envisioned and desired, given that the most desirable is very perfect.

[...] two things are required for pleasure: the attainment of the appropriate good and the knowledge of this attainment. Now, these two things consist in a certain action; for knowledge in act is an action, and likewise, by an action we attain the appropriate good. Moreover, the appropriate action is itself an appropriate good. It is necessary, therefore, that all pleasure proceed from an action. (AQUINAS, *S. Th.* , III, 3, q. 32, a.1, r)

It is well known that pleasure is not restricted to the human senses; we can admit it in intellectual intuition, regarding the relevance of considering the truth contained in things, at the same time that we can consider it so true that it becomes indubitable. While a true operation is culminated, it is important to emphasize that

there is also a delightful operation. However, the detention of the opening of pleasure is not restricted to the senses, but they are effective channels for its conduction to perfection.

It is worth noting that there is a sharing of activities among men, that is, each one exercises it in a certain area and with the possibilities that he most desires. Thus says Aristotle: “Now the pleasure that leads the activities to a greater degree of completeness, and so is life, for which all humans yearn” (ARISTOTLE, 2009, p. 229). It is, therefore, an incessant search for pleasure by everyone, because that which encompasses and completes all existence has a sign of predilection.

The differentiation of the intensity of activities is observed in the degree of satisfaction or completeness granted by the relevance of the pleasure that is intrinsic to it. In the Aristotelian conception, regarding Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, we can perceive the Philosopher's position regarding the correlation of pleasure and the intensity of the activity, considering the indissoluble relationship between them. One quality includes the important participation of the other so that together they give meaning to the action, granting the opportunity to recognize its relevance that is present in the degree of discernment, which we must agree is within the

competence of the various areas of identification of pleasure. Regarding this, the Stagirite says:

For the intensity of an activity increases with the pleasure that is pertinent to it. Thus, those who carry out their activity with pleasure obtain a higher degree of discernment and rigor regarding each task, as is the case of those who become competent in geometry through the pleasure they feel in solving geometric problems. They understand each detail in a deeper way (ARISTOTLE, 2009, p. 230).

It is necessary to emphasize the distinction between activities, and thus we admit such differentiation by excellence or mediocrity. The first consists of the excellent fruit of a serious movement; the other comes from the perversity resulting from a bad movement. Therefore, those who yearn for right conduct are recognized as worthy of praise, while wicked men are deserving of reprimand. As executions differ, so too does pleasure, given the vast variety of types of pleasure present in man. It is with great reservation that we emphasize activities as being superior according to an accumulation of purity in their gradual phases, according to Aristotle (2009).

From the perspective that pleasure varies according to the nature of the agent,

we emphasize that what arouses the appetite for some, for others, takes away the taste of seeing it. What delights the action for some can also create abjection on the part of others. As what constitutes the relevance of one thing to another is the degree of excellence and the goodness of the agent, we must give credit and recognize the truth of these pleasures. This is what makes the things that provoke true joy in us satisfactory. Regarding the opposite, that is, shameful pleasures, the Philosopher says: “It is, therefore, evident that those pleasures that are unanimously considered shameful cannot be called pleasures, except for those who are in a state of depravity” (ARISTOTLE, 2009, p. 232).

3. LOVE AS THE FOUNDING PRINCIPLE OF DELIGHTFUL FRIENDSHIP

The question of the other also permeates the work of the Angelic Doctor, given that being willing to serve and finding delight in a kind action dignifies human nature and elevates it to the recognition of its potential for good. Knowledge and love are the necessary dispositions to inaugurate a communion of feelings that produce intimacy between one person and another. Existence consists, therefore, in seeing in the other the possibility of allowing oneself

to be in him and for him, thus awakening him to a new way of being, proper to someone who becomes aware of being loved and reciprocates by loving. However, we recognize that such reciprocity occurs through the compatibility of affection and knowledge.

Love is, in the conception of Josaphat (2009), presented as an indispensable passion, which gives dynamism and meaning to the life of the human being. It has some capacities, among which the inclination towards good stands out, which in turn is divided into two: sensitive and spiritual. That is, good is in fact good when we desire something desirable and convenient, and especially for someone who inspires us to love well. However, such an idea will lead to the understanding of love as being the value of values. It is certain that there is the presence of such loving spontaneity in the understanding of human acts as well as in the audible voice of God that resonates through his plans and mysteries. The intention of the medieval master is contained in the expression of Josaphat (2009, p. 90): “It must encompass the simple experiences of the verb to love, involve all the most eminent forms of human love and see if it is possible to glimpse, while one can, the entire mystery of divine love”.

Thomas will make a tripartite division of the pleasure resulting from the benefit done to another. The first is related to the effect; what can be produced in the other. The second with the purpose; a reward resulting from such action. The third derives from the principle, which is exemplified in three. They are: a) the capacity to do good, b) the habit that inclines to do good and c) that moves to act.

As for the three principles that cause pleasure, the first is focused on reflecting on the realization of the right intention in the other. Reciprocity is the guarantee that the good done to the other also serves our good, since love is the link in this friendly relationship. Thomas states: “[...] as we consider our good the good of the other due to the union of love”⁸. Regarding the end, in this case doing good to the other would not only be a reciprocal satisfaction, but a justification for those who act in this way. They will become imbued with hope that good will come as a reward for themselves, coming from men or from God. Aquinas says: “Indeed, hope is the cause of pleasure”⁹. The third and last way is related to the capacity to do good. The central axis of this way is intrinsically related to the causative principle.

Good is materialized when the agent provides himself and his neighbor with a natural inclination to the delightful act of offering and sharing with others his excellence and participation in divine goodness. Man becomes capable of doing good by remembering, when addressing others, his divine filiation. He becomes connatural in the practice of goodness through the communication of the goods that are his own. Aquinas tells us: “The first is the capacity to do good: thus, doing good becomes delightful because man then imagines himself to be very endowed with goods, since he can communicate them to others¹⁰.”

3.1 FRIENDSHIP AS AN EXERCISE AND MANIFESTATION OF HUMAN FULFILLMENT

To reflect on such an engaging and pertinent theme, Aristotle's philosophy, more specifically book VIII of his work *Nicomachean Ethics*, will serve as a guiding subsidy, in line with the conception of the other, carried out by Thomas Aquinas, in question thirty-two, article six, of the third volume of the *Summa Theologica*.

The Stagirite's conception of friendship is closely linked to communal life, that is, the completeness of the human

⁸ Cf. *S. Th.*., III, 1.q. 32, a.6,r.

⁹ Cf. *S. Th.*., III, 1.q. 32, a.6,r.

¹⁰ Cf. *S. Th.*., III, 1.q. 32, a.3,r.

being in the community. Even if they enjoy other goods, no one wants to live without friends. Although it is not a convenient good, friendship is in fact a consolation that maintains balance in the various situations of life, providing those who consider themselves friends with a sharing of themselves with others and their respective needs. The Philosopher states:

Friends are a help to the young, by keeping them from doing foolish things; and to the old, by taking care of them and by making up for the growing loss of autonomy that results from their weakness. But to those who are in the prime of life, friends are a help to the performance of excellent actions (ARISTOTLE, 2009, p, 174).

In order for this friendly relationship to exist, it is necessary to observe the dispositions of the individuals involved in this spontaneous and reciprocal movement. Being a friend and allowing the other person to be one implies a mutual relationship between both parties. Wishing each other everything that is appropriate for goodness, without this desire going unnoticed. It is important to note that it is suggested that we be cautious of possible incompatibilities with friendship, because we realize that what is important in building a solid friendship is to take into account the qualities that come from our character.

Friendship and pleasure are closely related in terms of the pleasure of doing good to others and receiving it in return. Solid friendship is based on those who aim for good as the principle of all mutual action, that is, wishing good for others with the same intensity. Therefore, the good we wish for ourselves is the same that we should deposit in others through directed intellectual appetite. We should value our friends for who they are and not for formulated and unbreakable archetypes of friendships conceived by our subjectivity.

The permanence of good is the fair measure of the duration of friendship. The individual, in his collective coexistence, is not focused on the principle of being pleasant, but of addressing others pleasantly, that is, men who carry kindness are transmitters of it by the fact of being pleasant. Thus, they become useful to others, according to Aristotle (2009).

It is clear how much the Philosopher understood the meaning of friendship based on dignity, that is, in the possibility of being a friend or not there is a determining factor. To achieve an intimate, pleasurable and friendly relationship with the other, one must take into account the process that makes us worthy of such excellence. This process encompasses the becoming worthy of people who thus yearn for authentic friendship, and the self-recognition of this

same dignity by them. Given the explanation of the process, Aristotle gives credibility: “First, they must become worthy of friendship and this same dignity can be recognized in them. The desire for friendship arises quickly, but friendship does not” (2009, p. 179).

The correlation between pleasure and friendship designates the degree of excellence of the agent ¹¹. Perfection is contained in the persistence of pleasure in this spontaneous action that springs from the potentiality of desiring the things that are desirable to us. The ability to offer the other a pleasantness in friendly coexistence leads to the apprehension of true friendship, as friends centered on the aforementioned connection give each other mutual pleasure. As for what has been stated, it is only possible because it arises from good, since men who fit into goodness are determinedly useful to each other. Consequently, pleasure is independent of the relationship between inferior and superior men. Given that each person must post their right intention and characterize friendship arising from justice, the Stagirite tells us: “But the relations of friendship between these are, above all,

lasting, when they receive in return the same thing they give, such as, for example, pleasure, and not just any pleasure, but a determined pleasure, obtained from the same thing, by people of the same level” (ARISTOTLE, 2009, p. 179).

The atmosphere created by true friends is based on dialogue, from which the ease of friendship arises. Living together in a community is a natural consequence of our natural inclination, which is always inclined towards what brings us pleasure rather than pain. Living together involves creating responsibility for one another. The fruits of a guided friendship are noticeable when we spend our lives together.

Reciprocity is the backbone of this reflection, along with the connection with love in an understanding of absolute good and the object of that love. Pleasantness, to be understood in its entirety, needs to be guided by good. In this way, good men want good for the people they like for their own sake, without taking into account the possibility of a passionate emotional state, but in proportion to what springs from the most intimate part of man, from his soul. The direction given by love makes us

¹¹ Action is an expression of man as he is aware of his condition, since the individual as a practical being is the foundation of action. Every path of the practical man must be traced with the end in mind. It is in this terminology, agent, that we detect the

ethical being, where we perceive on the practical horizon the interconnected action and production. Agent is the name given to someone who converts a theoretical or practical reality into a performed action.

become an occasion of delight for the other. By loving a friend, we love ourselves. By becoming a good for a friend, we become appreciative of our own good.

For indeed what is absolutely good and pleasant seems to be susceptible of absolute love and to be simply willed, while what is good and pleasant for each person in particular is an object of love and willed for that person. The good is, however, for good men, susceptible of love and willed both absolutely and in relation to themselves (ARISTOTLE, 2009, p. 181).

Following Aristotle, the Angelic Doctor identifies love as the founding principle of a solid friendship. To do or suffer for a friend is a source of pleasure for us, as we are driven to act with the intention of becoming more and more human. For those who love their neighbor, whoever takes the initiative to love another, contributes to the achievement of the fullness of such an act. Then, such a feeling becomes unison in the expressions that edify and grant us a correction, so that we can reach our excellence, given that we aim at wisdom as an indispensable element among the fruits of a plausible friendship.

Thomas exhorts us: “[...] to give

man the impression of his wisdom and excellence”¹².

3.2 CHARACTER AS A UNIT THAT PROPOSES THE INDISSOLUBILITY OF FRIENDSHIP

The relevance of this reflection is present in the disposition of the character of individuals who desire a friendship resulting from fruitful acts, endowed with characters that enhance human actions in conjunction with the excellence of action. Let us take into consideration some indispensable qualities for such an axiom: a) excellence, b) self-control and c) transcendence.

A dispositional awareness brings together the concepts for the three premises that have been exposed. The first would be the consideration of self-control as a quality worthy of praise and observance. The second is centered on the conception that the man who thus conceives his existence is master of himself, when thinking he is able to contain himself and direct his action, therefore, whoever controls himself will not pursue vile actions, he will act well by virtue of the guiding sense. The third is contained, from the Aristotelian perspective, in the disposition of a divine character¹³.

¹² Cf. *S. Th.*., III, 3.q. 32, a.6,r.

¹³ It would be a natural disposition that has considerable qualities and is analogous to perfection.

Self-control coincides with one of the most excellent capacities of human existence. As a person becomes aware of such dignity, he or she carries common sense as a determining criterion. The absence of control is perceptible through the enjoyment felt with bodily pleasures, that is, it is through them that we define the temperate or debauched person according to Aristotle (2009).

It is clear, in Book VII of Nicomachean Ethics, that the consequences of the harm that someone apparently does to himself, may affect others, since it creates an objection to the debauched person. In a situation of debauchery, the person involved enjoys an incurable pleasure; on the other hand, the person who loses control of himself is curable. Given that, for Aristotle (2009), the lack of control does not assume the same criterion of discernment as the perverse disposition. The Philosopher tells us: "While perversion is a disposition that goes completely unnoticed (by those who have it), the lack of control is a state that does not go unnoticed" (ARISTOTLE, 2009, p.163). It is not that those who do not restrain themselves are unjust, but they

commit acts of injustice.

Those who do not control themselves, when it comes to controlling their desires, do not allow themselves the flexibility to transform them through their guiding sense, but they give their desires the opportunity to vehemently attack them. We therefore consider that not all pleasure is cause for disapproval, but those that are considered shameful. Aristotle (2009) invites us to reflect on the right position, since there is also, between excess and lack of pleasure, a position of balance that does not change when we assume it. Between not feeling pleasure in the body and feeling it in excess. Those who truly control themselves are inserted in the right measure, in a position of balance between excess and lack. The importance of seeking such a position is in the intention of being cautious when faced with things that cause us pleasure, since the more pleasures give us pleasure, the further they distance us from sanity. Furthermore, some forms of feeling pleasure are *pathological* (sick).

Therefore, in the Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas (2009) continued and exemplified in a practical way the purpose

The analogy is related to the disposition or idea of a divine character, as acting perfectly, with qualities incompatible with the normality of the world of men, is to transcend and form a differentiated personality and vision regarding the issuing of a moral judgment

on the realities that concern the political order. Especially when the fundamental rights of the human person are required, since all the resources available must be in accordance with the *good of all* (common good).

of the just measure, since man realizes his fulfillment in time and specifically according to his nature. Taking into account that human forces are limited, action is granted to a certain extent. The constant on the delightful act can find a just measure and make man moderate. He is therefore subject to alternations and modifications. That is, for our nature that is inserted in mutability, mutable pleasure. But it is in the immutable realities that we find permanent joy, since the most perfect pleasures are contained therein.

Ultimately, the formation of character is proportional to the aforementioned forms of human behavior in the face of desire and the possibility of giving in to it. However, it is in the practical field that the individual builds his good judgment in the face of attempts to love the other. If in concupiscent love the other is seen as an object of utility, this type is degrading to human nature, it does not recognize the other as a person, and consequently devoid of character; in benevolent love, the human person is recognized as being the bearer of dignity and kindness. Therefore, what characterizes the formation of a disposition that perpetuates friendship is, in truth, the spontaneity and responsibility of love. Josaphat tells us:

Love will assert itself as a triumph, whether quick or slow, that manages to place all factors or at least the dominant factors on its side: esteem (the most rational element), tenderness, concentration of feelings, the ability to give, to give oneself (the most responsible element), to do good and to seek the happiness of the loved one (2009, p. 93).

Furthermore, this disposition is part of the human dispositions. This way of conducting life is a specificity of human nature, as it triggers the possibility of transcending the temporal condition. What builds this perspective of life is the ability to distinguish what is in fact appropriate or not, through the options of choice. Therefore, the authenticity of character will make us capable of making decisions in our expositions.

4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This particle, an ethical problem, which is also present in the work of Thomas Aquinas, considers action related to theoretical and practical meaning as a formulation that directs life to an excellent condition through prudence, that is, directs it towards happiness that comes from good. Existence becomes a vehicle that can provide guidance to unchanging and constant joys. Thus, pleasure emerges as a

link between thinking and acting, granting man a promising uniqueness that leads to his adaptation to the idea of returning to the creator as a participation in his goodness, that is, what is most excellent in human nature.

Given that pleasure is the motivating and determining principle of an operation, the fullness of the action is considered as the perfection of the pleasure itself. The senses are the facilitators between the individual who carries out the action and the sensitive element. Given that it is convenient to take into consideration two irrefutable elements, the principle of the operation and its object. For the action to reach its degree of excellence, both items must be in perfect form. Furthermore, pleasure is an indispensable prerequisite for human action, not as if it were a consequence of a habit, but as a determining factor in achieving its end, that is, in achieving perfection.

is a close relationship between pleasure and life, as pleasure will not find its fulfillment without human action, and the latter can only be taken into consideration in relation to the former. However, such an agent's behavior is an opportunity to give meaning to life, holding back disconcerting impulses and passions. If good is linked to appetite, both trace an opening of the being to what is desired.

Pleasure is a consequence of the relationship that involves our life with the detection of attainable good, and this concludes the necessary object to fill the gaps in existence, repairing our weakness resulting from bodily limitations.

Joy must be accompanied by prudence, which will lead to the human formation of the conscious individual. This means that we must nurture within ourselves an honest pleasure, the core of human joy. Therefore, the discussion involves a question that includes action, the other and movement. Thus, the problem finds its core in the following issue: to be or not to be, which in this sense is explained as follows: the question of being is a constitutive particle of the question of good.

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