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**Author(s):** Toivanen, Juhana

**Title:** Cognitive Dispositions in the Psychology of Peter John Olivi

**Year:** 2018

**Version:** Accepted version (Final draft)

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**Please cite the original version:**

Toivanen, J. (2018). Cognitive Dispositions in the Psychology of Peter John Olivi. In N. Faucher, & M. Roques (Eds.), *The Ontology, Psychology and Axiology of Habits (Habitus) in Medieval Philosophy* (pp. 185-204). Springer. *Historical-Analytical Studies on Nature, Mind and Action*, 7. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-00235-0\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-00235-0_10)

## Cognitive Dispositions in the Psychology of Peter John Olivi

Juhana Toivanen (University of Gothenburg / University of Jyväskylä)

**Abstract:** This chapter discusses Peter John Olivi's (1248–1298) conception of the role of dispositions (*habitus*) in sensory cognition from metaphysical and psychological perspectives. It shows that Olivi makes a distinction between two general types of disposition. Some of them account for the ease, or difficulty, with which different persons use their cognitive powers, while others explain why people react differently to things that they perceive or think. This distinction is then applied to Olivi's analysis of three different psychological operations, where the notion of disposition figures prominently; estimative perception, perceptual clarity, and the perception of pain and pleasure. The chapter argues that Olivi uses cognitive dispositions in an interesting way to explain individual differences between persons, and that they reveal the dynamic nature of his conception of human psychology.

**Keywords:** history of philosophy, medieval philosophy, philosophical psychology, perception, Peter John Olivi, disposition, internal senses, cognitive psychology, individuality

### Introduction

The importance of habits or dispositions (*habitus*) for the philosophical psychology of Peter John Olivi (ca. 1248–1298) emerges from an enigmatic sentence that he wrote late in his career:

It is clear that in addition to their essence, the substantial powers of the soul need particular habits and dispositions (*habitus et dispositiones*) and actual directing or turning (*aspectus seu conversiones*) towards the objects, in order to proceed to their acts without difficulty and perfectly.<sup>1</sup>

Olivi aims to explain why the actions acts of one power of the soul may prevent the other powers from performing their actions. He acknowledges that sometimes we fail to see what is

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<sup>1</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa* II, q. 50 appendix, ad 3 (ed. Jansen, 2: 54): “Constat autem quod praeter essentiam potentiarum substantialium animae exiguntur speciales habitus et dispositiones et actuales aspectus seu conversiones ad obiecta ad hoc quod expedite et perfecte exeant in suas actiones.” When referring to Olivi, I shall use the original title of the work, *Summa quaestionum super Sententias*. Jansen has edited the second book of this work in *Quaestiones in Secundum Librum Sententiarum*, and questions from books 3 and 4 have appeared in print as *Quaestiones de incarnatione et redemptione* (ed. Emmen and Stadter) and *Quaestiones de novissimis* (ed. Maranesi). On the concept of *aspectus*, see Toivanen (2013a, 151–160). For Olivi's biography and an overview of his thought, see Boureau and Piron (1999), Burr (1976), Piron (2010).

happening in front of us when we concentrate on thinking, but he argues that the reason for this is not the ontological unity of the powers of the soul. The phenomenon can be saved by appealing to the necessity of paying attention—or, in Olivi's terms, the need for the directing of one's *aspectus* to one power of the soul and its objects instead of another. Thinking prevents perceiving simply because focusing on a philosophical problem prevents paying equal attention to the things in one's visual field.

This theory has been discussed in the scholarly literature,<sup>2</sup> but the other idea that the quoted sentence brings to the fore has not received as much attention, even though it is basic to Olivi's theory of cognition. Alongside the selective attention, Olivi holds equally strongly that the powers of the soul must have habits and dispositions in order to act. What does he mean? What are these habits and dispositions that are necessary for various psychological processes? Why are they necessary for cognitive acts? Above all, what is their function in psychological processes? The present essay aims at shedding light on these questions and on the psychological role that the dispositions and habits (*habitus*<sup>3</sup>) of the soul play in Olivi's philosophical psychology.

The essay is divided into two main sections. The first pertains to the metaphysics of dispositions, understood as configurations of the cognitive and appetitive powers of the soul. The second is devoted to the various ways in which the concept of disposition figures in Olivi's cognitive psychology. I shall concentrate on three cases, which reveal the manifold functions that the dispositions play in sensory cognition: (1) estimative perception, (2) perceptual clarity, and (3) the pleasure and pain that accompany sense perception.<sup>4</sup> In general,

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<sup>2</sup> See Pasnau (1997), Perler (2003), Silva and Toivanen (2010, 260–277), Tachau (1988), Toivanen (2013a).

<sup>3</sup> From this point on, I shall translate the term *habitus* as “disposition” or simply leave the term untranslated, especially when I discuss the relation between *habitus* and *dispositio*.

<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, it is not possible to address the role of dispositions of the will and intellect in this connection. Those who are interested should consult Yrjönsuuri (2002) and Faucher's article in the present volume, p. XXX.

these three cases show that the dispositions of the powers of the soul account for the interpretation that the perceiving subject makes of the objects that she perceives, and for the emotional reaction that sense perception causes.

## 1. What are dispositions?

Before proceeding to the metaphysics of *habitus*, let us begin with a terminological remark, which is not devoid of philosophical significance. Olivi does not systematically distinguish the two terms that we encountered in the passage quoted above—*habitus* and *dispositio*. He often juxtaposes them,<sup>5</sup> and occasionally he characterizes them in such a way that they seem to be more or less synonymous. For instance, he writes:

in active powers, a disposition (*dispositio*) is not required for anything else but adjusting the powers to act appropriately and promptly, and so they act and can act to some extent also without any habit (*habitus*), although not as perfectly.<sup>6</sup>

The ease with which he moves from one concept to another indicates that he does not see any reason to distinguish them radically from each other. In a similar vein, he does not clearly separate *consuetudo* from *habitus*. Some medieval authors, Aquinas being the most well-known, argue that animals can be habituated to certain kinds of actions, but because they are

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<sup>5</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa* II, qq. 81–82 (ed. Jansen, 3: 175): “[...] habitus seu habituales inclinationes et dispositiones.”

<sup>6</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa* II, q. 58 (ed. Jansen, 2: 467): “Praeterea, in virtutibus activis non exigitur ad aliud dispositio nisi ad coaptandum eas ad agendum debite et expedite, unde et sine habitu aliquid agunt et agere possunt, etsi non ita perfecte.” Ibid. (ed. Jansen, 2: 398): “Item, habitus voluntatis disponunt ipsam et determinant ad agendum potius quam ad patiendum; ergo videtur quod sunt dispositiones et determinationes eius. [...] Quando autem dicitur quod habitus sunt quaedam formae activae, sicut in minori praedicti argumenti tangebatur, tunc secundum istos nomine habitus significatur ipsa potentia ut sic disposita et habitata; alias secundum eos non debent dici principia effectiva sed solum dispositiones principiorum effectivorum.” Olivi’s point is that a *habitus* can be called an efficient principle of acts only if it refers to the power, which is disposed in a certain way. Properly speaking, it is not an efficient principle.

not free to resist their *consuetudines*, they cannot be said to have *habitus* in the proper sense.<sup>7</sup>

Olivi does not use this term often, but when he does he seems to consider it as yet another synonym for the dispositions of the soul.<sup>8</sup>

Olivi's way of using these terms interchangeably seems deliberate. He occasionally classifies *habitus* as a kind of *dispositio*. For instance, he claims that, "habits mean a disposition of a power in relation to an act"<sup>9</sup> More precisely, he seems to think that *habitus* is a disposition that qualifies the powers of the soul, whereas *dispositio* is more often used in relation to the matter and organs of the body, and he prefers the latter term when he speaks about a kind of receptivity or capacity, while *habitus* inclines powers to act in a certain way.<sup>10</sup> Even though Olivi uses *dispositio* and *habitus* interchangeably when he talks about the powers of the soul, to the best of my knowledge he never uses the latter term to describe

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *ST I-II*, q. 50, art. 3 ad 2. See Darge's and Löwe's articles in the present volume, p. XXX.

<sup>8</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa II*, q. 16 (ed. Jansen, 1: 346): "Praeterea, virtutes et habitus consuetudinales, sive boni sive mali, per frequentes actus et applicationes potentiarum magis et magis educuntur in esse et crescunt." See also *ibid.*, q. 31 (ed. Jansen, 1: 524): "virtus consuetudinalis"; *ibid.*, q. 58 (ed. Jansen, 2: 515–516): "virtutes consuetudinales et multas alias affectiones habituales"; *Summa III*, q. 2 (ed. Emmen, 107–108): "vitiositas consuetudinalis"; *ibid.*, qq. 8–9, (ed. Stadter, 330): "consuetudo fidei." Occasionally Olivi uses *assuefactio*, apparently as a synonym for habituation. See, e.g., *Summa II*, q. 58 (ed. Jansen, 2: 431–432).

<sup>9</sup> *Summa II*, q. 58 (ed. Jansen, 2: 485): "[H]abitus dicunt dispositionem potentiae in ordine ad actum." See also *ibid.*, q. 58 (2: 398, 424–432, 467); q. 64 (2: 604–605; quoted in note 45 below); q. 72, ad 3 (3: 41): "Potentia enim activa saepe ex parte sua eget debito habitu et debito aspectu et, si est organica, eget debita dispositione organi"; q. 74 (3: 119; quoted in note 22 below); q. 74 (3: 126–127, 132). q. 105 (3: 250): "[...] aliquem habitum virtutis vel aliquam partem eius aut aliquam habilitatem seu habitualement dispositionem ad bonum." *Summa III*, q. 1 (ed. Emmen, 47): "[...] quae insistentia non est proprie habitus eo modo, quo habitum vocamus dispositionem potentiae ad actum."

<sup>10</sup> Matter is disposed by the forms it has, and the disposition of matter enables it to receive further forms or certain kinds of acts; see, e.g., Peter John Olivi, *Summa II*, q. 16 (ed. Jansen, 1: 315, 336, 339); q. 22 (1: 399–401); q. 49 (2: 15); q. 54 (2: 270); q. 57 (2: 364); q. 61 (2: 547–585); q. 72 (3: 12–13, 31, 41); q. 74 (3: 113–114). For instance, the body is disposed to receive the soul and air is disposed to receive the form of light, etc. The background is, naturally, Olivi's acceptance of the plurality of substantial forms. A clear case of this kind of usage is at *Summa II*, q. 111 (ed. Jansen, 3: 279): "Licet autem habitus animae vitiosi sint quoad quid nobiliores quam prava dispositio corporis a qua causantur."

dispositional changes and the states of physical bodies. Thus, Olivi's use of terminology suggests that *habitus* is a type of *dispositio*, which can be attributed to the powers of the soul.

Despite this apparent taxonomic classification, there is a clear metaphysical affinity between *habitus* and *dispositio*. Dispositions of material substances, including the body and its organs, are functionally similar to the dispositions of the powers of the soul. The reason for this is twofold. First, Olivi thinks that *habitus* is not something that is added to the powers. He is known as a critic of a realist conception of Aristotelian categories and he argues that the categories do not refer to essentially distinct things in the world, but to different aspects of reality or ways to describe substances.<sup>11</sup> Even though it is not completely clear that his denial of the reality of categories applies also to the category of quality (which includes *habitus*),<sup>12</sup> he nevertheless argues that *habitus* should not be considered as independent additions to cognitive powers. Rather, they are modifications (*variatio*) of powers, which affect the way the powers act.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, Olivi does not attribute *habitus* to the powers of the soul as such, but to the compound of the power and its organ.<sup>14</sup> The same metaphysical structure can also be applied to the intellectual powers of the soul because Olivi accepts the doctrine of universal hylomorphism, according to which the intellectual soul in itself is composed of matter and form.<sup>15</sup> Intellectual dispositions are modifications of the so-called spiritual matter, which functions as the material substrate of the intellectual part of the soul. In this way, there is no need to posit one type of disposition for material substances and

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<sup>11</sup> See Pasnau (2011) and Pini (2005) .

<sup>12</sup> This is pointed out by Pasnau (2011).

<sup>13</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa* II, q. 58 (ed. Jansen, 2: 432–433).

<sup>14</sup> There is some uncertainty as to what Olivi's final position is because he proposes slightly divergent views in different places. The bulk of the evidence suggests that *habitus* belongs primarily to the form, but it is necessarily actualized in the matter. See *Summa* II, q. 51 (ed. Jansen, 2: 113); q. 72 (3: 41, 45–46); cf. 58 (2: 432–433). Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *ST* I-II, q. 50, art. 4.

<sup>15</sup> See Ribordy (2010) and Toivanen (2013a, 25–30).

another for the powers of the soul, because a similar metaphysical structure underlies both of them.

A brief comparison with Aquinas's view will help to clarify Olivi's position. Aquinas emphasizes that *habitus* can be attributed only to powers that can be determined in many ways. If a power is determined to one kind of act, it cannot and does not need a *habitus*. Due to this restriction, *habitus* belongs primarily to rational powers of the soul, and they can be attributed to sensory powers only insofar as they can be controlled by the rational ones—that is, they can be attributed only to the appetitive powers that are responsible for emotions and to some of the internal senses. Aquinas also argues that *habitus* cannot be innate, and that irrational animals cannot have *habitus*, since they act by natural necessity.<sup>16</sup> In sum, Aquinas makes a clear distinction between *dispositio* and *habitus*, and thinks that these two serve different functional roles. By contrast, as we shall see below, Olivi is ready to attribute *habitus* to all powers of the soul, even in irrational animals. He also thinks that dispositions can be controlled: for instance, when a hand is repeatedly moved in a certain way, the hand, as a bodily organ, acquires a disposition to move in such a way, but this hardly necessitates the person to move her hand in that way.<sup>17</sup> In this way, Olivi's view is not based on a functional difference between *dispositio* and *habitus*. If there is a difference, it is far less pronounced than what we see in Aquinas. Due to the metaphysical and functional similarity between these two concepts, and the fact that Olivi uses them interchangeably, we should not limit our inquiry to those arguments where he explicitly uses the latter term, if we want to understand the philosophical role that cognitive dispositions have in Olivi's view. Instead, we need to examine what kind of functional role the disposition (be it *dispositio* or *habitus*) has in the argument.

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<sup>16</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *ST I-II*, q. 49, art. 4; q. 50, art. 3, esp. ad 3; and q. 51, art. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa II*, q. 58 (ed. Jansen, 2: 432). Olivi uses this example as an illustration of the manner in which repeated use of the will brings about a *habitus* in the spiritual matter of the will.

So much for the preliminaries. One of the most important places, where Olivi discusses the metaphysics of the dispositions of the soul, is the question 74 of the second book of *Summa*, which aims at clarifying what the efficient cause of cognitive acts of the soul is. His main claim is that acts are caused by the powers of the soul, which must be intentionally directed at their objects before they can act.<sup>18</sup> Sometimes these powers need to be perfected by dispositions, which should not be understood as active principles or independent elements in the production of an act, but as modifications of powers, which are the principal efficient causes of their acts. Moreover, dispositions should not be understood in an instrumental sense; rather, the power and its dispositions form one unified efficient cause.<sup>19</sup> Olivi clarifies his theory by comparing the perceiving subject to a cutting sword. The cutting is an act that is ultimately attributed to the sword as a whole, though it involves various elements: the hardness of iron represents the power of the soul; the sharpness of the sword can be compared to one type of disposition; the shape of the sword is like another disposition; and its impetus is the intentional directedness of the power that accounts for the connection between the power and the perceived object.<sup>20</sup> The illustration may not be as instructive as Olivi hopes, but the fundamental idea is clear: the dispositions and the intentional directedness should not be considered as direct causal factors of the act but rather as modifications or conditions which make the soul's power capable of performing its act.

To my knowledge, Olivi never offered a detailed and systematic definition of the dispositions of the soul. The closest thing to a definition that I have been able to find is as follows: “*Habitus* are certain efficient principles of their acts, that is, they are formal dispositions of a power by which the power becomes capable or more capable of causing

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<sup>18</sup> In other words, Olivi argues that the soul is not a passive recipient of external stimuli but has an active role in cognitive processes. For a more detailed discussion and references, see Silva and Toivanen (2010, 260–277), and Toivanen (2013a, 141–191).

<sup>19</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa* II, q. 74 (ed. Jansen, 3: 127); q. 58 (2: 429, 432–433).

<sup>20</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa* II, q. 74 (ed. Jansen, 3: 128). The two kinds of dispositions in this illustration correspond to types A and B as discussed below.



such an act.”<sup>21</sup> Although dispositions are here called efficient principles, it is clear that they do not bring about acts independently, but are more like modifications of a power that make certain kinds of actions either possible or easier to bring about. In addition, we can find the following bits of information from various contexts: dispositions are first actualities of powers, they are generated and strengthened by acts, and they become weaker if they are not practised and they admit variations with respect to their strength.<sup>22</sup> The overall picture that emerges on the basis of these details is that the powers of the soul are active efficient causes of their acts. Repeating one kind of action generates a disposition—that is, it modifies the power, and allows it to perform the same kind of action more easily. Dispositions are generated rather easily, but practice strengthens them. As far as I can see, there is nothing special in Olivi’s view. He defends a rather typical medieval conception of the dispositions of the soul.<sup>23</sup>

However, Olivi also puts forth ideas that are less conventional. Two of them are especially important for our purposes. First, he makes a distinction between two different kinds of disposition in the cognitive powers of the soul by arguing that:

And perhaps all [cognitive powers] need some accidental clarity or vigour, which is greater or lesser not only in different people, but in one and the same person at different times. When this clarity is in the intellect, we call it

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<sup>21</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa* II, q. 74 (ed. Jansen, 3: 119): “Habitus sunt quaedam principia effectiva suorum actuum, id est, sunt formales dispositiones potentiae per quas fit potens vel potentior ad talem actum efficiendum.” Olivi is not aiming to give a full definition, but to distinguish dispositions from memory species. In other places, he characterizes dispositions as follows: “Nullus habitus intellectus vel voluntatis dicit per se rationem principalis potentiae activae, sed solum aliquam dispositionem ipsius, determinantem ipsam ad speciale obiectum et ad specialem modum agendi” (ibid., ed. Jansen, 3: 127); “Et sic species actus non datur ab aliquo habitu, immo potentia est semper principale agens; habitus vero cooperatur ei non proprie per modum agentis instrumentalis, sed per modum formalis dispositionis potentiae agentis” (ibid., ed. Jansen, 3: 132).

<sup>22</sup> See Peter John Olivi, *Summa* II, q. 51 appendix (ed. Jansen, 2: 165); q. 16 (1: 346); q. 58 (2: 467); q. 74 (3: 117, 130); and q. 22 (1: 390, 407–408).

<sup>23</sup> It is interesting that Olivi presents many of his ideas in order to refute other (unnamed) philosophers, who held contrary views, which shows that even though his view may be typical in many respects, it was not universally accepted. He is taking part in ongoing debates concerning the nature of dispositions.

“cleverness that makes one apt to learn and sharp” or “prompt perspicacity” to learn and investigate many subtle things easily. And this is one genus of the dispositions (*habitus*) of cognitive powers. In addition, in relation to certain acts or modes of acting (*modorum agendi*), the interior powers, and especially the superior powers, need certain other dispositions (*habitus*), which determine the power to habitual assent or dissent, which is sometimes knowing, sometimes believing or opining.<sup>24</sup>

Olivi notices that the dispositions of cognitive powers are often charged with two functions that can be distinguished from each other. On the one hand, having a *habitus* of, say, knowledge makes it easy to think about the objects and propositions that fall under the branch of knowledge that the *habitus* is about; on the other hand, it entails assenting to the truth of those objects and propositions. Olivi wants to keep these two apart. Dispositions of the first kind (call them type A) refer to an accidental capacity that explains why some people are quick to learn and can think easily and clearly, while others are slow and confused. The reason for attributing type-A dispositions is that the cognitive powers as such, without any habituation, always function equally well, and the differences between individuals and changes that one individual may undergo require appealing to habituation of the cognitive power.

The main explanatory function that these dispositions have is that they account for a cognitive power’s raw ability to comprehend its proper objects. Powers of the soul can be habituated to work better and more easily, and if they are not used enough they will become less capable of apprehending their objects. Moreover, the scope of type-A dispositions can be

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<sup>24</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa* II, q. 74 (ed. Jansen, 3: 114): “Et forte in omnibus [potentiis cognitivis] exigitur aliqua accidentalis claritas seu vivacitas. Quae non solum in diversis personis est maior et minor, sed etiam pro diversis temporibus in eadem. Hanc autem claritatem in intellectu vocamus ingeniositatem docibilem et acutam seu perspicaciam promptam ad multa et alta faciliter addiscenda vel investiganda. Et hoc est unum genus habitus potentiarum cognitiviarum. Respectu etiam quorundam actuum vel modorum agendi exigunt potentiae interiores, et specialiter superiores, aliquos alios habitus determinantes potentiam ad habituales assensus vel dissensus, qui aliquando sunt scitivi, aliquando vero creditivi seu opinativi.” Elsewhere in the same question (3: 131–132), the expression *modus agendi* is used.

quite narrow, in the sense that they account for differences between individuals who have specialized in different subjects: one is good in mathematics, another in physics, and their difference is due to their having two different kinds of type-A dispositions; one pertaining to mathematical thinking and the other to physics.<sup>25</sup>

The other function of cognitive dispositions is related to assenting to, or dissenting from, the object or proposition that one has in mind. Olivi attributes this function to another kind of disposition (call it type B), and characterizes it by appealing to a “mode” of acting and/or apprehending the object and proposition (*modus agendi*). In order to understand what he means, let us begin with the following passage:

It is proven that certain habitual clarity or habitual sharpness is required for a cognitive act. First, not only from the fact that some people have sharper and quicker vision, hearing, or understanding to perceive their objects anew more quickly and clearly than others, but also because this happens to the same person at different times. [...] Sometimes another disposition (*habitus*) is needed, which differs from the previous one, and this becomes clear from the disposition of faith, without which no one can believe virtuously and in a way that brings salvation, those things which we must believe, according to God. However, the dispositions of knowledge, opinion, or estimation, which are generated by our acts, are not necessarily required for acts of knowing or opining. [...] It is clear that these and similar dispositions differ from the first genus of dispositions. First, because these dispositions designate habitual assent or dissent, which habitually affirms or rejects its objects, whereas the aforementioned clarity or sharpness means nothing like this.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa* II, q. 74 (ed. Jansen, 3: 118).

<sup>26</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa* II, q. 74 (ed. Jansen, 3: 117–118): “[A]liqua habitualis claritas seu aliquod habituale acumen exigatur ad actum cognitivum, probatur. Primo, ex hoc quod non solum quidam habent visum vel auditum vel intellectum acutiorem et promptiorem ad sua obiecta citius et clarius de novo percipienda quam alii, immo idem homo pro temporibus diversis hoc habet. [...] Aliquando exigatur alter habitus a praedicto, patet ex habitu fidei, sine quo nullus potest virtuose et salutifere credere illa, quae sunt nobis secundum Deum credenda. Habitus vero scientiae vel opinionis vel aestimationis per nostros actus aggeneratus non necessario praeexigitur ad actum sciendi vel opinandi. [...] Quod autem isti habitus et consimiles differant a primo genere habituum patet. Primo, ex hoc, quia isti habitus dicunt habitualement assensum vel dissensum habitualiter affirmantem vel negantem sua obiecta, praedicta vero claritas vel acumen nihil tale dicit.”

Olivi makes use of the same distinction between the dispositions of type A and B. While the former account for the power's raw ability to grasp its objects, the latter pertain to the way the subject relates to them. The list of B-dispositions that he gives here includes various kinds of epistemic stances, such as faith, knowledge, opinion, and estimation.<sup>27</sup> Faith is probably the most informative example.<sup>28</sup> Olivi explains elsewhere that it affects the way we consider the objects of our thoughts without changing the raw contents of the thought itself. One who has the disposition of faith thinks of the same cognitive or propositional content in a different way from one who lacks faith, but the content of the thought itself is not affected.<sup>29</sup>

The reason for this is that B-dispositions account for the assent or dissent (*assensus vel dissensus*) that the cognitive subject gives to the cognitive content of her thought. It is possible to know what the terms "woman," "virgin," and "to give birth" mean without assenting to the proposition that "A virgin has given birth" (that is, without believing in Virgin Birth). The B-disposition of faith explains the difference between a Catholic and an atheist in this respect. Olivi writes:

Cognizing the terms [of a proposition] differs in reality from the aforementioned assent [...] because these kinds of terms are often known without knowing or believing their affirmative or negative composition. This is clear from one who knows what "woman," "virgin," and "to give birth" mean, without yet knowing or believing that virgin has given birth. Secondly, because we can, from the same terms that we know, have some knowledge or

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<sup>27</sup> The list here is not exhaustive. In addition to faith, knowledge, opinion, and estimation, Olivi mentions at least *habitus erroneus/errorum*, *habitus dubitativus*, *habitualis credulitas*, and of course virtue and vice; see *Summa* II, q. 74 (ed. Jansen, 3: 130–131); q. 40 (1: 686–687); *Summa* III (passim).

<sup>28</sup> It should be noted that faith is singled out as a special case because it is the only B-disposition that one must have before being able to act accordingly. In the case of knowledge, opinion, and estimation, the acts come first and the dispositions are generated by the acts. See also *Summa* II, q. 74 (ed. Jansen, 3: 130).

<sup>29</sup> Olivi points out in *Summa* II, q. 74 (ed. Jansen, 3: 118–119) that dispositions affect the way we consider the objects of our thoughts. A Jew and a Christian both may think of Jesus, but only the latter thinks of him as Christ, and the difference is due to the disposition of Christian faith, which is present in the latter but not in the former: "[...] nam Iudaeus credens Iesum non esse Deum nec de Virgine natum ita habet memoriales species horum terminorum sicut habet Christianus hoc credens."

opinion at one time, its contrary at another time; we can now have true knowledge or opinion, now false, now probable, now improbable, and the passage of time can change this ad infinitum.<sup>30</sup>

As a matter of fact, there are at least two possible ways to interpret his view: (1) an atheist knows the terms but does not form the proposition, whereas a believer forms the proposition, due to his faith. According to this reading, forming propositions and syllogisms from terms would require a B-disposition. (2) An atheist knows the terms and can form the proposition but he does not assent to it because he does not have the B-disposition of faith. In this case, the task of type-A dispositions would be to facilitate forming propositions and syllogisms, and the type-B dispositions would take care of assenting or dissenting *in a certain way*—either by having a disposition of faith (assent, belief), having a contrary disposition (dissent, unbelief), or not having a B-disposition at all. It is not completely clear which of these interpretations is correct but I tend to favour the latter, for two reasons. First, Olivi explicitly says that the function of B-dispositions is not to facilitate forming syllogisms or propositions; they account for assenting and dissenting to syllogisms and propositions. Second, Olivi points out that knowledge and opinion may change from one extreme to the other, even in the case of a single person, which suggests that the issue is not about forming the proposition but about assenting to or dissenting from it.<sup>31</sup>

Supposing that the same structure applies to all B-dispositions, the division of labour between them and the type-A dispositions is that, whilst the latter accounts for one's ability to grasp the essence of a certain kind of substance and to form a proposition or syllogism in

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<sup>30</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa* II, q. 36 (ed. Jansen, 1: 651): “[N]otitia terminorum differat realiter a praedicto assensu [...] quia saepe sciuntur huiusmodi termini absque hoc quod sciamus vel credamus affirmativam vel negativam compositionem ipsorum, sicut patet de eo qui scit quid est mulier et quid virgo et quid parere, et tamen nondum scit vel credit mulierem virginem peperisse. Secundo, quia de eisdem terminis nobis notis possumus nunc unam scientiam vel opinionem habere, nunc vero contrariam, et nunc veram, nunc erroneam, nunc probabilem, nunc improbabilem, et hoc per successionem temporum potest sic in infinitum variari.”

<sup>31</sup> See also Peter John Olivi, *Summa* II, q. 74, ad 1 (ed. Jansen, 3: 131).

relation to it, the former pertains to the way the subject relates to the substance, proposition or syllogism. Thus, there may be two persons, one of whom is quick to understand a philosophical position or logical structure of an argument, whilst the other needs more time and effort in order to grasp it. These persons differ because the first has acquired a disposition to operate with philosophical concepts and arguments and the other has not; they have different dispositions of type A. However, there may also be two persons who are equally good in understanding a certain philosophical position or the logical structure of an argument, but the other believes that it is true while the other rejects it as false, or one knows that it is true and the other has an opinion about—but not the knowledge of—its truthfulness. These persons have similar A-dispositions but different B-dispositions. If this is on the right track, we may think that Olivi distinguishes understanding from knowledge: it is possible to understand the structure of an argument without knowing that it is true or false, or without assenting to its truthfulness.

The expression *modus agendi* is an accurate description of what the B-disposition changes, since knowing, opining and rejecting are different types of actions, although they are performed by one and the same power. In addition to being more or less clever, individual human beings may have different kinds of B-dispositions. When Olivi discusses them, he seems to have in mind the subjective elements that distinguish these modes of acting from each other. This is in line with his general approach to psychological questions: he takes the phenomenological aspect of cognitive psychology seriously. One who has a strong opinion that a proposition *P* is true may be right (he may have true belief) but his epistemic stance nevertheless differs from another person's knowledge that *P* is true. The one who knows *P* lacks any degree of uncertainty, whereas the one who has an opinion, however strong it may be, is not completely certain in his assent. In other words, the phenomenological feel of thinking about *P* is different in the case of these two persons. Olivi does not explain the function of B-dispositions explicitly in these terms but when he appeals to the difference

between the two kinds of dispositions in the question 36 of his *Summa*, he clearly indicates that there is a phenomenological difference between different epistemic stances:

Likewise, as we experience in ourselves, dispositions of knowledge or belief or opinion are the same in us as habitual affirming or negating, or habitual assent or dissent of the intellect concerning the truthfulness or falsity of its objects—unless you understand by the term ‘disposition’ a habitual sharpness of perspicacious mental ability or its opposite, that is, habitual tardiness and stupidity of undeveloped and thick mental ability. But habitual assent is called disposition of knowledge, when it is knowing; but when it is believing or opining, it is called a disposition of belief or opinion.<sup>32</sup>

In this context, Olivi does not address the objective elements that distinguish the epistemic stances of knowing, believing and having an opinion. Instead, he emphasizes the subjective quality or “feel” that an act of assenting or dissenting may have. We can form propositions from various terms, and we may assent to, or dissent from, the proposition in various ways, depending on the B-disposition that we happen to have. This is the reason why the expression *modi agendi* is an apt description of B-dispositions. When one gives assent to a proposition *P* with a disposition of knowledge, one thinks of *P* in a different “mode”, compared to a situation where *P* is merely believed or considered probable. If we wanted to express these different modes in a propositional form—something Olivi might or might not be unwilling to do—the disposition of knowledge could be something like “I know *P* to be true,” and the disposition of opinion “I think that *P* is true.” The same *P* is thought of in a different light and the phenomenological experience is different in the two cases.

It should be noted that I emphasize the phenomenological or “modal” difference between various kinds of B-dispositions because it plays a central role in various dispositions of the

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<sup>32</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa* II, q. 36 (ed. Jansen, 1: 650–651): “Item, quantum in nobis experimur, scientialis aut creditivus vel opinativus habitus in nobis sunt idem quod habitualis affirmatio vel negatio seu habitualis assensus vel dissensus intellectus de veritate vel falsitate obiectorum suorum, nisi per nomen habitus intelligas habituale acumen ingenii perspicacis vel oppositum eius, scilicet habitualement tarditatem et hebetudinem ingenii rudis et grossi. Habitualis autem assensus, quando est scitivus, dicitur habitus scientiae; quando autem est creditivus vel opinativus, dicitur habitualis credulitas vel opinio.”

cognitive powers of the soul that we shall discuss below. However, I also believe that it is the most natural reading of Olivi's theory of the two kinds of dispositions.

Thus, the roles of the two kinds of dispositions can be summed up as follows:

(A) Dispositions of type A make the power capable of acting easily.

(B) Dispositions of type B determine the kind of assent or dissent we give to an object of cognition.

Both types of dispositions are crucial for understanding various special cognitive functions that Olivi discusses.

I mentioned above that there are two ideas that are important for my purposes. The other of them is that cognitive dispositions are not restricted to the intellectual level. Of course, there is nothing special in conceptualizing, say, moral virtues as dispositions of the appetitive powers of the sensory part of the soul, which make them liable to be controlled by the reason and will,<sup>33</sup> but Olivi thinks that the cognitive powers of the sensory soul—both internal and external senses—can be habituated in such a way that their proper activity is modified.<sup>34</sup> They are capable of receiving various dispositions, and (I shall argue) at least some of them admit to both types of dispositions. Olivi is able to classify the dispositional changes of the cognitive powers of the sensory soul under the rubric of *habitus* due to the affinity that he sees between intellectual, sensory, and even bodily dispositions: these powers can be habituated, regardless of whether they can be controlled by reason or not. There is no radical difference between the intellectual and sensory dispositions: in both cases, the raw ability of

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<sup>33</sup> See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *ST I-II*, q. 50, art. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Aquinas acknowledges the possibility that the internal senses of human beings can be habituated, but he explicitly denies that the external senses can; see *ST I-II*, q. 50, art. 3, ad 3. Olivi uses seeing and hearing as examples of powers that can be affected by dispositions of type A; see note 27 above.



the power to perform its cognitive act, and the mode in which the act is performed, are accounted for by appealing to *habitus*.<sup>35</sup>

## 2. Dispositions in sensory cognition

We have already seen that Olivi accepts the existence of cognitive dispositions in the sensory powers of the soul. He repeatedly says that the external senses may acquire dispositions, and when he claims that “the interior powers”<sup>36</sup> may be modified by them, it is not difficult to decipher that he is referring to the internal senses. To boot, the appetitive powers of the soul can be habituated too.<sup>37</sup> Olivi does not explicitly argue that the dispositions of the sensory powers can be divided between types A and B. However, the three cases that will be analysed below resemble the analytic framework that we saw in the previous section. Even if the division between dispositions A and B may not apply to sensory powers as such, there are good reasons to believe that it guides Olivi’s exposition of the functions of the sensory dispositions, and can therefore be used to analyse them.

Dispositions play a central role in at least three different kinds of psychological processes that belong to the sensory soul: (1) estimative perception, (2) perceptual clarity, and (3) the pleasure and pain that accompany sense perception. Let us briefly look at each of these cases.

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<sup>35</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa* II, q. 111 (ed. Jansen, 3: 272–273): “Circa primum ergo sciendum quod sensitivae potentiae animae recipiuntur et existunt in partibus corporis sicut in propria materia et, ut ita dicam, sicut in proprio vase, ita quod in illis et cum illis inclinantur et diriguntur ad sua obiecta et ad suos actus quos utique habent intra ipsas. Et ideo habitus et aspectus et actus potentiarum sensitivarum sunt in certis partibus corporis sicut in propria materia potentiarum quarum sunt. Hoc autem facile est videre in sensibus particularibus.”

<sup>36</sup> See note 25 above. It is clear that the expression *potentiae interiores* refers to the internal sense, because it is contrasted with external senses on the one hand, and intellectual powers (*potentiae superiores*) on the other.

<sup>37</sup> As Hartman points out in his article below, certain fourteenth century authors claimed that *habitus* that make intellectual thinking easier must be located in the sensory powers of the soul. See p. XXX.

Animals and human beings often apprehend things in their surroundings as useful or harmful for their well-being. Thirteenth-century Latin philosophers usually accounted for this phenomenon by arguing that the sensory soul includes a distinct estimative power. Estimation was thought to be capable of apprehending so-called intentions (*intentiones*), which arrive in the cognitive system through the external senses but cannot be directly perceived. Thus, Aquinas argues that a sheep becomes afraid and flees a wolf because it apprehends the harmfulness of the wolf by receiving an insensible intention of harmfulness in its estimative power.<sup>38</sup>

Olivi rejects this theory. He discards intentions as superfluous and argues that the estimative perception can be explained by appealing to various kinds of acts of the common sense. The estimative power and the common sense “are one and the same power, but in such a way that its estimative dispositions (*habitus*) [...] differ from that power as an actual disposition differs from the power to which it belongs.”<sup>39</sup> Estimative acts of the common sense differ from other perceptual acts only because they are affected by estimative dispositions, which change the way the perceived object appears to the perceiver. These dispositions explain why different animals react in different ways when they perceive the same object. When a sheep perceives a wolf, it apprehends the wolf *in a special way*, because it has an innate disposition to perceive wolves as harmful. By contrast, bigger beasts, such as bears, do not necessarily apprehend wolves as dangerous for the simple reason that they do not have a corresponding disposition.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 78, art. 4; *Quaestiones disputatae de anima*, q. 13. See also Di Martino (2008, 85–101).

<sup>39</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa II*, q. 64, (ed. Jansen, 2: 603): “[...] sint una et eadem potentia, sic tamen quod eius habitus aestimativi [...] differunt a potentia illa, sicut habitus actualis differt a potentia cuius est.”

<sup>40</sup> For a more detailed analysis, see Toivanen (2007; 2013a, 327–339).

The same explanation applies to estimative dispositions that result from experience. For instance, the harmfulness of fire can be perceived by simply touching a flame and feeling the pain it causes. After one or two similar experiences, the common sense acquires a disposition to apprehend fire as harmful even when seen from a distance.<sup>41</sup> Yet, it does not seem plausible that this kind of habituation of the cognitive system would alter the perception of the visual qualities of fire as such. The same qualities are just apprehended as harmful. Olivi acknowledges that this kind of learning is also possible for non-human animals, although many of their dispositions are innate.<sup>42</sup>

Olivi does not say it explicitly, but it is not difficult to see that the dispositions he uses to explain estimative perception are functionally quite close to the B-dispositions outlined in the previous section. As a matter of fact, the explanation that Olivi uses to account for estimative perception can be used to illustrate what he had in mind when he made the distinction between the two kinds of disposition, A and B. The difference between a sheep and a bear is not in the way they perceive the perceptual qualities of the wolf, but in the “mode” of perceiving, and this is due to the different habituation of the cognitive powers of the soul. While the cognitive content of an act of perception (insofar as it pertains to the sensible qualities of an external object) remains the same among all perfect animals—which is hardly surprising, since Olivi defends direct realism in his theory of cognition<sup>43</sup>—the interpretation of the relevance of these qualities to the percipient changes from species to species, and from individual to individual. The same cognitive content appears harmful to one and indifferent or

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<sup>41</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa* II, q. 64 (ed. Jansen, 2: 604–605); q. 58 (2: 509–510).

<sup>42</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa* II, q. 63 (ed. Jansen, 2: 601): “Quando etiam canis per doctrinam et assuersionem acquirit aliquos habitus in suo sensu communi et appetitu, ita quod habitualiter amat et aestimat multa quae prius non amabat vel odiebat nec noverat: tunc utique habitualis amicitia et prudentia eius potentiis et organis acquiritur differens a suis actibus qui cito recipiuntur et transeunt”; see also q. 66 (2: 610). Ibid., q. 64 (2: 603): “Quod dico, quia tam in homine quam in brutis sunt multae habituales aestimationes tam a consuetudine quam a natura genitae et inditae.” Olivi’s idea that dispositions (*habitus*) may be innate and thus completely natural goes against Aquinas (see *ST* I-II, q. 51, art. 1).

<sup>43</sup> See Pasnau (1997, 168–247) and Tachau (1988, 39–54).

useful to another. Thus, the sheep sees and smells the wolf as harmful and dangerous, because its common sense has been disposed by nature to do so. The bear perceives the colour, shape, and smell of the wolf exactly as the sheep does, but its cognitive act lacks the additional element of harmfulness.<sup>44</sup> The acts of the external senses and the common sense account for the perceptual content and “the estimative power adds nothing to the common sense or to the imagination except for certain habitual estimations or certain dispositions which determine or incline it to estimate in one way or another.”<sup>45</sup> As we have seen, several quotations in the previous section mention sensory powers of the soul, and therefore transferring the A-B distinction to the sensory level is less problematic than it may have appeared to be at the outset.

Olivi gives one further argument that shows the relevance of A-dispositions in the cognitive operations of the sensory soul. He argues against a view that the common sense is not susceptible to *habitus* by appealing to Augustine’s observations:

You may object to some of the aforementioned [arguments] by saying that the common sense is not susceptible to any *habitus* or habitual disposition. Firstly, Augustine is against this objection. He says and proves by experience (in *De musica* 6) that some people become more skilful in judging with ease the good or bad quality of wines and their superiority and inferiority. Likewise, he says that the experience of singing and listening to different songs generates and augments an affection and a capacity to discern the harmonies of voices more quickly and easily, not only in the common sense but also in the sense of hearing.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> One way to put this is to say that the perceptual contents of the cognitive acts of the sheep and the bear are similar but differ when it comes to the estimative element. This means, of course, that the cognitive experience of these two animals is different because the estimative element is part of it.

<sup>45</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa* II, q. 64 (ed. Jansen, 2: 604): “[A]estimativa nihil addit supra sensum communem et imaginativam nisi solum quasdam habituales aestimationes vel quasdam dispositiones determinantes aut inclinantes ad sic vel sic aestimandum.”

<sup>46</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa* II, q. 64 (ed. Jansen, 2: 605): “Si vero contra quaedam praedictorum obicias quod sensus communis non est susceptivus alicuius habitus vel habitualis dispositionis: contra hoc est primo Augustinus, VI *Musicae*, dicens et experimentis probans quod aliqui ex frequenti usu probandi et gustandi vina acquirunt maiorem peritiam faciliter iudicandi bonitatem vel malitiam vinorum ac melioritatem et peioritatem eorum. Et

It is possible to habituate one's external senses through practice. The musician's perception of sounds is accurate compared to the man on the street, because her common sense and sense of hearing are modified by corresponding dispositions (*habitus*). It seems that Olivi is here thinking a disposition of type A, because he refers to the raw ability to perceive better and more accurately. In another similar example, he argues that part of the process of learning to read is related to the habituation of the common sense and the sense of sight.<sup>47</sup> The difference between good and slow readers is accounted for by appealing to various degrees of habituation, caused by different amounts of practice. We can generate dispositions in our senses (and even in parts of our bodies<sup>48</sup>) through practice. From a metaphysical perspective, this process is similar to the one by which a child learns that fire is harmful, but in this example the way the external object is interpreted by the subject does not change. Practice just makes the perceptual process faster and more precise.

If we consider together the two ideas presented above, we see that the range of psychological operations that Olivi explains by using the concept of *habitus* is wide. Perception and estimative evaluation are complex processes, which involve elements that cannot be reduced to a simple grasping of the perceptual qualities of an external object. Olivi uses *habitus* as a powerful metaphysical tool, which allows him to explain various kinds of higher-order elements in perception without positing new metaphysical entities in his theory.

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consimiliter dicit quod ex usu cantandi et cantus varios audiendi non solum in sensu communi sed etiam in sensu auditus gignitur et augetur aliqua affectio et discretio ad concordantias vocum subtilius et facilius discernendas." See also *Summa* IV, q. 7 (ed. Maranesi, 159). Olivi is not completely consistent when it comes to the seat of the dispositions which allow us to, say, better judge the quality of wines. In *Summa* II, q. 70 (ed. Jansen, 2: 632) he says that such dispositions belong to the sense of taste.

<sup>47</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa* II, q. 64 (ed. Jansen, 2: 605): "Praeterea, nunquid acumen sensualis iudicii in suis obiectis acutius et facilius iudicandis iuvatur per frequens exercitium? Certe pueri, quando didicerunt litteras et ex litteris syllabas et dictiones componere et legere psalmos, habent sensualem habitum cito diiudicandi et discernendi quaeque legenda, ita quod quosdam dicimus in hoc tardos et duos, quosdam vero acutos et promptos." When children learn to read, they learn to recognize a certain arrangement of lines as a letter. This change in their perception is caused by an acquired *habitus*, which is possible to understand as similar to B-dispositions. See Toivanen (2013b, 333–335) for discussion.

<sup>48</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa* II, q. 58 (ed. Jansen, 2: 432).

It also allows him to analyse various kinds of phenomenological aspects of the perceptual process, which require a dynamic conception of the activity of the soul. Since all perceiving subjects have the same set of powers, their differences must be due to the habituation of these powers.

Finally, Olivi thinks that the pleasure and pain that accompany sense perception can be accounted for by appealing to dispositions and habituation. In order to understand his view, we need to make a short detour into his conception of the psychological constitution of the soul, which is surprisingly complex, given his general tendency to reduce the number of internal senses. Namely, he argues that every external sense is accompanied by what might be called an “affective power.”<sup>49</sup> These affective powers of the senses serve to explain several empirical facts that we encounter in our everyday lives: sometimes we enjoy and sometimes we suffer when we perceive the same object, or one that is in relevant ways similar; we are capable of developing a liking for certain kinds of things that we did not like before; and we can see that different animals find different things pleasant or disagreeable.<sup>50</sup>

None of these phenomena is due to changes in the way the sensory qualities of the object are perceived. Instead, Olivi accounts for them by appealing to the changing state of the affective powers of the senses:

For, an object is not perceived to be fitting solely because its essence and nature (taken absolutely) are perceived and discerned absolutely, but rather because it is perceived to correspond with and to conform to an inclination of the subject (*affectioni suae*). This idea is proved: the same nature of an object

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<sup>49</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa* II, q. 70 (ed. Jansen, 2: 635–636): “Videtur ergo quod quilibet sensus duas potentias comprehendat, unam scilicet apprehensivam et aliam appetitivam.” See also q. 54, 277. Olivi’s position is dynamic: the dispositional state of the appetitive powers of the senses changes from time to time. For a more detailed discussion, see Toivanen (2011, 428–438).

<sup>50</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa* II, q. 70 (ed. Jansen, 2: 632): “[E]x visu vel apprehensione eiusdem proprii et formalis obiecti aliquando delectamur, aliquando contristamur; unde aliquando in gustu vini vel mellis eiusdem saporis delectamur et aliquando sic contristamur quod illud tanquam abominabile reicimus et evomimus.” See also *ibid.*, q. 64 (2: 605); *Summa* IV, q. 7 (ed. Maranesi, 159).

is sometimes perceived as fitting, sometimes as unfitting, and sometimes as indifferent, without there being any alteration in the object or in the cognition of the object (as a cognition) but only in the inclination and in the mode of being inclined (*modi afficiendi*). [...] Furthermore, when our [sense of] taste tastes or gnaws at a refined husk, it senses it as indifferent to itself, whereas the [sense of] taste of a bovine animal tastes a husk as pleasant to itself, and another animal—which by its very nature abhors husks—senses them as horrible to itself. Yet the absolute nature of the taste of a husk is the same among all the [senses of] taste.<sup>51</sup>

The last sentence of this passage underlines a crucial point in Olivi's theory: even if different animal species react differently to one and the same object, they perceive it uniformly. The taste of husks is similar to humans and cows (leaving aside the obvious fact that cows have tasted husks more often than an average human being, which probably makes them more qualified to make distinctions between high-quality husks and those that grow on an inferior *terroir*); what changes is the affectional aspect of perception. The affection that explains the changing effects that external objects have on us are due to the affective powers of the senses.<sup>52</sup> The sense of taste in cows and sheep has an affection towards husks, but the sense of taste of human beings is differently disposed, which explains why the taste of husks is pleasant for cows and sheep but is indifferent for us. Some of these affections change easily (hunger and thirst), others are innate and unchanging (the taste of husks), and some are in between, as they must be learned but do not change quickly (musical taste).<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa* II, q. 70 (ed. Jansen, 2: 633): “Quia obiectum non sentitur esse conveniens ex hoc solo quod absolute sentitur et discernitur eius essentia et natura absolute sumpta, sed potius ex hoc quod sentitur concordare et conformari alicui affectioni suae. Quod probatur: quia eadem natura obiecti aliquando sentitur ut conveniens, aliquando vero ut disconveniens, aliquando vero ut indifferens, et hoc nulla variatione facta ex parte ipsius nec ex parte cognitionis eius, in quantum cognitio, sed solum ex parte affectionis et modi afficiendi. [...] Gustus etiam noster, quando tangit vel rodit paleam mundam, sentit eam ut sibi indifferentem, gustus vero bovis ut sibi delectabilem, et aliud animal naturaliter horrens eam sentit eam ut sibi horribilem; et tamen absoluta natura sui saporis est apud omnes gustus eadem.” See also *ibid.*, q. 54 (2: 277–278) and *Summa* IV, q. 7 (ed. Maranesi, 160–161).

<sup>52</sup> See, e.g., Peter John Olivi, *Summa* II, q. 70 (ed. Jansen, 2: 635).

<sup>53</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa* II, q. 70 (ed. Jansen, 2: 632): “Nullus sensus in obiecto delectatur, nisi prius habeat quandam affectionem proportionalem ad illud. Quae quidem affectio secundum eum [sc. Augustinum] *ibidem* [VI *Musicae*] per frequens exercitium augetur et per

The structural and functional similarity between these examples and the two kinds of disposition is clear. To boot, Olivi conceptualizes the state of the affective powers of the senses as a kind of *habitus*: “An inclination (*affectio*) is a kind of habitual [state] (*quiddam habituale*) of a power which can be inclined in opposite ways or which can receive contrary inclinations.”<sup>54</sup> He points out repeatedly that these habitual states can be altered through experience, and even though there probably are many things that human beings simply cannot learn to like, it is clear that we have acquired tastes. For instance, many flavours and musical genres are not pleasant for someone who is not acquainted with them, yet one may learn to like them. In an illuminating passage, Olivi explains how changing bodily dispositions may indirectly affect the way the powers of the soul act, using as examples the *habitus* that the original sin has brought about in the emotional part of the soul, and matters of taste:

The aforementioned vicious disposition (*habitus*) is not made by the soul, because the soul does not cause in itself unnatural habits except through some intervening action. [...] Likewise, the habitual affection of our sense of taste to certain flavours or foods is caused by diverse complexions or dispositions of the body. [...] Also, some people have, due to a different disposition of their brain and sense of hearing, a habitual taste for certain kind of singing, which others dislike habitually because of a contrary disposition; and the same holds for smells and visible and tangible qualities.<sup>55</sup>

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contrarium usum minuitur et aliquando eius contraria gignitur, et dat exemplum in auditu cui aliqui modi cantuum placent qui prius non placebant, dicitque quod, nisi numerosam proportionem illorum cantuum haberet prius in aliqua affectione sua, non repente demulceretur in auditu illius nec offenderetur in auditu contrarii, et idem dicit de gustu respectu diversorum vinorum.” See also *ibid.*, q. 64 (2: 605); *Summa IV*, q. 7 (ed. Maranesi, 159).

<sup>54</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa II*, q. 70 (ed. Jansen, 2: 632–633): “Ergo ista affectio est quiddam habituale alicuius potentiae oppositis modis affectibilis seu contrariarum affectionum susceptibilis.”

<sup>55</sup> Peter John Olivi, *Summa II*, q. 72 (ed. Jansen, 3: 32): “Praedictus etiam habitus vitiosus non est factus ab anima, quia ipsa non causat in se habitus innaturales nisi per aliquam actionem intermediam. [...] Item, fit hoc modo habitualis affectio nostri gustus ad hunc vel illum saporem vel cibum ex varia complexionem vel corporis dispositionem causata. [...] Quibusdam etiam secundum variam dispositionem cerebri et auditus habitualiter sapiunt quidam modi cantandi qui aliis propter contrariam dispositionem habitualiter desipiunt, et idem est de odoribus et visibilibus et tangibilibus.”



One of the points that Olivi wants to make here is that some dispositions are not caused by acts of the soul. One learns to like certain kinds of music and food, not by repeatedly liking them, but by undergoing bodily changes in the organs of the powers that are responsible for the pleasure and pain that accompany perceptual acts. It is possible that at least some of these dispositions are innate but, at least on the face of it, Olivi does not rule out the possibility that they may be learned as well. These changes alter the way the powers are disposed and react to hearing music and tasting food, and when one is repeatedly exposed to a particular piece of music or a particular flavour, the disposition of the body becomes more adapted to them. This process has an effect on the affective powers of the senses, which in turn explains why one acquires new tastes.

The psychological role that Olivi ascribes to the “habitual affection,” which is caused by the disposition of the body and its organs, is functionally similar to type-B dispositions. As in the case of tasting husks, the perception of the audible qualities of music, or the flavours of a certain dish, does not change due to the changing state of the affective powers of the senses (although one may learn through experience to distinguish more clearly the various elements in the music, or in the flavour, as we have seen above). The change takes place at a different level, as the “mode” of perception changes from indifferent to pleasurable. Perhaps apprehending a piece of music as pleasant does not involve assenting to it, in the way that thinking of a proposition as true does, but the phenomenal difference that holds between opinion and knowledge can be considered analogous to the phenomenal difference between hearing a tune as pleasant and hearing the same tune without affection. Although Olivi does not mention the distinction between types A and B when he explains how pleasure and pain function, the functional roles played by these two dispositions are part of his view.

## Conclusion

Dispositions of the cognitive and appetitive powers of the soul are crucial for Olivi's philosophical psychology and the concepts of *habitus* and disposition play a central role in his view concerning the differences between individual human beings, as well as between different animal species. Usually, we perceive things around us uniformly, but our estimations of their relevance to our well-being vary from individual to individual. Moreover, some of us are better than others at perceiving the minute details of external objects, we tend to like and dislike different things, and our epistemic stances towards factual matters vary. Instead of appealing to differences in the cognitive powers of the soul as such, Olivi explains the kind of individuality at play in these cases—the individual features that distinguish one person from another—as the result of these powers being habituated. In his hands, the concept of *habitus* becomes a powerful tool, which can be used to account for a wide array of complex psychological phenomena that we experience on a daily basis.

One of the most interesting aspects of Olivi's theory of the cognitive role of *habitus* is the distinction he makes between dispositions that make one person quick to learn and understand on the one hand, and dispositions that change the mode of assenting on the other. While the former dispositions refer to the familiar phenomenon that practice makes perfect, the latter explain why different people react differently to one and the same cognitive content, even when their cognitive powers grasp their objects uniformly. Two people can think about a proposition or syllogism in such a way that one of them knows that it is true, while the other remains doubtful. The difference between these two thinkers is that the former has a *habitus* of knowledge and the other a *habitus* of opinion. This division of labour between the two kinds of disposition is applied to several psychological operations of the sensory soul as well.

The concept of *habitus* is highly flexible in Olivi's philosophical psychology, but the flexibility comes at the cost of conceptual clarity. Olivi seems to oppose any clear-cut distinction between *habitus* and *dispositio*, which means that the concept of *habitus* loses the

analytical power it has in some other medieval theories. When very different kinds of phenomena—from the changeable states of bodily organs to the intellectual disposition of faith—are conceptualized by using the same set of terms, the unity of the concept is hard-pressed. Yet, the flexibility of the concept allows Olivi to underline the dynamic nature of human psychology and to consider various phenomenological matters with unprecedented precision.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> This study was funded by the Academy of Finland and the Riksbankens Jubileumsfond.

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