

DAVID HUME AND THE CONCEPT OF VOLITION

Introduction

The following two papers, though separately authored, belong together, not only because we, the authors, shared our views during the writing, but also because they are excerpts from a single story we are interested in telling. This is the story of a particular insight into the conceptual structure of human volition -- the will. The insight is that volition -- or, more precisely, intention -- is (or presupposes) a kind of knowledge, practical knowledge. Our larger goal is to show how this insight was developed from the time of Aristotle into the Middle Ages, and then fell into obscurity in modern philosophy until quite recently. This insight became especially clear in the writings of Thomas Aquinas. The epistemological development which obscured it was most powerfully furthered by David Hume. The recovery of the insight was initially the work of the later Wittgenstein. The first paper deals with Aquinas; the second with Wittgenstein; and both with Hume.