

# THE POWERS OF THE SOUL IN DAVID OF AUGSBURG'S *DE EXTERIORIS ET INTERIORIS HOMINIS COMPOSITIONE*

## LOS PODERES DEL ALMA EN EL *DE EXTERIORIS ET INTERIORIS HOMINIS COMPOSITIONE* DE DAVID DE AUGSBURGO

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### Abstract

David of Augsburg, who lived from c. 1200 to 1272, is perhaps one of the least known of the most read authors of the late Middle Ages. His *opus magnum*, *De exterioris et interioris hominis compositione secundum triplicem statum incipientium, proficientium et perfectorum*, written in the 1240s in Regensburg, is one of the most successful books of learning in the Northern part of Europe in the Late Middle Ages. It is a voluminous treatise consisting of three books, structured according to Pseudo-Dionysius' three steps of the spiritual life. Within this triple scheme, the three powers of the soul (understanding, memory, and will) are presented as central to the whole trajectory of spiritual growth towards God. This article addresses five paradoxes that one encounters while studying David and his extensive treatise, in particular the parts on the powers of the soul.

### Keywords

David of Augsburg; Franciscans; Spiritual Progress; Powers of the Soul; Virtues

### Resumen

David de Augsburg, quien vivió aproximadamente desde el año 1200 hasta 1272, es quizás uno de los autores menos conocidos pero más leídos de finales de la Edad Media. Su obra magna, *De exterioris et interioris hominis compositione secundum triplicem statum incipientium, proficientium et perfectorum*, escrita en la década de 1240 en Ratisbona, fue uno de los libros de aprendizaje más exitosos en la parte norte de Europa durante la Baja Edad Media. Se trata de un tratado voluminoso que consta de tres libros, estructurados según los tres pasos de la vida espiritual de Pseudo-Dionisio. Dentro de este esquema triple, se presentan las tres facultades del alma (entendimiento, memoria y voluntad) como centrales para toda la trayectoria del crecimiento espiritual hacia Dios. Este artículo

aborda cinco paradojas que se encuentran al estudiar a David y su extenso tratado, en particular las partes sobre los poderes del alma.

### Palabras clave

David de Augsburgo; franciscanos; progreso espiritual; poderes del alma; virtudes

## 1. A “Monastic” Franciscan

David of Augsburg, who lived from c. 1200 to 1272, is perhaps one of the least known of the most read authors of the late Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup> Little is known about his life. He comes into the picture when, in 1246, he and a fellow Franciscan brother, Berthold of Regensburg (ca. 1220-1272), control the affairs of some monasteries around Regensburg. The fact that he does this on the authority of the Pope, indicates that David enjoyed a certain prestige in ecclesiastical circles. A second rare undisputed fact of his life is his death in Augsburg in the year 1272.<sup>2</sup> We do not know where and when David studied or when he moved to neighboring Augsburg, but his works suggest a solid theological education. In addition to various treatises in Latin, he also wrote a number of works in German, including *The Seven Stages of Prayer*, *The Mirror of Virtue*, and *The Manifestation and Salvation of the Human Race*.<sup>3</sup> These are certainly a product of his activity as a novice master and preacher. As a spiritual author and spiritual director, he addressed himself primarily to other religious. He also wrote sermons for his famous brother in Regensburg, preacher Berthold.

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<sup>1</sup> On David, see Cornelius Bohl, *Geistlicher Raum. Räumliche Sprachbilder als Träger spiritueller Erfahrung, dargestellt am Werk De compositione des David von Augsburg*, Franziskanische Forschungen 42 (Werk: Dietrich-Coelde-Verlag, 2000); Thomas Ertl, *Religion und Disziplin: Selbstdeutung und Weltordnung im frühen deutschen Franziskanertum*, Arbeiten Zur Kirchengeschichte 96 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006), 292-305; Claudia Rüegg, *David von Augsburg. Historische, theologische und philosophische Schwierigkeiten zu Beginn des Franziskanerordens in Deutschland*, Deutsche Literatur von den Anfängen bis 1700, 4 (Bern etc.: P. Lang, 1989); Dagobert Stöckerl, *Bruder David von Augsburg. Ein deutscher Mystiker aus dem Franziskanerorden*, Veröffentlichungen aus dem kirchenhistorischen Seminar München 4 (München: Lentner, 1914). See furthermore Maarten van der Heijden and Bert Roest, “David ab Augusta (David Augustanus/David von Augsburg, ca. 1200-1272)”, available at: <https://applejack.science.ru.nl/franciscanauthors/> (25-9-2021).

<sup>2</sup> In 1398, a fire destroyed the Franciscan Church in Augsburg where David was buried.

<sup>3</sup> David von Augsburg, *Die sieben Staffeln des Gebetes. In der deutschen Originalfassung herausgegeben von Kurt Ruh*, Kleine deutsche Prosadenkmäler des Mittelalters 1 (München: Fink, 1965); David von Augsburg, “Der Spiegel der Tugend”, in *Deutsche Mystiker des 14. Jahrhunderts* vol. 1, edited by F. Pfeiffer (Leipzig, 1845), 325-341; David von Augsburg, *Von der Offenbarung und Erlösung des Menschenschlechtes*, edited by F. Pfeiffer, *Zeitschrift für Deutsches Alterthum* 9 (1852): 1-67. For his other works, see Bohl, *Geistlicher Raum*, 21.

David's *opus magnum*, *De exterioris et interioris hominis compositione secundum triplicem statum incipientium, proficientium et perfectorum*, written in the 1240s in Regensburg, is one of the most successful books of learning in the Northern part of Europe in the Late Middle Ages. It is a voluminous treatise consisting of three books, structured according to Pseudo-Dionysius' three steps of the spiritual life. The three books, regularly attributed to Bonaventure and transmitted in various combinations with a notable preference for the first book, were not written as one volume but soon came to be seen as one "*Composition of the exterior and interior man according to the triple states of beginners, proficient, and perfect.*"<sup>4</sup> The first book, often handed down as a stand-alone manual for novices (*Formula novitiorum* or *Speculum monachorum*), contains an explanation of the rules for the good friar with the corresponding discipline inside and outside the convent. This volume deals primarily with the external, practical design of religious life, but also places a strong emphasis on self-discipline and self-reflection. As such, it presents itself in many ways as a regimen for monks. The second book deals with the inner, spiritual reform of the religious person. Exposed to the temptations of the flesh, the world and the devil, he must arm himself against the vices. In this way he can be inwardly purified and enlightened. The third book describes the seven steps of the religious person towards perfection. These are: fervor, austerity, consolation, temptation, self-mastery, holiness, and wisdom.<sup>5</sup> To these are added the fruits of prayer and the Eucharist.

The *Composition* is actually a very un-Franciscan book: it hardly deals with Francis or his spirituality.<sup>6</sup> In the words of Théophile Desbonnets, his teachings "n'a plus grand chose de franciscain."<sup>7</sup> In terms of concepts and method, David's work connects much more to the long monastic tradition.<sup>8</sup> Silence, self-reflection, and a focus on the inner self are central.<sup>9</sup> Humility, obedience, and poverty, themes that were also central to Francis (!), are often given a monastic interpretation. It seems as if David was primarily concerned

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<sup>4</sup> Edition: David ab Augusta, *De exterioris et interioris hominis compositione secundum triplicem statum incipientium, proficientium et perfectorum libri tres* (Quaracchi: Ad Claras Aquas, 1899). English translation: Dominic Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress: A Translation of De exterioris et interioris hominis compositione*, 2 vols. (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1937).

<sup>5</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* II, 3.

<sup>6</sup> See for an exceptional instance this passage on the highest degree of obedience: "[...] sicut de sanctissimo Patre nostro Francisco legimus et primis eius sociis" (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 267-268). Throughout the work, David touches on mendicant spirituality, but nowhere systematically. See, illustratively, on mendicant prayer, which is only one of several ways of praying: "Aliquando quasi mendicus et pauper" (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 303).

<sup>7</sup> Théophile Desbonnets, *De l'intuition à l'institution: Les Franciscains* (Paris: Editions Franciscaines, 1983), 67.

<sup>8</sup> I thank Marcia Colish for the observation that David may have become a Franciscan relatively late in his life. Dominic Devas refers to a Cistercian influence. Not pursuing the matter further, he states that much prominence is given to behavior when travelling and, "ancillary to this", "the stress laid on the life of retirement as equally and eminently Franciscan, seeing that the Order from its origins has envisaged the secluded life of the contemplative" (Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* I, xii).

<sup>9</sup> On interiority, see Werinhard J. Einhorn, "Der Begriff der 'Innerlichkeit' bei David von Augsburg und Grundzüge der Franziskanermystik", *Franziskanische Studien* 48 (1966): 336-376.

with training monastics and contemplatives, not preachers and active religious who go through the world proclaiming the salvation of Christ. Does this focus on inner development immediately explain the success of David's work in the circles of the Modern Devotion? The Latin edition of 1899 already mentions 370 manuscripts and early editions (many of them containing only the first book or only two of the three books, the second and third book often under the name *Profectus religiosorum*), and in the following century many Latin manuscripts and translations into the vernacular have been added by such researchers as Morton Bloomfield, Marcel Haverals, and Kurt Ruh.<sup>10</sup> The manuscripts originate mainly from Franciscan monasteries, but (young) Benedictines, Cistercians, Dominicans, and others also used the work, especially the *Formula novitiorum*, intensively. The role of the Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life is striking. They unquestionably regarded the book as fiber-rich and tasty spiritual food. Not only did they themselves copy (parts of) the work, but they also frequently used passages to reinforce their own spiritual considerations. Especially the emphasis on "progress in virtues" (*profectus virtutum*) among pious devout women and men often goes back directly to David's *Composition*.<sup>11</sup>

A closer look at the manuscript evidence reveals some strange production and transmission patterns. In a small number of cases, the order of the books of the *Compositione* has been changed in favor of book three, and of these cases at least six contain the order 3-2. This means that the main structure (*novitii, proficientes, religiosi*) has been abandoned for what must have seemed a more suitable concept of "seven steps

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<sup>10</sup> Morton W. Bloomfield *et al.*, *Incipits of Latin Works on the Virtues and Vices, 1100-1500 A.D.* (Cambridge: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1979) (nrs. 0019, 2655, 4155, 4283, 5676); Marcel Haverals, "Deux exhortations á la vie monastique de la 'Dévotion moderne'", in *Pascua Mediaevalia. Studies voor Prof. Dr. J.M. de Smet*, edited by R. Lievens *et al.*, *Mediaevalia Lovaniensia 1-10* (Leuven: Universitaire Pers Leuven, 1983), 605-618; Kurt Ruh, "David von Augsburg und die Entstehung eines franziskanischen Schifftums in deutscher Sprache", in *Kleine Schriften 2. Scholastik und Mystik im Spätmittelalter* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1984), 46-67. Most of the manuscripts are situated in the German-Dutch area, but whereas the reception of the text in the German area has been scarcely studied, the late medieval Dutch reception is fairly mapped out. This has much to do with the interest in the Modern Devotion and the emphasis the brothers and sisters lay on spiritual practice and *profectus virtutum*. See especially Karl Stooker and Theo Verbeij, "'Uut Profectus'. Over de verspreiding van Middel nederlandse kloosterliteratuur aan de hand van de 'Profectus religiosorum' van David van Augsburg", in *Boeken voor de eeuwigheid. Middelnederlands geestelijk proza*, edited by T. Mertens *et al.*, *Nederlandse literatuur en cultuur in de middeleeuwen 8* (Amsterdam, 1993), 318-340. See furthermore Crispinus S. Smits, "David van Augsburg en de invloed van zijn Profectus op de Moderne Devotie", *Collectanea Franciscana Neerlandica 1* (1927): 171-203.

<sup>11</sup> See Krijn Pansters, *De kardinale deugden in de Lage Landen, 1200-1500*, *Middeleeuwse studies en bronnen 108* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2007), 165-171; Krijn Pansters, "Profectus virtutum: The Roots of Devout Moral Praxis", in *Seeing the Seeker: Explorations in the Discipline of Spirituality. A Festschrift for Kees Waaijman on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, edited by H. Blommestijn, *Studies in Spirituality. Supplement 19* (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 231-249.

towards perfection and the acquisition of virtues" preceding "the fight against the vices".<sup>12</sup> We could say, with some exaggeration, that the order vice-virtue has been changed in favor of the order virtue-vice. What is striking in this context is that from the six manuscripts mentioned in the edition of 1899 that contain the order 3-2 (out of 370) three are situated in the Low Countries, and one in Gdansk, a well-known medieval Dutch trading partner in Preußen (nowadays Poland).<sup>13</sup> In addition, two other manuscripts in the Netherlands (not mentioned in the edition of 1899) also contain the order 3-2.<sup>14</sup> Even more interesting is the reception of the work in Middle Dutch. Of the 27 known translations of the *Composition*, seven follow the order 3-2,<sup>15</sup> which is almost 25%. I have not examined the manuscripts and their relations any further, nor checked if this is all a matter of coincidence or error, but a preliminary conclusion with regard to this strange inversion may be this: the reception of the *Composition* in the Low Countries evidences the shift in importance from a focus on vice in the pastoral literature of the High Middle Ages to a focus on virtue in the devout literature of the Late Middle Ages.<sup>16</sup> There are, indeed,

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<sup>12</sup> The first chapter of the third book deals, among other things, with spiritual consolation, whereas the final chapter deals with the Eucharist. I am reminded here of the reversal of book three (on the Eucharist) and book four (on interior consolation) of the autograph of Thomas a Kempis' *Imitatio Christi* (see Léon M.J. Delaissé, *Le manuscrit autographe de Thomas a Kempis et 'L'Imitation de Jésus-Christ. Examen archéologique et édition diplomatique du Bruxellensis 5855-6*, 2 vols. [Antwerp and Amsterdam: Éd. Érasme, 1956]) by scribes who preferred to end with the chapter on the Eucharist. See Rudolf Th. M. van Dijk, "De Navolging van Christus als concept voor de geestelijke weg. De relevante plaats van het derde en vierde boek", *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 77 (2003): 43-92.

<sup>13</sup> Possible sources for the inversion are ms. Brussels, Royal Library, 1795 (1388) and ms. The Hague, Royal Library, 70 E 10 (1397). Both manuscripts have the inverted order book three-book two. In the Hague 70 E 10, it is the same hand that joins the explicit of book three with the incipit of book two. The Dutch translations are of a later date (and possibly based on these manuscripts).

<sup>14</sup> Stooker and Verbeij, "'Uit Profectus'", 318-340.

<sup>15</sup> Stooker and Verbeij, "'Uit Profectus'", 337-340.

<sup>16</sup> The shift "from vice to virtue" is confirmed by the work of Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen (1367-1398), the influential theologian of the Modern Devotion from the generation after Geert Grote (1367-1384). His emphasis is on virtues and on progress towards perfection, not on vices. His reception of the *Composition* in his *De spiritualibus ascensionibus* follows the same inversion. In some places Zerbolt starts with the virtues of book three, and then opposes them with the vices of book two. Whereas David treats the vices first and ends with the love for one's neighbor, Zerbolt starts with the love for one's neighbor and ends with a particular vice, for example in the chapter on *invidia* (ch. 60): "Ascensus contra invidiam sunt profectus et gradus dilectionis proximi. Quorum primus est nullum odire, nulli malum cupere, nullius velle bonum impedire, in necessitate proximo auxilium subventionis non subtrahere et breviter, ut nulli faciat vel cupiat malum cum voluntatis consensu et bonum optet et faciat sicut sibi velle deberet si indigeret [...]. Est autem summum remedium invidiae nihil amare eorum, quae mundus amat, honores, divitias, voluptates. In quantum nos aliquod terrenum diligimus in tantum si per aliquem ab eo impedimur ad invidiam concitatur [...]. Secundum remedium est, ut homo diligenter perpendat, quod etiam si alius illo careret bono, de quo ei invidet, attamen ipse illud non haberet [...]". See David: "Dilectionis proximi primus gradus esse videtur nullum odire, nulli malum cupere, in necessitate proximo auxilium subventionis non subtrahere, et breviter, ut nulli faciat malum vel cupiat cum voluntatis consensu, et bonum proximo optet et faciat, sicut sibi velle deberet, si indigeret [...] [3,36]. Primum remedium

good spiritual reasons for the Modern Devout to concentrate on virtue, not vice.<sup>17</sup>

## 2. The Powers of the Soul

The main theological division outside-inside (*De exterioris et interioris hominis compositione*) that David uses to express the necessity of man's outer and inner reformation is borrowed from Cassian.<sup>18</sup> This author had intended his *Institutiones* and *Collationes* to be a literary unit, aimed at the *homo exterior* and *homo interior* respectively. Thus,

The *exterior* man means the body which by force of decay – inherent legacy of sin – grows weak, dies and turns to dust; but *the inward man is renewed day by day* (2 Cor. 4,16) in good, and grows up into a more and more perfect *likeness* to Him to whose *image* he has been created.<sup>19</sup>

In addition, David adopts the reformation of understanding, will, memory, the three powers of the soul that he discusses in the second and third book (see below), from Augustine.<sup>20</sup> Other medieval authors who have a considerable influence on David are

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contra invidiam est, quod et summum est, nihil amare vel cupere eorum, quae mundus amat, id est honores, divitias, voluptates [...]” [2,37]. “Secundum est cogitare, quod si alius non haberet illud, unde tu ei invides, tamen tu non haberes [...]” [2,37]. The Dutch tradition of inversion ends with the Modern Devout Jan Mombaer (ca.1460- ca.1501), who in his *Rosetum exercitiorum spiritualium et sacramentum meditationum* uses the third and a portion of David's second book in the form of excerpts, summaries, and *versus memoriales* (Pansters, *De kardinale deugden*, 189).

<sup>17</sup> The Dutch historian Leendert Breure, studying the attitudes toward death and life within the Modern Devotion, observes that with the virtues of *ynnicheit* (inner peace) and *puritas cordis* (purity of heart) in possession, there is no need to attach too much importance to temptations, sin, and fear: “The idea existed that it is dangerous to bury oneself too deep in the notion of sin. Thinking less about the problem of sin and fear, the attitude of acceptance of life as it comes was connected with the often-pronounced hope of grace” (Leendert Breure, *Doodsbeleving en levenshouding: een historisch-psychologische studie betreffende de Moderne Devotie in het IJsselgebied in de veertiende en vijftiende eeuw*, *Middeleeuwse studies en bronnen* 5 [Hilversum: Verloren, 1987], 119; trans. K. Pansters). Furthermore: “The goal was always to produce something useful, in which the devout person could mirror himself. Listing the virtues served that purpose” (Breure, *Doodsbeleving en levenshouding*, 214). And: “Vices had to be ascertained, but not analysed. There was little or no room for reflection on psychological causes behind one's own behaviors” (Breure, *Doodsbeleving en levenshouding*, 258-259).

<sup>18</sup> Bohl, *Geistlicher Raum*, 119. The decision to describe the virtues in just a few outstanding degrees without any intermediate steps also goes back to Cassian (Bohl, *Geistlicher Raum*, 119).

<sup>19</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* I, 83-84. “Exterior homo est corpus, quod ex defectu corruptionis, quae ex peccato provenit, languescit, moritur et incineratur; interior autem homo in bonis de die in diem renovatur et proficit in similitudine eius, ad cuius imaginem creatus est” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 88). “External” powers like physical strength or practical intelligence do not feature in the *Composition*. See, in this regard, David's quotation and explanation of 1 Tim. 4,8: “[...] corporalis exercitatio ad modicum utilis est, pietas autem ad omnia utilis est” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 87).

<sup>20</sup> Bohl, *Geistlicher Raum*, 123-124.

Gregory the Great, Hugh of St. Victor, and Bernard of Clairvaux.<sup>21</sup> With regard to the conceptualization of spiritual progress, the influence of these authors is nevertheless negligible. David's classification of spiritual life (*incipientes, proficientes, perfecti* and the corresponding stages *animalis, rationalis, spiritualis*), which forms the backbone of his religious program, is derived from the prevalent *Epistola ad fratres de Monte Dei* of William of St. Thierry.<sup>22</sup>

Concerning the theme of progress in the virtues, David does not limit himself to this sixth step of the third book.<sup>23</sup> *Profectus virtutum* is in fact the underlying, connecting theme of all three books of the *Composition*. Whereas one with ardent zeal in each of the three stages (in the three books) necessarily participates in a continuous transformation process,<sup>24</sup> the life of virtue is situated in the dynamics of spiritual development as a continuous discovery and interiorisation of the good (*in bonis*) that is God. Inextricably bound up with the other steps of the spiritual transformation process (that in itself consists of a continuous *proficere*), progress in the virtues relates to this whole process (*processus*) from beginning (*incipere*) to end (*perfectio*). Making progress (*proficere, progredi, promovere, procedere, ascendere*) and becoming perfect (*perfici*) demand a – literally – unremitting effort (*studium, disciplina, labor, exercitium, opera, devotio*). In one of his letters that has been passed down in many manuscripts of the *Composition*, David puts it this way:

The more one advances [in exercising virtue] the more one sees of the way one has yet to travel and how best to set about it... Not to endeavour to advance [in the practice of virtue] is to risk losing this understanding, for the path itself to holiness [*virtutes*] fades from view.<sup>25</sup>

In the same vein, the three powers of the soul (understanding, memory, and will) are also presented as central to the whole trajectory of spiritual growth towards God. A whole

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<sup>21</sup> Bohl, *Geistlicher Raum*, 125-133.

<sup>22</sup> In David's own words: "Beatus Bernardus in Epistola ad Fratres de Monte Dei describit tres status Religiosorum, scilicet incipientium, proficientium, perfectorum. Primum vocat animale[m] [...]. Secundum vocat rationale[m] [...]. Tertium vocat spirituale[m]" (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 84). See also: Bohl, *Geistlicher Raum*, 132-134. This work was thought to be written by Bernard of Clairvaux. See also: Jacob Heerinckx, "Influence de l'Epistola ad fratres de Monte Dei' sur la composition de l'homme extérieur et intérieur de David d'Augsburg", *Études franciscaines* 45 (1933): 330-347, here 333: "Et n'était-il pas naturel que le maître des novices allemandes, écrivant pour des débutants dans la vie religieuse, s'inspirât du traité composé par l'abbé de Clairvaux, comme on croyait, pour des novices chartreux?"

<sup>23</sup> For this and the previous paragraph, see Pansters, "Profectus virtutum", 236-238.

<sup>24</sup> Hein Blommestijn, "Progrès-progressants", *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 12 (1986): 2383-2405, there 2397.

<sup>25</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* I, 3. "Quanto plus quis altius profecerit in actione virtutis, tanto clarius videt, quid adhuc sibi desit, et qualiter ad ea, quae restant, debeat pervenire [...]. Qui autem non studet in virtutibus semper proficere etiam hoc aliquando perdet, quod necdum viam, qua ad virtutes tendatur, intelligat" (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 1). The editors have placed this letter of David before the first book.

chapter is dedicated to them in the second book.<sup>26</sup> Here, in the context of the interior life and the recovery from sin, David gives an overview of the three powers (*potentiae*), their role in the process of interior renovation, and each of the powers' successive stages of "beginning, progress, and perfection". First, the soul, being an image of the Trinity, has three powers. With these powers "it may reach upwards towards God:"<sup>27</sup>

By the understanding it touches the wisdom of God, by the memory it touches the eternity of God, from whom it need never more be separated, by the will it touches the goodness of God.<sup>28</sup>

Verbs connected to the "touching" (*capere*) of God, the highest good to be reached by the soul (*quod est capax summi boni*), are striving (*studere, diligere*), rising (*apprehendere*), laying hold (*tenere*), desiring (*requirere, desiderare*), possessing (*in se habere*), seeking (*quaerere*), and finding (*invenire*). To the "positive" labors that may forward (*quae promovent eam*) the soul's search are added the "negative" efforts to avoid (*omnia vitare et fugere*) the pitfalls on the path.

Second, "interior reformation is to be looked for in the faculties of the soul".<sup>29</sup> The rational soul, in which lies the image of God, needs renovation

because sin has obscured the reason, enervated and distorted the will and turned the memory aside upon an endless variety of vain courses. How often does reason take falsehood for truth, the will mistake evil for good, the memory busy herself constantly on what brings nothing but disquiet in its train, forsaking the one supreme good in whom she might find all good as in its source.<sup>30</sup>

The renovation (*reformatio*) of interior man therefore begins with setting the three powers straight. Third, understanding, will, and memory each have three stages: beginning, progress, and perfection. Here is an overview of the nine elements (in my analysis) of the reformation of the powers of the soul:<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> The chapters of book two are: "Four Points for Beginners", "Fourfold Temptation", "Three Kinds of Religious", "The Soul's Three Powers", "Interior Discord", and "The Seven Capital Sins".

<sup>27</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* I, 81. "[...] habes tres potentias, quibus capax est Dei" (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 85).

<sup>28</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* I, 81. "Per rationem potens est capere sapientiam Dei; per memoriam potens est capere virtutem aeternitatis Dei, ut in aeternum nunquam ab eo possit separari; per voluntatem potens est capere bonitatem Dei" (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 85).

<sup>29</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* I, 83. "Interior reformatio in spiritu mentis consistit" (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 88).

<sup>30</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* I, 84. "Sed per peccatum ratio caeca facta est, voluntas curva et foeda, memoria instabilis et vaga. Ratio recipit saepius falsum pro vero; voluntas eligit deterius pro bono; memoria occupat se illis, quibus semper inquietatur, quia unum et summum bonum deseruit, in quo omnia bona poterat habere" (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 88).

<sup>31</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* I, 84-87. Reason: "Initium ergo reformationis rationis est fidem catholicam firmiter credere. [...] Profectus rationis est ex illuminatione divina rationes fidei aliquatenus intelligere [...]. Perfectio rationis in hac vita est per mentis excessum supra se rapi [...]"



	Understanding	Will	Memory
Beginning	Firm belief in the truths of the Catholic Faith	Firm determination to resist vice and for God's sake to devote itself sincerely to the acquisition of virtue	Strive to recall it from its habitual wandering to the thought of God by means of prayer, reading, recollection and reflection
Progress	Growing apprehension of the truths of faith, under the light of divine grace	The movements of the will are found so well ordered and set towards the acquisition of virtue that there is neither compulsion on the one hand nor revolt on the other, and that nothing is relished but God's will alone	The success attained in freeing meditation and prayer from importunate distractions, and in maintaining, <i>with heart enlarged</i> (Ps. 118,32), an orderly mind
Perfection	Entire elevation of the mind above itself [so] that God is perceived [...] by a radiant clearness of the soul wrapt in contemplation	Become by love <i>one spirit</i> with God (1 Cor. 6,17), so that it cannot exercise itself except in God and longs to be filled to the full with His sweetness	Being so caught up with and absorbed in God as to be forgetful of self and all created things, and, without any stir of fugitive thoughts and imaginings, to rest sweetly in God alone

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purissima mentis intelligentia Deum in contemplatione videre." Will: "Initium reformationis voluntatis est ex bonae voluntatis assensu vitii resistere et operibus virtutum fideliter instare propter Deum. [...] Profectus eius est omnes affectiones habere ordinatas et in virtutes formatas sine rebellione vel coactione, ut iam non libeat, nisi quod est secundum voluntatem Dei. Perfectio voluntatis est unum cum Deo spiritum esse per amorem, ut iam non possit velle nisi Deum et eius suavitatis dulcedine inebriari." Memory: "Initium reformationis memoriae est mentem ab evagatione sua ad memoriam Dei cum labore reducere orando, legendo, recolendo vel [...] cogitando. Profectus est bonis meditationibus et orationibus sine importuna evagatione posse intentum esse et in latitudine cordis sui secum deambulare. Perfectio est ita in Deum esse absorptum per mentis excessum, ut et sui ipsius et omnium, quae sunt, obliviscatur homo et in solo Deo absque omni strepitu volubiliu cogitationum et imaginationum suaviter quiescat" (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 89-92).

After this triple treatment of the soul's three powers (interior man – reformation – three stages), David concludes with an explanation of the intermediate stage of progress:

It must begin with the *will*, for on the will all depends, virtue, vice and merit, and those inclinations also which tend towards good on the one hand or towards evil on the other. Next in order comes the *memory*, and lastly the *understanding*, or intellect. The *will* is master in the soul, and the *understanding* is the teacher; but the *memory* is for the service of both, implementing the commands of the one, absorbing the instruction of the other.<sup>32</sup>

Here we have the functional (obediential, pedagogical) relationships between the three powers – the triad's internal logic considered from the perspective of monastic living.

A rehearsal of this treatment in the fourth chapter of the second book (on the interior life) can be found in the first chapter of the third book (on progress in a religious soul): “The powers of the soul are the memory, the understanding and the will, and herein is the image of the Blessed Trinity found.”<sup>33</sup> Hence, God

enlightens the intellect that it may know the truth; He enkindles the will that it may love what is good, and He gives to the memory to find its tranquillity and joy in clinging to the good that is true.<sup>34</sup>

Here, in the third stage of the religious person progressing towards perfection, viz., *spiritualis consolatio*, the definitions of the three powers are roughly corresponding to their first stages described in book two. Entirely new is the explanation that spiritual consolation adorns the powers supernaturally,<sup>35</sup> in the sense that natural faculties are adorned (*ornatus*) by God with their characteristic understandings and recognitions, affections and virtues, and thoughts and capacities.<sup>36</sup>

David brings up the three powers in three more places. First, in chapter five (on prayer) of the third book he directly refers to his treatment of the powers in the second

<sup>32</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* I, 87. “De quorum profectibus aliquanto latius est considerandum, et primo de reformatione voluntatis; quia virtus et vitium et meritum dependent ab ea et affectiones, quae tam ad vitia quam ad virtutes inclinantur; postea de memoria et ratione vel intellectu. Voluntas est in anima quasi imperans, ratio vero quasi docens, memoria quasi ministrans utrique, illi quid iubeat, isti quid doceat” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 91-92).

<sup>33</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* II, 5-6. “Potentiae animae, in quibus imaginem summae Trinitatis praefert, sunt tres: ratio, voluntas et memoria” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 164).

<sup>34</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* II, 6. “[...] hoc est a Deo. Ratio illuminatur ad cognitionem veri, voluntas accenditur ad amorem boni, memoria tranquillatur ad fruendum et inhaerendum vero bono” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 164).

<sup>35</sup> “Vera autem consolatio spiritualis consistit in duobus: in naturalium animae potentiarum decoratione et carnis ad spiritum quieta concordatione” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 163-164).

<sup>36</sup> “Rationis ornatus est lucida intelligentia de Deo et de his, quae de Deo sunt et ad Deum conducunt, ut intellectus sacrae Scripturae et rationes fidei et operum Dei [...]. Ornatus voluntatis sunt sanctae affectiones et devotio ad Deum, fervor fidei, fiducia spei, dulcedo caritatis et bonae voluntatis alacritas [...]. Ornatus memoriae est sacrarum copia cogitationum et affluentia utilium meditationum et stabilis memoria Dei [...]” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 165).

book (*dictum est enim supra*) when he asserts that “the perfection of a spiritual life depends upon the enlightenment of the understanding, the rectitude of the will and the ever constant memory of God”.<sup>37</sup> Except for a few words on *memoria*, he does not elaborate any further on the triad. Second, at the very end of the same chapter, we read about the best form of prayer as “that calm ecstasy of possession wherein all the fugitive faculties (*vires*) and powers (*potentiae*) of the soul are gathered together and fixed upon the One”.<sup>38</sup> Here, too, David gives no further explication. Third, in chapter six (on the states of prayer) of the third book David examines the triple powers as “the steps whereby the soul may advance and approach the summit”. The first progressive step in prayer is control of the imagination (*memoria*), which “will move into an atmosphere of tranquillity”.<sup>39</sup> The next step is understanding (*intelligentia*), which, “thus lit and enlarged, has now a wide field of thought”.<sup>40</sup> The soul progresses towards supreme goodness (God), finally, in the will (*affectus*): “as the understanding advances in its knowledge and truth, so also does the appetite of the soul, the will with its affections, experience truth’s sweetness.”<sup>41</sup> In this way, when the understanding (*ratio*) “is filled with the knowlegde of God”, the will (*voluntas*) “is set uniquely upon the love of God”, and the memory (*memoria*) “is wholly absorbed in holding, gazing upon and delighting in God”, all the faculties and powers are ultimately unified in the *forma animae*, God.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* II, 128. “Dictum est enim supra, quod perfectio spiritualis vitae in tribus principaliter constet: in rationis illuminatione, in voluntatis rectitudine et in memoriae iugi circa Deum occupatione” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 294).

<sup>38</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* II, 170. “[...] ubi omnes vires animae et potentiae a suis dispersionibus simul collectae et in unum verum et simplicissimum et summum bonum fixae” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 338).

<sup>39</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* II, 171. “Primo enim assuescit dispersiones memoriae [...] memoria aliquando proficit et stabilitur” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 339).

<sup>40</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* II, 172. “Intelligentia etiam [...] Et hac illustratione dilatatur mens ad multa cogitanda” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 339).

<sup>41</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* II, 173. “[...] ideo, cum intellectus coeperit in agnitione veri dilatari, statim etiam et gustus animae, hoc est interior affectus, incipit quodam spirituali sapore in cognitis delectari” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 341). Here, David reflects on the role of the *affectiones* (*amor, gaudium, spes, timor, odium, dolor, pudor*), noting that “each affective power of the soul has its own proper object” (“Licet enim omnes animae affectiones suos habeant proprios sapes”).

<sup>42</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* II, 178. “[...] cum omnibus potentiis suis et viribus in Deum collecta [...] Forma enim animae Deus est [...] nisi cum ratio perfecte iuxta capacitatem suam illuminatur ad cognitionem Dei [...] et voluntas perfecte afficitur ad amandum summam bonitatem, et memoria plene absorbetur ad intuendam et tenendam et fruendam summam felicitatem” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 346).

### 3. Power Paradoxes

I would now like to address five paradoxes that I have encountered while studying David and his extensive treatise, in particular the parts on the powers of the soul.

- (1) This is a Franciscan manual for monastic living, or rather, a monastic manual for Franciscan living. Clear Franciscan themes and elements (going outside the convent, not engaging with women, begging, following the example of Francis, etc.) indicate the intended public (viz., novices and professed friars living in convents), but form, structure, and content follow a thoroughly monastic framework.<sup>43</sup> The Franciscan author is clearly in love with his patristic and monastic sources – a preference that may also be at the root of the reception of the text by the interiority-driven Modern Devout and their strange reversal of books two and three.
- (2) The treatise, while focusing on the steps of spiritual progress on the route to perfection (*novitii, proficientes, religiosi; incipientes, proficientes, perfecti; animalis, rationalis, spiritualis*), employs several philosophical schemes that one expects to find in a scholarly treatise but not (necessarily) in a manual for spiritual life. One of these schemes is the platonic/augustinian quartet of cardinal virtues,<sup>44</sup> another the platonic trilogy of lower powers of the soul (the *vires animae* of reason, spirit, and appetite) – schemes that one will not encounter, for instance, in the writings of Francis. Noteworthy, too, is the central, structuring place of the augustinian trilogy of the higher powers of the soul (the *potentiae animae* of understanding, will, and memory) in the spiritual transformation from vice to virtue in the second book.
- (3) The use of these schemes is rather stereotyped.<sup>45</sup> With regard to the three

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<sup>43</sup> In some ways, there is no great contrast between mendicant and monastic, or between spiritual and philosophical in the thirteenth century. The medievals simply did not have the same distinctions that we tend to like to draw in these and other ways. Bonaventure, for instance, cannot be categorized as either “spiritual” or “philosophical”, to the exclusion of the other: he is both. One suspects the same can and indeed should be said of David, but this is simply not true. Unlike Bonaventure, whose outlook is universal and whose approach is differentiated, David writes a manual for Franciscan novices in distinctly Benedictine, even un-Franciscan terms. His persistent focus on interiority and the life of the soul (instead of mendicancy and the life on the street) is striking in his whole oeuvre.

<sup>44</sup> David gives a short description of the cardinal virtues in chapter four of the third book (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 217, 227). See on the hesitant reception of the cardinal virtues in late-medieval discourse: Pansters, *De kardinale deugden*.

<sup>45</sup> As is so often the case with philosophical schemes in late medieval theology, they are reproduced, repeated, and rehearsed, but not prepared for practical application in natural circumstances. See for example, in general terms, on the Platonic trilogy: “The very fact that it was stereotyped indicates a formal rather than an enthusiastic acceptance of the idea. In the ethical and social and political thought of Plato himself the tripartition unquestionably fulfilled a vitally important role, but we cannot say the same for the part it plays in the long series of his devoted followers” (David

*potentiae*, we see that they are neither fully integrated in the concept of spiritual progress (as if a friar, who will be naturally drawn toward regular reflection on progress in his virtues, will also continually consider his understanding, will, and memory), nor self-evident for the discipline inside the convent or the development of virtue (where basic considerations, not higher powers dictate daily progress). More importantly, even though they are declared crucial for the interior life and indispensable for the soul's *profectus* both in the context of the recovery from sin and the practice of prayer, they neither provide a functional foundation nor an inspirational framework, like religious exercise or spiritual virtue, for the *practical process* between purification and fruition.

- (4) The powers of the soul are inherently connected (not unlike the *connexio* of the cardinal virtues),<sup>46</sup> but this connexion is not maintained everywhere by David. For example, he refers to the powers already at the very beginning of the first treatise, but only partly so: “[...] He has not merely created man, but, in addition, adorned him with reason, enobled him with free-will [...]”<sup>47</sup> After that, *voluntas* and *ratio* keep returning in various places, either in combination or separately, but – with the exception of the “complete” treatment of the triad in chapter four of the second book and in chapter six of the third book – always without *memoria*. Thus, when he deals with the “natural powers of the mind” (*naturales vires animae*) in relation to the movements of the will (*motus affectionum*, viz., the concupiscible and irascible passions, or sense appetites) very concisely, he also mentions will as God's subject and reason as the soul's guide.<sup>48</sup> And when he concludes his book on the vices and their remedies, he observes that “the will is strengthened in the conflict with temptation”.<sup>49</sup> In addition, will incidentally appears as part of other divisions, e.g., will, action, and joy as the powers of love,

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N. Bell, “The Tripartite Soul and the Image of God in the Latin Tradition”, *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 47 [1980]: 16-52, there 52). See on the “l'art pour l'art” reception of the cardinal virtues in late medieval society: Pansters, *De kardinale deugden*.

<sup>46</sup> “Nulla istarum valet esse vel perfici sine aliis: si ratio non videret, voluntas non amaret, quia nec sciret, quid esset amandum; si non amaret, non delectaretur in bono; item, si non memoraretur boni, quomodo posset agnoscere vel illud amare?” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 164).

<sup>47</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* I, 3. “[...] quem non solum creavit sicut cetera, sed insuper intellectu decoravit, libero arbitrio nobilitavit” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 1).

<sup>48</sup> “Voluntas nulli debuit esse subiecta nisi soli Deo [...] et iste appetitus vocatur concupiscibilitas. [...] docente vi rationali [...]. Et haec vis vocatur irascibilitas [...] per vim concupiscibilem appetivit bonum [...] per vim irascibilem tenuit et inhaesit bono” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 92-93). Elsewhere, in a paragraph on “temptation and its methods of approach” in the second chapter of the third book, the translator calls the “lower” *tres animae vires* (*concupiscibilitas*, *irascibilitas*, *rationabilitas*) the “three powers of the soul” (Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* II, 185).

<sup>49</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* I, 130. “[...] voluntas roboratur contra tentationes” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 159). There are some independent references to memory, and these usually concern the mindfulness of God, e.g., “huius beatitudinis imitatio quaedam est iugis memoria Dei” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 213).

whereby it remains, unsurprisingly, “informed by reason”.<sup>50</sup>

- (5) David’s clear descriptions of the powers’ form, function, and effect remain close to traditional interpretations, but the terminology used is far from consequent. Terminological inconsequence may be a typical trait of the late medieval mindset, but David’s variations are nevertheless surprising and occasionally confusing. For example, in one and the same chapter he first calls the powers *memoria*, *intelligentia*, and *affectus*, and then *ratio*, *voluntas*, and *memoria*.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, the internal order of the triad in chapters two (*ratio*, *memoria*, *voluntas*; *ratio*, *voluntas*, *memoria*) and three (*memoria*, *intelligentia*, *affectus*; *memoria*, *affectus*, *intellectus*; *ratio*, *voluntas*, *memoria*) seems to be somewhat a matter of indifference. In some instances, similarities are so vague as to become futile, for example: “[...] knowing nothing of interior devotion, they pay little heed to the cultivation of true holiness which lies in the intellect [*spiritu*] and in the will [*mente*]”;<sup>52</sup> or, in this well-known definition of virtue: “by virtue we mean a movement of the will [*affectus*] acting in accord with a legitimate judgment formed by the intellect [*mentis*]”.<sup>53</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

Returning by way of conclusion to the treatise in its entirety, we can safely say that, in David’s conception, all human powers (*potentiae*, *vires*, *virtutes*, *affectiones*, etc.) are always entirely spiritual, i.e., functioning within a divine-human relational framework. On the one hand, they are elements of a complete program of religious return to the Creator, thus ultimately to be given back to God: “Therefore you must give Him all – all that you are, all your powers of mind and body.”<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, they are essentially

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<sup>50</sup> “Dilectio nostra in tribus consistit: in voluntate, in opere, in affectu. Voluntas informata a ratione” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 224).

<sup>51</sup> There are more variations in this chapter: “[...] et quanto ferventius ab inferiorum memoria, affectu et intellectu ad superna sustollitur” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 345); “[...] ut anima toto intellectu et affectu et memoria in Deum feratur” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 346). See also, in chapter 65: “Cum autem devotio sit pia affectionis pinguendo et magis se habeat ad affectum quam ad intellectum” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 354).

<sup>52</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* I, 76. “[...] et interioris dulcedinis ignari, de veris virtutum studiis, quae in spiritu et mente sunt, parum currant” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 80). It is not entirely clear why Devas translates *spiritu* with “intellect” and *mente* with “will”; a better translation would have been one using the more literal “spirit” and “mind.”

<sup>53</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* II, 54. “Virtus est ordinatus secundum veritatis iudicium mentis affectus” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 215).

<sup>54</sup> “[...] et ideo debes ei dare totum, quod es et quod scis et potes” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 4). See for a similar example: “[...] nos eum vicissim diligere ex omni, quod sumus et scimus et possumus” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 224). We are dealing here with powers of the soul, not higher powers. However, God’s grace is a *basso continuo* in the *Composition*. See, already, the

(potentially) internal and God-directed: “Be a man of God (*devotus Deo*) in real earnest (*cor tuum semper, quantum potes*), and occupy yourself in Him (*occupato cum ipso*).”<sup>55</sup> Even the building blocks of discipline inside the convent – covered in chapter one of book one, on “outward man” – are virtues or *spiritual* habits: obedience (“for the love of God and of His Kingdom of Heaven you have surrendered yourself”<sup>56</sup>), peace with superiors (“believe that in whatever they enjoin, God is behind them working for your soul’s good”<sup>57</sup>), care in the divine office (“compel the body to minister to the spirit”<sup>58</sup>), discipline at chapter (“provided his conscience is clear before God”<sup>59</sup>), discipline in the refectory (“be concerned with yourself alone and God”<sup>60</sup>), and so forth. The same goes for discipline outside the convent – covered in chapter two of book one, still on “outward man” – where self-discipline (chapter three), community life (chapter four), and exterior conduct are always a reflection of the soul’s devotion, the heart’s direction, the desire for religious progress, in short: the interior disposition-in-development, or spiritual *composition*.

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beginning of the introductory letter: “Quod Deo operante bene incepto ipso cooperante melius consummare” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 1).

<sup>55</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* I, 30. “[...] esto devotus Deo et cor tuum semper, quantum potes, occupato cum ipso” (David ab Augusta, *De exterioris*, 35).

<sup>56</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* I, 5.

<sup>57</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* I, 6.

<sup>58</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* I, 7.

<sup>59</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* I, 8.

<sup>60</sup> Devas, *Spiritual Life and Progress* I, 9.

