

Aquinas on the Unity of Perfect Moral Virtue

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In attempting to assemble a substantive account of Aquinas's synthetic virtue theory, one encounters a lacuna in the area of moral virtue. For, while insisting on the two species of moral virtue, the acquired and infused, Aquinas devotes the greatest proportion of the *Secunda Secundae* of the *Summa Theologiae* to the analysis of the acquired moral virtues and neglects a correspondingly full exposition of their infused counterparts.¹ Then, in the scattered references in which Aquinas does compare and contrast the two species of moral virtue, although he affirms that the acquired and infused moral virtues can coexist in the Christian,² and that the presence of acquired moral virtues exerts³ a positive impact on facility in the performance of virtuous acts,⁴ he does not discuss precisely how the two species of moral virtue interrelate in the moral actions of the Christian who possesses both.

Accordingly, we need to investigate the following. First, is it in accord with Aquinas's theory of virtue to say that, in the Christian who acquires human virtue, the acquired and infused moral virtues coexist in a parallel fashion enabling the individual to perform purely natural acts of virtue at one time and purely supernatural acts of virtue at

¹ See ST 2-2.47-170.

² See *In III Sent* 33.1.2.4, s.c.; ST 2-2.47.14 ad 1; 53.1 ad 3.

³ In the course of this paper, the human soul, its powers and their perfections, and the habits and virtues, are frequently described in a way that connotes hypostatization: the soul understands; the will desires; prudence directs; the acquired moral virtues exert, etc. Aquinas insists that one must always remember that it is the person who wills, the person who is prudent, the person who is virtuous. Reference to the soul, powers, or virtues is only for purposes of analysis and classification, and a certain reification of them is not intended to obfuscate the principal point that habits and powers of the human person are properties of a substantial human being pertaining to the accidental category of quality (see ST 1-2.56.5).

⁴ See ST 1-2.65.3 ad 2.

another? Or, do both species of moral virtue contribute in some manner to the performance of the same moral act? Second, if the latter is true, what is the theoretical explanation for a single moral act following from two causes, one natural, the other supernatural?

In answer to this line of inquiry, I will advance a twofold thesis. First, in the Christian who also possesses the acquired moral virtues, each acquired virtue and its infused counterpart are the material and formal principles, respectively, of the perfect realization of that particular moral virtue and constitute a unified virtue that is supernaturally transformed. Or, to state the thesis differently: in the Christian moral life, a perfect moral act directed to a single material object but performed from two ordered motives, natural and supernatural, is able to realize a created good that is a means to attaining the absolutely ultimate end. Second, the theoretical explanation of the unity of perfect moral virtue⁵ significantly clarifies Aquinas's understanding of the workings of nature and grace within the Christian life.

To understand this thesis correctly, one must note that (1) the term virtue is used analogically of human and divine virtue.⁶ For Aquinas, the principal comprehensive definition of virtue is that of Augustine which is passed down in Peter Lombard's *Sentences*: "Virtue is a good quality of the mind, by which one lives rightly, [and] of which no one is able to make bad use, which God works in us *without us*" (italics added).⁷ With his appropriation of this definition, Aquinas establishes infused or supernatural virtue as the primary analogate of virtue. All other species of virtue, whether natural or the acquired intellectual and moral virtues, are secondary analogates and are defined "from above," that is, against the norm of infused virtue. Therefore, of the two species of moral virtue, infused moral virtue adequately considered possesses the perfection of moral virtue without qualification, or *simpliciter*, and acquired moral

⁵ The phrase, "Aquinas's theory of the relation between the acquired and infused moral virtues in the Christian," is alternately referred to throughout this investigation as "the theory of the unity of perfect moral virtue."

⁶ Aquinas applies the general definition of virtue, "that which renders the human act good and makes the man himself good," (see ST 2-2.58.3, borrowed from Aristotle's *Ethics*) to the various species of virtue in a way that is partly the same and partly different. The definition of virtue as applied to both species of moral virtue, for example, is partly the same insofar as each kind of moral virtue perfects its subject and its acts. Acquired moral virtue perfects the natural human subject and his acts; infused moral virtue perfects the justified human subject and his acts. The definition of virtue is applied to the acquired and infused moral virtues in a way that is partly different insofar as the perfection of the infused moral virtue effects a supernatural perfection and, as such, infinitely exceeds the natural perfection of acquired moral virtue.

⁷ "Virtus est bona qualitas mentis qua recte vivitur, qua nullus male utitur, quam Deus in nobis sine nobis operatur." ST 1-2.55.4, obj. 1: Leonine, 6: 353.

virtue adequately defined possesses that perfection in a relative sense, or *secundum quid*.⁸

(2) The terms matter and form when applied to the relation of these two types of virtue are also analogical since both are spiritual qualities when used in reference to virtue.⁹ When it is said that Aquinas presents the acquired and infused moral virtues in a relation of matter to form, what is presupposed is the act-potency relationship that is constitutive of matter and form. Therefore, such an assertion should not be taken to mean that the acquired moral virtue is literally like matter or that the infused moral virtue is literally like form. Rather, it should be understood to mean that the same potency-act relationship that characterizes the affiliation between matter and form is similar to the relation between acquired and infused moral virtue. Therefore, each acquired moral virtue is related to its infused counterpart as a determinable or perfectible principle, that is, that which is in potency to the actualization by its infused analogate. Correlatively, each infused moral virtue is related to its acquired counterpart as the determining or perfecting principle, that is, that which actualizes the potency of its corresponding acquired moral virtue.

(3) The term "perfect moral virtue" is applied in its absolute sense only to human virtue transformed by grace.¹⁰ "Perfect moral virtue" is the term that will be used to designate a single, indivisible, composite moral virtue consisting of two ordered principles. It must be noted, however, that in Aquinas's virtue theory, the term "perfect virtue" is also used analogously. Thus, absolutely perfect moral virtue is to the infused moral virtue as relatively perfect moral virtue is to the acquired moral virtue. A unified virtue whose form is an infused moral virtue and whose matter is an acquired moral virtue is said to be perfect absolutely (*simpliciter*).

(4) Finally, Aquinas's doctrine of the relation of nature and grace, although a problem far broader than this thesis, can be illuminated by

⁸ See ST 1-2.65.2

⁹ The analogous application of principles of matter and form to acquired and infused moral virtue is an example not of a mere metaphor but of an analogy of proper proportionality. That is, the relation of the one analogate—form to matter—is similar or properly proportional to the relation of the other—infused moral virtue to acquired moral virtue.

¹⁰ This virtue is distinguished from a unified habit in which an intellectual virtue, such as prudence, informs a moral virtue as its matter. In the latter case, the virtue is said to be a perfect moral virtue only relatively, that is, *secundum quid*. Because of its supernatural form, only virtue constituted by the union of an infused and acquired moral virtue is perfect in an absolute sense. The perfection of acquired moral virtue, though perfect in the natural realm, is relativized when compared to moral virtue which is perfect *simpliciter*.

it.¹¹ In general terms, although Aquinas distinguishes between nature and grace, he in no way countenances their abrupt separation. Grace perfects nature without in any way destroying it.¹² The implication of this axiom for moral activity in the life of grace is this: human nature and God's grace are related in such a way that the moral act of a Christian manifests at once the supremacy of God's principal causality and the genuine freedom of human effort. As it will be argued, it is precisely this reality that is evidenced in the theory of the matter-form relationship between acquired and infused moral virtue within the perfect moral virtue of a Christian.

My thesis represents a reconstructive effort which involves three goals. The first is to reconstruct a theory of the relation between the two species of moral virtue that faithfully corresponds to Aquinas's explicit teaching on virtue and on issues that bear structural similarities to that of the relation between the acquired and infused moral virtues. The second is to use the thesis as a tool to critique two representative theories that were developed over four centuries of Thomistic commentary and which sought to clarify Aquinas's doctrine on the relation between the acquired and infused moral virtues by focusing only on the problem of facility. The third and final goal is to elucidate connections between the theory of the unity of perfect moral virtue and its matrix, that of Aquinas's nature-grace doctrine.

I.

A. *Habitus* and Virtues:¹³ The appropriate first step in grasping what Aquinas explicitly teaches regarding virtue is to investigate his theory of *habitus*.¹⁴ Whenever the word habit (or *habitus*) is used in this

¹¹The "doctrine of nature and grace" designates a general theme pervading Aquinas's teaching about the relationship between God's grace and human activity, or the natural and supernatural aspects of Christian life.

¹²See ST 1.8 ad 2.

¹³Human virtue is a good operative habit (see ST 1-2.55.3), that is, a steady disposition that enables human beings consistently to pursue the good or perfection that is proper to them as rational creatures. As a *habitus* that has the human good of the agent as its object and end, a virtue diverges from any other *habitus* or *qualitas* precisely because of its *differentia*, the good (see ST 1-2.55.4). A vice is a *habitus* that inclines the agent to evil acts; imperfect virtue leads the person to actions that may be good or evil, but acts of perfect virtue will tend only to the good.

¹⁴*Habitus* is a fourth declension noun which when used in an English text has the same form in the singular as in the plural. It is derived from the verb *habere* meaning to have or possess something, or *se habere*, to be in a certain state (see ST 1-2.49.1).

Translations are often misleading. To translate *habitus* with the English

paper, it is used in its scholastic sense. In short, it does not mean some automatic reflex or response passively developed through repetition (as a twentieth century person might speak of a habit of smoking) but represents deliberate qualifications of human powers whose exercise always constitutes a freely chosen act. These qualities are so firmly imbedded in the person that one is able to execute them consistently and with ease. In *ST* 1-2.49 Prol., Aquinas identifies the intrinsic principles or sources of human acts as faculties and *habitus*. The concept of the faculties is discussed in the *Prima Pars*; *habitus* are discussed in the *Prima Secundae*. Aquinas makes the distinction that, although operational *habitus* perfect the faculties that are directed toward activity and are sources or principles of activity in the most complete sense, bodily or natural *habitus* such as health, beauty, and strength are also sources of activity, albeit indirectly, since "natura est principium actus."¹⁵

Aquinas's concept of a habit, the genus of virtue, lays a foundation for the thesis of this paper in two ways. First, it highlights the active and passive power of a habit, a cardinal concept in the theoretical part of the thesis which involves the concept of habits related to one another as potency to act or matter to form. The human soul, as substantial form, is the act of the human composite and the remote source of all human activity. As Aquinas explains:

And since life is manifested according to diverse operations in diverse grades of living things, that by which we first perform any of the works of life is the soul, for the soul is that by which we first eat and feel and move as to place, and likewise that by which we first know. Therefore, this principle by which we first know, whether it is called intellect or the intellective soul, is the form of the body.¹⁶

In the order of action, however, the soul is in potency to further actuation by its powers which have the capacity to perform particular acts. There is, however, nothing in the power which guarantees stable patterns of

word "habit" could confuse contemporary connotations of the word with the scholastic meaning.

¹⁵*ST*1-2.49.3: Leonine, 6: 312.

¹⁶"Et cum vita manifestetur secundum diversas operationes in diversi gradibus viventium, id quo primo operamur unumquodque horum operum vitae, est anima: anima enim est primum quo nutrimur et sentimus, et movemur secundum locum; et similiter quo primo intelligimus. Hoc ergo principium quo primo intelligimus, sive dicatur intellectus sive anima intellectiva, est forma corporis." *ST* 1.76.1: Leonine, 5: 208-9.

action that can be executed with ease and enjoyment. In this sense, we define a power of the soul as matter for the further formation by *habitus*, perfections that insure that a particular power will perform its operations efficiently and with ease.

In the introduction to his treatise on habit, Aquinas declares that powers and habits are the intrinsic sources of action in the human agent.¹⁷ While it might appear that there is nothing that comes between a human power of the soul, which is a capacity to act, and the actuality of that power in a human act, Aquinas argues for a psychological reality that stands midway between a power and its act, namely, a habit. As a disposition to act, a *habitus* orients a power of the soul to perform a certain operation with ease, promptness, and enjoyment. Understood in hylomorphic terms, a habit is related to a power as form to matter or act to potency. It determines or perfects a power, which has the potency to act indeterminately, and causes it to act in a determinate way in an easy and steadfast manner. A habit's effect in a power resembles the way that the form of a soul perfects matter, which is in potency to existence, and causes it to exist as a certain species. Because human beings can act in more than one way, and because they are subject to random, chance influences, their actions require habituation. They can choose and determine their goals and the means to those goals. Human agents, therefore, need added dispositions to insure that they act in accord with their nature. Good *habitus* insure that the rational powers and their natural dispositions toward truth and goodness function optimally. *Habitus* are vicious if these basic dispositions are relativized in evil choices, that is, in choices that cripple the practice of the natural good habit. *Habitus* are good if the particular choices that are a consequence of a habit support or facilitate these natural inclinations.

The second way Aquinas's theory of *habitus* lays a foundation for my thesis is by illustrating that a habit is also a passive power or agent, that is, capable of receiving further perfection from a superior habit. Aquinas is careful to point out that habits, like human activity, are complex. For example, a good habit of the intellect, such as the habit of science, functions optimally only when the possible intellect and the interior cognitive senses are perfected in their respective activities.¹⁸ Moral *habitus* are also complex. Although essentially an appetitive habit, a moral habit is accidentally or secondarily a habit of the intellect, that is, prudence.¹⁹ The habit of the intellect is related to the habit of

¹⁷"Principium autem intrinsecum est potentia et habitus." Prologue to ST 1-2.49-54; Leonine, 6: 309.

¹⁸See ST 1-2.50.3 ad 3.

¹⁹Aquinas speaks of moral virtue as a requirement of prudence. See ST 1-2.57.4.

the appetite like the substance of the soul is related to the accidental form of a power, that is, as form to matter.

The material and formal principles of a composite human habit, for example, the habit of a particular science, have the following significance. The habit that is the material component, for example, the habit of memory, is the necessary substratum for the perfecting form (the habit of science) and, while maintaining its own essential form, the habit of memory is further defined by the form that it receives from the superior habit. The reality of the composite habit of science transcends that of either component principle. Therefore neither the habit of memory nor the habit of science *in se* is a habit in an absolute sense. Alone the inferior or superior habit is imperfect or incomplete, but together the ordered components form one complete or perfect habit that is unified by the form of the superior habit.

When we move from Aquinas's discussion of the genus of virtue, *habitus*, to virtue itself, especially human or acquired virtue, three points of central interest vis-à-vis my thesis emerge. First, Aquinas's analogous use of the term "virtue" creates a fluid hierarchy of human virtue. Insofar as the criterion for superior human virtue is that which inheres in the most perfect human faculty, the intellect, and that which is directed to the noblest human activity, contemplation, then intellectual acquired virtue ranks higher than, or is superior to, acquired moral virtue. When Aquinas, however, defines human virtue in its absolute sense as that which involves the will directed to the formal good, then acquired moral virtue ranks as virtue in an absolute sense (*simpliciter*) while intellectual virtue is virtue in a restricted sense (*secundum quid*).

For Aquinas, the speculative virtues are more excellent than the moral virtues, objectively speaking, because they proceed more directly from the rational part of the human soul and are directed to the ultimate end, the contemplation of God. They are less excellent in the fullest sense of virtue, however, because they lack an act of the will directed to a formal good. Since only the will, or faculties directed by the will, is directed to *bonum ut bonum*, only virtues that perfect these appetites are virtues strictly speaking. Therefore, in the order of human virtue, only moral virtues are virtues in an absolute sense. "(T)hus only the habits pertaining to the appetitive part can be called virtue, not, how-

"(T)herefore, for right reason about things to be done which is prudence, it is necessary that man have moral virtue." ("ideo ad rectam rationem agibilium quae est prudentia, requiritur quod homo habeat virtutem moralem." ST 1-2.58.5; Leonine, 6: 376.)

ever, the intellectual habits, and especially not the speculative habits.²⁰

With Aquinas's introduction of infused virtue into the hierarchy of virtue, however, the superiority of acquired moral virtue is itself relativized. Since divine or infused virtue is directed not to a particular good but to the absolute Good,²¹ acquired moral virtue is no longer virtue in an absolute sense but, in reference to infused virtue, is virtue in a restricted sense. Nevertheless, because of the complementarity of the respective ends of acquired moral virtue (particular good) and infused moral virtue (absolute Good), it can be argued that Aquinas presents acquired moral virtue as disposed toward infused moral virtue.

Second, Aquinas sets the active-passive potency of the natural dispositions as the standard for causality that is characteristic of human virtue. The "seeds of virtue" are passive principles because they are receptive to the form of the perfected or acquired virtue, and they are active agents because, like the natural principle of fire, they induce their own form into the power from which their action originates. In this way, natural dispositions, with a graduated impact, impress their form on their respective powers and on each act that proceeds from their powers until by the frequent repetition of these acts, the habits of the virtues and sciences are perfected. Hence, just as the natural dispositions or "seeds of virtue" are the perfecting principles of the inferior power of their respective faculties, so is it reasonable to argue that acquired moral virtue is the perfecting principle of the natural dispositions which are subordinate to it. Just as natural dispositions are the perfectible or material principles of the more perfect principles of the acquired intellectual and moral virtues, so is it reasonable to argue that acquired moral virtue is the perfectible or material principle of infused virtue which is superior to it.

Third, through his theory of the unity of human moral virtue,

²⁰"sic solum habitus respicientes appetitivam partem virtutes dici possunt, non autem intellectuales, et specialiter speculativi." *In III Sent* 23.1.4.iii, sol. 1: Moos, 3: 712).

²¹If the human agent is to move toward an end, the end must be known and desired, that is, the end must be seen as attainable and loveable. Faith is the virtue that enables the human being to know God, for through faith, "the mind comprehends those things which it hopes for and loves." ("apprehendit intellectus ea quae sperat et amat." *ST* 1-2.62.4: Leonine, 6: 405). Hope is the virtue that gives the recipient the confidence that God is attainable, for the will, perfected by hope, reaches out to its end with a "movement of intention tending toward [the good] itself as if toward that which is possible to attain." ("motum intentionis, in ipsum tendentem sicut in id quod est possibile consequi" *ST* 1-2.62.3: Leonine, 6: 403). And charity is the virtue that enables the person to love God because "through it [the will] is transformed, so to speak, into that end." ("per quam quodammodo transformatur in illum finem," *ST* 1-2.62.3: Leonine, 6: 403).

Aquinas demonstrates that relatively perfect moral virtue is materially an acquired moral virtue and formally a virtue of prudence. Aquinas defends the Socratic notion that knowledge is virtue to the extent that this notion recognizes that distinctively human behavior lies in reason, for reason points out what is good or evil. But just as firmly, Aquinas asserts that knowledge alone fails to insure good human activity; the human appetites, both rational and sensitive, are capable of presenting formidable opposition to the direction of reason and demand the perfection of the moral virtues to dispose them to obey reason, that is, to obey the direction of prudence. The "seeds of virtue" are passive principles because they are receptive to the form of the perfected or acquired virtue; and they are active agents because, like the natural principle of fire, they induce their own form into the power from which their action originates. In this way, natural dispositions, with a graduated impact, impress their form on their respective powers and on each act that proceeds from their powers, until by the frequent repetition of these acts, the habits of the virtues and sciences are perfected. Therefore, perfect moral virtue in the human order, or relatively perfect moral virtue, is a composite virtue that is formally a virtue of prudence and materially a virtue of justice, temperance, fortitude or their allied virtues.

Furthermore, with the composite nature of relatively perfect moral virtue, a single human virtue consisting of ordered components that are in a matter-form relationship, Aquinas sets the precedent for the composition of an absolutely perfect moral virtue. That is, through the unifying presence of prudence, Aquinas defines the prototype of each species of human virtue, both intellectual and moral, as a composite virtue. Similarly, through the unity of charity, he defines absolutely perfect moral virtue as a virtue that is formally an infused virtue and materially an acquired virtue. For Aquinas, the principle that charity is the 'form' of the virtues means, in its most general sense, that charity perfects the acts of the other virtues by commanding or directing them to their ultimate end, in effect, by making the justified capable of acts of love that would otherwise exceed the power of the human will.

In *De veritate*, Aquinas offers one explanation of how charity informs the other virtues and their acts and, as a consequence, is the source of unity for Christian life and conduct. He suggests that we think in terms of how two principles or agents, one higher and one lower, are ordered to one another: the higher principle is formal in relationship to the lower principle which is material. In the virtue of faith, for example, where the knowledge of the intellect (in this case, the lower principle) is commanded by the will (higher principle), the knowledge of the intellect operates as a material principle and the direction of the will as a formal principle. Since charity is the perfection of the will, charity is the form

of faith and of all the virtues that are moved by the will.

To establish what kind of formal cause charity is, Aquinas eliminates essential or intrinsic form immediately. "Charity is not called the form of faith in the way that a form is part of an essence."²² In other words, charity in its informing does not suppress the specific form of the other virtues. That which constitutes the essence of each virtue—its respective formal object or cause—remains intact.

In *De caritate*, Aquinas reiterates the notion of charity as an exemplary form (*forma exemplaris*), but he qualifies the notion slightly by explaining that charity is an effective exemplar form (*exemplar effectivum*), a form producing acts like itself. Here charity is the form of the virtues not so much as generating other virtues like itself but as producing virtues that operate like itself. The nexus between charity and the other virtues is underscored in Aquinas's description: "charity, considered as an act, not only has an exemplarity, but it also has a motive and effective force. For there is no effective exemplar without its copy, because it produces something in being. And thus charity does not exist without the other virtues."²³

All the infused moral virtues, Aquinas insists, depend on charity.²⁴ Charity, or supernatural love of God, is the form, source, and end of all action that is supernatural and meritorious. As a result, besides acts of faith, hope, and charity, Christians can posit supernatural acts of fortitude, temperance, justice, and prudence and their allied virtues, acts that are the means to attaining their supernatural end or happiness. The other moral virtues cannot exist without prudence, and prudence cannot exist without the other moral virtues, for the latter dispose a person to certain natural ends from which the judgment of prudence begins. For prudence, however, to judge rightly regarding the supernatural end, the virtue of charity that fits the agent to that end must be present.²⁵ What Aquinas appears to be saying is that the line of command or direction from charity to the infused moral virtues,

²²"non dicitur esse forma fidei caritas per modum quo forma est pars essentiae;" *De veritate* 14.5 ad 4: Vivès, XV: 24.

²³"(C)aritas quantum ad actum non solum habet exemplaritatem, sed etiam virtutem motivam et effectivam. Exemplar autem effectivum non est sine exemplato; quia producit illud in esse; et sic caritas non est sine aliis virtutibus." *De caritate* 3 ad 8: Vivès, XIV: 239.

²⁴See ST 1-2.65.3, c and ad 1; *De virtutibus cardinalibus* 2.

²⁵Aquinas insists that charity is essential to the infused moral virtues. The infused virtue of prudence is able to judge correctly regarding the supernatural end only by means of the direction of charity. Likewise, the other infused moral virtues that are connected with prudence, and cannot exist without it, also require the perfection of charity in order to direct the agent to the absolutely ultimate end (*ad finem ultimum simpliciter*).

except for prudence, is a mediate one. Prudence maintains its command of the other moral virtues in the supernatural plane; charity informs prudence directly and, through prudence, the other infused moral virtues. In one sense, then, charity and prudence connect the infused moral virtues, but charity is their ultimate bond because all the divine virtues are directed to the end of charity. In other words, an infused moral virtue, having received its perfect form from charity, is also able to effect, produce, and create its own form or perfection in its acquired counterpart, enabling the acquired virtue to function just like itself.

Finally, although Aquinas teaches that an acquired moral virtue and its infused analogate have the same material act, they have different formal objects or motives.²⁶ The motive for practicing supernatural temperance in regard to food, for example, is a supernatural measure: Christians should chastise their bodies and bring them into subjection. The motive for practicing natural temperance in regard to food is a natural measure: food should not harm the body nor hinder reason. The end of the acquired moral virtues is good behavior in human affairs; the end of the infused moral virtue is to perfect the person as a citizen of heaven.

It is evident, however, that the mean which is imposed on desires of this sort according to the rule of human reason differs from that mean which is imposed according to the divine rule. For example, in the consumption of food, by human reason the mean is established that it should not injure bodily health nor impede the act of reason. But according to the rule of divine law, it is required that, by abstinence from food and drink and from other like things, man *should chastise his body and reduce it to servitude.*²⁷

Because of the ordered relationship of imperfect to perfect principles, Aquinas demonstrates that the motive and end of acquired moral virtue is included within or the material component of the motive and end of infused moral virtue. As far as the intention of an act is concerned, Aquinas insists that the human agent is able to intend more than one

²⁶ See ST 1-2.63.4; *De virtutibus* 10 ad 7, 8, 9; *In III Sent* 33.1.2.iv.

²⁷ "Manifestum est autem quod alterius rationis est modus qui imponitur in huiusmodi concupiscentiis secundum regulam rationis humanae, et secundum regulam divinam. Puta in sumptione ciborum, ratione humana modus statuitur ut non noceat valetudini corporis, nec impediatur rationis actum; secundum autem regulam legis divinae, requiritur quod homo *castiget corpus suum, et in servitutem redigat*, per abstinentiam cibi et potus, et aliorum huiusmodi." ST 1-2.63.4: Leonine, 6: 411; see also ST 1-2.63.4 ad 1.

thing at the same time. Therefore, since intention responds to both a final and a proximate end, it is possible to do one and the same act for both a natural and supernatural end. As a result, an act of temperance following from a perfect virtue of temperance is a single act performed from two ordered motives and for two ordered ends.²⁸

B. Cases Analogous to the Relation Between Acquired and Infused Moral Virtue: To verify the validity of the reconstructed theory of the relation between acquired and infused moral virtues, besides demonstrating its compatibility with his explicit teaching on virtue, I will also illustrate its complementarity to Aquinas's indirect teaching regarding this question, that is, in cases which are analogous to the relation of the two species of moral virtue and which illustrate Aquinas's conception of the unity of distinct components that are ordered to each other as matter to form. First, Aquinas argues that the "informed" human act, though composed of the material-formal components of the commanded act and the act of command, is one act.

But just as in the genus of natural things a certain whole [being] is composed of matter and form as, [for example] the man who is one natural being, is composed from soul and body, although [this whole] may have many parts. So also, in human acts, the act of an inferior power is related to the act of the superior power materially. For the inferior power acts in virtue of the superior power moving it; even so the act of a prime mover is related to the act of its instrument formally. Hence, it is evident that a command and the act commanded are one human act, just as some whole [thing] is one, but as to its parts is many.²⁹

Second, the human person, though composed of the material-formal principles of body and soul, is one human person. "It is not necessary to ask if the body and soul are one [thing] as neither [is it necessary to ask whether] the wax and its shape are [one thing]."³⁰ Third, the activity

²⁸ See ST 1-2.12.3.

²⁹ "Sicut autem in genere rerum naturalium, aliquod totum componitur ex materia et forma, ut homo ex anima et corpore, qui est unum ens naturale, licet habeat multitudinem partium ita etiam in actibus humanis, actus inferiores potentiae materialiter se habet ad actum superioris, in quantum inferior potentia agit in virtute superioris moventis ipsam: sic enim et actus moventis primi formaliter se habet ad actum instrumenti. Unde patet quod imperium et actus imperatus sunt unus actus humanus, sicut quoddam totum est unum, sed est secundum partes multa." ST 1-2.17.4: Leonine, 6: 121.

³⁰ "non oportet quarere si unum est anima et corpus, sicut neque ceram et figuram." (Cited in ST 1.76.7, s.c.: Aristotle, *De anima* 2.1.412b 6-9.)

of Christ, though composed of the material-formal causes of human and divine activity, is a single activity.

Dionysius posits a *theandric* operation, that is, a *divine-male* or *divine-human* operation in Christ, not through some confusion of the activities or powers of both natures but, through this, that his divine action uses his human action and his human action participates in the power of the divine action.³¹

Fourth, the Divine Law, though composed of the material-formal elements of the Old Law and the Gospel Law, is a single law.

From these examples we can deduce, *mutatis mutandis*, what Aquinas might have said if, in one of the articles in his treatise on virtue in the *Summa Theologiae*, for example, he had asked the question "How do the acquired and infused moral virtues function within the justified person?" Moral virtue in the Christian, though composed of acquired and infused moral virtue, is an indivisible but composite virtue that is formally an infused moral virtue and materially an acquired moral virtue.

II.

Thomistic commentators from the post-scholastic era (ca 1500-1700) to the modern period (1700-1943) generally restricted their discussions of Aquinas's doctrine on the relationship between the acquired and infused virtues to the question of facility, that is, whether or not each kind of virtue, natural and supernatural, facilitates the acts of the other. R. F. Coerver³² gives 1943 as a cutoff date for contemporary discussion of the question of facility in the infused virtues. His 1946 dissertation on the topic notes that many theologians of his day had discarded the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic facility and, with the exception of the manuals of Merkelbach (1871-1942) and Hervé (1881-1958), "few of the modern theologians devote much space to the interrelation of the acquired and infused moral virtues and to the question of whether or not facility is possible in the infused moral virtues by the acquisition

³¹"Dionysius ponit in Christo operationem *theandricum*, idest *divinam-virilem* vel *divinam-humanam*, non per aliquam confusionem operationum seu virtutem utriusque naturae, sed per hoc quod divina operatio eius utitur humana eius operatione, et humana operatio participat virtutem divinae operationis." ST 3.19.1 ad 1: Leonine, 11: 240.

³²R. F. Coerver, *The Quality of Facility in the Moral Virtues*, The Catholic University of America Studies in Sacred Theology, No. 92 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1946).

of natural habits.”

The main lines of the 16th century scholastic response to the objection that infused moral virtues do not confer facility can be traced to Suárez, who, followed by the Salmanticenses (Discalced Carmelites) and J. B. Gonet, O. P. (c. 1616-1681),³³ introduced the distinction between extrinsic and intrinsic facility in reference to the acquired and infused moral virtues, respectively. In doing so, they relied on two texts from Aquinas in which reference is made to distinct kinds of facility. The first text is from *De veritate*: “Something is said to be easy in a twofold way: in one way by the removal of impediments, in another way by supplying help.”³⁴ The second text is one in which Aquinas associates the latter type of facility, or “a strong adhesion to the object of virtue,”³⁵ with that of the infused virtues. In sum, Suárez and proponents of his theory define extrinsic facility as that which accompanies the acquired moral virtue and enables the agent, through the removal of impediments, the moderation of inordinate affections, and the elimination of contrary vices, to perform acquired acts of virtue with ease.³⁶ It consists of a strengthening of the faculty itself so that it is intrinsically inclined to the object of virtue, and the person is disposed to a life of virtue. The opinion of these 16th century theologians, then, is that an infused virtue, *in se*, confers only intrinsic facility.

From these distinctions arose a question particularly pertinent to my thesis. What is the source of the facility of action that results from repeated acts of infused virtue? Do the repeated acts of infused virtue produce an extrinsic facility of action through the generation of acquired virtues?³⁷ Suárez maintains that acts of infused virtue do not give rise to any habits, either acquired or supernatural.³⁸ Rather, the extrinsic facility associated with the exercise of the infused virtues originates directly from the grace of God, particularly from repeated acts of infused virtue. Billot, on the other hand, asserts that repeated acts of infused

³³Coerver (*Facility*, 26-28) points out that in his *Clypeus theologiae thomisticae contra novos ejus impugnatores*, Gonet quotes verbatim the definition of intrinsic and extrinsic facility from the *Cursus Theologicus*, a theological treatise based on the outline of the *Summa Theologiae*, the bulk of which was written in the 17th century by the Salmanticenses, Discalced Carmelites of the College of St. Elias in Salamanca, Spain.

³⁴“aliquid dicitur esse facile dupliciter: uno modo propter remotionem impedimenti; alio modo propter appositionem adjutorii.” *De veritate* 24.4 ad 1: Vives, XV: 205.

³⁵“ex forti inhaesione ad objectum virtutis,” *In IV Sent* 14.2.2. ad 5: Moos, 4: 623.

³⁶Coerver, *Facility*, 37.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 40.

³⁸“tollendo impedimenta, moderando aliquos affectus, vel habitus aliquo modo repugnantes excludendo.” Suárez, *Opera Omnia*, Vol. 9, Bk. VI, Ch. XIV, n. 24.

virtue *do* generate acquired habits, and these acquired habits, in turn, contribute to the facility of the infused moral virtues.³⁹

The insight that led four centuries of Thomistic commentators to use the issue of facility as a way to reconstruct Aquinas's theory of the relation between acquired and infused virtue is essentially a sound one. Approaching the question of the relation, however, between the two species of moral virtue through the concept of facility will only lead to an accurate interpretation of Aquinas's view regarding perfect Christian moral virtue when facility is assessed within its full context: first, within the perspective of Aquinas's notion of the composite nature of perfect virtue; second, within the context, outlined above, of Aquinas's teaching on other issues that deal with a single, ordered reality such as the unity of the human person, Christ's activity, the divine law, and the informed human act; and third, by means of a careful implementation of the relevant Thomistic principles which figured in the theories of both Suárez and Billot.

In the very way that Aquinas defines the facility proper to the acquired and infused virtues respectively, he indicates that both ought to be integral qualities of the moral activity of the Christian and, therefore, characteristics that ought to mark the Christian life. The intrinsic facility of the infused virtue cannot be operationally functional without the extrinsic, and the extrinsic facility of the acquired virtues cannot be depended on in the midst of temptation to sin unless united to the perfection of intrinsic facility. If extrinsic-intrinsic types of facility, proper to the acquired and infused moral virtues, respectively, are ordered components of a single reality related to each other as matter to form, *a fortiori*, the virtues that generate those respective qualities must also be so ordered.

Therefore, in a search for the theoretical explanation for the causality of the acquired virtue that confers extrinsic facility on the performance of supernatural acts of virtue, one must not make the mistakes that Suárez and Billot did.⁴⁰ First, one must not attribute extrinsic facility,

³⁹Coerver, *Facility*, 40-62.

⁴⁰In the opening paragraphs, I raised the question of whether it is in accord with Aquinas's theory of virtue to speak about a Christian performing purely natural acts of virtue at one time and purely supernatural acts of virtue at another. In ST 2-2.47.14 ad 1, Aquinas gives this example: a Christian who lacks the corresponding acquired virtue of diligence (*industria*, a virtue necessary for prudence) could perform purely supernatural acts of diligence but these acts will only fit the person for making good decisions in regard to supernatural affairs. In order to perform acts that will enable the Christian to make sound decisions in human affairs as well as in supernatural situations, the "fuller" kind of diligence must be present, namely, a virtue which is materially a virtue of acquired diligence and formally a virtue of infused diligence. I have not,

which in Aquinas's view is generated from acquired moral virtue, to the grace of God or infused virtue as Suárez insists. Second, one must avoid the error of Billot, that is, to attribute extrinsic facility to an acquired virtue which is generated by an infused virtue instead of, to an acquired virtue generated by repeated acts of acquired virtue as Aquinas argues. In short, one must be guided by the principle that effects are proportionate to their causes. The acquired virtue and its concomitant facility, then, can only be generated by a cause proportionate to it, that is, from repeated acts of natural virtue. This distinction is critical and leads to another: in Aquinas's view, in the context of the generation of facility in the performance of supernatural acts of virtue, human moral effort is a constitutive element which, when transformed by the supernatural, forms an operational unity with grace and the infused virtues. This last judgment illustrates how the question of facility provides a vehicle for identifying the broad lines of Aquinas's doctrine on the fullness of human moral virtue and the foundational insights into his concept of the intrinsic relation between the cooperative workings of nature and grace within the Christian life.

III.

The first part of the thesis states that acquired virtue is the secondary, subordinate, or material cause of the single reality of perfect moral virtue. To say that the acquired virtue is "matter," that which can be perfected, or that which is in potency to the infused virtue, means that human virtue is open to or capable of receiving the determination or perfection of the perfecting power of the primary or supernatural principle. This dispositive character of acquired virtue is significant in Aquinas's theory of the unity of perfect moral virtue, for it underlines the vital role of human effort in Christian moral activity. The sublimation of human virtue into divine is a direct testimony to the dispositive character of human nature and the divine potential of human moral effort. For Aquinas, then, nature is dynamic in character and includes an inner drive toward its existential fulfillment. Grace builds not on the ruins of nature but on its foundation.

A second conclusion of the first part of the thesis is that the infused moral virtue transforms the acquired moral virtue. This motion parallels Aquinas's notion of the perfective power of the supernatural: forma-

however, found that Aquinas attributes purely natural acts of virtue to the Christian who possesses both acquired and infused virtues. Suárez and Billot, however, both appear to admit of this possibility. In this regard, I believe, they diverge from Aquinas's teaching on the matter.

tion by grace implies the perfection of what is human. Although ordered to grace, human nature is impotent of itself to attain it. It can only be lifted above its own limitations by a gratuitous act of God and by a superior nature. Therefore, grace could never detract from nature. Rather, witnessing to the dignity of the human person as an *imago Dei* who is open to and fit for grace, the supernatural life of God confers on human nature the very completion toward which it tends.

The third determination of the thesis is that acquired and infused moral virtue together form a unity, a single, indivisible virtue that is supernatural in character. The moral virtue infused by charity rewards the human act with a perfection that far exceeds its finite scope. The intrinsic relation between acquired and infused virtues within perfect moral virtue is analogous to Aquinas's view of the alliance between nature and grace in the justified. The Christian person existentially has a single nature consisting of human and divine causes, and this nature is a divinized one. God, who is perfect unity and perfect activity, not only shows human persons who they are, but also unifies and activates them in ways they are not able to be or do on their own. The greater the unity and actuation in human nature itself, the more is it *capax Dei*, open to divinization; the greater its divinization, the surer the union between God and the Christian.

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