

Moral Virtues, Charity, and Grace: Why the Infused and Acquired Virtues Cannot Co-Exist

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IN THE COURSE OF DEVELOPING HIS ANALYSIS of habits in the *Prima secundae* of the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas identifies three ways in which habits are caused in the soul. The habitual knowledge of the first principles of speculative and practical knowledge is innate. Other habits of the intellect and all the habits of the appetites, which comprise the moral and theological virtues as well as vices, are either acquired through action or infused directly by God. Infused habits are necessary, Aquinas explains, in order for the human person to act in such a way as to attain an end which exceeds the capacities of nature:

There are some habits by which the human person is well disposed to an end exceeding the faculties of human nature, which is the ultimate and perfect happiness of the person. And because a habit must be proportioned to that to which the human person is disposed through it, therefore it is necessary that the habits disposing to such an end should exceed the faculties of human nature. Hence, such habits can never be in the human person except through divine infusion, and such is the case for all the gratuitous virtues (ST I-II q. 51, a. 4).

As we would expect, the gratuitous virtues include the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, which direct the human person immediately to God. However, Aquinas goes on to say that moral virtues are also sometimes infused directly by God, and more specifically, all the cardinal virtues are infused together with charity (ST I-II q. 65, a. 3). This claim raises a question that has received considerable attention over the past few years.¹ What is the relation between the infused

¹ The current debate was triggered by articles by William Mattison and Angela McKay Knobel, arguing against (Mattison) or at least calling into question (McKay Knobel) the claim that for Aquinas, the acquired and infused virtues can co-exist; see Angela Knobel, "Can Aquinas's Infused and Acquired Virtues Coexist in the Christian Life?" *Studies in Christian Ethics* 23 (2010): 381-96, and "Two Theories of Christian Virtue," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 84 (2010): 599-618; and William

moral virtues and virtues acquired by the individual before she receives charity? More specifically, can infused and acquired moral virtues co-exist in the same individual?

Aquinas does not address this question directly in the *Summa theologiae*, but I believe that he says enough to allow us to answer it with some confidence.² That is, given what Aquinas says about the necessity for the infused moral virtues, taken together with the wider context set by his analysis of grace as a form of the soul, it is impossible on his view that the infused and acquired virtues can co-exist in the same individual. That, at least, is what I will argue in this paper. I should add that this conclusion is restricted to his mature view as set forth in the ST. I do not claim that this was his view throughout his career, nor do I attempt to trace the development of his thought on this topic. But I do want to argue that by the time Aquinas develops his final, comprehensive account of the virtues and the life of grace, he is committed to the view that someone in a state of grace cannot have, and does not need, virtues acquired through purely natural principles and directed towards connatural happiness.

This conclusion runs contrary to a well-established line of interpretation, going back at least to Cajetan and defended by many prominent scholars of Aquinas's thought.³ On this reading, Aquinas presupposes

Mattison III "Can Christians Possess the Acquired Virtues?" *Theological Studies* 72 (2011): 558-585.

² Some commentators do claim that Aquinas says that the acquired virtues can exist together with charity, but I have yet to see a citation from the ST that makes that claim explicitly. The texts most frequently cited in support of this claim include ST I-II q. 65, a. 3, ad 2 and ST II-II q. 47, a. 14, ad 1. In the first text, Aquinas observes that the exercise of an infused virtue can be impeded by contrary dispositions and the "relics" of previous acts, which would be removed through the formation of an acquired virtue. However, he does not claim that the infused virtue therefore needs an acquired virtue in order to operate. In the second text, Aquinas draws a distinction between a level of prudence sufficient to avoid sin and attain salvation, which is present in everyone who has grace, and a more comprehensive kind of prudence which is present in only some. But he does not say that this more comprehensive prudence is acquired, and the context would seem to confirm that he is talking about different degrees of possessing infused prudence.

³ As David Decosimo rightly observes, the position defended by Mattison, and up to a point by McKay Knobel, is a minority view; see "More to Love: Ends, Ordering, and the Compatibility of Acquired and Infused Virtues," in *The Virtuous Life: Thomas Aquinas on the Theological Nature of Moral Virtues*, ed. Harm Goris and Henk Schoot (Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 47, n.1. He himself defends the compatibility of the infused and acquired cardinal virtues in this article and in his recent book, *Ethics as a Work of Charity: Thomas Aquinas and Pagan Virtue* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2014), 190-197. In addition, see John Harvey, "The Nature of the Infused Moral Virtues," *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 8 (1955): 172-221; Romanus Cessario, *The Moral Virtues and Theological Ethics* (Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 99-113; Renée Mirkes, "Aquinas's Doctrine of Moral Virtue and its Significance for Theories of Facility," *The Thomist* 61 (1997):

or implies that the acquired virtues continue to operate in the graced individual, in some kind of separate or subordinate relationship to the infused cardinal virtues. This line of interpretation is attractive, first of all, because it offers a straightforward and plausible answer to an obvious question. What happens when someone who has acquired virtues receives the infused virtues? It is natural to think that the acquired virtues continue to operate, presumably in subordination to the infused moral and theological virtues. This way of reading Aquinas has the further advantages of preserving the value and integrity of human nature and the place of human activity in shaping one's moral character. These are important concerns, and I will return to them in the last section of this paper. At this point, however, I simply want to observe that this reading raises a basic question of its own. That is, if the acquired virtues continue to operate in the graced individual, then why does Aquinas claim that the moral virtues are infused together with charity? Why not simply say, as Duns Scotus does, that charity works through the acquired moral virtues, orienting them towards the higher end of divine beatitude?⁴ To frame this question in another way, if the acquired virtues persist after the infusion of grace, why are the infused moral virtues necessary at all?

Until recently, this question was relatively neglected. Every student of Aquinas recognizes that on his view, the infused cardinal virtues confer a distinctive orientation towards God, but there has been surprisingly little interest in exploring how this is supposed to work.

189-218; Denis J.M. Bradley, *Aquinas on the Twofold Human Good: Reason and Human Happiness in Aquinas's Moral Science* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 14-24; John Inglis, "Aquinas's Replication of the Acquired Moral Virtues: Rethinking the Standard Philosophical Interpretation of Moral Virtue in Aquinas," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 27 (1999): 3-27; Robert Miner, "Non-Aristotelian Prudence in the *Prima secundae*," *The Thomist* 64 (2000): 401-422; Thomas Osborne, "The Augustinianism of Thomas Aquinas's Moral Theory," *The Thomist* 67 (2003), 279-305; "Perfect and Imperfect Virtues in Aquinas," *The Thomist* 71 (2007): 39-64; Jennifer Herdt, *Putting on Virtue: The Legacy of the Splendid Vices* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 82-91; Michael Sherwin, "Infused Virtue and the Effects of Acquired Vice: A Test Case for the Thomistic Theory of Infused Cardinal Virtues," *The Thomist* 73 (2009): 29-52. In addition, Nicholas Austin argues that acquired and infused moral virtues are not specifically different, but it is not clear that he attributes this view directly to Aquinas; see *Aquinas on Virtue: A Causal Reading* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2017), 205. Finally, and on the other side of this debate, Andrew Pinset argues for the incompatibility of infused and acquired virtues, most explicitly in "Who's Afraid of the Infused Virtues? Dispositional Infusion, Human and Divine," 73-96 in *The Virtuous Life*. I cannot discuss his arguments in any detail here; his interpretation of the infused virtues is illuminating, but also, in my view, problematic. Most notably, he denies that the infused virtues are habits, a claim that Aquinas contradicts; see "Who's Afraid," 85, and compare, for example, ST I-II q. 63, a. 3, in which Aquinas refers to the infused moral virtues as "habits divinely caused in us...."

⁴ See Ordinatō III, dist. 36 in *Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*, ed. A. Wolter (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1986), 414-416.

According to one view, the infused cardinal virtues confer an orientation towards one's supernatural end, but nothing more—that is to say, they do not confer a facility for action. This line of analysis explains why the acquired virtues continue to be necessary, but it does not really help us to see why the infused virtues are necessary.⁵ At any rate, it is difficult to reconcile this line of interpretation with Aquinas's clear and unqualified claim that the infused cardinal virtues are operative habits. As such, each infused virtue is oriented towards and defined in terms of a distinctive kind of action, directed towards a characteristic kind of object which is good in some formally distinct way (ST I-II q. 54, a. 2; ST II-II q. 23, a. 4). He acknowledges at several points that the infused virtues may be impeded by contrary dispositions or desires; that is how he accounts for difficulties in practicing the infused cardinal virtues, and the ongoing possibility of sin even for someone who has charity (ST I-II q. 65, a. 3, ad 2, ST II-II q. 24, a. 11). At the same time, he would seem to rule out the suggestion that the imperfections of the infused virtues might need, or even allow for, another set of habits, the acquired virtues, in order to help them along. A habit is a kind of form, and as such, it cannot be augmented—that is to say, extended or rendered more effective—through the addition of another form (ST I-II q. 52, a. 2). By implication, someone's growth in the practice of the infused virtues would not be due to the assistance of the acquired virtues, but rather, it would reflect the greater permeation and effectiveness of the infused habits themselves.⁶

At any rate, once the received view began to be challenged, scholars began to try to account for the necessity of the infused virtues, while still maintaining that the infused and acquired virtues operate together. On one view, the infused moral virtues are necessary in order to carry out distinctive kinds of actions, which are only performed by someone who has grace. But it is difficult to say just what kinds of actions those would be, and at any rate, Aquinas claims that the infused moral virtues have the same field of operation as their acquired counterparts, including all the kinds of actions characteristically associated with a given faculty.⁷ Alternatively, the infused cardinal virtues

⁵ The claim that the infused cardinal virtues do not bestow a facility for action seems to have been widely held through the first decades of the last century; for a defense of this view, see Harvey, "The Nature of the Infused Moral Virtues," 193-194. For a more recent version, see Herdt, *Putting on Virtue*, 90-91.

⁶ This claim presupposes that the infused virtues are in some sense open to development and augmentation, and I believe that this is indeed Aquinas's view; see ST I-II q. 51, a. 4, ad 3, ST II-II q. 24, a. 2-4. For further discussion of this point, see Mattison, "Can Christians Possess the Acquired Moral Virtues?" 566-7, 576-580.

⁷ Decosimo claims that the acquired virtues are oriented to acts which reflect right reason, whereas the infused virtues are directed towards acts within the domain of a given virtue which are necessary for salvation and require grace; see *Ethics as a Work of Charity*, 193. As for Aquinas's claim that the infused and acquired virtues have the

might be said to direct or coordinate the acts of their acquired counterparts, in such a way as to direct these towards the final end of charity. But it is difficult to see why charity would need to operate through intermediaries in this way. If the acquired virtues can be directed towards the agent's final end at all, why can't charity itself play this role?⁸ It is also difficult to see how the infused virtues of temperance and fortitude, both habits of passions, could direct or command their acquired counterparts. The virtues of charity and justice can command the acts of the other virtues, because these are virtues of the will, which is capable of commanding actions, in conjunction with the intellect (ST II-II q. 32, a. 1, ad 1). But virtues of the passions can only lead to actions within the scope of the passions, namely, affective responses to images of particular desirable or noxious objects. The infused virtue of temperance, for example, can elicit desires and aversions which are congruent with the agent's overall stance of charity, but it is difficult to see how it could move another kind of temperance to elicit desires and aversions of any kind.

My point in raising these questions is not to try to settle the debate over infused and acquired virtues through theoretical speculation on the scope and the limits of the virtues. Rather, I want to suggest that if we want to move forward in this debate, we need to look more closely at what Aquinas says about the necessity of the infused cardinal virtues. Why does Aquinas claim that the cardinal virtues are necessarily infused together with charity? What does this claim tell us about the distinctive character of the infused cardinal virtues, seen in relation to charity? In the first half of this paper, I want to pursue these questions by focusing on four texts in the ST that would seem to be especially pertinent. The first of these, ST I-II q. 63, a. 3, asks whether some moral virtues are in us through infusion. The second, ST I-II q. 65, a. 3, asks more specifically whether charity can exist without the infused moral virtues. The third and fourth, ST II-II q. 23, aa. 7-8, which we will consider together, ask whether there can be any true virtue without charity, and whether charity is the form of the virtues. In the second half of this paper, I attempt to place this debate within the wider context of Aquinas's doctrine of grace, in order to make a point about

same field of operation, see ST I-II q. 63, a. 4 and *De Virtutibus in Communi* q. 1, a. 10, ad 8.

⁸ If I have understood him correctly, Decosimo takes this view in "More to Love," 53, 56-59. So far as I can tell, most of those who defend the co-existence of infused and acquired virtues take the simpler view that charity directs the acquired virtues. But this approach makes it even harder to see why Aquinas says that infused cardinal virtues are necessary. They may cooperate with charity in a more appropriate or harmonious way, but if the acquired virtues can get the job done, why are they necessary? I am not persuaded by Decosimo's interpretations, but he is one of only a few participants in this debate to take seriously Aquinas's claim that the infused cardinal virtues are necessary.

the relation between grace and the infused virtues stemming from grace, and the good of human nature perfected by grace.

WHY ARE THE INFUSED CARDINAL VIRTUES NECESSARY?

After setting out his overall understanding of the virtues, their relation to the faculties of the soul, and the ways in which they are distinguished from one another, Aquinas turns in ST I-II q. 63 to a consideration of the causes of the virtues. This is the context within which he poses the question “whether some moral virtues are in us through infusion?” (ST I-II q. 63, a. 3). This question presupposes that we do possess some infused virtues, namely, the theological virtues, which orient us directly to God and therefore go beyond the capacities of human nature. But it is not apparent that we also need to postulate infused moral virtues, which are immediately oriented towards particular goods, but in such a way that these can be ordered to the final end of supernatural happiness. Aquinas develops this idea through three objections. In the first objection, he points out that God does not generally bring something about immediately if secondary causes are sufficient to do so; hence, since we can acquire the virtues, there is no need for God to bring them about. In the second objection, he observes that God does nothing superfluous, and since the theological virtues are sufficient to orient us to God, we do not need infused cardinal virtues in order to do so. Finally, he once again points out that God does nothing superfluous, and since he can be said to insert the seeds of virtue by creating us as rational creatures, he does not need, in addition, to confer cardinal virtues on us through infusion.

These objections have a strikingly contemporary sound. Each one appeals to an ideal of simplicity or fittingness, grounded in a sense of the goodness of created nature and the sufficiency of grace. Simply by creating us as rational creatures, God gives us the capacities we need to acquire and act on the virtues. At the same time, moral goodness alone cannot attain heaven, and so God also bestows the principle of divine life, in the form of faith, hope, and charity. These two divine endowments, the natural and the supernatural, might be expected to work together harmoniously to lead us to our final end of union with God. This is an attractive view, affirming the goodness and the fundamental integrity of human nature while also acknowledging the necessity for grace.

And yet, this is not Aquinas’s view. Why not? We might expect him to respond to these objections by reminding us of the crippling effects of sin, but that consideration is absent here. We might also expect him to make the point that the capacities of human nature are inadequate to attain one’s supernatural end. But the objections do not deny that point, and the second objection explicitly acknowledges that the human person is oriented directly to God through infused virtues.

Rather, Aquinas rejects the view sketched above because it presupposes an inadequate view of grace itself:

It is necessary that an effect be proportionate to its causes and principles. Now all virtues, whether intellectual or moral, which are acquired from our acts, come forth from certain natural principles preexisting in us...; in the place of these natural principles, theological virtues are conferred on us by God, through which we are ordained to a supernatural end....Hence, it is necessary that other habits, divinely caused in us, proportionately correspond to the theological virtues, which habits are related to the theological virtues in the same way as the moral and intellectual virtues are related to the natural principles of the virtues (ST I-II q. 63, a. 3).

In this way, Aquinas argues that the infused cardinal virtues are a necessary concomitant of the theological virtues, considered in themselves and as the first, inchoate principles of other virtues (cf. ST I-II q. 63, a. 3, ad 3). By implication, the intrinsic dynamisms of the theological virtues—and more especially charity, as we will see—are intrinsically linked to infused cardinal virtues, through which they transform every aspect of human life through the operations of grace.

So far, nothing in this text rules out the possibility that the acquired virtues might continue to exist and function on a parallel track with the infused cardinal virtues. However, this passage does make it clear that in order to defend this claim, we would need to postulate the existence of two distinct principles of action in the graced soul. On this view, the theological virtues, together with the infused cardinal virtues, would operate independently of natural human capacities for knowledge and desire, while these natural capacities would retain their autonomy as principles directed towards a kind of this-worldly happiness. At the same time, Aquinas also says that the rational agent necessarily has one final end, towards which all his actions are in some way directed (ST I-II q. 1, aa. 4-6). By implication, someone who is oriented towards the supreme happiness of union with God cannot also pursue connatural happiness, since this is a qualitatively different kind of end.⁹ Correlatively, it cannot be the case that the infused and ac-

⁹ Mattison emphasizes this point in support of the conclusion that the infused and acquired virtues cannot co-exist, “Can Christians Possess the Acquired Moral Virtues?” 560-565. I agree, but at this point I am making a more modest claim, that at the very least, someone who argues for the co-existence of these two kinds of virtues must also claim that the acquired virtues are oriented towards the final end of beatitude in some way. Almost all the authors we are considering would agree with this. However, Mirkes apparently believes that the acquired virtues remain oriented towards their proper end of natural happiness, which is in turn oriented towards supernatural happiness; see “Aquinas’s Doctrine of Moral Virtue and its Significance for Theories of

quired virtues operate in complete independence, oriented to the disparate ends of supernatural and natural happiness. Presumably, the operations of the acquired virtues are harmonized or subordinated in some way to the overarching aim of supernatural happiness. Nonetheless, on this view, the graced human soul operates out of two distinct principles, and correspondingly, two distinct sets of virtues, which are hierarchically ordered and extrinsically related to one another.

Whatever the merits of this view may be, I do not believe that it can be Aquinas's own view. We will return to the question of grace as a principle of operation and virtue. The more immediate difficulty, from Aquinas's standpoint, arises out of the claim that the theological virtues can somehow direct or work through the acquired virtues. In his responses to the objections sketched above, Aquinas seems to rule this out. The most relevant of these is the response to the first objection, which as we recall claims that infused moral virtues are superfluous, since we can attain the moral virtues through our own actions. Aquinas replies that "indeed, some moral and intellectual acts can be caused in us by our actions, but these are not proportioned to the theological virtues. And, therefore, we need others, immediately caused by God, which are proportionate to these" (ST I-II q. 63, a. 3, ad 1).

It is not immediately clear what Aquinas means by saying that acquired virtues are not proportioned to the theological virtues.¹⁰ He has already told us that effects must be proportioned to their causes, but it is difficult to see how this general rule would apply in this context. In what sense could the relation between theological and moral virtues, of any kind, be a causal relation? The parallel text in *De Virtutibus in Communi* (DVC, un 10) sheds light on this question. In that text, he frames the causal relation more specifically in terms of the proportion between a causal power which perfects something and the corresponding capacity for perfection in that which is perfected.¹¹ For Aquinas, perfection always implies the actualization of some intrinsic potential or capability, in accordance with the form of existence proper to that which is actualized. Correlatively, nothing can be perfected—actualized, realized, developed—unless it already has some latent capacity

Facility," 191-192. This claim overlooks the point that natural and supernatural happiness are two distinct ways of attaining one's perfection, that is to say, one's full and appropriate development as a rational creature. Each mode of perfection is complete at its own level. The particular goods of human life can be oriented towards supernatural perfection—that is what the infused virtues do—but connatural happiness is complete in accordance with its own standards and cannot be oriented towards another, qualitatively different kind of completion.

¹⁰ For a helpful discussion of this question and its relation to this debate, see Knobel, "Two Theories of Christian Virtue," 610-618.

¹¹ The concept of perfection is fundamental to Aquinas's thought; within the ST, the key texts would include ST I q. 4, a. 1, q. 2; q. 5, a.1, especially ad 1; q. 6, a. 1; and with respect to the perfection of the rational creature, ST I-II q. 1, a. 7; q. 5, a. 6.

to be perfected in the relevant way. Hence, no created causal power can bring about some perfection in another, unless the agent and the thing perfected are, so to speak, on the same ontological plane. That is why God necessarily creates the rational soul directly—its powers exceed the capacity of matter. He goes on to say that:

It is therefore necessary that, just as the first perfection of the human person, which is the rational soul, exceeds the power of corporal matter, so the ultimate perfection to which the human person can reach, which is the happiness of eternal life, exceeds the full power of human nature. And because each thing is oriented towards an end through some operation, and those things which are oriented towards an end are necessarily in some way proportioned to the end, it is necessary that there be some perfections of the human person by which he is ordered to a supernatural end, which exceeds the power of the natural principles of the human person. This however is not possible, unless over and above natural principles, some supernatural principles of operation are infused in the human person by God (DVC un 10).

These supernatural principles include grace itself, through which the human person attains a kind of “spiritual being,” and the supernatural virtues, which orient the intellect and will directly towards God. Finally:

And just as beyond those natural principles, habits of virtue are required in order to perfect the human person in a way that is connatural to him...so from divine infusion the human person obtains, in addition to the afore-mentioned supernatural principles, other infused virtues, through which he is perfected to carry out operations ordered to the end of eternal life (DVC un 10).

We are now in a better position to understand what Aquinas means by saying, at ST I-II q. 65, a. 3, ad 1, that infused cardinal virtues are necessary because acquired virtues are not proportionate to the theological virtues. Aquinas presupposes that a higher virtue can be said to perfect a lower virtue by actualizing it, in the sense of commanding its proper act and ordering it to some higher or more comprehensive good. This can only work if the higher and the lower virtue are already oriented in some way towards the same overarching aim, the latter presumably in a more limited way; otherwise, the commanding activity of the higher virtue would distort the innate orientation of the lower virtue, rather than perfecting it. Hence, the infused moral virtues can be said to be proportionate to the theological virtues because each set of virtues is directed towards the same supernatural end, indirectly or directly. The acquired virtues, in contrast, are directed to a different end, connatural perfection or happiness. This orientation towards con-

natural happiness is constitutive of the acquired virtues, just as an orientation to supernatural happiness is constitutive of the infused cardinal virtues.¹² That is why the acquired virtues do not have the capacity, as it were, to be perfected through the commanding operations of the theological virtues. The theological virtues cannot direct the acquired virtues to their own end without, in a sense, doing violence to the intrinsic orientation of these virtues—that is to say, they are not proportioned to the theological virtues.

Aquinas goes on, in his response to the second objection, to argue that the theological virtues alone cannot perfect the soul with respect to this-worldly desires and activities—a response framed in such a way as to imply that the soul needs to be perfected in this way, in order for the theological virtues themselves to operate effectively. And finally, he reminds us that the natural power of the innate principles of virtue cannot extend to the attainment of a supernatural end, and that is why we need supernatural principles of action. This would seem to be another way of formulating the point that habits must be proportioned to the end towards which they are oriented, and it reinforces the idea that our natural capacities and the acquired virtues stemming from these capacities cannot be oriented towards supernatural beatitude, even instrumentally.

WHY DOES CHARITY NEED THE INFUSED CARDINAL VIRTUES?

This brings us to the second text under consideration, ST I-II q. 65, a. 3, “Whether charity can exist without other, moral virtues?” Once again, the objections with which Aquinas introduces this question indicate what, for him, are the issues at stake. The first objection claims that charity alone is sufficient to fulfill all the acts of virtue; the second and third, in contrast, argue that at least some of those who have charity do not, in fact, possess all the moral virtues. So far, nothing in this article suggests that the distinction between infused and acquired virtues might be relevant to the question at hand. The objections are focused on the relation between charity and the moral virtues, without further qualification. Taken together, they point to the conclusion that charity alone is sufficient for living the life of grace.

Yet on Aquinas’s view, charity alone is not enough. In the course of developing this claim, he explicitly links charity to the infused moral virtues, arguing that the latter are necessary in order for charity to function:

¹² Aquinas makes this point repeatedly; see, for example, ST I-II q. 51, a. 4, q. 63, a. 3, and q. 110, a. 3. For further elaboration of the relation between different kinds of perfection or happiness and divisions of the virtues, see William Mattison, “Thomas’s Categorizations of Virtue: Historical Background and Contemporary Significance,” *The Thomist* 74 (2010): 189-235, and Arielle Harms, “Acquired and Infused Moral Virtue: A Distinction of Ends,” *The New Blackfriars* 95 (2014): 71-87.

With charity all the moral virtues are infused simultaneously. The reason is that God does not work less perfectly in the works of grace than in the works of nature. Now we see in the operations of nature that principles of some works are not found in something, unless those things which are necessary to perfecting these are found in it....[I]t is manifest that charity, insofar as it orders the human person to the ultimate end, is the principle of all the good works which can be ordained to the ultimate end. That is why it is necessary that with charity, all the moral virtues are infused together, by which the human person perfects specific kinds of good works. (ST I-II q. 65, a. 3).

As we know from earlier texts, the virtues cannot function properly, unless they operate together (ST I-II q. 65, aa. 1, 3). More specifically, a will that is oriented towards love of God and neighbor cannot effectively command and carry out charitable actions, unless the agent's passions and practical intellect are disposed in such a way as to be congruent with charity and to operate harmoniously with it. Aquinas does not even consider the possibility that the acquired moral virtues might work together with charity in the requisite way, even though we know from the DVC that he is aware of this possibility (see DVC un 10.4). When we turn to his response to the first objection, we get some idea of why this might be the case.

For if the principal agent is well disposed, a perfect act will not follow, if the instrument is not well disposed. Hence, in order for the human person to act well in those things which are directed towards an end, it is necessary that he not only have virtues through which he is well related to the end, but also virtues through which he is well related to those things which are directed towards the end, for the virtue which is directed towards the end stands as principle and mover with respect to those things which are directed to the end (ST I-II q. 65, a. 3, ad 1).

In the last section, we saw that Aquinas's claim that the acquired virtues are not proportioned to the theological virtues should be understood in terms of perfection, understood as development or completion in accordance with some intrinsic standard. At this point, he makes a similar claim, formulated explicitly in terms of the relation between the end pursued by charity and the ends which define the moral virtues. At the same time, this text advances our understanding of the distinction between the acquired and the infused moral virtues by calling attention to the way in which each category of virtue is defined in accordance with the end towards which it is oriented.

In order to move forward at this point, we need to look more closely at the distinction between the acquired and the infused cardinal virtues, as Aquinas understands them. We might assume that any vir-

tue which pertains to particular goods, which can be pursued and enjoyed in this life, must be an acquired virtue. But as we noted above, Aquinas does not distinguish between the acquired and infused cardinal virtues in this way. These two kinds of cardinal virtues are both oriented towards characteristic kinds of particular goods—for example, acquired and infused temperance are both oriented towards the right enjoyment of pleasures of touch. These two kinds of virtues are specifically distinct because they follow two different normative standards, determined by reference to reason and Divine Law, respectively (ST I-II q. 63, a. 4, ad 2).

We are familiar by now with the claim that the acquired cardinal virtues are governed by right reason, whereas the infused cardinal virtues observe a standard set by divine law (ST I-II q. 63, a. 3, q. 110, a. 3). This claim has led to the suggestion that any virtue which takes account of rational standards must be acquired, but that is not Aquinas's point.¹³ Rather, in each instance the normative standard in question is determined by reference to the final end towards which the virtues are oriented. The acquired virtues are oriented towards the perfection of human nature, in accordance with the potentialities that are connatural to it. Since reason is the distinctive mark of human nature, this implies that the acquired virtues perfect the human person by developing her rational capacities in a full and appropriate way, and correspondingly, the relevant standards can be discerned through human nature. The infused virtues, in contrast, are oriented towards the supernatural perfection of the human agent, inchoately through grace and fully through union with God in the next life. Since this kind of perfection exceeds the capacities of human nature, the relevant standards must be given through divine, that is to say, revealed law. At the same time, the fundamental distinction between these two kinds of virtues lies in the way in which each is related to the final perfection, that is to say, the happiness of the individual. Acquired and infused virtues are oriented towards two distinct kinds of happiness, and in each case, this orientation towards a specific kind of happiness partially defines the virtue itself.¹⁴

This last point is critical to understanding the significance of Aquinas's distinction between the acquired and infused virtues. Those who

¹³ For example, Decosimo says that "Infused virtue cannot apply right reason to some matter any more than acquired virtue can apply New Law [sic] or a cake-baking habit can produce sweaters," Decosimo, "More to Love," 55. Yet Aquinas does say that the infused virtues incorporate rational considerations into their operations; right reason does not set the normative standard for the infused virtues, but rational considerations are incorporated into its operations whenever they are relevant and appropriate to the standards set by the New Law; see ST I q. 1, a. 8, ad 2 and ST II-II q. 26, a. 6.

¹⁴ Aquinas makes this point repeatedly; the key texts within the ST would include ST I-II q. 5, a. 5, q. 51, a. 4, q. 62, a. 2, q. 63, a. 3, and q. 110, a. 3. In addition, see the studies by Mattison and Harms cited above, note 12.

defend the compatibility of acquired and infused virtues presuppose that the acquired virtues are defined by an orientation towards some kind of finite good, which can be directed towards either natural or supernatural ends. But this is not Aquinas's view. Rather, he holds that acquired and infused virtues are both defined by reference to a formally distinctive kind of action, which pursues its end in a characteristic way, in accordance with some rule. This point is worth underscoring: These two kinds of virtue are distinguished both by their orientation towards two different kinds of perfection, but also, and correlatively, by two formally distinctive kinds of objects (ST I-II q. 63, a. 4, ad 1). As we have already seen, the rule or normative standard in the case of the acquired virtues is determined by reference to the overall rational perfection, the connatural happiness, of the individual. Infused virtues, similarly, are defined by reference to a formally distinctive kind of action, which pursues a given, particular kind of good in accordance with one's overall orientation to supernatural happiness. The point is, in each instance the formal definition of the virtue presupposes a distinctive standard of perfection, natural or supernatural, by reference to which the distinctive normative ideal of the virtue is determined.

We are now in a better position to see why Aquinas says that charity cannot operate without infused cardinal virtues. Like every other virtue, charity is oriented towards a distinctive kind of action, in this case, a distinctive kind of love of God. In order to work effectively in other spheres of life, it needs to work through other virtues, which are immediately oriented towards other, more particular kinds of goods. At the same time, charity cannot work through virtuous dispositions which are oriented towards, and formally shaped by, a different end than that pursued by charity itself. Hence, Aquinas concludes, charity can only effectively operate in conjunction with moral virtues which are already indirectly oriented towards, and defined by reference to, the supernatural end of charity itself. By implication, charity cannot operate through the acquired virtues.

If this is so, then it is difficult to see how the acquired virtues could continue to exist in someone who has charity. Aquinas certainly admits the possibility of latent virtues, but he does not seem to allow for the possibility that a virtue might remain if its field of operation is superseded by a contrary or a higher-order habit (cf. ST I-II q. 54, a. 4).¹⁵ In the last section, we considered the possibility that the infused

¹⁵ Decosimo claims that habits can co-exist in the same faculty, if they are different in species from one another; "More to Love," 55. But this is too sweeping. Aquinas says that specifically distinct habits can co-exist in one faculty because the faculties of the human person are oriented to more than one kind of action, each of which is informed by an appropriate habit (ST I-II q. 54, a. 1). But this does not mean that any two specifically distinct habits can co-exist—otherwise, someone could simultaneously have a virtue and its contrary vice (cf. ST I-II q. 71, a. 3).

and acquired virtues might exist together, on parallel tracks of goodness, as it were. But this line of analysis presupposes that the operations of the acquired virtues might somehow be directed towards the final end of charity, and now it appears that this is not the case. Charity cannot command the acts of the acquired virtues because they are not proportioned to the proper object of charity, that is, supernatural happiness attained through direct union with God. We might wonder whether the infused cardinal virtues could fill this gap, mediating in some way between the acquired virtues and charity. But if the acquired virtues are disproportionate to charity, they are disproportionate to the infused cardinal virtues for the same reason—that is, they are oriented towards two different kinds of ends. At any rate, as far as I have been able to determine, there is no textual support for this suggestion in the ST or elsewhere.

Based on what we have seen so far, it would seem that Aquinas would reject the thesis that the acquired virtues can co-exist with the infused virtues. Admittedly, he does not consider this thesis in the ST, but given his assumptions and aims, he has no reason to consider it. He argues that the theological virtues are intrinsically oriented towards infused cardinal virtues, in somewhat the same way as the first principles of practical reason are intrinsically oriented towards acquiring virtues oriented towards one's rational good. The infused cardinal virtues, correlatively, are intrinsically oriented towards the end of the theological virtues, and this shapes the proper object defining each particular virtue. That is why the infused cardinal virtues can be appropriately responsive to the theological virtues—they are already oriented, in limited and particular ways, towards the goal of the theological virtues. Acquired virtues, in contrast, are intrinsically oriented towards the connatural happiness proper to us as creatures of a certain kind.

In each case, the orientation in question is not just arbitrary. The cardinal virtues, whether acquired or infused, are habitual dispositions to reason or to desire in certain specific ways, in light of one's overall beliefs, aspirations, and objects of love. Someone whose deepest aims and desires are focused on his family, or her commonwealth, or the kingdom of ends, will reflect and judge and feel in ways that are deeply shaped by these ends. In order to think and desire in accordance with a supernatural end, the agent will need to develop a new set of judgements and desires, congruent with her final end. Aquinas believes that this transformation comes about immediately through the infusion of cardinal virtues together with charity, but he acknowledges that the operations of the infused virtues may take time to become apparent, and may never be completely expressed (ST I-II q. 65, a. 3, ad

2).¹⁶ Nonetheless, he holds on to the view that the transformation of the will brought about through charity is always accompanied by a transformation of the whole person, including the will in all its aspects, the intellect, and the passions.

CHARITY AND THE ACTS OF VIRTUE

This brings us, finally, to two texts in which Aquinas considers charity and the virtues from a different perspective, focusing on charity seen in relation to acts proper to virtue, rather than charity seen in relation to other virtuous habits. The texts in question occur within the context of Aquinas's initial question on charity in the *secunda secunda*. In ST II-II q. 23 a. 7, he asks whether true virtue is possible without charity, and then in q. 23, a. 8 he goes on to ask whether charity is the form of the virtues. Turning to ST II-II q. 23, a. 7, the first thing to note is that Aquinas has already addressed this question, or a close variant of it, at ST I-II q. 65, a. 2, in which he asks whether the moral virtues can exist without charity. In that article, he analyzes the issues at stake in terms of the distinction, familiar by now, between two kinds of habits, grounded in different principles and oriented towards the distinct ends of natural and supernatural happiness. In the article that we are now considering, in contrast, Aquinas frames the issue in terms of good actions, rather than good habits. The first objection makes this clear: "It is proper to virtue to produce good acts. But those who do not have charity do some good acts, for example when they clothe the naked, feed the starving, and similar works." The second objection, similarly, observes that we find many examples of true chastity and true justice among unbelievers. Finally, and less immediately relevant to us, the third objection notes that those who lack charity do often have intellectual virtues such as art.

In the main body of the article, Aquinas begins by looking more closely at what it means for something to be a good action. An action is principally judged to be good by reference to its end, and the end, in turn, can be considered from the standpoint of one's final end, or from the standpoint of some proximate end. He goes on to say that:

¹⁶ As we have already seen, Aquinas attributes these deficiencies to contrary dispositions, which would not rise to the level of habits, or else to the incomplete reception of the habitual form by the potency that is its subject; in addition to the text just cited, see ST I-II q. 55, a. 1, ad 1, ST II-II q. 24, a. 11. Recently, a number of theologians have questioned whether Aquinas's view of infusion is persuasive, arguing instead for a model of gradual infusion; for a good defense of this view, together with a summary of the arguments, see Nicholas Austin, *Aquinas on Virtue*, 190-212. It would go outside the limits of this paper to address this question. I would simply observe that for Aquinas, form is always tied to identity, either substantial identity or identity under some aspect, that is to say, identity as a dog, or identity as a brown dog. In either case, identity does not allow for degrees, and correlatively, neither does form. For a good illustration of this approach, see ST I-II q. 52, aa. 1, 2.

The ultimate and principal good of the human person is the enjoyment of God...and the human person is ordained to this through charity. However, the secondary and as it were particular good of the human person can take two forms. One indeed is a true good, since it can be ordained, considered as it is in itself, to the principal good, which is the ultimate end. The other is an apparent and not a true good, because it leads away from the final good (ST II-II q. 23, a. 7).

What Aquinas has in mind here, as he goes on to explain, are those kinds of actions which correspond to similitudes of the virtues, for example, the act of cunning associated with a worldly similitude of prudence. The salient point is that Aquinas is contrasting two kinds of actions, those which are performed with a good motive, so far left unspecified, and those which are distorted by a vicious motive in some way. On this basis, he goes on to identify the different ways in which someone might be oriented towards final and proximate goods. True virtue in the full and unqualified sense presupposes charity. At the same time, it is possible to be oriented towards genuine proximate goods in an appropriate way without charity, and a disposition of this kind counts as a virtue in a qualified sense. He goes on to say that it is also possible to be oriented towards seeming but false goods, citing a text from Augustine to the effect that seeming virtues motivated by avarice are not virtues at all. He concludes by saying that “if that particular good is a true good, for example to conserve the city or something of this sort, it will indeed be a true virtue, but imperfect, unless it is referred to the final and perfect good.”

This is a compressed text, and it raises a question about the interpretation developed so far. Read in one way, it would seem to say that charity orients the virtues directed towards particular goods towards its own final end. Aquinas does not specify acquired or infused virtues, but since he refers earlier in this article to true virtues apart from charity, we might think that what he has in mind are acquired virtues, directed by charity towards the final end. But this conclusion would be too quick. Aquinas is here contrasting a genuine particular good with an apparent good, associated with a similitude of virtue, in order to set up a further contrast, between virtues which do not stem from grace, and yet are associated with genuine goods, and similitudes of virtue, directed towards seeming goods. He then goes on to say that if such a genuine particular good is referred to the final end of charity, then it is associated with a virtue that is such in an unqualified sense. My point is that when Aquinas speaks in this context of referring something to charity, what he has in mind is a genuinely good kind of action, which as such can be associated with a true virtue, but not the

virtuous habit itself.¹⁷ And this is what we would expect, since as we recall, one virtue commands another by commanding the act that is proper to the virtue.

This line of interpretation is confirmed by the next article, “whether charity is the form of the virtues.” In this article, Aquinas offers his interpretation of a traditional claim that charity is the form of the virtues. In fact, this is an awkward claim for him, because given his overall metaphysical commitments, it ought to imply that all true virtue is really equivalent to charity. The first objection captures this point. It observes that if charity is the form of the virtues, then it has to be either an exemplary or an essential form, and in either case, other virtues would be species of, or simply equivalent to charity itself. The second and third objections contrast the formal cause with other kinds of causality that are more proper to charity, either material cause, because charity is said to be the root of the virtues, or efficient or final causality.

Aquinas is committed to defending the traditional claim that charity is the form of the virtues, but he does so in such a way as to preserve the distinction between charity and the other virtues. Charity, he argues, can be said to be the form of the virtues in a qualified sense, insofar as it directs the acts of the other virtues to its own proper end:

In moral matters the form of an act is principally dependent on the end. The reason for this is that the principle of moral acts is the will, the object, and as it were the form of which is the end. Now the form of an act always follows the form of the agent. Hence, it is necessary that in moral matters, that which gives an act its order to an end also

¹⁷ The distinction between an action of a kind associated with a virtue and an act of virtue, that is to say, an act produced by a virtuous habit, is not central to Aquinas’s thought, but he is familiar with it; see ST II-II q. 32, a. 1, ad 1. This distinction is also relevant to a much-discussed text, DVC a. 10, ad 4, which reads as follows: “Since there can be no merit without charity, the acts of the acquired virtues cannot be meritorious without charity. Together with charity, all the other virtues are infused, hence the acts of the acquired virtues cannot be meritorious, unless mediated by infused virtue. For virtues ordered to an inferior end cannot bring about an act oriented to a superior end, except through the mediation of a superior virtue.” Does Aquinas mean that the inferior virtue in question is itself somehow mediated through the superior virtue, or does he mean—as the comparison with ST II-II q. 23, aa. 7 and 8 suggests—that the act associated with the lower virtue is transformed, through charity, into a meritorious act? Taken by itself, the text is open to either interpretation. For a very helpful overview of the issues raised by this text, see Angela Knobel, “A Confusing Comparison: Interpreting *De Virtutibus in Communi* a.10, ad 4,” in *The Virtuous Life*, 97-115. At the same time, I agree with Mattison that this text can be read in such a way as to bring it into line with the interpretation of the parallel texts in the ST; see “Can Christians Possess the Acquired Moral Virtues?” 567-568. At any rate, I would argue that the texts under consideration, ST II-II q. 23, aa. 7 and 8, are not ambiguous in the same way as the DVC text, especially when we take account of the way in which 8 develops 7.

gives to it its form. Now it is clear from what was said above that through charity, the acts of all the other virtues are ordained to the ultimate end. Accordingly, this itself gives form to the acts of all the other virtues. On this account it is said to be the form of the virtues, for the virtues themselves are said to be ordered to a formed act (ST II-II q. 23, a. 8).

Does it follow that the infused moral virtues are all identical with charity? No, because charity is not, on this account, the exemplary or essential form of the virtues, as Aquinas goes on to explain: “Charity is said to be the form of the other virtues, not in an exemplary or essential sense, but rather in an efficient sense, since it determines the form of all, in the way set forth” (ST II-II q. 23, a. 9, ad 1). He will go on to make an almost identical argument with respect to general justice, arguing that general justice is not simply equivalent to virtue in general, but rather, is general in the sense that it directs the acts of the other virtues towards its own overarching end (ST II-II q. 58, a. 6). At that point, he explicitly says what he implies here, that charity is in a certain sense the form of all the virtues, and yet is not equivalent to these.

The critical point is that Aquinas’s argument here depends on the claim that charity directs the acts of the other virtues towards its own proper end of supernatural happiness. Note that he does not say that charity directs virtuous habits, as such, towards its proper end. Rather, charity actualizes virtuous habits of a certain kind by commanding the actions that are proper to those virtues. Correlatively, the virtues that are actualized in this way are oriented towards those kinds of actions which are proportioned to charity—that is to say, those kinds of actions proper to the infused cardinal virtues, which are oriented towards particular goods, as referred to one’s supernatural end. It is important to note here that Aquinas does not simply say that charity operates by directing good actions to a further end. His point, rather, is that human acts commanded by charity are intrinsically shaped by the orientation to the final end of charity, in such a way as to be formally distinct from those kinds of actions which pursue particular goods in reference to a connatural final end (cf. ST I-II q. 63, a. 4, ad 1). As he says, charity gives the form to the acts of the other virtues, which correlatively are defined by reference to what he here calls the formed act, which constitutes the proper object of the virtue.

According to those who argue for the co-existence of charity and the acquired virtues, the acts of the acquired virtues are in some way directed towards the final end of charity, directly or through the intermediary of the infused cardinal virtues. I believe that this text definitively rules out that line of interpretation. According to Aquinas, actions commanded by charity are intrinsically informed by charity, in

such a way as to be intrinsically oriented towards the final end of charity itself. At the same time, charity, as the supreme virtue of the will, is a comprehensive and architectonic virtue, operative in every good action of the graced individual (*De Caritate* q. 1, a. 5, ad 3; cf. ST II-II q. 24, a. 11). Her desires, choices, and actions, insofar as they are not sinful, will necessarily be shaped and governed by the overall orientation towards union with God that is proper to charity. Given this, there is no space and no need for another set of habitual dispositions, grounded in purely natural principles of operation and oriented towards a different kind of final end.

So far, we have framed the relation between infused and acquired virtues in terms of relations among different kinds of ends, habits, and actions. But for Aquinas, the infused virtues can only be understood within a wider context, set by his doctrine of grace. We now turn to a further consideration of that point.

MORAL VIRTUE AND THE OPERATIONS OF GRACE

Aquinas holds that without God's gratuitous assistance, men and women cannot desire, act towards, or attain the union with God that constitutes their ultimate happiness (ST I-II q. 51, a. 4, q. 110, aa. 2,3). Furthermore, the kind of assistance in question is distinct from God's gratuitous acts of creation and preservation, that is to say, it is supernatural, rather than natural (ST I-II q. 110, a. 2). Without this kind of grace, men and women cannot overcome the effects of original sin, or repent, be forgiven, and healed from actual sin. More fundamentally, even innocent human nature, or for that matter, angelic nature stands in need of grace in order to attain supernatural happiness, which goes beyond the capacities of any created nature.¹⁸ Without grace, we would be capable of a kind of connatural happiness, consisting in the practice of the acquired virtues (ST I-II q. 5, a. 5). With grace, we are oriented towards and ultimately attain the happiness of friendship with God, known and loved in his full, Trinitarian reality.

Aquinas's doctrine of grace raises the same kinds of questions that run through the debate over the infused and acquired virtues. What is the relation between grace and nature, considered as two principles of operation oriented towards two distinct ends? These issues were widely debated among Aquinas scholars and theologians throughout most of the last century.¹⁹ According to one view, the natural and the

¹⁸ Aquinas develops this point in a systematic way through his consideration of a set of traditional questions pertaining to what the human person can achieve without grace; see ST I-II q. 109, aa. 1-10.

¹⁹ For a general history of the theological distinction between nature and grace, see John Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology: A Study of the Roman Catholic Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 72-115. For an illuminating discussion of the relevance of this history to current debates over acquired and infused virtue, see Pinset, "Who's Afraid of Infused Virtue?" 79-80.

supernatural co-exist as two distinct, although ultimately co-ordinated spheres of existence and activity. On this view, natural inclinations and activities, the purely moral virtues, and the natural law offer touchstones for understanding Christian virtue, while also providing common ground with those who do not share Christian faith. Above all, this line of interpretation sought to preserve the integrity of nature—perhaps, at the cost of giving enough weight to the necessity of grace.

Beginning in the early twentieth century, Thomists and theologians generally began to react against this way of construing the relation between nature and grace. At the risk of over-simplifying, this reaction generally took the form of interrogating the claim that nature and grace are two distinct principles of operation. It may be that grace supersedes nature, or it might be said that God's creative and sanctifying operations are not really distinct, or we might regard nature as an abstraction that is never actually realized, except as in some way qualified by grace. This line of interpretation is motivated by a strong sense of the importance and comprehensiveness of grace, together with a heightened sense of the significance of dynamism and historical process, over against a supposedly timeless nature. At the same time, if the former approach tends to denigrate grace, this line of interpretation risks denying the integrity of nature, and by implication, the fundamental goodness of God's creation.

It will be apparent by now that current debates over acquired and infused virtues raise many of the same issues as do earlier controversies over nature and grace. Indeed, we can helpfully approach these as a continuation of these earlier debates. Those who defend the co-existence of acquired and infused cardinal virtues are motivated by the same commitments to the integrity of nature and the value of reason as we find among defenders of a clear division between the natural and the supernatural. By the same token, this way of relating two different kinds of virtues presupposes the same kind of hierarchical division between natural principles and the operations of grace that early twentieth century theologians found objectionable. At least, the claim that the acquired and infused virtues can co-exist would seem to have a strong affinity with the older, two-tier model of natural and supernatural principles of action.

If that is so—and if it is indeed the case that Aquinas rules out the co-existence of acquired and infused virtue—then it might seem that we are forced to accept an attenuated view of nature, along the lines sketched above. Almost everyone involved in the current debate would reject this alternative, and rightly so. But once we admit that the infused virtues cannot co-exist with connatural, acquired virtues, are we not forced to admit that in this respect, at least, grace really does operate as a comprehensive principle, without any tethering in natural principles or the values inherent in these? In a word, no. In the

last section of this paper, I want to argue that these are false alternatives. The key question at this point is, what is the relation between nature and grace, considered as two principles of operation? And can we say that natural principles are in any way preserved in the operations of grace?

In order to address these questions, we need to look more closely at Aquinas's views on grace, seen in itself and as a principle of virtue. We have already noted that Aquinas, like every other scholastic theologian, holds that no man or woman can please God or attain salvation without God's gratuitous aid, identified with grace. Aquinas is especially careful to distinguish this kind of gratuitous help from God's free decision to create and preserve all creatures, a kind of gratuity that is expressed through the existence and orderly operations of the natural world. The gratuitous assistance proper to grace, in contrast, operates in such a way as to transcend the natural capacities of the human creature, in such a way as to orient her to union with God.

We might understand God's gratuitous aid in any number of ways. Aquinas addresses this question under the general heading of "the grace of God, with respect to its essence," and the first article signals the approach that he takes. In ST I-II q. 110, a. 1, he asks whether grace posits something in the soul, finally concluding that "so therefore when it is said that the human person has the grace of God, what is signified is something supernatural in the human person, coming forth from God." This general description leaves open just what it is that God provides, and Aquinas addresses this further question in the next article, which asks whether grace is a quality of the soul. He begins by observing that God can be said to aid someone gratuitously by moving him to some cognition or volition or action, and in this case, the effect of God's aid is a motion of the soul, rather than a quality. He goes on to say that:

In another way the human person is aided by the gratuitous will of God in such a way that some habitual gift is poured into the soul by God. And this indeed, because it is not appropriate that God should provide less for those whom he loves in such a way that they have supernatural goods, than he provides for creatures that he loves in such a way that they have natural goods. For he provides for natural creatures in such a way that he not only moves them to their natural acts, but he also bestows on them certain forms and powers, which are the principles of acts, so that they are themselves inclined to motions of this kind. And so the motion by which they are moved by God is made connatural and easy to creatures....Much more, therefore, does he pour out certain forms or supernatural qualities on those whom he moves to attain the supernatural good of eternity, according to which they are moved by him sweetly and promptly to attain the good of eternity. And so the gift of grace is a certain quality (ST I-II q. 110, a. 2).

Aquinas goes on to say that grace is a kind of accidental form (ST I-II q. 110, a. 2, ad 2). More specifically, it is a kind of habit, that is to say, a stable disposition towards a characteristic kind of existence and operation. As an accidental form, grace does not change the essence of the soul, but it qualifies the way in which that essence is actualized. Considered within the context of the natural order, this kind of habitual disposition of the soul would be superfluous, since the soul is “the completive form of human nature;” however, “if we speak of a superior nature, in which the human person can share, nothing prohibits the existence of some habit in the soul according to its essence, that is, grace” (ST I-II q. 50, a. 2).

Returning to Aquinas’s treatment of the essence of grace at ST I-II q. 110, he goes on in q. 110, a. 3 to consider the claim that grace is identical to the infused virtues, and he argues that it is not. The virtues, whether acquired or infused, are perfections, and a perfection implies a normative standard, determined by some antecedently existing nature. The acquired virtues perfect the faculties of the soul by reference to a standard set by human nature as discerned through reason, and in the same way, the infused virtues perfect the faculties by reference to a standard set by the divine nature in which the individual participates. This participation in divine nature, which is brought about through grace, is therefore prior to the infused virtues and cannot be equated with them. This brings him, finally, to the question of whether grace is in the essence of the soul as its subject, or in the potencies of the soul. Given what he has just said about the relation of grace to the infused virtues, which are habits of the potencies of the soul, he answers this question readily:

If however grace differs from virtue, it cannot be said that the potencies of the soul are subjects of grace because every perfection of a potency of the soul has the rational character of a virtue.... Hence it follows that grace, just as it is prior to virtue, so it has as its subject that which is prior to the potencies of the soul, so that it is indeed in the essence of the soul. For just as through the intellectual potency the human person participates in divine cognition through the virtue of faith; and according to the potency of the will he participates in divine love through the virtue of charity; so also through the nature of the soul he participates, in accordance with a certain similitude, in the divine nature through which he is regenerated or recreated (ST I-II q. 110, a. 4).

In his account of the essence of grace, Aquinas emphasizes that grace is a created quality in the soul itself. It cannot be equated with God or the Holy Spirit moving the soul as an instrument, nor is it equivalent to the virtues, nor is it a kind of super-potency or power, through which the soul carries out good actions of a certain kind. Rather, it is a quality of the soul, a way of being and operating which

informs all the faculties of the soul (ST I-II q. 110, a. 4).

It will be apparent by now that Aquinas's account of grace reinforces our earlier conclusion that the infused and acquired virtues cannot co-exist. Grace is a quality of the whole soul, comprehensively transforming all its distinctively human potencies in accordance with a participation in divine nature. This comprehensive transformation comes about through the perfection and actualization of these potencies through virtues and actions which stem from inchoate principles of belief and love, and reflect the standards set by divinized human nature. In order for acquired virtues to take root in this context, we would need to postulate some potencies, or some sphere of activity, that remains untouched by grace and subject to the standards of created human nature. But on the terms set by Aquinas's doctrine of grace, there is no such purely natural sphere of activity within the soul of someone in grace. The human person can always act in ways that are not informed by grace—otherwise, those who receive grace would be incapable of sin (ST II-II q. 24, a. 11). But for those in grace, every truly good action and good habit will be in some way informed by the pervasive transformation that God brings about in the graced soul.

At the same time, Aquinas's doctrine of grace also provides a context for understanding the full implications of his treatment of the infused virtues. More specifically, Aquinas's treatment of grace brings us back to central questions in the current debate: What is the relation between nature and grace? Can we affirm the comprehensiveness and sufficiency of the infused virtues, while at the same time doing justice to the value and integrity of human nature and the natural world more generally? Formulated in these terms, it would seem that nature and grace are two distinct principles, which may co-exist or not, but which at any rate are, so to speak, on the same ontological plane. But Aquinas's analysis of what he calls the essence of grace makes it clear that this is not so. Rather, according to him grace is a habit of the soul, that is to say, an accidental form qualifying the nature of the soul in a certain way. The graced human soul is still a human soul, operating through potencies which retain their natural structures and ways of operating.

Aquinas's doctrine of grace opens up a new perspective on the value of the natural order that is rightly central to the debate over two kinds of virtues. Grace, as a quality of the soul, and the infused virtues which stem from it, are not alien to human nature—rather, they represent one way of perfecting human nature and its constitutive potencies. The kind of perfection brought about by grace goes beyond anything that human nature could achieve by its own powers, but it is nonetheless intelligibly a perfection of those powers, that is to say, an expansion and a fuller development of human potentialities. Aquinas affirms the scholastic dictum that grace does not do away with nature, but perfects it (ST I q. 1, a. 8, ad 2). Similarly, in the context of a discussion

of the natural and supernatural operations of the angels, he argues that the blessed angels continue to exercise their natural powers of intellectual understanding and volition: "It is manifest that nature is compared to happiness as primary to secondary, because beatitude is added to nature. It is always necessary to preserve that which is primary in that which is secondary. Hence, it is necessary that nature is preserved in happiness. And similarly, it is necessary that the act of nature is preserved in the act of beatitude" (ST I q. 62, a. 7). Aquinas is here speaking of the blessed angels, who already enjoy the supernatural happiness of friendship with God. But his observation can be generalized: If the act of nature is preserved in beatitude, then we can be confident that natural operations and values are in some way preserved in grace, which is the anticipation of beatitude.

This line of analysis opens up a new perspective on the infused cardinal virtues and their relation to the acquired virtues. Rather than construing these as two distinct, coeval and potentially competing sets of virtues, we should think of them as two distinct ways of perfecting natural human faculties. For this reason, we would expect them to resemble one another in some ways. Infused temperance, for example, operates over the full range of desires and aversions relating to the pleasures of touch, and its proper actions will be acts of the passions of simple desire, as these are informed by the agent's overall orientation towards friendship with God (ST I-II q. 63, a. 4). Because the desires and aversions proper to infused temperance are shaped by this orientation, its proper object—the formal action which defines the virtue—is distinct from the proper object of acquired virtue. And yet, if we have understood infused temperance correctly, we should be able to see how this virtue is an authentic perfection of the capacity for desire. Certainly, if the perfection in question depends on the supernatural gift of grace, then we would expect it to take an unexpected, perhaps an initially unattractive form. But on Aquinas's terms, it is still an intelligible expansion and full actualization of a human potency. At the very least, it should not move the agent to genuinely harmful or perverse actions (cf. ST II-II q. 147, a. 1, ad 2).

The upshot is, on Aquinas's showing the integrity of nature and natural values are not set aside through the infused virtues. Grace preserves nature and brings it to a level of perfection that would otherwise be unimaginable, let alone attainable. Because the infused virtues represent the comprehensive perfection of the faculties that they inform, they are, again, not compatible with the acquired virtues, which represent another kind of comprehensive perfection of the same faculty. Yet they bring about what the acquired virtues also accomplish—the perfection of nature—and they do so in such a way as to open up new possibilities for the operations of our natural faculties.

This line of analysis can also be applied to a question which runs

through much of the literature on infused and acquired virtues. Suppose we are now persuaded that the infused virtues cannot co-exist with the acquired virtues. In that case, what happens when someone who has already acquired the virtues experiences a conversion, turns to God in faith, hope and charity, and receives the infused cardinal virtues immediately with charity? Do the acquired virtues simply go away, to be replaced by their infused counterparts? Yes, they do; but we can admit that, without committing ourselves to the implausible view that the reception of grace in this kind of case represents a complete break in the continuities of individual experience and personality.

Aquinas does not explicitly deal with these specific questions, but he does address the more general question of motion and form. The text in question comes in the context of a discussion of the processes of procreation and fetal development. As we have already noted, Aquinas holds that the rational, distinctively human soul is created immediately by God at a certain point in fetal development. He assumes, as do his interlocutors, that before that point, the embryo has a generative or a sensitive soul. This raises the question, what happens to these earlier souls? This question is relevant for us because for Aquinas, the soul is a kind of form—a substantial, rather than an accidental form, but a kind of form nonetheless. He is therefore posing the question, what becomes of one form when another, as it were covering the same sphere of existence and operation, is introduced. His answer is instructive:

Since the generation of one is always the decay of another, it is necessary to say that with respect to both the human being and other living things, when a more perfect form comes to be, the prior form decays, yet in such a way that the subsequent form has whatever the first form had, and has it more fully. And so through many generations and decays, the final substantial form comes into being, both in the human being and in other living things....And so it should be said that the intellectual soul created by God at the end of human generation, which is simultaneously both sensitive and nutritive, is the corruption of the pre-existing forms (ST I q. 118, a. 2, ad 2).

In order to appreciate the significance of this text for our subject, it will be helpful first to ask why Aquinas says that the generation of one thing is the corruption of another. His point is that any finite creature is necessarily one distinctive kind of thing, not many things or an indefinite continuum of things. Existence and identity are punctual. Form is a dynamic principle of existence and operation, and therefore, it has no separate existence, except insofar as it is abstracted and held

in some intellect (ST I q. 5, a. 5, q. 15, a. 1).²⁰ Thus, when Aquinas says that the generation of one form is the corruption of another, we should not imagine the forms as discrete entities, competing for existence in the same ontic space as the entities they inform. Rather, when Aquinas speaks of the generation and corruption of forms, he is referring to processes through which distinct kinds of things come into existence and cease to exist, seen from the standpoint of the form, the principle of determinate existence and identity. Something cannot be both a nutritive entity, while at the same time also being a sensitive entity. When through the processes of fetal development the capacities of sensitive existence emerge, the nutritive entity ceases to be, and when God bestows the rational soul, the sensitive entity ceases to be.

The same general observations would apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the coming into being and ceasing to be of accidental forms, which pertain to the same aspects of being and are therefore in a sense contrasting forms. Acquired temperance, to continue with our example, is a distinctive way in which someone's capacity for desire and aversion is configured and put into operation. Infused temperance is another, contrasting configuration of the same capacity. When the agent becomes capable of this latter kind of temperance, her capacity for desire changes in fundamental ways. It is informed by a different dynamic principle, another form, that is to say, the infused virtue of temperance. At the same time, this new way of operating encompasses the operations proper to the earlier, more limited dynamic principle—which is to say, infused temperance incorporates, as it were, the dynamisms of acquired temperance, in such a way as to reorient and transform them.

This brings us to a final point. An acquired virtue, as the name suggests, is acquired through ongoing processes of desire and operation, which leave their traces in the agent's memory and judgment, in such a way as to shape her character and personality. There is no reason to think that these desires, memories, and judgments simply go away, to be replaced by something else—and what could that be?—through the infusion of virtue. Aquinas speaks at one point of the *relicta* of habits, which remain after new habits are infused through grace. He is speaking of the remains of bad habits, vices, but there is no reason why we should not also think in terms of the remains of the good habits, the acquired virtues. What I am suggesting is this: Through the infusion of grace, the personality of the individual is transformed and re-oriented, but not destroyed or set aside. The agent's acquired virtues cease to be, considered as distinctive habits, but the many aspects of personal experience and identity that they helped to form continue,

²⁰ The human soul is the exception to this rule, since it persists after the dissolution of the body; see ST I q. 75, aa. 2, 3, 6. This claim is of course enormously controversial, but fortunately it is not directly relevant to the question at hand.

transformed into another kind of virtue through grace. Aquinas believes that grace and the infused virtues are profoundly transformative, but he surely does not believe that they represent a rupture in personal identity. His analysis of this transformation in terms of the habits of the soul offers us a way of understanding what that transformation implies.

Clearly, much more could be said about the ways in which the transformative effects of grace are seen and experienced in the moral life. But in order for this line of inquiry to be fruitful, it needs to begin by recognizing that the transformation brought about through charity is profound and complete. Someone who receives the grace of God is a new creation, and this implies new moral virtues as well as a new set of beliefs, hopes, and desires. We cannot fully appreciate the significance of Aquinas's moral theology unless we take this point into account.²¹ **M**

Citations from Aquinas are taken from the following:

Summa theologiae (ST), Volumes 4-12 in *Opera Omnia jussa edita Leonis XIII PM* (Rome: Ex Typographia Polyglotta S.C. de Propaganda Fide, 1888-1906).

Quaestiones disputatae de virtutibus, q.1, *De Virtutibus in Communi* (DVC), 707-751 (Rome: Marietti, 1965).

– Q.2, *De Caritate*, 752-791 (Marietti).

²¹ An earlier version of this paper was read at the annual meeting of the Catholic Theological Society of America, June 9, 2018, Indianapolis, Indiana, and I would like to express my thanks for the many helpful questions and comments offered by those present. I would also like to thank William Mattison and Joseph Wawrykow for reading a draft of this paper and offering me many valuable suggestions for its improvement.