THE INFUSED AND ACQUIRED VIRTUES IN AQUINAS’ MORAL PHILOSOPHY

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by

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Throughout his writings on the virtues, Aquinas consistently makes two claims: 1) the infused moral virtues are completely different from the acquired virtues (for instance, they can co-exist with a disposition to the corresponding acquired vice); and 2) it is the infused moral virtues which are moral virtues in the truest sense. Together these facts present a puzzle about the detailed accounts of the moral virtues in the second part of the second part: Might these be primarily accounts of the infused moral virtues, and only derivatively about acquired moral virtue? Given that parts of the treatment are clearly concerned with infused moral virtues and other parts are clearly concerned with acquired moral virtue, what portion of the discussion in the second part of the second part is devoted to each? What relevance does acquired moral virtue have to its infused counterpart, and vice versa?

These two facts, together with the questions they raise, tend to go unmentioned in literature that deals with Aquinas’ treatment of the virtues, but they have important ramifications, particularly for those who might wish to appropriate a Thomistic notion of virtue into contemporary virtue ethics. For if it can be established that there is a significant difference between the infused and acquired moral virtues at both the practical
and theoretical level, that Aquinas is aware of these differences, and that, aware of these differences, he focuses almost exclusively on the infused virtues, then Aquinas’ moral philosophy departs farther from Aristotle’s ethical system than most scholars acknowledge.

This dissertation aims to address the distinction between the infused and acquired virtues in Aquinas’ moral theory, and to show that the infused virtues are not only different from and independent of the acquired virtues, but that – at least as evidenced by the treatises on prudence and fortitude – this drastically different set of virtues is the true subject of Aquinas’ detailed discussion of the virtues in the secunda secundae.
DEDICATION

To Fr. Brian Shanley, O.P.,
with affection and gratitude.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It has become a commonplace that Aquinas’ moral theory is an appropriation of Aristotle’s writings on the virtues, “topped” by the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. In their book, *Christian Ethics*, Waldo Beach and Richard Niebuhr provide a typical instance of such a claim:

“In man to man relationships, the life of a good man will be characterized by the practice of the four classical virtues: temperance, courage (or fortitude), justice, and above all wisdom or prudence, that refined ability to judge correctly what is right to know and do. This much can be developed by natural and reasonable man, quite apart from revelation and faith. In all this Thomas does little more than reproduce Aristotle. God endows man, through Christian revelation and the church with its sacraments, with the added gift of the three theological virtues, faith, hope and love, which direct man to God Himself, and which therefore crown the four natural virtues. These seven cardinal virtues are the internal habits of the good life.”

An even more succinct version of the same claim is made by Austin Fagothy: “St. Thomas follows Aristotle, omitting some points, developing others more thoroughly, and adding the theological virtues.”

Versions of this claim, in one form or another, are

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1Beach, Waldo and Niebuhr, Richard *Christian Ethics*

2Fagothy, Austin *Right and Reason*, p.182
reiterated by many prominent Thomists. Aquinas’ moral theory, one cannot help but infer, is a relatively unimaginative appropriation of the Aristotelian theory of virtue, with faith, hope, and love spliced somewhat awkwardly on top.

This “common” conception of Aquinas’ moral theory not only implies that the acquired moral virtues comprise the main subject of Aquinas’ moral philosophy, but utterly ignores an entire subset of Aquinas’ moral theory – namely, the infused moral virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are bestowed on man along with the

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3Recent books that treat Aquinas’ moral theory, even those which self-consciously emphasize the importance of charity in Aquinas’ moral theory, virtually reproduce this picture. In her recent book Aquinas, for instance, Eleanore Stump gives the following pithy description of the structure of Aquinas’ moral theory:

“The four cardinal virtues should be understood as [acquired] habits of this sort. Reason’s habit of good governance generally is prudence; reason’s restraint which wards off self-serving concupiscence is temperance; reason’s persevering rather than giving in to self-serving irascible passions such as fear is courage; reason’s governance of one’s relations with others is justice. Aquinas’ normative ethics is based on virtues; it is concerned with dispositions and then with actions stemming from those dispositions.

In addition to the moral virtues in all their various manifestations, Aquinas also recognizes intellectual virtues that, like the moral virtues, can be acquired by human effort. On the other hand, the supreme theological virtues of faith, hope and charity cannot be acquired but must be directly infused by God. Aquinas introduces these virtues and others in Summa Theologiae IaIIae. 49-88 and examines them in detail throughout IiaIIae.” (25)

Brian Davies implies a similar structure in his book The Thought of Thomas Aquinas (Oxford 1992), dealing with the acquired moral virtues in a chapter entitled “How to be Happy,” the theological virtues in a chapter entitled, “How to be Holy.” Paul Wadell’s book The Primacy of Love (New York 1992), while emphasizing the importance of charity, nowhere mentions the infused virtues. Fredrick Copleston’s summary gives a similar impression:

“It is clear that for Aquinas there is an ideal type of man, an ideal of human development and integration, a notion which has been flatly rejected by, for example, existentialists like M. Sartre. And the possession of the natural virtues, moral and intellectual, belongs to this ideal type. But the concrete ideal is not for Aquinas simply the ideal of the fully developed natural man. For under the action of divine grace man can rise to the life of supernatural union of God. And for this higher sphere of life he needs the infused virtues of faith, hope, and charity....While building, therefore, on a largely Aristotelian foundation, which represents what we may call the humanistic element in his ideal for man, Aquinas proceeds to discuss the theological virtues, which are not acquired in the same way as the natural virtues, and the gifts of the holy spirit.” Copleston, Aquinas (Penguin 1955) p.209

Even Philippa Foot offers the same basic sketch of Thomist moral theory: “By and large Aquinas followed Aristotle--sometimes even heroically--where Aristotle gave an opinion, and where St. Thomas is on his own, as in developing the doctrine of the Theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, and in his theocentric doctrine of happiness, he still uses an Aristotelian framework where he can...however there are different emphases and new elements in Aquinas’s ethics: often he works things out in far more detail than Aristotle did, and it is possible to learn a great deal from Aquinas that one could not have got from Aristotle.” (Foot, Philippa, “Virtues and Vices” in Crisp and Slote, eds. Virtue Ethics Oxford, 1997 p.164)
theological virtues. Why do Beach, Niebuhr and others who offer similar snapshots of Aquinas’ moral theory make no mention of the infused moral virtues? Are they simply unaware that Aquinas posited them? Does not even the briefest summary of Aquinas’ moral theory present a mere caricature if it fails to make some reference to the role played by an entire class of dispositions?

Conversation reveals that those who omit mention of the infused moral virtues typically do so out of a desire to be charitable to Aquinas. For, in the eyes of many, the infused moral virtues are a somewhat ‘ad hoc’ stipulation which do not, at the end of the day, do much more than add scholastic clutter to Aquinas’ ethical landscape. The notion that the infused moral virtues are superfluous is not new; indeed this thesis was first and most famously advocated by John Duns Scotus. There is, however, one important difference between Scotus’ explicit rejection and the implicit dismissal of many contemporary Thomists: Scotus’ rejection of the infused moral virtues is rooted in a rejection of Aquinas’ entire ethical framework, while the impression given by many...
This point will become clearer in Chapter One, where the theoretical reasons behind the postulation of the infused virtues is discussed. The infused virtues, theological and moral, are necessary in Aquinas’ schema because the gift of grace alters man’s nature – the man justified by grace becomes the adopted son of God; and in order to act as the son of God should act, he needs correspondingly altered habits. Scotus, however, has no such exalted view of grace. Grace, which he appears to identify with charity, is merely a habit of the will. It does not raise man’s nature to a new level. For a good explanation of the Scotist view of grace, see Richard Cross’s book, *Duns Scotus* (Oxford 1999) p.108.

This dissertation seeks to establish the infused moral virtues as a vital component of Aquinas’ moral theory, and to argue that it is this set of virtues, a set which differs drastically from its acquired counterparts, which Aquinas has in mind in his detailed writings on the virtues in the second part. The first and second chapters will examine Aquinas’ theoretical reasons for positing the infused moral virtues, and will demonstrate that the infused virtues differ from the acquired in terms of the mean they seek, the manner in which they are lost and come to be, and most importantly, in terms of the kind of facility they confer. In the third and fourth chapters, I will argue that, at least as evidenced by his discussions of prudence and fortitude, the *secunda secundae* is primarily concerned with the infused moral virtues.

It will be noted that the body of this dissertation consists almost exclusively of a close reading of Aquinas’ writings on the virtues, and rarely engages the theses about the infused virtues which have been put forward by other scholars. This method has been chosen for two reasons. First, scholarly accounts of the infused moral virtues differ so widely, and rely on so many unspoken assumptions, that no productive study of the role played by the infused moral virtues in Aquinas’ moral philosophy can be undertaken until

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we make a thorough study of (1) why Aquinas posits the infused moral virtues (2) how these virtues differ from their acquired counterparts and (3) what role these virtues play in Aquinas’ philosophy. Second and more importantly, however, it seems to me that existing attempts to accommodate the infused moral virtues only bolster the case of those who omit them. For almost invariably, “defenses” of the infused moral virtues allot all the work of the moral life to the acquired virtues, leaving the infused virtues intact, but to all appearances, useless.
CHAPTER 2

THE STRUCTURE OF THE VIRTUES

This dissertation seeks to understand the role of the infused moral virtues in Aquinas’ moral philosophy, and to understand the relationship between the infused moral virtues and their acquired counterparts. Many of those who tackle this issue dive directly into various puzzles about the virtues. Is it the case that different ends require different sets of virtues? Can Scotus’ argument against the infused moral virtues be justly applied to Aquinas? Need one really think of the infused virtues as distinct virtues, or are they not merely enhanced versions of the acquired virtues? Or, given that they are distinct, do acts of infused virtue cause an increase in acquired virtue? Although these questions will be addressed in due course, a considerable framework has to be established before we can even put ourselves in a position to ask these questions. For unless one knows what virtue is, and what place it occupies in Aquinas’ moral philosophy; unless one can explain why he posits two separate sets of virtues in the first place, no solution to the above questions, no matter how clever, will offer any real insight. To achieve any real comprehension of the difference between the infused and acquired virtues, it is necessary to start from the
beginning. If one first tries to understand what virtue is and how it functions in Aquinas, it may be that some of the above questions will resolve themselves.

It may seem superfluous to devote an entire chapter of a dissertation to re-hashing Aquinas’ theory of the virtues, especially as it seems that any well educated undergraduate could give such an explanation in his sleep. This sentiment, indeed, is most likely what leads those who write on the connection between the infused and acquired moral virtues to forego such a discussion. It is equally likely, however, that the structure of the virtues in Aquinas is less obvious than it seems. If this is the case, then one can only shed light on these more complicated questions by returning to the fundamental principles of Aquinas’ moral theory.

An adequate conception of the Thomist account of virtue hinges on an adequate conception of the Thomist account of nature. A virtue is a good habit, and a habit is a permanent and lasting disposition of the soul. To call a disposition good or bad is merely to say that it fulfills or fails to fulfill the thing in question: it either makes an individual a good specimen of the human species, or it fails to. But whether a quality makes an individual a good or bad specimen depends on nature – on what it means to be the kind of thing in question. Virtues are thus deeply rooted in nature. Hence, one who wishes to describe the role of the virtues in Aquinas’ moral philosophy must take as his point of departure the Thomist understanding of nature.  

Fergus Kerr makes a similar suggestion in his recent book, After Aquinas. Kerr points out that if there is one continuous thread throughout Aquinas’ work, it is the repeated return to nature. Hence, Kerr suggests that the clue to understanding Aquinas’ ethics might well depend on the nature. (see After Aquinas, pp. 119-120) Fr. Weisheipl has also emphasized the need to understand Aquinas’ thought in terms of nature, though his comments were not directed at ethics in particular. See for instance his article, “The Concept of Nature: Avicenna and Aquinas,” in Brezik, ed. Thomistic Papers: I (Houston, TX 1984)
An examination of nature proves especially crucial to understanding the virtues in Aquinas, because it is only through a return to the Thomist conception of nature that one can makes sense of the fact that there are for Aquinas not one, but two sets of virtues. For Aquinas believes that nature itself is capable of habituation, and that an altered nature requires a correspondingly altered set of virtues. Through the acquired virtues, man is perfected in accord with his created nature; the infused virtues perfect man insofar as he partakes in the Divine Nature.⁷

In this chapter I will outline and contrast the structure of the infused and acquired virtues in Aquinas, and I will base my contrast on the transformation effected in nature by grace. Thus, I will first describe Aquinas’ general view of nature, and argue that “nature” entails two fundamental components – a general orientation to an end, and a “rule,” the standard which the thing in question is judged against. The virtues in this schema are simply the dispositions which, by rendering the first principles of action specific, bring man into conformity with the rule. To truly understand a set of virtues, I will argue, is to understand a) the innate principles from which those virtues spring, b) the rule against which those virtues are measured, and c) how the set of virtues in question allows an individual to act in accord with that rule.

Attention to these fundamental aspects of Aquinas’ moral philosophy provides us with a method of comparing the infused and acquired moral virtues. For to understand the difference between the two sets of virtues is to understand the difference in the innate principles from which they spring, the rule which they are measured against, and the way

⁷Aquinas, I-II.62.1; see also DQV.10
each set of virtues allows an individual to act in accord with that rule. In the final two sections of this chapter, therefore, I will examine the acquired and infused virtues, respectively, in terms of these three features. I will argue that the infused and acquired virtues spring from different seeds and enable man to adhere to a different rule, via a very different sort of action, than the acquired virtues do.

This method of contrasting the virtues provides specific points of contrast and as such is highly necessary, especially as the existence of the infused virtues is often overlooked or ignored by many scholars. At the same time, however, this analysis runs a considerable risk insofar as a contrast based on “differences” in nature cannot help but give the impression that man, in the Thomist framework, somehow has “two natures” and hence “two ends.” This is not Aquinas’ view. Man, for Aquinas, has one nature and one end, but a nature which is itself receptive to habituation. Man by nature has the potency, a potency made actual by the infusion of grace, to partake in a still higher nature. Any implication in the body of this chapter, therefore, that man has two ends or two natures is purely unintentional.

2.1 The Thomist Account of Human Nature

A proper description Aquinas’ theory of virtue hinges on a proper understanding of Aquinas’ theory of “nature”. Although Aquinas’ account of nature has clear Aristotelian affinities, it also departs from Aristotle in significant ways. Thus, in this section of the paper, I will first describe certain fundamental aspects of Aquinas’ concept of nature which have their roots in Aristotle. Having done so, however, I will demonstrate
that Aquinas moves beyond the fundamental Aristotelian conception in at least one crucial respect.

2.1.1 The Relationship between Nature and Virtue

One who wishes to understand the relationship between nature and virtue must begin by examining what the concept of nature entails. In his Physics, Aristotle distinguishes two different types of things – those that exist by nature, and those that are artifacts. As one might expect, things such as rocks, animals, and plants are among the things that exist by nature, while such things as house and knives are artifacts. The items in the former set exist “by nature” because they, unlike the items in the latter set, contain something intrinsic to themselves that causes them to be what they are. A tadpole becomes a frog, and an acorn becomes an oak, because of something intrinsic to the acorn and the tadpole. Something within drives these things toward their final completion. Aristotle thus offers a first definition of nature: “All the things mentioned present a feature in which they differ from things which are not constituted ‘by nature.’ Each of them has within itself a principle of motion and of stationariness...which seems to indicate that nature is a source or cause of being moved and of being at rest in that to which it belongs primarily, in virtue of itself and not in virtue of a concomitant attribute.”

In things that exist by nature, change originates from within the thing. One can better understand what this means by examining how nature affects the development of a thing.

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8Barnes, Jonathon The Complete Works of Aristotle, (Princeton 1984) Physics II. Ch1
A thing’s nature, its “interior principle of change and motion,” affects a thing’s development in two ways. It affects development in the first, most obvious way by providing an end or telos to which the thing in question is directed. To understand the nature of a frog is to understand that there are certain activities which capture what it means to be a frog. Even our understanding of “tadpole” is informed by our understanding of “frog,” for to understand what it is to be a tadpole is to understand it as something that is on the way to becoming a frog; something that does the sorts of things that frogs typically do. Thus in one very important sense a thing’s nature is its end, or telos: “the nature is the end or ‘that for the sake of which.’ For if a thing undergoes a continuous change and there is a stage which is last, this stage is the end or ‘that for the sake of which.’” But describing a thing’s nature in terms of the end to which it is directed hardly exhausts the role of nature.

To truly understand what it is for something to have a “nature,” one must understand nature not only in terms of a thing’s end, but in terms of nature’s ability to direct things towards their ends. That is, we have to see that the nature of the frog or the acorn is already present in the tadpole or the acorn as a principle driving it towards its completion. The tadpole is already in some sense a frog, for it is on the way towards becoming one, and that it is, is due to its nature. Nature thus provides both the source of

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\(^9\)Aristotle, *Physics* II. Ch2
motion towards the end, and the end itself.\textsuperscript{10} As such, nature is present in every aspect of a thing’s development.\textsuperscript{11}

The above account of nature illuminates the role of habits and virtues.\textsuperscript{12} For habits exist in the middle ground between the principles that direct man to his end and the end itself. The presence of certain seminal principles are enough for a tadpole to become a frog: if nothing goes wrong, these principles are sufficient to ensure that the tadpole reaches its telos. But with man the situation is more complicated, because in order for man to achieve his end a great many different powers of the soul must operate together in harmony. To paraphrase Aquinas, that which can be disposed towards many different ways of acting needs habits in order to be directed towards a single manner of acting.\textsuperscript{13} Consequently, habits are measured in terms of their ability to order man towards the fulfillment of his nature, and a habit is said to be good or bad insofar as it does or does not do so. Nature, therefore, is the rule or measure of a habit.\textsuperscript{14} But it is equally important that habits, in their truest sense, also come from man’s nature: a habit builds on something

\textsuperscript{10}In fact, Aristotle even says that nature is exhibited in the process of growth by which nature is attained.

\textsuperscript{11}For an excellent discussion of this, see Jonathan Lear’s Aristotle: The Desire to Understand (Cambridge University Press, 1988).

\textsuperscript{12}The importance of understanding habit in terms of nature is discussed in Bernard Inagaki’s article, “Habitus and Natura in Aquinas,” in Wippel, John ed., Studies in Medieval Philosophy p.159-175, and also by John of St. Thomas, in Cursus Theologicus, In I-II De Habitibus (Quebec 1949) p.41, 42. Inagaki notes that John of St. Thomas was virtually the only early commentator of Aquinas to notice the deep relationship between nature and habit.

\textsuperscript{13}Aquinas, I-II.49.4, 52.2

\textsuperscript{14}Aquinas, I-II.54.3
already present in man.\textsuperscript{15} This point, as well as to the question of how these habits are formed, will be treated in greater detail in what follows. For now the important point is this: good habits take the first, general principles that orient man towards his end, and enable man to act according to these principles in his particular actions. The rule or measure of these habits is of course whether or not they order man to his end.

The pervasive presence of nature and its intimate relationship to virtue has important consequences, especially regarding the relationship between a habit and the end that habit is ordered to. For it indicates that if one were to say that something’s nature had been altered, or if one were to say that one thing had a different nature than another, one would not merely be making a claim about the telos of the thing in question. To say that two things have different natures certainly does mean that they are oriented towards different ends, but it also means that the very sources of their actions differ as well. And if an alteration in nature alters not only the end of action, but the source of action, it is easy to see that it will require altered habits as well.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{15}For an excellent exposition of this point, see Bernard Inagaki’s “Habitus and Natura in Aquinas.”

\textsuperscript{16}I will not be concerned to claim, of course, that grace gives man a “different” nature: it habituates an existing nature, and makes it a partaker in the Divine Nature. But to the extent that man’s nature is altered, the source of his actions must be altered, and the end that he initially only had the potential to act in accord with is now made really possible for him. Consequently, man will have a different set of virtues.
2.1.2 Habituated Nature

The above description of nature as something that provides both a source from which and an end to which provides the foundation that I will use for my discussion of virtue in the remainder of the chapter. For when one understands a) the principles that good habits spring from, b) the end to which those habits are directed, and c) the process through which they are formed, he will have a better understanding of the virtues themselves. The ultimate goal of this chapter, however, is to contrast two very different sets of virtues, and to do so it is necessary to understand why the Thomist concept of nature requires that there be two sets of virtues.

Although the treatment of nature in the previous section could be applied equally to Aristotle or Aquinas, Aquinas’ understanding of nature goes far beyond the basic structure outlined by Aristotle. For Aquinas as for Aristotle, a thing attains its end by doing the sort of activity peculiar to that thing, well. Since man is distinguished from all other things by his ability to reason, man achieves his end by doing this activity well, or by acting in accord with right reason. But for Aquinas the matter is much more complicated than this, because although man is by nature oriented towards activity in accord with reason, Aquinas does not think that man finds true fulfillment through the realization of such an end. For Aquinas an integral part of human nature is a desire for something supernatural; something that he cannot achieve through his own powers.\(^{17}\) This

\(^{17}\)Helpful texts with regard to this point can be found in I.43.3, The Treatise on Happiness, and the Third Part. What these texts show us is that (a) there is a special kind of fulfillment which the rational nature, perfected by grace, is capable of, and (b) that this fulfillment is particularly suited to and desired by man in virtue of his rational nature.
means, in part, that man has an end that transcends his nature. This is not to say that man’s nature is in conflict with his end, but merely that man has to be habituated to his end in a more extreme way than he does in the Aristotelian schema. Whereas for Aristotle man had to be habituated to act in accord with his nature, for Aquinas man’s very nature has to be habituated. Only the man whose nature has been habituated by grace is capable of acting in accord with his true end, and hence it is only after such a transformation has occurred that the moral life truly begins.

All of this necessarily impacts Aquinas’ discussion of the virtues. A virtue is a good habit, and a habit is a permanent disposition to act well or badly in accord with some rule. The rule of created nature is reason, and thus a power of the soul is ordered rightly when it habitually follows the dictates of right reason in exercising that power. Moreover, it is within man’s power to cause these dispositions in himself, since he holds both the active principle – reason, which commands the lower powers – and the passive principle – the power itself, which has the potency to be disposed to a given way of acting. The virtues that consist of permanent and lasting dispositions in the powers of the soul to follow the dictates of right reason, then, are called the acquired virtues, since they can be achieved through man’s own efforts. These habits genuinely merit the title of “virtues” since they truly are perfections of powers of the soul, but it is equally important to keep in mind that they are perfections with respect to a very specific measure – the rule of reason. To put it differently, the disposition to follow the rule of reason is the highest perfection man himself can give to the powers of the soul.
In the nature habituated by grace, the rule is divine law, which orders man to his
ultimate end, and insofar as the soul is disposed to follow the dictates of divine law, it is
perfected in a different way and hence possesses a different sort of virtue. Since the
attainment of this end exceeds the capacities of man’s nature, he cannot “acquire” the
virtues that order him to the ultimate end, for he lacks the active principle that would
allow him to do so. However, insofar as a desire for the ultimate end is in all men by
nature, all men have at least the potency for these perfections.\textsuperscript{18} The perfections
themselves, however, must be given to man by God. Because of this, the virtues that
dispose man rightly with respect to the rule of divine law are called infused virtues.\textsuperscript{19}

The two sets of virtues and their mutual basis in nature yield a method of
understanding and contrasting the infused and acquired virtues. For the two sets of virtues
spring from two different sources – man’s created nature, on the one hand, and nature
habituated by grace on the other – and dispose man to act in accord with two very
different rules. This very difference provides a method of approaching the two sets of
virtues. For understanding the differences in the sources from which the two sets of
virtues spring and the differences in the formation of the two sets of virtues and the rules
by which they are measured will help to explain the differences between the two sets of

\textsuperscript{18}Aquinas, I-II.5.1

\textsuperscript{19}Importantly, the divine law and the dictates of reason do not necessarily coincide.
virtues. The remainder of this chapter, therefore, will be devoted to contrasting the infused and acquired moral virtues in terms of these differences.  

2.2 Acquired Virtue

Although it is axiomatic that the acquired virtues dispose man to follow the dictates of right reason, this statement alone provides little insight into the actual nature of the acquired virtues. A full treatment of the acquired virtues must begin with an exposition of the sources which give rise to the acquired virtues, and it is this question that will be addressed below.

2.2.1 The Seminal Principles of Acquired Virtue

Scholars pay surprisingly little attention to the seminal principles of the virtues, and the absence of such scholarship is, I think, responsible for much of the confusion surrounding the virtues in Aquinas. Some scholars assume that the “seeds” of the virtues are certain brute inclinations towards virtuous actions, and hence that temperance is acquired when the natural disposition towards temperance is gradually refined into a rational desire for it. This assumption, in turn, is used to ground incorrect, if tidy,
“hierarchical” accounts of the virtues in Aquinas. Under such interpretations, brute inclinations turn gradually into acquired virtues, which then themselves become infused virtues. In what follows it will become evident that for Aquinas the seeds of virtue are actually far removed from brute inclinations, and play a far more interesting role.

Aquinas describes the virtues as dispositions that grow out of man’s nature. As such, he rejects both the theory that virtue is innate, and merely uncovered, and the theory that virtue is bestowed entirely from without. Rather, Aquinas characterizes virtue as something which both is and is not natural to man. By nature man possesses the seeds or principles which give rise to the virtues, but not the virtues – considered as stable dispositions towards particular kinds of actions – themselves. Importantly, Aquinas does describe these seeds of virtue as a sort of habit: deep seated stable dispositions that allow man to act in accord with his end. The natural principles or seeds of virtue, as our discussion will reveal, are the ground of the virtues.

Aquinas introduces the principles that orient man towards the good of reason in the context of a discussion of the habits that exist in man by nature. A habit can be natural to man either in virtue of his specific nature – and hence natural to all men – or in virtue of his individual nature, whence it will be natural only to some particular man. Aquinas argues that both types of “natural habits” can be found in men:

In virtue of his specific nature, therefore, man possesses an affection for the good of reason and a knowledge of first principles, which are natural to the will and the

22 Aquinas, I-II.63.1 : “Ita etiam circa scientias et virtutes, aliqui quidem posuerunt eas totaliter esse ab intrinseco, ita scilicet quod omnes virtutes et scientiae naturaliter praeeexistunt in anima; sed per disciplinam et exercitationem impedimenta scientiae et virtutis tolluntur, quae adventunt animae ex corporis gravitate; sicut cum ferrum clarificatur per limationem. Et haec fuit opinio Platonicerum. Alii vero dixerunt quod sunt totaliter ab extrinseco, idest ex influentia intelligentiae agentis, ut ponit Avicenna.”
intellect, respectively. In virtue of his individual nature, moreover, man possesses certain natural bodily dispositions, in virtue of which one man is naturally prone to courage and another, to temperance. Importantly, neither the dispositions that are natural to man’s specific nature nor those natural to man’s individual nature truly merit the name “virtue”. To the contrary, both of these inclinations are mere “aptitudes for virtue,” rather than the virtues themselves.  

The most interesting aspect of Aquinas’ treatment of the “natural virtues,” however, is that Aquinas clearly asserts that only some natural dispositions can be properly called “seeds” of virtue. Aquinas makes it clear, here as elsewhere, that only the dispositions that belong to man in virtue of his specific nature, and not those that belong to him in virtue of his individual nature, are truly seeds of the virtues. That this is the case is evident from the fact that in every text where Aquinas speaks of the seminal principles of the virtues, it is the virtues natural to man’s specific nature that he points to. Even beyond this, Aquinas also explicitly rejects the possibility that a disposition natural to man’s individual nature might be called a seed of virtue.

A virtue natural to man’s individual nature cannot be a seed of virtue precisely because it belongs to the individual, not the specific, nature. A virtue natural to man’s individual nature is a certain bodily disposition towards acting in a certain way. As such, it is necessarily accompanied by its opposite. To have a bodily inclination towards

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23 Aquinas, I-II.63.1: Utroque autem modo virtus est homini naturalis secundum quandam inchoationem. Secundum quidem naturam speciei, inquantum in ratione homini insunt naturaliter quaedam principia naturaliter cognita tam scibilium quam agendorum, quae sunt quaedam seminalia intellectulum virtutem et moralium; et inquantum in voluntate inest quidam naturalis appetitus boni quod est secundum rationem. Secundum vero naturam individui, inquantum ex corporis dispositione aliqui sunt dispositi vel melius vel peius ad quasdam virtutes:...Et secundum hoc, unus homo habet naturalem aptitudinem ad scientiam, alius ad fortitudinem, alius ad temperatiam. parallel texts are found in DQV 8, and also DV.11.1

24 A number of texts are relevant here. The most obvious, of course, is 62.3, 62.2, also see Aquinas’ commentary on De Magistro, found in q.11 of De Veritate, and DQV.
courage is to have a simultaneous bodily inclination towards intemperance, since those who have a strong irascible appetite by nature also tend to be impatient. Similarly, any natural bodily disposition towards a virtue will be accompanied by a disposition towards a vice in the opposite faculty:

Those things which are (a disposition) to one virtue, can be from a natural inclination. But those things which are dispositions to all the virtues, are not able to be by natural inclination; because a natural disposition which inclines to one virtue, inclines to the contrary of another virtue: one who is naturally disposed to fortitude, which concerns difficult things to be done, is less disposed towards mildness, which consists in restraining the irascible appetites. Whence we see that an animal which is naturally inclined towards the act of one virtue, is inclined towards the contrary defect of some other virtue; as the lion, which is naturally brave is also naturally cruel. And this natural inclination to this or that virtue suffices for other animals, which are not able to achieve the full good of virtue, but seek some determinate good. But men are intended to achieve the full good of virtue; and thus it is fitting that he should possess inclinations to all acts of virtue: and because he cannot have these from natural dispositions, it is fitting that it should be according to reason, in which exists the seeds of all the virtues. 25

The idea that grounds this claim is a relatively simple one. In order for something to be a “seed” of virtue, it must be a seed of all the virtues. But the dispositions men have in virtue of their individual nature are precisely not seeds of all the virtues. Insofar as they dispose man towards one virtue, so do they incline him against another: “a natural

25Aquinas, DQV 8.10 : Ad decimum dicendum, quod ad ea quae sunt unius virtutis, posset esse inclinatio naturalis. Sed ad ea quae sunt omnium virtutum, non posset esse inclinatio a natura; quia dispositio naturalis quae inclinat ad unam virtutem, inclinat ad contrarium alterius virtutis: puta, qui est dispositus secundum naturam ad fortitudinem, quae est in prossequendo ardua, est minus dispositus ad mansuetudinem, quae consistit in refrenando passiones irascibilis. Unde videamus quod animalia quae naturaliter inclinantur ad actum alicuius virtutis, inclinantur ad vitium contrarium alteri virtutis; sicut leo, qui naturaliter est audax est etiam naturaliter crudelis. Et haec quidem naturalis inclinatio ad hanc vel illam virtutem sufficit aliis animalibus, quae non possunt consequi perfectum bonum secundum virtutem, sed consequuntur qualcumque determinatum bonum. Homines autem nati sunt pervenire ad perfectum bonum secundum virtutem; et ideo oportet quod habeant inclinationem ad omnes actus virtutum: quod cum non possit esse a natura, oportet quod sit secundum rationem, in qua existunt semina omnium virtutum. (Parallel texts can be found in I-II.63 )
disposition which inclines towards one virtue, inclines to the contrary of another virtue.”

The only real candidate for the “seeds” of virtue are therefore the general principles of thought and action that man possesses in virtue of his specific nature: the will’s appetite for the good of reason and the natural knowledge of first principles.

Given the above, it is now possible to offer a description of the source from which the virtues spring, or the “seeds of virtue.” For later in the Summa, in the context of his discussion of natural law, Aquinas considers these “natural principles of thought and action” in greater detail. Natural law is that portion of the eternal law instilled in our hearts by God. The eternal law is in turn simply God’s governance promulgated through creation. But the eternal law is present to rational creatures in a special way, because human beings exercise governance over their actions: “But among all others the rational creature falls under divine providence in a more excellent way, inasmuch as he himself is made to share in providence.” The special governance given to creatures is bestowed in the form of natural law, or a “natural inclination to proper act and end.” But natural law, as Aquinas establishes later in the same article, in the course replying to the objection that man is not directed in his acts by nature, but by reason and will, comes from the seeds of virtue: “Every work of reason and will in us is drawn from that which is according to

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26 Aquinas, DQV 8.10 : dispositio naturalis quae inclinat ad unam virtutem, inclinat ad contrarium alterius virtutis.

27 Aquinas, I-II.91.2 : Unde cum omnia quae divinae providentiae subdantur, a lege aeterna regulentur et mensurentur, ut ex dictis patet; manifestum est quod omnia participant aliquam legem aeternam, inquantum scilicet ex impressione eius habent inclinationes in proprios actus et fines.

28 Aquinas, I-II.91.2 : Inter cetera autem rationalis creatura excellenteri quodam modo divinae providentiae subiaceat, inquantum et ipsa fit providentiae particeps.
nature, as said above, for every form of reasoning is drawn from naturally known principles, and every desire for those things which for the sake of the end, is derived from the natural appetite for the ultimate end. And thus it is fitting that the first direction of our actions to the end, occurs through the natural law.\(^{29}\) This quote is helpful both in clarifying the nature of the “seeds of virtue” and in specifying the relationship of virtue and the natural law. For the natural law, instilled in our hearts in virtue of our status as creatures, simply is the seed and foundation of virtue – the nursery in which virtue grows.\(^{30}\)

The mere presence of the seeds of virtue is not sufficient for morally good action. The natural inclinations that all men possess in virtue of their species give men only a first, rudimentary orientation to the good: they give him general principles of action.\(^{31}\) These general principles, however, do not provide man with enough guidance to know what action is appropriate in a given circumstance; for this man needs the acquired

\(^{29}\)Aquinas, I-II.91.2 R.O.2 : Ad secundum dicendum quod omnis operatio, rationis et voluntatis derivatur in nobis ab eo quod est secundum naturam, ut supra habitum est, nam omnis ratiocinatio derivatur a principiis naturaliter notis, et omnis appetitus eorum quae sunt ad finem, derivatur a naturali appetitu ultimi finis. Et sic etiam oportet quod prima directio actuum nostrorum ad finem, fiat per legem naturalem.

\(^{30}\)It is important, of course, to distinguish between natural habitual knowledge and the dictates naturally known as a result of that knowledge. The latter is natural law, the former is synderesis, which is most properly identified with the seeds of virtue, since both of these are habits. For an additional, helpful discussion of natural law, see Ralph McInerny's Ethica Thomistica (CUA Press, 1982); Gilson makes a direct connection between the seeds and natural law in his book, The Christian Philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas, (Notre Dame, 1994) p.256

\(^{31}\)This, in itself, should indicate the inadequacy of attempts to formulate a Thomistic “natural law ethics” which utterly disregards the necessity of virtue. The natural law provides only a starting point; it is hardly self sufficient.
virtues. The acquired virtues, in a very real sense, grow out of their seeds. The next section will consider just how this process takes place.

2.2.2 The Rule of Reason

At a certain level, Aquinas’ view of how the seeds are formed into virtues is too elementary to merit much discussion: in addition to the first, general principles of thought and action provided by nature, man is equipped with the natural light of reason and passions which are naturally receptive to formation by the dictates of reason. Thus through successive actions, based on reason’s formulation of specific dictates from more general ones, man acquires the habits that dispose him to act in accord with the good of reason.\footnote{Aquinas, I-II.63.2 R.O.3} This account, however, is insufficient, mainly because it lends little clarity to the actual process of the acquisition of the virtues. For this reason, it is helpful to understand the acquisition of virtue in light of the comparison that Aquinas draws between the acquisition of virtue and the acquisition of knowledge.

In question 11 of De Veritate, Aquinas describes the process through which learning occurs, and he draws explicit comparisons between this process and the acquisition of virtue. As in other texts, Aquinas characterizes the acquisition of knowledge (and virtue) as building upon seeds that pre-exist in man’s nature. As before, Aquinas takes the position that knowledge comes \textit{neither} exclusively from external sources \textit{nor} entirely from within, but partly from both:
“Virtuous habits pre-exist in us prior to their consummation in certain natural inclinations, which are inchoate virtues, but afterwards, through repeated actions they are brought into their appropriate fullness. And a similar sort of thing is to be said concerning the acquisition of science; that there pre-exist in us certain seeds of science, as first conceptions of the intellect, which are known immediately by the light of the agent intellect by a species of abstract sense...When therefore from such universal knowledge the mind is educated so that it knows particulars in action, which before in the universal and hence potentially were known, at that time one is said to acquire science.\textsuperscript{33}

Man by nature possesses the potency for knowledge, and this potency lies in certain seminal principles that provide the ground from which all other knowledge grows. These seeds are knowledge of the first principles of reasoning.

The seeds of knowledge thus exist in the same way, and are formed in the same way, as the seeds of virtue. Man has the power to develop both sets of seeds because he possesses the active principle needed to dispose what is passive in them – the natural light of reason. Because the powers of man’s soul are naturally receptive to the natural light of reason, man can habituate those powers through repeated acts.

The parallel between knowledge and virtue offers important insights into the acquisition of virtue. Aquinas notes that the seeds of knowledge have an active potency – on the basis of them, man can create knowledge in himself. But more importantly, even when knowledge is bestowed on man by a teacher, that teacher must minister to man’s nature. The teacher who wishes to give a student knowledge must impart that knowledge

\textsuperscript{33}DV 11.1 : virtutum habitus ante earum consummationem præexsistunt in nobis in quibusdam naturalibus inclinationibus, quae sunt quaedam virtutum inchoationes, sed postea per exercitium operum adducuntur in debitem consummationem. Similiter etiam dicendum est de scientiae acquisitione; quod præexistunt in nobis quaedam scieniarum semina, scilicet primae conceptiones intellectus, quae statim lumine intellectus agentis cognoscuntur per species a sensibilibus abstractas...Quando ergo ex ipsis universalibus cognitionibus mens educitur ut actu cognoscat particularia, quae prius in universali et quasi in potentia cognoscebantur, tunc aliquis dicitur scientiam acquirere.
in a manner befitting the student. He must appeal to the student’s knowledge of first principles, and he must lead the student’s reasoning along the paths which it is naturally meant to follow in the acquisition of knowledge. That is, he must start from known principles and guide the student’s reasoning so that he arrives at the right conclusion. Aquinas explains his point here with the example of doctors, who can only heal their patients by ministering to nature.\(^{34}\) Nature is therefore important in the acquisition of knowledge, not merely because it provides the end, but because it provides the source, and even the guidelines that one must adhere to in attaining and imparting knowledge.

Aquinas’ comments on the acquisition of knowledge provide helpful insights into the acquisition of virtue. To say that the natural light of reason, in all men by nature, is the active principle behind our acquisition of the moral and intellectual virtues is not to say, as some might think, that our un-aided reason does or even can determine the correct act in each instance. It is theoretically possible that, starting from Euclid’s five postulates, one might derive geometry, but this is not how geometry is typically learned. The point here is that when a man learns, or acquires virtue, he – or more specifically, his reason – and not the teacher or the book, is the primary cause of the acquisition. For even when man is aided in the acquisition of knowledge and virtue – as he most often is – these external factors can help him only insofar as they appeal to his nature: his reason, and the first principles on which that reasoning is based.

One further point that arises from the above parallel between the acquisition of knowledge and the acquisition of virtue is the intimate involvement of the very rule by

\(^{34}\text{DV 11.2}\)
which a habit is measured in the formation of the habit itself. The rule, reason, is not merely an end goal, but is involved in the very acts through which the habits are formed. For it is right reason that the teacher must appeal to in leading the student along the appropriate path.

This discussion illuminates the acquired moral virtues. Man contains, in virtue of his created nature, two sets of active principles. The first set of principles give him a general rudimentary orientation towards the good of reason, and the second principle, reason itself, allows man to render these general directives specific in action. But man also possesses passive principles, the powers of the soul, which are by nature receptive to formation by reason. Because man contains both the active and passive principles, he is able to produce dispositions in himself through repeated actions.35

2.3 Infused Virtue

Having outlined the acquired virtues in terms of the seeds from which they spring, the rule against which they are measured, and the process through which they are acquired, it is fitting that the same analysis be made of the infused virtues. But before embarking on such an analysis, it is important to grasp not that the infused virtues spring from different sources and adhere to a different rule, but why they must do so.

35Aquinas, I-II 63.2, particularly RO.3: “sicut dictum est (a.1; q.51 a.1), virtutum acquisitarum praexistunt in nobis quaedam semina sive principia, secundum naturam. Quae quidem principia sunt nobiliora virtutibus eorum virtutae acquisitis: sicut intellectus principiorum speculabilium est nobilior scientia conclusio; et naturalis rectitudo rationis est nobilior rectificatione appetitus quae fit per participationem rationis, quae quidem rectification pertinet ad virtutem moralem. Sic igitur actus humani, inquantum procedunt ex altioribus principis, possunt causare virtutes acquisitas humanas.”
As was noted earlier, Aquinas believes that man’s true end radically exceeds the capacities of his nature. Although man has the capacity to seek the good of reason, and to create in himself the dispositions that allow him to determine and carry out the actions that right reason dictates (though even at this level he needs God’s help), he is not truly fulfilled until he participates in the divine life; until he becomes, as Aquinas says in the *tertia pars*, the adopted son of God.\(^{36}\) No matter how adept man becomes at acting in accord with the good of reason, he cannot render himself capable of acting in this more elevated way without divine assistance. For to act in accord with one’s true end is to act as an adopted son of God should act, and such actions exceed the capacity of human nature. What it means to become the adopted son of God, therefore, will turn on what it means to be made “worthy” of the divine inheritance.

Aquinas maintains that man is granted participation in the divine life through the infusion of grace, which makes him in a real sense the adopted son of God. What is meant by this, at least in part, is that the gift of grace effects a radical transformation in the soul. Grace allows us to know God in a new, more intimate way; so intimate, in fact, that God is said to dwell in the souls of those justified by Grace. Aquinas describes this new, more intimate presence of God in the first part of the summa:

“God is common to all things through essence, power, and presence, as a cause imparting goodness to its effects. Over and above this common mode, there is a special mode, appropriate to rational creatures, in which God is said to be present as the thing known to the knower and the beloved to the lover. And because the rational creature through knowing and loving touches God himself, according to

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\(^{36}\)Aquinas, III.23.1
this special mode God is not only said to be in rational creatures, but even to dwell in them as in his temple.” 37

The individual transformed by grace is really united to God, and he experiences this unity in an intimate way. As many spiritual writers put it, the man so united has a real experiential knowledge, a tasting, of God. But his union with God is highly imperfect and incomplete, and it is as important that to acknowledge this point as it is to acknowledge that God really does dwell, in some sense, in the souls of the just. 38

If the transformation of grace is so radical that it alters man’s very nature, it becomes clear that any analysis of the infused virtues must take this transformation as its point of departure. However, when the alterations that grace effects in nature are considered, it is important to keep two things in mind. First, Aquinas describes grace as a habitus that effects the very essence of the soul, so that man’s very nature is altered. 39 As part of this alteration, man receive new dispositions, dispositions which render him capable of a qualitatively different kind of action. These dispositions are the theological virtues, the infused moral virtues, and the gifts. Secondly and more importantly, with the infusion of grace comes “divine indwelling.” The Holy Spirit, for Aquinas, actually dwells in the soul of the individual justified by grace. Whatever the character of graced

37Aquinas, I.43.3 : “Est enim unus communis modus quo Deus est in omnibus rebus per essentiam, potentiam et praesentiam, sicut causa in effectibus participantibus bonitatem ipsius. Super istum modum autem communem, est unus specialis, qui convenit creaturae rationali, in qua Deus dicitur esse sicut cognitum in cognoscente et amatum in amante. Et quia, cognoscendo et amando, creatura rationalis sua operatione attingit ad ipsum Deum, secundum istum specialemodum Deus non solum dicitur esse in creatura rationali, sed etiam habitare in ea sicut in templo suo.”

38John Jenkins also makes this point in his book.

39Aquinas, I-II.110.2
action, and whatever the role of the infused virtues, it will be important to keep these two features of the graced life in mind.

In what follows, the infused virtues will be contrasted with the description of the acquired virtues given above. The previous section described the acquired virtues as the outgrowth of two superior principles – the first principles of thought and action and the natural light of reason. Yet, given that man’s very nature is altered by the infusion of grace, and given that man receive an entirely new set of virtues along with the gift of grace, how are we to understand these new virtues? As in the previous section, the examination of these virtues will begin by considering the seeds from which they spring and the rule by which they are governed. However, the situation here will be complicated by the fact that man does not contain the rule by which this set of virtues is measured, as he does the rule that measures the acquired virtues. Consequently, a large part of the second half of the discussion, which considers the formation and use of the infused virtues, will hinge on an explanation of how this rule is made present to man.

2.3.1 The Seminal Principles of Infused Virtue

Immediately after defining grace as a habit that effects the very essence of the soul, Aquinas argues for the necessity of a new set of virtues. The grounds for this necessity are crucial, and should be examined with care. Aquinas claims that with the infusion of grace, God bestows new first principles, or new seeds of virtue on man:

“man is perfected through virtue towards acts which order him to beatitude, as is evident from what has been said above. But the beatitude or happiness of man is two-fold, as was said above. One kind is proportioned to human nature, namely
that which man is able to arrive at through the principles of his nature. But the other is a beatitude exceeding the nature of man, which man is able to reach only by the divine power, according to some participation in the divine; as it is said in II Peter 1,4, that through Christ we are made sharers of the divine nature. And because such blessedness exceeds the proportion of human nature, the innate principles of man, from which he proceeds well towards things to be done according to their proportion to him, do not suffice to order man to the aforementioned beatitude. Whence it is necessary that there be given to man in addition other divine principles, through which he is ordained to supernatural beatitude, though not without divine assistance. And the foremost virtues of this sort are called theological: not only because they have God for their object, inasmuch as through them we are rightly ordered to God; but also because only by divine revelation, in sacred Scripture, are virtues of this kind made known.”

St. Thomas re-iterates the above statement in a number of different places in the corpus, each time on the grounds that when man is elevated by grace to a nature befitting his true end, he must be given principles that orient him to it.

The sense of this quote could not be more clear. As the natural appetite for the good of reason and the natural knowledge of first principles order us to the good of reason, so do the theological virtues give man his first, incomplete, order to God. The theological virtues, then, are in a very real sense to be understood as the “seeds” of virtue

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Aquinas, I-II 62.1: “per virtutem perficitur homo ad actus quibus in beatitudem ordinatur, ut ex supradictis patet (q.5 a.7). Est autem duplex hominis beatitudo sive felicitas ut supra (q.5 a.5) dictum est. Unad quidem proportionata humanae naturae, ad quam scilicet homo pervenire potest per principia suae naturae. Alia autem est beatitudo naturam hominis excedens, ad quam homo sola divina virtute pervenire potest, secundum quandam divinitatis participationem; secundum quod dicitur II Peter 1,4, quod per Christum factum sumus consortes divinae naturae. Et quia huiusmodi beatitudo proportionem humanae naturae exedit, principia naturalia hominis, ex quibus procedit ad bene agendum secundum suam proportionem, non sufficiunt ad ordinandum hominem in beatitudinem praedictum. Unde oportet quod superaddantur homini divinitus aliqua principia, per quae ita ordinetur ad beatitudinem supernaturalem, non tamen abseque adiutorio divino. Et huiusmodi principia virtutes dicuntur theologicae: tum quia habent Deum pro obiecto, inquantum per eas recte ordinamur in Deum; tum quia a solo Deo nobis infunduntur; tum quia sola divina revelatione, in sacra Scriptura, huiusmodi virtutes traduntur.”

Identical texts can be found in a number of places. Among them are 63.3, RO.3, and several different places in DQV
at the level of graced action. They give man’s nature a reorientation: through faith, hope, and charity, man’s heart and mind are united to God.\textsuperscript{42}

Though Aquinas repeatedly draws an analogy between the seeds of acquired virtue and the theological virtues, the analogy is imperfect in at least on crucial respect. The theological virtues do give man his first, fundamental reorientation, and they do give him new first principles which guide every graced action, and in this way they perform the same role as the seeds of the acquired virtues. But it is also clear that Aquinas does not perceive the theological virtues merely as first, guiding principles. While Aquinas is careful to point out that the natural dispositions that order man towards the good of reason are only “inchoate inclinations” towards virtue, he emphasizes that the theological virtues are genuine virtues, virtues which have specific acts associated with them.\textsuperscript{43}

Even if the analogy is an imperfect one, it is clear that Aquinas believes the analogy exists, and the repeated use of the analogy in Aquinas’ corpus indicates that he considers it to be an important one. Thus it seems reasonable to say that the theological virtues play the same role as the seeds of acquired virtue at the level of graced action. That is, they direct the actions of the justified individual and hence provide the source of actions befitting an adopted son of God. If the theological virtues are the graced analogate of the seeds of acquired virtue, however, only raises a still further question. What is the graced analogate of the acquired virtues? For if the general directions given by the seeds

\textsuperscript{42}Other scholars have also indicated an awareness of this analogy. See for instance Barthelemy Froget’s \textit{The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit} (Newman Press 1952) John Jenkins has also made this point in his book, \textit{Knowledge and Faith in Thomas Aquinas} (Cambridge 1997).

\textsuperscript{43}For examples of this, see the detailed treatments of the theological virtues in II-II
of acquired virtue are rendered particular through the acquired virtues, it seems only reasonable that there be virtues at the level of graced action that render the general directives of the theological virtues specific.

Aquinas clearly bestows this role on the infused moral virtues. It is, in fact, the recognition of the need for a set of habits capable of rendering the general directives specific that leads St. Thomas to posit the infused moral virtues in the first place. In I-II.63.3, arguing for the need to posit the infused moral virtues, Aquinas writes:

“it behooves an effect to be proportionate to its causes and principles. But all virtues, both intellectual or moral, which are acquired by our acts, proceed from certain natural principles pre-existing in us, as was said above. In place of which natural principles, there are given to us by God the theological virtues, by which we are ordered to a supernatural end, as was said above. Whence it is fitting that besides these, other divine habits caused in us should correspond proportionally to the theological virtues, in the same way as the moral and intellectual virtues are possessed with respect to the natural principles of virtue.”

With this quote, Aquinas clearly indicates that the infused moral virtues do for the theological virtues what the acquired virtues do for the seeds of virtue. They render the general principles of action specific. It seems justifiable, therefore, to draw the following analogy between the two sets of virtues:

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44 Just as there are imperfections in the analogy between the theological virtues and the seeds of acquired virtue, so there will be imperfections in the analogy between the acquired virtues and the infused moral virtues. The infused moral virtues come to be, are lost, and increase quite differently that the acquired virtues do. These differences are the subject of Chapter 2.

45 Aquinas, I-II.63.3: “Respondeo dicendum quod oportet effectus esse suis causis et principiis proportionatos. Omnes autem virtutes tam intellectuales quam morales, quae ex nostris actibus acquiruntur, procedunt ex quibusdam naturalibus principiis in nobis praexistentibus, ut supra dictum est (a.1; q.51 a.1). Loco quorum naturalium principiorum, conferuntur nobis a Deo virtutes theologicae, quibus ordinamur ad finem supernaturoalem, sicut supra (q.62 a.1) dictum est. Unde oportet quod his etiam virtutibus theologicis, proportionaliter respondeant alii habitus divinatus causati in nobis, qui sic se habeant virtutes morales et intellectuales ad principia naturalia virtutum.” Supporting texts can be found in DQV.10
2.3.2 The Rule of Divine Law

The above discussion of the seeds of the infused virtue provides us with a general framework for understanding the infused virtues. Man, elevated by grace, receives new first principles and a new set of virtues which enable him to act in accord with those first principles. But exactly how does this action occur, and what does it involve? In order to examine the type of action that occurs at the level of infused virtue, it is necessary to consider the rule which the infused virtues are measured against.

Aquinas says in several places that the rule of the infused virtues is divine law. As the acquired virtues allow man to walk as befits the light of reason, so do the infused virtues allow man to walk as befits the light of grace. But how does this rule factor into the virtuous actions themselves? Specifically, how does an individual, even one who possesses the capacities to act in accord with this rule, determine the appropriate action? At the level of acquired virtue, recall, reason was not only the rule by which the acquired virtues were measured, it played an essential role in their formation, and in each action. To grow in acquired virtue is to simultaneously increase one’s ability to reason correctly: one cannot walk as befits the light of reason unless one is first able to see the path.

While traditional accounts of graced action (i.e. accounts of action at the level of infused virtue) acknowledge that the infused virtues are measured by a different rule, they

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46See for instance Aquinas, I-II.62.3

47Aquinas, I-II.110.3
typically do not argue that this rule plays a vital role in the performance of graced action. Instead, they typically argue that in an act of infused virtue, reason (perfected by the theological virtues) arrives at the appropriate action, and the infused virtues allow man to act accordingly.\textsuperscript{48} In what follows, I wish to provide a somewhat different account; one in which the rule at the level of infused virtue – the light of grace – plays a much more intimate role. In order to understand this point, it is important to understand the extreme limitations reason is faced with at the level of infused virtue.

An attempt to understand the structure of action at the supernatural level will be an attempt to understand what it means to “walk as befits the light of grace.” Some preliminary thoughts about this emerge from a comparison between these acts and the acts of the acquired virtues. The acquired virtues, says Aquinas, enable man to “walk in accordance with the natural light of reason.” Through the acquired virtues, man is able to (1) see which actions are in accord with reason and (2) to act accordingly. This distinction will help us to better understand how the infused virtues help man in action. That is, it would seem that “walking as befits the light of grace” will entail that the individual in question is (1) able to see the world with an altered vision, in the light of grace, and (2) able to act in a manner befitting this altered vision. For, as will become clear in what follows, while the ability to see the correct action is every bit as important as the ability to

do the correct action, the infused virtues do not render man perfectly capable of the
“seeing” that is a pre-requisite of such action.  

While the acquired moral virtues provide man with both features of the capacities mentioned in (1) and (2) above, the infused virtues provide the second capacity, but they provide the first capacity in a highly limited sense. In I-II.68.2, Aquinas points out that man’s reason, even perfected by the theological virtues, is still incapable of locating the correct actions without help. While the acquired virtues perfect man’s reason with respect to natural actions, the theological virtues only provide man with an imperfect and limited union with God, and hence perfect man’s reason only in an imperfect and limited way.  

Though man’s reason moves him toward graced acts, it is only partially perfected, and thus man needs in addition the promptings of the Holy Spirit:

“But in those things ordered to the ultimate, supernatural end, towards which reason is directed imperfectly and in a certain respect by the theological virtues, the motion of reason does not suffice, unless the instinct and motion of the holy spirit should support it from above”

It makes the most sense to characterize what is absent from the theological virtues as having to do with “seeing”. Man, it seems, has the ability as a stable disposition to act in

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49 A better way of putting the same point might be to say that although the justified individual is capable, insofar as he possesses the infused virtues, of the right kinds of actions, those kinds of action are not always before his eyes: he has to first recognize the situation as requiring a certain kind of action before he can act accordingly. Although what the theological virtues cannot provide us with is manifested in our inability to reason, what is lacking is not merely rational knowledge. What is lacking has to do with man’s inability to share completely in the divine life: to see as God sees. Because he does not fully participate, he does not fully understand, and this incomplete understanding manifests itself in an inability to reason to the correct action.

50 Aquinas, I-II.68.2

51 Aquinas, I-II.68.2 : Sed in ordine ad finem ultimum supernaturalem, ad quem ratio secundum quod est aliqualiter et imperfecte formata per virtutes theologicas, non sufficit ipsa motio rationis, nisi desuper adsit instinctus et motio Spiritus Sancti
a way befitting his status as an adopted son of God, and he has a general union with the
divine nature, but he is not so perfected that he is able to “see” clearly in the light of
grace. The theological virtues, particularly charity, do perfect man’s reason, uniting his
heart and mind to God, but they do so in a highly imperfect way, because they are
imperfectly possessed.\textsuperscript{52} Because man possesses the theological virtues imperfectly, his
reason is incapable of moving him to act where graced action is concerned. In order for
that motion to take place, a still further principle is required:

“what possesses a nature or form or virtue imperfectly is not able to act through
itself, unless it is moved by another. Thus the sun, which is perfectly luminous, is
able to illuminate by itself; but the moon, in which the nature of light exists
imperfectly, does not give off light unless it is illumined. Likewise the doctor who
knows the art of medicine perfectly is able to work by himself, but his student,
who is not yet fully instructed, is not able to work by himself, unless he is
instructed by the doctor”\textsuperscript{53}

The necessary mover is the Holy Spirit, who dwells in all who have grace. Man,
who has through the infused virtues the ability to act in a manner befitting an adopted son
of god, and who has through the theological virtues an affective union with God, still sees
“through a glass darkly,” and must be guided in supernatural actions through the instinct,

\textsuperscript{52} Aquinas, I-II.68.2

\textsuperscript{53} Aquinas, I-II.68.2 : \textit{id quod imperfecte habet naturam aliquam vel formam aut virtutem not potest per se operari, nisi ab altero moveatur. Sicut sol, quia est perfecte lucidus, per seipsum postest illuminare; luna autem, in qua est imperfecte natura lucis, non illuminat nisi illuminata. Medicus etiam qui perfecte novit artem medicinae potest per se operari, sed discipulus ejus, quo nondum est plene instructus, non potest per se operari, nisi ab eo instruatur.} 

It is important to note that this quote directly suggests that divine motion is necessary for every act of infused virtue.
or motion of the holy spirit. This brings us to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which Aquinas says are infused along with the theological and infused moral virtues.

### 2.3.2.1 The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

In order to understand the role and the limitations of the infused virtues, it is necessary to discuss a set of infused dispositions that all too often goes unmentioned – the gifts of the holy spirit. For man needs to be led and guided in supernatural acts by the Holy Spirit, and it is necessary to explain how this guidance occurs. Although it is true that the Holy Spirit dwells in the soul of every graced individual, man does not have direct, intimate knowledge of God as an immediate result of divine indwelling. He can know God only through a medium, through a habitual disposition rendering him receptive to the divine instinct. The gifts are habitual dispositions of the soul that make man amenable to the motion of the Holy Spirit. Hence it is only through the gifts that man is able to be guided in acts of infused virtue.

St. Thomas refers to the gifts as habitual dispositions, and it is important to understand them as such. As habitual dispositions, the gifts do not merely make it possible for man to receive the motion of the holy spirit: they give him an affective

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54 In a recent article Servais Pinckaers argues for the need to pay more attention to the fact that Aquinas describes the motion of the holy spirit in terms of an “instinct”. (See Pinckaers, Servais “L’Instinct et l’esprit au couer de l’éthique chrétienne” in Novitas et Veritas Vitae (Frébourg 1991) ) To my mind the most interesting fact about Aquinas’ use of the term “instinctus” with regard to the gifts is the fact that he uses the same term, “instinctus” to describe the motion by which human reason guides man in action. This seems to support my thesis that the gifts give us the ability to “see” in the light of grace.

55 For a helpful discussion of why such a medium is necessary, see Lawrence Cunningham’s book, *The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit*, p.201
longing, as it were, for that motion. As Lawrence Cunningham has pointed out, it is important to understand the gifts as affective habits. For they are not merely a mechanism which allow us to receive motion, they are real affective yearnings, so to speak, for that motion:

“A habit or power is an inclining toward its object and proper acts...not a simple non repugnance toward some act and object, nor a naked and indeterminate susceptibility of receiving something; it is a vital tending toward some object, even in first act, in virtue of its very form...those who possess the gifts are only potentially in second act respecting the love and knowledge of the divine persons. But they bear a real respect to the Persons before any act on their part, since these habits are directly infused by God and not acquired by repeated acts.”

To possess the gift of wisdom or understanding or any other gift is not to possess the mere potency to be moved by God, but to possess a habitual tending-towards, an affective inclination for that movement.

The above implies the following picture of action at the supernatural level. The individual perfected by grace has the ability to act in a manner befitting the adopted son of God, and through the theological virtues which unite his heart and mind to God he has a hazy and imperfect grasp of what those actions might be. But man also has, through the gifts, habitual dispositions that orient him towards God’s motion, the disposition to see in the light of grace. Graced action thus consists in a) the motion of God, b) bestowed on an individual prepared to receive it, and c) acting. The gifts make it possible for man to receive the motion of God, and hence for man to “see in the light of grace,” while the

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56 Cunningham, p.202
infused virtues make it possible for man to act in a manner befitting his transformed vision.\textsuperscript{57}

This interpretation helps us to understand the gifts and the infused virtues as two separate, equally necessary sets of habits, each of which play an essential role in the same action. One needs the the gifts in order to truly partake in the divine life; insofar as they allow man to have experiential knowledge, or contact, with the holy spirit dwelling in his soul. The gifts allow human reason to come into contact with the divine, to know in some highly limited way what God knows. As Gilson has written, “The Gift of Wisdom, then, does not add a superior reason to the natural superior reason, but it causes reason, in its investigation of the divine, to feel as if it were at home therein, instinctively sensing what is true long before grasping its demonstration.”\textsuperscript{58} The gifts thus enable man to receive the motion of the holy spirit, and hence, when that motion is present, they enable him to “see in the light of grace”.\textsuperscript{59} But the infused virtues are really existing, stable dispositions that

\textsuperscript{57}My interpretation requires that (1) every act of infused virtue involves the simultaneous operation of the corresponding gift, and (2) that the motion of the holy spirit is operative in every act of infused virtue. This is of course a highly controversial interpretation, which I shall defend in the subsequent section.

\textsuperscript{58}Gilson, \textit{The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas} p.347 It is important, of course, that one not treat the gifts as purely intellectual perfections. The gifts are necessary because of the imperfections of reason, but what the gifts give us is not some purely rational knowledge. The knowledge received through the gifts is a knowledge rooted in love, and for this reason the gifts are said to grow out of charity.

\textsuperscript{59}In keeping with this interpretation, one might consider the various gifts themselves: understanding, wisdom, counsel, knowledge, piety, fear, and fortitude. In his discussion of each of these, Aquinas describes them in terms of their ability to help us share in the divine life, and this sharing is typically described as helping man to see, in some highly limited and imperfect way, as God sees.
render man capable of acting in accord with what he sees: of walking as befits the light of grace.\textsuperscript{60}

This interpretation also helps explain the occurrence of growth in the spiritual life. Though St. Thomas says that all men receive the infused virtues and the gifts along with the infusion of grace, he also says that each receives these in a manner befitting his capacity. On this view, the infused virtues and the gifts would grow together. The more perfect the gift of wisdom, the more perfect the act of faith, and so forth.

The infused virtues, unlike the acquired virtues, are bestowed and lost as a unit. The individual justified by grace receives the theological virtues, the infused moral virtues and the gifts, and when he sins mortally, all these are lost. Nonetheless, it is important to note that not all who possess the infused moral virtues possess them in the same degree. The reason for this is directly tied to the fact that grace makes man a participant in the divine nature. Man’s first participation in the divine life – which occurs when, through the gift of grace, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within his soul – is vague and imperfect. Through the individual justified by grace has all the infused virtues and gifts, they are present in a weak and imperfect way. Only through continual effort can man work to merit an increase in the virtues and gifts.

\textsuperscript{60} Although this description locates the infused virtues and the gifts as two separate sets of habits, it is important to understand them as two equally important components of the same grace act, equally present and equally operative in every graced action.
2.3.2.2 The Controversy over the Gifts

The account of the gifts given above is a non-standard one and hence will most likely raise some objections. I think it is best to raise and counter these objections in the context of alternative treatments of the gifts, and hence it to these alternative accounts that I will now turn.

Certain basic features of Aquinas’ treatment of the gifts must be and are accommodated by anyone purporting to provide an exposition of Aquinas’ text. There is no controversy, for instance, over the fact that the gifts render man susceptible to divine motion. There is disagreement, however, over when and how this motion is needed, and over how the activity of the gifts is best characterized. In what follows I shall discuss two views which differ from my own. The first, which I have labeled “the Two-Modes thesis” differs drastically from my account, while the second, advocated by John Jenkins in his book *Knowledge and Faith in Thomas Aquinas*, differs only slightly.

2.3.2.2.1 The Two-Modes Thesis

Under the most popular theory, the gifts and the infused virtues constitute two separate “modes” of supernatural action. Rather than postulating the gifts and the infused virtues as two separate sets of habits, equally involved in each graced action, this interpretation holds that the two sets of habits correspond to two different kinds of acts.

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61 Proponents of this view include LaGrange, Froget, Gardeil, Cessario, John of St. Thomas, and Sheedy.
Proponents of the two-modes thesis take their point of departure from ST I-II.68.1, where Aquinas links the gifts to the movement of man’s will from without:

“And thus to distinguish the gifts from the virtues, we should follow Scripture’s manner of speaking, where we do not find them under the name of gifts, but rather under the name of spirits: for it is said in Isaiah 11,2,3: “The spirit of knowledge and wisdom rests on him,” etc. From which words it is clearly given to be understood that the seven things enumerated there correspond to those things which are in us by divine inspiration. But Inspiration signifies motion from an exterior. For it is to be considered that a two-fold principle of motion is in man: one interior, which is reason, another exterior, which is God, as was said above (q.9 a.4.6) ⁶²

The gifts are habits that connect man to the indwelling of the holy spirit; on the man who has the gifts rests the “spirit” of divine wisdom, understanding, and so forth. As such, they are habits that look to movement from without, namely they render man receptive to the movement of God. This much is undisputable. But it does not follow from this that the gifts and the infused virtues are linked to two different, completely unrelated types of actions. To see this more clearly, it will be helpful to examine the texts cited by Aquinas himself.

In I-II.9.6 St. Thomas considers whether man’s will can be moved by something external to him. He responds that only the cause of a thing can cause a natural movement in a thing: “Therefore it happens that man, having will, is moved by another who is not the cause of him: but that his voluntary movement should be from some extrinsic

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⁶²Aquinas, I-II.68.1 : Et ideo ad distinguendum dona a virtutibus, debemus sequi modum loquendi Scripturae, in qua nobis traduntur non quidem sub nomine donorum, sed magis sub nomine spirituum: sic enim dicitur Is. 11,2-3: Requi eset super eum spiritus sapientiae et intellectus, etc. Ex quibus verbis manifeste datur intelligi quod ista septem enumerantur ibi, secundum quod sunt in nobis ab inspiratione divina. Inspiratio autem significat quandum motionem ab exteriori. Est enim considerandum quod in homine est duplex principium movens: unum quidem interius, quod est ratio; aliud autem exteriorius, quod est Deus, ut supra dictum est (q.9 a.4.6);
principle which is not the cause of his will, is impossible." Thus, if man voluntarily wills something, it is either because he chose it, or because he was moved to it by the cause of his will, namely God. Aquinas then proceeds to consider the circumstances under which the will is moved by God:

God moves the will of man, as a universal mover, towards the universal object of the will, which is the good. And without this universal motion man is not able to will anything. But man through reason determines himself to will this or that, which is either truly or apparently good. –But nevertheless sometimes God moves some to will something determinate, which is good: as in those who he moves through grace, as is said below (q.109 a.2)

In this text, Aquinas points to two possible courses of action: either man’s will is moved by God to desire the good in general, and man then proceeds by reason to will this or that, or God moves man more directly, to the willing of determinate things, and the latter kind of motion occurs in those moved by grace.

The important point about this text, however is that Aquinas nowhere indicates that the latter movement is to be relegated to a special, exceptional sort of divine action. To the contrary, an explicit contrast is made between the sort of action that occurs in the individual who works from grace as opposed to one who works from purely natural action. This text, at least, implies that God’s motion is in all who have grace.

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63 Aquinas, I-II.9.6 : Sic ergo hominem, voluntatem hanentem, contingit moveri ab aliquo qui non est causa eius: sed quod motus voluntarius eius sit ab aliquo principio extrinseco quod non est causa voluntatis, est impossible.

64 Aquinas, I-II.9.6.RO.3 : Deus movet voluntatem hominis, sicut universalis motor, ad universale obiectum voluntatis, quod est bonum. Et sine hac universalis motione homo non potest aliquid velle. Sed homo per rationem determinat se ad volendum hoc vel illud, quod est vere bonum vel apparentens bonum. –Sed tamen interdum specialiter Desu movet aliquos ad aliquid determinate volendum, quod est bonum: sicut in his quos movet per gratiam, ut supra (q.109 a.2) dicetur.
Substantiation of this point can be found in Joseph Warwykow’s treatment of meritorious action in his book, *God’s Grace and Human Action*. Warwykow points out that the grace necessary for meritorious actions (i.e. actions proportionate to man’s true end) is not limited to the habitual grace which alters the nature of the soul. In addition, there must also be God’s “auxilium”: “grace is responsible not only for the possibility of doing on the supernatural level, but as an auxilium also in a radical way for the doing itself”.

This is not merely to say that God is the ultimate principle behind all movements, but rather that, given that the transforming *habitus* of grace doesn’t effect a complete transformation, God must still move man to the appropriate actions: “the transformation entailed in justification is never so complete in this life that the individual can no longer sin; indeed, left to himself, the justified individual would be drawn back to sin by the inclination to and temptations of sin...only by God’s contribution to human action does the human person in fact do good”.

The *auxilium* of God involves both operative and cooperative grace. That is to say, the *auxilium* of God does not merely sustain man in the doing of good acts that he has already chosen, but even takes an active causal role in the choice itself. Through operative grace, God actually moves the will to will the end. Then, through cooperative grace, God confirms and sustains the actual willing of the end.

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65Warwykow, p.172
66Warwykow, p.172
67Warwykow, p.172
68Warwykow, p. 173
Warwykow, commenting on the operative nature of grace, makes a convincing argument to the effect that operative grace is present in *every* meritorious action. Although Aquinas makes direct reference to operative grace only in the justification of sinners, he says that operative grace is *especially* present in this case, and as Warwykow points out, it would be a great stretch of the word “*praesertim*” to take such statements as meaning that operative grace was *only* present in these instances.

Warwykow’s argument that not only co-operative, but operative grace is present in *every* meritorious action fits well with the structure of the infused virtues which I wish to argue for. For if in every meritorious act it is God’s grace which not only sustains our willing but presents the good to the will in the first place, then it makes sense to say that the operative principle of acts in the nature habituated by grace is the divine light of God.

Those who support the two modes thesis also point to texts in the treatment of the gifts, where Aquinas contrasts the gifts and the virtues. Specifically, some scholars find support for the two-modes thesis in I-II.68.1 Rp 3, where St. Thomas contrasts the virtues and the gifts:

The definition of virtue is given there according to the common notion of virtue. Whence if we want to restrict the definition to virtues as they are distinguished from gifts, we say that insofar as this is said, by which one lives rightly, it is to be understood about the rectitude of life which is undertaken according to the rule of reason. –Similarly it can be said that a gift, as distinguished from infused virtue, is given by God with respect to his own motion, that it make man know and follow his instinct well.\(^{69}\)

\(^{69}\)Aquinas, I-II.68.1.RO.3 : *definitio illa datur de virtute secundum communem modum virtutis. Unde si volumus definitionem restringere ad virtutes prout distinguuntur a donis, dicemus quod hoc quod dicitur, qua recte vivitur, intelligendum est de rectitudine vitae quae accipitur secundum regulam rationis. –Similiter autem donum, prout distinguitur a virtute infusa, potest dici id quod datur a Deo in ordine ad motion ipsius; quod silicet facit hominem bene sequentem suos instinctus.*
Scholars take this text to imply that through the virtues, man reasons to and does the good, but that through the gifts man receives a special impulse from God, with the result that he does not need to reason: he is moved by the winds of the holy spirit rather than the oars of his intellect.

Advocates of two-modes theses take this text as an indication that there are in effect two different modes of graced action. In the first mode, man uses his reason, perfected by the theological and infused moral virtues, to arrive at the appropriate course of action. In the second mode of action, man receives a special inspiration from God through the gifts, and acts accordingly. Advocates of this view are careful to point out, of course, that there might well be no apparent difference between the two modes of action, even to the individual who does the action. Nevertheless, proponents of this view do present the gifts as a specifically different mode of action, and a highly unusual mode at that. Typically, they claim, man proceeds in supernatural activity through the use of his reason, as a rower proceeds through the water by means of oars. But occasionally, man receives divine help via the gifts: and in these instances he moves forward, not by oars, but as if he had caught wind in his sails (the gifts being the sails that catch the wind of divine motion).

If one carefully examines the actual text, however, it is clear that this is not at all what Aquinas has in mind. If one restrict his attention to the first few lines of the quote, then it does seem that Aquinas intends to contrast the virtues with the gifts, on the basis of the idea that the virtues look to the rule of reason, while the gifts look to the motion of

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LaGrange p.79
God. But at the end of the quoted text, it becomes obvious that Aquinas is in fact making a two-fold contrast: he is contrasting the gifts with the acquired virtues on the one hand, and the infused virtues on the other. The acquired virtues are distinguished from the gifts because they look to the rule of life which is the rectitude of reason. The infused virtues, however, are distinguished from the gifts because the gifts are given to man by God in relation to God’s motion; while the infused virtues are given to man by God in relation to his motion.71 The texts cited by advocates of two-mode theses, therefore, do not establish their claim.

If the texts cited by two-modes theorists do not settle the issue on their behalf, proponents of this view might still argue that their theory provides the best explanation. In what follows I shall argue that this is not the case.

The main problem facing two modes thesis is a motivational one. As is evident from our earlier discussion, the texts cited in defense of the idea that there are “two modes” of graced action nowhere provide direct substantiation of this claim. In fact, it is difficult to see how these texts provide even indirect substantiation of such a claim. To the contrary, in each instance the cited texts contrast purely natural action with action that occurs at the supernatural level. Nowhere does Aquinas indicate that he thinks there are two distinct modes of supernatural activity. This seems to imply that God’s direct motion is involved in every act of the individual justified by grace, and not that there are two distinct modes of supernatural action.

71It is true that Aquinas uses the word “virtue,” in the reference which I take to apply to acquired virtue, without specifying whether he means infused or acquired virtue. However, this is typical of St. Thomas.
The second problem for theses such as these is that they introduce a certain awkwardness into graced action. For Aquinas, when an individual is justified by grace, he simultaneously receives the theological virtues, the infused moral virtues, and the gifts. If these three sets of dispositions come to be and are lost as a unit, then one should expect them to function as a unit. This leads to a third problem: accounts such as this one diminish the role of the gifts and appear to render them superfluous, as if Aquinas has mentioned them merely because earlier theologians had. But this is not what one expects from Aquinas’ elegant and systematic treatments. One would not expect him to mention the gifts, let alone end every treatment of every virtue with a discussion of its corresponding gift, unless they played an integral role in the activity of the individual justified by grace.

Finally, this view of the gifts not only fails to find direct support in the text of Aquinas, but actually contradicts the text in a crucial regard. For Aquinas introduces the gifts because man’s reason is inadequate to direct his activity at the supernatural level. Thus, Aquinas says that man, in order to perform actions at the supernatural level, is in continual need of divine assistance, and that he needs the motion of the holy spirit as the moon needs the sun in order to give off light, and as the medical student needs the assistance of the physician to heal.\textsuperscript{72} This seems to conflict with the view that man typically uses his (perfected) reason to perform supernatural actions, and only sometimes is moved by the holy spirit.

\textsuperscript{72}Aquinas, I-II.68.3
Proponents of the two-modes thesis defend themselves from objections such as these, and in particular from this last objection, by putting forth two claims. First, they argue, Aquinas’ claim that man is “continually” in need of divine assistance should not be taken literally. Rather, man is continually in need of divine assistance in the way he is continually in need of a hat. He doesn’t always need the hat—he doesn’t need it, for instance, when he sleeps—but he does need it often. They find further support for this claim in Aquinas’ own example of the medical student and the physician: the medical student doesn’t, they argue, always need the physician: he only needs him in difficult cases. Second, proponents of this view argue that the gifts cannot be necessary for every instance of supernatural action, since it is possible for an individual to perform an act of faith in a state of mortal sin, where he must obviously lack the gifts.

Neither of these responses are compelling. In the first place, one doesn’t say that someone is in “continuous” need of a hat. One says he needs the hat often. In order to accommodate such an interpretation, therefore, one would at the very least have to attribute an odd use of language to Aquinas. Moreover, although Aquinas does make a comparison between a medical student and a physician, it doesn’t follow that the student is not in need of continuous instruction in the literal sense. For a while a very experienced medical student might seldom need instruction, a novice would need constant supervision, and man might well think of himself as a novice in graced action. Finally,

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73 LaGrange’s footnote, p.72 of *The Three Ages of the Interior Life*; this claim is also made by Froget.

74 LaGrange, p.72; this claim is made by Froget as well.
even if it were possible to handle the example of the medical student by claiming that he is not *always* in need of instruction, but merely *often* in need of instruction, this response cannot handle the first example given by Aquinas, namely that of the moon illumined by the sun. Even if it is possible to argue that there are certain things the medical student can do without the physician’s presence, it is not possible to argue that the moon can give off light without the sun. Yet Aquinas uses both analogies in support of the claim that man needs to be continuously moved by the holy spirit in graced action. So this response hardly settles the question in favor of the two-modes thesis.

What then of the claim that it is possible to perform an act of supernatural faith in the absence of the gifts, and hence that the gifts are not a necessary component of supernatural action? This response fares even worse than the preceding one. It is true that acts of faith are possible without grace, but this in no way works against the idea that the theological virtues, the infused moral virtues, and the gifts, which are granted together, ought to work together. For although one can perform an act of faith without grace, such an act is not meritorious. Faith can remain in the individual who has sinned mortally, but it does not exist as a virtue. Rather, it is what Aquinas refers to as “unformed” faith.\(^7^5\)

2.3.2.2 Jenkin’s Thesis

A much more compelling treatment of the gifts can be found in John Jenkins’ book, *Knowledge and Faith in Thomas Aquinas*. Although I will argue that Jenkins’ view

\(^{75}\text{De Veritate} \)
does require an important modification, I think he accommodates some points which are crucial to any treatment of the gifts; and more broadly, to any account of graced action.

Jenkins’ central insight is a point made much of in earlier sections, namely that for Aquinas the theological virtues are comparable to the seeds of virtue. Jenkins makes this same point with different terminology, arguing that the theological virtues give us only the “rudimentary principles of action.” Faith, hope and love provide man with new sources of action, but they do so in a highly imperfect and elementary way. Man needs additional help in order to act as an individual in the state of grace should.

The additional help, as Jenkins rightly observes, is found through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit: “The further moving principle which is required for faith, hope, and charity is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.” Jenkins’ case for the necessity of the gifts is, again, quite similar to the arguments I gave above. For he points to Aquinas’ assertions that while the theological virtues perfect man’s reason, they do so only imperfectly. The theological virtues need the gifts, because without them man cannot know what actions are required of him.

From these two points, however, Jenkins draws a conclusion that differs from the account given above. For Jenkins argues that the gifts turn the rudimentary principles of

76Jenkins, p.157

77Some objections have been raised to Jenkins’ assertion that the theological virtues provide only the rudimentary principles of action. Objectors argue that the theological virtues are virtues, and as such must be stable dispositions, not mere rudimentary principles. This, as stated earlier, is indeed true. The theological virtues are real virtues for Aquinas, and they exist as stable dispositions. But it is important not to emphasize this point at the expense of Aquinas’ repeated analogies between the theological virtues and the seeds of acquired virtues.

78Jenkins, p.156
action, the theological virtues, into true virtues, concluding that “the infused virtues are rudimentary inclinations which become steady dispositions through the promptings of the Holy Spirit and the Gifts, each of which is a habit to be moved in accord with such promptings.” Jenkins finds support for his claim in two separate places. First, he notes that Aquinas compares the gifts and the moral virtues. Secondly, he argues that the theological virtue of faith can exist without the corresponding gift: “a person can have a theological virtue but lack the corresponding Gifts. Indeed, one who has faith and commits a mortal sin thereby loses sanctifying grace and loses the Gifts, but he need not thereby lose faith; he still may have what Aquinas calls “unformed faith.”

In order to make the present argument with greater clarity, it is necessary to explain exactly where Jenkins’ account parts company from it. There are two important differences between Jenkins’ view of the gifts and the view put forward in this dissertation. The first crucial difference is that Jenkins gives the gifts the role that this account gives to the infused moral virtues. Both argue that the theological virtues are in some sense “seeds” of virtue (though they may differ on how far this analogy can be extended). If the theological virtues are seeds in the same way that the first principles of thought and action are seeds, then the question remains what renders those principles specific. The above discussion argued that the infused moral virtues render those

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79 Jenkins p.157
80 Jenkins p.157
81 Jenkins, p.157
principles specific\textsuperscript{82}; Jenkins appears to give this role to the gifts. The second important difference between Jenkins’ account and this one has to do with the role of the gifts themselves. This dissertation argues that the infused virtues and the gifts are to be understood as two independent but equally important sets of habits; on Jenkins account, the gifts turn the theological virtues into stable dispositions. This seems to have the consequence that, at least in the individual transformed by grace, the gift merely “forms” the theological virtue. Each of these differences will be considered separately.

The first point of disagreement seems almost irreconcilable, for both accounts Jenkins can point to supporting texts. Aquinas clearly argues that the infused moral virtues render the general directives of the theological virtues specific in the same way that the acquired moral virtues render specific the first principles of thought and action. These texts were cited at length earlier in the chapter. However, Jenkins is also right to point out that Aquinas draws analogies between the gifts and the moral virtues. The disagreement, therefore, can only be settled by an examination of the texts in question.

The main text where Aquinas compares the infused moral virtues and the acquired moral virtues occurs in I-II.63.3, where Aquinas argues for the necessity of the infused moral virtues. Just as the acquired moral virtues render general directives specific, so too, says Aquinas, are the infused moral virtues needed to render specific the new general directives provided by the theological virtues:

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{“it behooves an effect to be proportionate to its causes and principles. But all virtues, both intellectual or moral, which are acquired by our acts, proceed from certain natural principles pre-existing in us, as was said above. In place of which}
\end{enumerate}

\textsuperscript{82}Though both the theological and infused moral virtues require the gifts for their operation.
natural principles, there are given to us by God the theological virtues, by which we are ordered to a supernatural end, as was said above. Whence it is fitting that besides these, other divine habits caused in us should correspond proportionally to the theological virtues, in the same way as the moral and intellectual virtues are possessed with respect to the natural principles of virtue. 83

The main text where Aquinas compares the gifts and the moral virtues, on the other hand, occurs in I-II.68.3:

(2) “as has been said (a.1), the gifts are perfections of man, by which he is disposed to this, that he follows the instinct of the Holy Spirit well. But it is clear from what was said above that moral virtues perfect the appetitive power according as it participates somewhat in reason, namely insofar as it is made to be moved by the command of reason. In this way the gifts of the Holy Spirit are possessed by man in comparison with the Holy Spirit, as the moral virtues are possessed by the appetitive power in comparison with reason. But the moral virtues are habits, by which man’s appetites are disposed to obey reason promptly. When the gifts of the Holy Spirit are habits, by which man is made to promptly obey the Holy Spirit.” 84

If one compares texts (1) and (2), some revealing details come to light. (1) clearly compares the theological virtues and infused moral virtues in terms of the need to render the seeds of action specific. But in (2) a somewhat different comparison is being drawn.

The comparison Aquinas draws is the following:

83Aquinas, I-II.63.3.: “Respondeo dicendum quod oportet effectus esse suis causis et principiis proportionatos. Omnes autem virtutes tam intellectuales quam morales, quae ex nostris actibus acquiruntur, procedent ex quibusdam naturalibus principiis in nobis praesistentibus, ut supra dictum est (a.1; q.51 a.1). Loco quorum naturalium principiorum, conferuntur nobis a Deo virtutes theoloeicae, quibus ordinamur ad finem supernaturalem, sicut supra (q.62 a.1) dictum est. Unde oportet quod his etiam virtutibus theologis, proportionaliter respondeant alii habitus divinatus causati in nobis, qui sic se habeant virtutes morales et intellectuales ad principia naturalia virtutum.” Supporting texts can be found in DQV.10

84Aquinas, I-II.68.3: sicut dictum est (a.1), dona sunt quaedam perfectiones hominis, quibus disponitur ad hoc quod homo bene sequatur instinctum Spiritus Sancti. Manifestum est autem ex supradictis (q.56.4; q.58.2) quod virtutes morales perficiunt vim appetitivam secundum quod participat aliquid rationem, inquantum scilicet nata est moveri per imperium rationis. Hoc igitur modo dona Spiritus Sancti se habent ad hominem in comparatione ad Spiritum Sanctum, sicut virtutes morales se habent ad vim appetitivam in comparatione ad rationem. Virtutes autem morales habitus quidam sunt, quibus vires appetitivae disponitur ad prompte obediendum rationi. Unde et dona Spiritus Sancti sunt quidam habitus, quibus homo perficiuntur ad prompte obediendum Spiritui Sancto.
(i) The appetitive powers are perfected by the acquired moral virtues so that they might readily obey reason.

(ii) Man is perfected by the gifts so that he readily obeys the holy spirit.

Thus, the gifts are to the holy spirit, where man is concerned, as the acquired moral virtues are to reason, where the appetitive powers are concerned. The point here seems to be that man participates in the divine life in a manner analogous to the way that the appetitive powers participate in reason. Man participates in the divine life insofar as he can habitually be ruled and directed by God through the gifts, just as the appetitive powers participate in reason insofar as they can be habitually ruled and directed by reason through the acquired virtues. And in this way the gifts are like the acquired virtues. The one renders us receptive to the rule and guidance of the Holy Spirit, while the other renders us receptive to the rule and guidance of reason.

Importantly, the comparison made in (2) does not entail the analogy Jenkins draws. For it does not center on the notion of the gifts making a virtue of something that was merely a seed or rudimentary inclination, but on the notion that the gifts allow us to be moved by the Holy Spirit in the same way as the acquired virtues allow our appetites to be moved by reason.

When the analogy in (2) is understood in this way, it sheds light on the second respect in which my account differs from Jenkins. On my account, the infused virtues, both theological and moral, are a set of virtues in their own right, which exist apart from the gifts, yet require the gifts for their operation. How can this be? The infused virtues give us the ability, considered as a stable disposition, to act as an adopted son of God.
ought to act. But they do not so perfect man that he always “sees in the light of grace”. Because man does not always have the light of grace before him, he needs another set of stable dispositions, the gifts, that allow us to be moved by the light of grace. The gifts allow man to see what God wants of him, and the infused virtues enable him to act accordingly.

2.3.3 Conclusion

By now the discussion seems to have digressed far from the initial subject. The topic which led to the discussion of how to interpret the gifts was the question of how one is to understand the rule of the infused virtues and its operation in man’s actions. But the extensive discussion of the gifts and what they do is, at the end of the day, exactly what is needed to answer this question. For through the infused virtues, man has the ability to act in accord with a higher rule. Yet even if he possesses that ability, and possesses it as a stable disposition, that ability is incomplete, for he still lacks the ability to see what that rule is. He does not possess the rule of the infused virtues as he possesses the rule of acquired virtues. Thus, he needs additional dispositions in order that this rule may be made present, and these dispositions are given through the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The above discussion thus provides two parallel descriptions of two very different sets of virtues, and the theoretical grounds, at least, for understanding why these two sets of virtues are necessary. Now, however, the major work must begin. For it is still necessary to explain how this theoretical necessity translates into practice. Such an explanation is necessary, for without it we will be unable to understand the actual
operation of the infused virtues, and how that operation differs from the act of acquired virtue. This question forms the subject of the next chapter.
CHAPTER 3

THE “GAP” BETWEEN INFUSED AND ACQUIRED VIRTUE

3.1 Introduction

The structure of the virtues outlined in Chapter 1 provides a clear theoretical foundation for the infused moral virtues. Just as the acquired moral virtues are necessary to render specific the general principles of thought and action (or seeds of virtue) that exist in all men by nature, so are the infused moral virtues necessary to render specific the new first principles of thought and action – namely faith, hope and love – that are bestowed on man with the infusion of grace. If Aquinas’ moral philosophy is considered from this perspective, the rationale behind the postulation of the infused moral virtues seems perfectly clear. Nevertheless, the infused moral virtues have long been a source of confusion and dissatisfaction for scholars of Aquinas, with the result that they are typically ignored, pushed to the background, and treated in all respects like the ugly step-child of Thomist moral philosophy.

The discomfort surrounding the infused moral virtues occurs at three different levels. The first level of discomfort stems from an incorrect understanding of what the infused moral virtues are. The infused moral virtues are understood by many to be the
acquired moral virtues, as they exist in the individual transformed by grace. On this view, an individual acquires temperance, fortitude, prudence and justice, and then, with the infusion of grace these virtues become somehow “supercharged” versions of their previous selves. If this is what infused moral virtues are, then it is easy to understand why they are considered superfluous. For why posit a new set of virtues? Aren’t these simply the acquired virtues, as they exist in the individual transformed by grace? If this were an apt characterization of infused virtue, then the dissatisfaction would be well placed. However, attention to Aquinas’ text, and even to some of the most basic Catholic teachings about salvation, indicates that this cannot be a correct description of infused moral virtue. Consequently while such dissatisfaction is justified, it is not justifiable to direct the dissatisfaction at Aquinas. Rather, the dissatisfaction should be directed at the various mis-characterizations of his moral theory.

The discomfort that occurs at the second level is better formulated. This level of dissatisfaction presupposes the recognition that Aquinas views the infused and acquired moral virtues as two distinct sets of virtues, which have to be understood separately. But given this, there is an apparent gap between the theoretical distinctions Aquinas draws in his general discussions of virtue and his detailed treatments of the individual virtues. If there is a real distinction between the two sets, oughtn’t it be evident in the discussions of the individual virtues? How is it possible to know when Aquinas is describing the infused version of a virtue, and how know when he is not?

The third and most important level of discomfort is a conceptual one. Given that there are two separate sets of virtues, and given that this distinction is operative, not
merely in the general descriptions of virtue, but even in Aquinas’ treatments of the individual virtues, so what? What does it mean to act out of infused virtue, and how does such an act differ from an act of acquired virtue? Why is infused virtue so necessary in the moral life?

The following two chapters seek to diminish the discomfort surrounding the infused moral virtues at each of these three levels. This chapter will respond to the first level of discomfort by pointing to relevant texts in the Summa and in the *Disputed Questions on Virtue*. Chapter 3 will respond to the second two levels of discomfort by arguing that, at least as evidenced by the treatise on prudence, the distinction between infused and acquired moral virtue really is operative in Aquinas’ treatments of the individual virtues, and offer a conceptual example of what it might mean to possess the infused virtues, yet lack the acquired virtues

### 3.2 The Gap Between Infused and Acquired Virtue

Aquinas uses the term “virtue” so broadly that it is often difficult to determine whether his treatment of the individual virtues is meant to apply exclusively to infused virtue, exclusively to acquired, or to both. But whatever difficulties the treatises on the individual virtues present, Aquinas clearly does distinguish between the two sets of virtues, at least in his general descriptions of virtue. In these texts, and particularly in his *Disputed Questions on Virtue*, Aquinas provides helpful distinctions regarding the difference between infused and acquired virtue. This section will make use of Aquinas’ general statements on virtue to establish several respects in which the infused and
acquired virtues differ. The previous chapter established that the infused and acquired virtues are above all else different in *kind* – the infused virtues make a qualitatively different kind of action possible. Moreover, because they make possible the only truly important kind of action -- the action befitting an adopted son of God -- they take precedence over the acquired virtues. Yet as this chapter will show, the infused and acquired virtues also have “structural” differences. Infused virtue arrives at a different mean, confers a different type of ability, and is bestowed and lost in different ways.

### 3.2.1 The Difference, in General

Before delving into the various “structural” differences between the infused and acquired virtues, it will be helpful to return briefly to the most basic distinction between the infused and acquired virtues. As indicated in the previous chapter, Aquinas most frequently describes the difference between infused and acquired virtue as a difference in kind. The infused moral virtues are necessary because action in accord with man’s true end requires not merely that man perform the same action with a different intention, but that the very character of man’s activity be altered. The principles of thought and action in all men by nature are not proportioned to his true end; thus he must be given new first principles of thought and action that are so proportioned, namely faith, hope, and love.\(^85\)

Thus, man also needs different habits than the acquired virtues, which dispose him to act in a manner proportionate to his un-habituated nature, so that he may be disposed to act in

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\(^85\)It is important to understand that these new principles do not conflict with or supplant man’s original principles of thought and action.
a manner proportionate to his true end. It is the idea of “proportionality,” therefore, that provides us with a first understanding of why a separate set of virtues is required.

Aquinas mentions the need for proportional habits in both the Disputed Questions on Virtue and in his general discussion of virtue in the Summa. The first principles of action and the virtues man acquires are proportionate to his created nature. But man’s true end exceeds the proportion of our nature. Thus, in order to act in accord with his true end, his very actions need to be elevated so that they are proportionate to that end. 86 It is through the infused virtues that man is “elevated” to an end that exceeds the proportion of his nature.

Because it is only through infused virtue that man is able to act in a manner befitting his true end, only the infused virtues are virtues in the truest sense. In a number of places, Aquinas demonstrates that the infused virtues –not merely the theological virtues, but the infused moral virtues as well– are the virtues that he is most concerned with. 87 More importantly, it is only the infused virtues which are necessary for salvation. The theological virtues cannot exist without the infused moral virtues, but they can exist without the acquired virtues. The acquired virtues, on the other hand, are not even truly

86 Aquinas, DQV.1.12 ad.6 :“Ad sextum dicendum, quod respectu finis qui est naturae humanae proportionatus, sufficit homini ad bene se habendum naturalis inclinationis, et ideo philosophi posuerunt aliqus virtutes, quarum objectum esset felicitas, de qua ipsi tractabant. Sed finis in quo beatitudinem speramus, Deus, est naturae nostrae excedens proportionem; et ideo supra naturalem inclinationem necessariae sunt nobis virtutes, quibus in finem ultimum elevemur.”; see also I-II.62.1. Aquinas also mentions the requirement of proportionality in the first article of the Disputed Questions on the Cardinal Virtues, where he lists four elements of the virtuous act. The act must be of fitting substance, inhere firmly in the agent, be directed by reason, and be proportioned to its end.

87 Aquinas, I-II.65.2
virtues unless they exist in one who also has the infused virtues. Moreover, only the infused virtues, not the acquired, remain in heaven.

These statements imply that the infused virtues make possible a sort of action which is quite literally different in kind. In acts of infused virtue, there is something about the very action itself that is proportionate to, or befitting, the act of an adopted son of God; something which cannot be present in the actions of one who is not a participant in the divine life. The act itself is of a quality befitting an adopted son of God. Romanus Cessario, describes Aquinas’ references to proportionality in just this way: “The infused moral virtues assume that God has acted in human history in such a way as to make beatific fellowship with himself possible for every member of the race. This elevation of human nature’s destiny requires a proportionate elevation of human nature’s capacities.”

This elevation of capacity, moreover, is directly linked to the infusion of grace: “Only the power of the holy spirit can create capacities proportionate to attaining supernatural beatitude. Besides the theological virtues, then, these divinely established capacities include the infused moral virtues.” The primary feature of infused virtue, then, is that it makes possible a qualitatively different kind of action.

Important as it is to understand that the infused virtues make a specifically different kind of action possible, it is equally important to understand that this difference

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88 Aquinas, DQV.1.10 ad.4
89 Aquinas, DQV.5.4
90 Cessario, Romanus The Moral Virtues and Theological Ethics p.107
91 Cessario, p.107
do not exhaust the gap between the infused and acquired virtues. If one focuses exclusively on the idea that the two sets of virtues differ in kind, one might be tempted to think that they only differ in kind, with the result that the infused moral virtues are “supercharged” versions of their acquired counterparts. On such a view it would be tempting to think that the infused virtues are merely the acquired virtues “lifted up” to a new level by charity. However, this chapter will demonstrate, such a characterization would be altogether inadequate.

3.2.2 Structural Differences

In various places throughout the summa, and especially in his *Disputed Questions on Virtue*, Aquinas indicates that the virtues proportionate to man’s true end are not only a different kind but virtue, but also differ in a number of “structural” ways from their acquired counterparts. This section will discuss three such “structural differences,” and argue that the acquired and infused moral virtues differ in terms of the mean they seek, the way they come to be and are destroyed, and finally, in terms of the kind of ability they confer. The structural differences between the two sets of virtues not only support the thesis that there are two separate sets of virtues, but also indicate that these two sets can, to some extent, come to be, pass away, increase and diminish independently of each other.

*Same Matter, Different Mean*

Although the infused virtues involve the same matter as their acquired counterparts, Aquinas argues that they seek a different mean. That is, the action that
achieves the balance between excess and defect in an act of infused virtue may be quite different from the act that lies in the mean between excess and defect in an act of the corresponding acquired virtue. Aquinas cites the example of infused and acquired temperance, which are both concerned with the pleasures of touch, but which have a different measure and hence, a different mean:

“Infused and acquired temperance agree in matter, for each one concerns the pleasures of touch; but they do not agree in the form of their effects or acts: for although each seeks the mean, nevertheless infused temperance seeks a different mean than acquired temperance. For infused temperance seeks the mean according to the reasons of divine law, which are taken from their order to the ultimate end; but acquired temperance takes its mean according to inferior reasons, ordered to the good of the present life.”  92

Because infused and acquired temperance are governed by different rules, an act required by infused temperance might well differ from an act required by acquired temperance. Aquinas provides a fuller indication of just how acts might differ in the first part of the summa:

“It is clear that the measure imposed on the concupiscible faculty by the rule of human reason differs from the measure imposed by divine rule. In the consumption of food, the rule established by human reason decrees that one should not harm the health of the body, nor impede the act of reason: but according to the rule of divine law, it is required that man castigate his body, and reduce it to slavery (I Cor. 9,27), through abstinence in food and drink, and other things of this kind. Whence it is clear that infused and acquired temperance differ in species: and the same reasoning applies to the other virtues.”  93

92Aquinas, DQV.1.10 ad.8 : “temperantia infusa et acquisita conveniunt in materia, utraque enim est circa delectabilia tactus; sed non conveniunt in forma effectus vel actus: licet enim utraque quae rerum medium, tamen alia ratione requirit medium temperantia infusa quam temperantia acquisita. Nam temperantia infusa exquirit medium secundum rationes legis divinae, quae accipiuntur ex ordine ad ultimum finem; temperantia autem acquisita accipit medium secundum inferiores rationes, in ordine ad bonum praesentis vitae.”

93Aquinas, I-II.63.4 : Manifestum est quod alterius rationis est modus qui imponitur in huiusmodi concupiscientis secundum regulam rationis humanae, et secundum regulam divinam. Puta in sumptione ciborum, ratione humana modus statuitur ut non noceat valetudini corporis, nec impediat rationis actum:
3.2.2.2 The Acquisition and Increase of Virtue

The second structural difference between the infused and acquired virtues has to do with how the respective sets of virtues are acquired and destroyed. While it is possible to gain the acquired virtues through repeated actions, the infused virtues are bestowed on man directly by God. Because the infused virtues are not acquired through repeated actions, neither are they lost through disuse or even by contrary actions, so long as the contrary actions are not mortal sins. The infused virtues are bestowed along with grace and remain as long as grace remains. Moreover, man cannot increase the infused virtues through his own power. Rather, through acts of infused virtue he merits their increase, but it is God who increases them. However, when man turns away from God and falls into mortal sin, all the infused virtues are lost. The acquired virtues, on the other hand, are not lost through a single contrary action, even if that action is a mortal sin. The strength or weakness of the acquired virtues depends on the strength of a disposition acquired and maintained through repeated actions, and when the actions responsible for the presence of the acquired virtues diminish or cease, the acquired virtues begin to be corrupted.

secundum autem regulam legis divinae, requiritur quod homo castiget corpus suum, et in servitutem redigat (I Cor. 9,27), per abstinentiam cibi et potus, et aliorum huiusmodi. Unde manifestum est quod temperantia infusa et acquisita differunt specie: et eadem ratio est de aliis virtutibus.

94It is worthwhile to note that the amount of charity that one receive depends on the free gift of God, and nothing else: it is bestowed neither in accord with one’s natural capacities, nor in accord with the amount of acquired virtue one possesses. To say that one individual possesses “more charity” than another simply means that such a one has the capacity to love God more fervently; and this capacity depends only on the discretion of the Holy Spirit. See Aquinas, II-II.24.3 and II-II.24.4.

95Aquinas, DQV.1.11
3.2.2.3 Two Types of Ability

The most important structural difference between the infused and acquired virtues, however, has to do with the kind of ability that each set of virtues confers. For a large part of the disgruntlement that many feel with respect to the infused virtues has to do with the sense that they don’t, at the end of the day, “do” anything. Even if they ostensibly exist apart from the acquired virtues; even if they are present in anyone who has grace, their presence seems to be neither evident nor effective. This sentiment stems in part from the belief that the infused virtues don’t seem to alter man’s acts, at least not in the obvious way that the infused virtues do. While it is certainly true that the infused virtues do not aid man’s actions in the same way that the acquired virtues do, it does not follow from this that they provide no assistance at all.

It shall be my goal in the remainder of this chapter to argue that scholars have been too quick to dismiss the possibility that the infused virtues do in fact confer a real and important kind of facility in action. The primary and most compelling evidence in support of my claim comes from Aquinas’ own writings on this matter. As I will demonstrate in what follows, Aquinas’ few statements on the question of the facility conferred by the infused virtues indicate that he believes the acquired virtues do confer a very real and important kind of ability – the strength to struggle against sinful desires. After examining the text of Aquinas, I shall then consider arguments designed to show that the infused moral virtues confer no facility in themselves, but rely on the acquired virtues for any “ease and readiness” of action that accompanies them. These arguments,
as I shall show in what follows, reflect an inaccurate understanding, both of what it means
to possess the infused virtues and of who can be said to possess them.

3.2.2.3.1 The Textual Basis for the Facility of the Infused Moral Virtues

Those who argue that the infused moral virtues confer no facility of action
invariably support their claims by pointing to examples which, at least on their
interpretation, indicate that infused virtue confers no added facility of action. In these
arguments, one finds little or no mention of Aquinas’ own writings on the facility
conferred by the infused virtues. This failure is to some degree understandable, for
although Aquinas has a great deal to say about how the acquired virtues affect the “ease
and readiness” with which certain actions are performed, he does not appear to say much,
if anything, about how the infused virtues affect action. Nevertheless, Aquinas is not
altogether silent on this question, and some important information can be gleaned from
the few remarks he does make.

Aquinas makes statements that shed light on the facility conferred by infused
virtue in both his Disputed Questions on Virtue and in his discussion of penance in the
third part of the Summa. These two texts reveal that for Aquinas the possession of the
infused virtues affects action in two very important ways. First, while the infused virtues
do not remove man’s vicious dispositions, they diminish their power. The man who has
the infused virtues may still feel sinful desires, and even feel them acutely, but he is no
longer enslaved to those passions: he has the power to resist them. This claim in itself
indicates that the presence of the infused virtues alters man’s “facility” of action. But in
his discussion of the effect of contrition, Aquinas goes beyond this to make a second, even stronger claim: the man who possesses infused virtues really does enjoy the act of infused virtue *qua* act, even if his passions simultaneously incline him in the other direction.

### 3.2.2.3.1.1 “The Strength to Struggle”

Two texts in *The Disputed Questions on Virtue* indicate that for Aquinas, the infused virtues give man the strength to struggle with himself; a strength he would not otherwise possess. Both texts occur in the responses to the objections in the tenth article of the first question of the treatise. The first text I wish to consider argues that the infusion of virtue corrupts any existing vices, *qua* vices. One of the objections argues that there cannot be infused virtues because if these are infused with grace, then the infused virtues would co-exist with acquired vices, which seems impossible.\(^{96}\) In his reply Aquinas agrees that acquired vices remain in the graced individual, but denies that they retain the power they previously held:

> Although an acquired habit is not corrupted through a single act, nevertheless the act of contrition through the power of grace has what corrupts the habit of vice. Whence in one who has the habit of intemperance, but is contrite, there does not remain with the infused virtue of temperance the habit of intemperance as a habit, but it is on the way to corruption, as a certain disposition. But a disposition is not the contrary of a perfect habit.\(^{97}\)

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\(^{96}\) Aquinas, DQV.1.10 Obj.16

\(^{97}\) Aquinas, DQV.1.10 RO.16 : *quod licet per actum unum simplicem non corrumpatur habitus acquisitus, tamen actus contritionis habet quod corrumpat habitum vitii generatum ex virtute gratiae; unde in eo qui habuit habitum intemperantiae, cum conteritur, non remanet cum virtute temperantiae infusa habitus intemperantiae in ratione habitus, sed in via corruptionis, quasi dispositio quaedam. Dispositio autem non contrariatur habitui perfecto.*
The infused virtues diminish the power that a vice exercises over an individual’s actions by altering the dispositions that incline man to sin. The individual who possesses a vice possesses a habitual disposition to choose a false good, and is unable to see genuinely good things as good. Grace corrupts this habit, so that while man’s passions still incline him towards false goods, and while man is still swayed by his passions, he does not have the habit of choosing false goods as good, and he is able to act in accord with his true end. What Aquinas establishes with the above quote, then, is that the infused virtues release man from the dominion of sin. The man who has infused virtues may still be inclined to cowardice and intemperance; he may even feel those inclinations very strongly, but those inclinations are not vices in the full sense, because he is no longer absolutely bound by those inclinations.

In a related text, Aquinas describes how it is that an infused virtue prevails against one’s vicious inclinations. Although infused virtue does not render man insensible to temptation, it does allow man to act as he knows he ought:

passions inclining to evil are not completely removed by acquired or infused virtue, except perhaps miraculously; because the struggle of the flesh against the spirit always remains, even with moral virtue, as the apostle says in Galatians 5, 17, *the flesh yearns against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh*. But these passions are modified somewhat by both infused and acquired virtue, so that man is not moved by them in an unbridled way, but acquired virtue in some degree prevails, and so too infused virtue. Acquired virtue prevails in this, that the assaults of passion are felt less, and this is due to its cause: because through frequent acts man is accustomed to virtue, and man is less inclined to obey such

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passions, when he is disposed to resist them, from which it follows that he feels their assaults less. But infused virtue prevails in this, that it causes it to be that even though these passions are felt, they in no way dominate. For infused virtue causes it to be that the concupiscence of sin in no way dominates, and while it remains, it does this infallibly.\textsuperscript{99}

Like the claim that infused virtue destroys existing vices \textit{qua vices}, this quote indicates that infused virtues diminish the power that the vices exercise over man’s actions. The desires are present, but man is no longer a slave to them, for they do not dominate. The infused virtues thus provide man with an option he does not have while mired in sin. For the man who possesses the infused virtues can – though he does not necessarily always do so – override his passions.\textsuperscript{100} If the vices are seen a sort of irresistible current washing man further and further from the person he is meant to be, then one might imagine the infused virtues as a sort of rope. They do not remove the pull of the current; perhaps they do not even lessen it; but they do allow man to begin to struggle towards the shore.

The importance of Aquinas’ statements in the above two texts should not be under-estimated. For in the above two texts Aquinas is claiming that the infused virtues make a new kind of action possible, and that the option for that sort of action is open to

\textsuperscript{99}Aquinas, DQV.1.10 ad 14 : passiones ad malum inclinantes non totaliter tolluntur neque per virtutem acquisitam neque per virtutem infusam, nisi forte miraculose; quia semper remanet collectatio carnis contra spiritum, etiam post moralem virtutem; de qua dicit apostolus, Gal., V, 17, quod caro concupiscit adversus spiritum, spiritus autem adversus carnem. Sed tam per virtutem acquisitam quam infusam huiusmodi passiones modificantur, ut ab his homo non effrenate moveatur. Sed quantum ad aliquid praevalet in hoc virtus acquisita, et quantum ad aliquid virtus infusa. Virtus enim acquisita praevalet quantum ad hoc quod talis impugnatio minus sentitur. Et hoc habet ex causa sua: quia per frequentes actus quibus homo est assuefactus ad virtutem, homo iam dissipavit talibus passionibus obedire, cum consuevit eis resistere; ex quo sequitur quod minus earum molestias sentiat. Sed praevalet virtus infusa quantum ad hoc quod facit quod huiusmodi passiones etsi sentiantur, nullo tamen modo dominentur. Virtus enim infusa facit quod nullo modo obediatur concupiscentiis peccati; et facit hoc infallibiliter ipsa manente.

\textsuperscript{100}The “can but doesn’t always” relies on the translation
anyone who possesses the infused virtues, no matter what other inclinations exist in them. Aquinas’ point here is strikingly similar to the point that is made again and again in the New Testament: Christ frees us from the bonds of sin. Though sin is not erased, the power of sin is lost. John writes: “he who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” It is interesting to note that, when man is elevated by grace into the divine life, this is just what seems to happen. The works of the devil – at least insofar as they govern man’s actions, are destroyed.

3.2.3.1.2 Unpleasant Virtues?

The above two texts provide evidence that the infused virtues, for Aquinas, do affect the ‘ease and readiness’ with which man acts in one very important respect, for thanks to them man has the strength to wrestle with his own vicious dispositions. But even given this, it may still seem that the infused virtues are not really virtues, for a virtue, it seems, ought to be pleasurable. It ought to not only make a certain kind of action possible, but make that action enjoyable as well. Aquinas offers two responses to this objection, both in the context of describing the effect of the sacrament of penance on the repentant sinner.

In The Disputed Questions on Virtue, Aquinas responds to the objection that the infused virtues do not make man enjoy the virtuous act and hence cannot truly be

101 John 3, 8 see also Romans 8.2: “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death.”
considered virtues by pointing out that the act of virtue is not necessarily accompanied by enjoyment. Pleasure, Aquinas argues, is essential to neither infused nor acquired virtue:

because at first infused virtue does not always remove the feelings of the passions as acquired virtue does, on account of this it is not performed joyfully at first. Nevertheless, this is not contrary to virtue, because sometimes it suffices for virtue that it be performed without sadness.102

An act can exhibit virtue, even if it is not enjoyed. Even acquired courage, as Aristotle has pointed out, is not always pleasant. To the contrary, it is in a certain sense most unpleasant for the virtuous man, since he chooses the courageous act at the cost of other goods. Aquinas makes a similar point in the above quote. Enjoyment does not have to be present for an act to count as virtuous. To the contrary, sometimes it suffices that the action be done “without sadness.”

Attention to the above quote, however, reveals that Aquinas is far from admitting that the infused virtues are not, in the general case, performed with pleasure. For Aquinas asserts that infused virtue “does not always” take away the feelings of the passions from the outset, and that consequently acts of infused virtue are “not at first” performed with pleasure. His very choice of vocabulary implies that infused virtue really is tied to pleasure; that its acts are performed with enjoyment. He is simply accommodating cases where pleasure is not present, and such cases include those acts that occur immediately after the infusion of virtue.

102 Aquinas, DQV 1.10 ad.15 : quod quia a principio virtus infusa non semper ita tollit sensum passionum sicut virtus acquisita, propter hoc a principio non ita delectabiliter operatur. Non tamen hoc est contra rationem virtutis, quia quandoque ad virtutem sufficit sine tristitia operari;
In the third part of the Summa, considering the effect of the sacrament of penance, Aquinas goes even further, arguing that the remission of sin makes the act of infused virtue enjoyable, even for one burdened by vicious dispositions. Penance does not remove an individual’s vicious dispositions, and hence the repentant sinner does find his actions difficult. Nevertheless, this does not mean he does not enjoy good works:

After the first act of penance, which is contrition, certain remnants of sin remain, namely dispositions caused by previous sinful acts, as a result of which the penitent performs works of virtue with difficulty, but insofar as the inclinations of charity and the other virtues themselves are concerned, the penitent performs the act of virtue joyfully and without difficulty; just as the virtuous man accidentally experiences difficulty in performing the act of virtue on account of sleepiness or some other bodily disposition. The vicious dispositions that remain after a sinner makes an act of contrition weigh upon him, insofar as they make his virtuous actions difficult; but they do not remove his enjoyment, “so far as the inclination itself of charity and of the other virtues is concerned”. Any difficulty that accompanies his actions is accidental to the act itself. That is to say, the act of infused virtue is enjoyable qua act of infused virtue, even if his actions are hindered by his vicious dispositions.

Aquinas’ remarks here ought to remove any residual doubt about the kind and quality of the facility conferred by the infused virtues. The infused virtues destroy the dominion that sin and vice exercise over man’s soul, and they allow man to perform acts

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103 Aquinas, III.89.1 RO.3: sicut supra dictum est, quandoque post primum actum poenitentiae, qui est contritio, remanent quaedam reliquiae peccatorum, scilicet dispositiones ex prioribus actibus peccatorum causatae, ex quibus praestatur difficultas quaedam poenitenti ad operandum opera virtutum, sed quantum est ex ipsa inclinatione caritatis et aliarum virtutum, poenitens opera virtutum delectabilius et sine difficiilate operatur; sicut si virtuosus per accidens difficulitatem patetur in executione actus virtutis propter somnum aut aliquam corporis dispositionem.
of infused virtue “with pleasure and ease.” This is precisely what one ought to expect. For if one recalls the origin and cause of the infused virtues, it is fitting that pleasure accompany the act, at least at some level. Grace unites man to God in charity; it elevates him into the divine life and brings him into friendship with God. It would be odd indeed if God’s friends failed to take pleasure in the acts of that friendship.

3.2.2.3.2 The Standard View Regarding the Facility of the Infused Moral Virtues

In the above section, I argued that Aquinas clearly believes that the infused moral virtues confer some kind of facility, even if they do not confer the same kind of facility as the acquired virtues. Most scholars, however, claim that although the infused virtues allow man’s acts to fall under a different description, they do not in any way alter the “facility” with which man acts. The argument proceeds as follows. If the infused virtues conferred facility of action, experience should support this point. However, experience seems to indicate just the opposite. Several examples appear to demonstrate that infused virtue can be present, and even present to a very high degree, without conferring any facility of action whatsoever. Therefore, the infused virtues do not provide man with any additional facility of action. This argument, if true, poses a serious problem for the interpretation given above, and hence it is important to examine the examples cited as proof by proponents of the standard view. In what follows, I will focus on the arguments of Robert Coerver and John Harvey.
The most detailed argument against the possibility that the infused virtues confer any additional facility of action is found in Robert Coerver’s book, *The Quality of Facility in the Moral Virtues*. Coerver readily acknowledges that the infused virtues make supernatural action possible, and that they therefore confer the “posse” of supernatural action. In fact, he notes that no theologian has denied this. Nevertheless, under Coerver’s interpretation, this “posse” serves only to alter the description of the act, and does not provide the individual who possesses the infused virtues with any additional strength. To the contrary, he attacks Gregory de Valentia, who claimed that: “the infused virtues too so perfect the appetite that they bestow on it a new and special faculty for resisting the passions and for eliciting proper actions toward our ultimate end.”

Coerver argues against Gregory de Valentia (whose statements on this matter sound strikingly similar to the texts quoted in the preceding section) that “posse” should not be thought to make good action any easier or any more readily performed:

“All theologians who admit the infusion of moral virtues, as previously stated, likewise admit that they confer a new faculty or “posse” toward placing acts in the supernatural order. If this is what Valentia refers to as the “new and special faculty,” then he is in agreement with the common reading of theologians. But obviously he means more than this, since he goes on to say that this new faculty is for “resisting the passions.” If the infused virtues did bring with them such a faculty, then they would confer a facility of action because they would remove impediments which is one of the principal functions of facility. However this opinion does not seem to have a solid basis in fact. For if the infused virtues do confer a faculty for “resisting the passions,” this is not apparent in the soul, otherwise how could the case of the recidivist in venial sin be sufficiently explained, to say nothing of the hardship and difficulty of practicing virtue even after conversion?”

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104 Coerver, p.25

105 Coerver, p.26; John Harvey gives a similar account of *posse* in his article “The Nature of the Infused Moral Virtues,” p.195
For Coerver and those who side with him, then, the “posse” conferred by supernatural action is not to be understood as the infused ability to struggle against one’s sinful dispositions that I described above, but as a mere capacity of “placing acts in the supernatural order.” It is as if the possession of infused virtue makes possible nothing more than performing actions under a different description.

Although Coerver does not claim that his position is supported by the actual text of Aquinas, he does claim that daily experience substantiates his view. John Harvey, who gives a similar account of the infused virtues, also relies on examples to make his point. In order assess the force of Coerver’s argument, therefore, it will be necessary to consider the examples that he and others put forward. The examples cited by those who deny the facility of infused virtue fall into three categories, all of which are designed to show that the presence of infused virtue confers no facility of action. The following will address these examples, and argue that they fail to defeat the thesis proposed in the previous section.

The examples put forward in support of the received view fall into the following three categories:

a) The Example of Venial Sin

The first set of examples cited by Coerver and others has to do with recidivism in venial sin. Coerver notes that those who possess infused virtue, even in a very high degree, still find it difficult to resist venial sin; and find themselves confessing the same sins week after week. Harvey goes even further than this, arguing that the infused virtues don’t appear to be operative in many daily

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106 Coerver p. 26
communicants. For though they must possess infused fortitude, many of them display a great deal of timidity in some of the most trivial activities of daily life. Because those who possess a high degree of infused virtue continue to confess the same sins every week, Coerver and Harvey conclude that infused virtue, even when present in a high degree, must not have any affect on the “facility” with which man acts. They conclude, therefore, that the infused virtues confer no facility of action.

b) The Example of the Lax Seminarian

Though the second set of examples could technically be treated as a subset of the first, I have separated them into two classes, because the class of examples discussed above could apply to those who are in fact very holy people. Even saints struggle with venial sins. This second class of examples, however, refers specifically to those who seem to care little for the state of their soul, and who are to all appearances less than what they ought to be. Harvey provides a typical instance of this in his example of the “lax seminarian.”

To support his claim that even a high degree of infused virtue confers no facility of action, Harvey cites the example of the “lax seminarian.” Many seminarians and other daily communicants, Harvey argues, receive the sacraments daily and consequently must possess a very high degree of infused virtue. Nevertheless, some of those who receive the sacraments daily are tepid or lax in their daily actions, making no attempt to grow in virtue or in the spiritual life. Thus, Harvey concludes that the mere presence of infused virtue, even when that virtue is present in a very high degree [as must be the case, he argues, in seminarians], does not make an individual any more prone to acts of infused virtue. Harvey even goes so far as to conclude that infused virtue, while present, is “inoperative” in those who do not also possess the acquired virtues.

c) The Example of the Penitent Sinner

Finally, Coerver, Harvey and others cite the example of repentant sinners. These scholars claim that according to the “Doctrine of Revival of Merit,” an individual

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107Harvey p.195; timidity is the example Harvey uses; a more interesting example might be the fabled cantankerousness of St. Jerome.

108Harvey, p.196; here as in other examples, Harvey is simply restating the examples of other theologians.

109Harvey, p.197
who possesses a high degree of infused virtue, sins mortally, and then repents
receive the same degree of infused virtue that he possessed prior to his fall from
grace. Yet, as Coerver and Harvey point out, it is entirely possible that such an
individual, during a prolonged fall from grace, should have acquired various
vicious dispositions. He might, among other things, have acquired dispositions
towards alcoholism and assorted other vices. Coerver and Harvey argue that the
mere fact that he has been restored to a state of grace, and perhaps even possesses
a very high degree of infused virtue, will make it no easier for him to actually act
as a temperate person ought. Hence, they again conclude that even a very high
degree of infused virtue confers no facility of action. ¹¹⁰

In what follows, I will argue that none of the examples put forward by Coerver
and Harvey provide decisive proof against the possibility that the infused moral virtues
confer some sort of facility. In fact, I shall argue that while their first example is merely
inconclusive, their second and third examples reflect an incorrect understanding of how
the infused virtues come to be, increase, and diminish.

Reply to (a)

While the truth of the first example cannot be denied, it would be hasty to
conclude, on the basis of such examples, that infused virtue confers no facility of action
whatsoever. Coerver and others are certainly correct in their observation that the
possession of even a very high degree of infused virtue does not appear to diminish the
“recidivism” of venial sin, and they are certainly correct to note that a high degree of
infused virtue does not appear to alter certain established character traits. The timid
person remains timid, the cantankerous person remains cantankerous, even when he
possesses a great deal of infused virtue. But it is important bear in mind that the issue
under debate was never whether vicious dispositions remain after the infusion of grace,

¹¹⁰Harvey, p.196
nor even whether the graced individual still falls prey to temptation. To the contrary, my account of the facility conferred by the infused virtues – namely, that the infused virtues give us the strength to struggle against our vicious dispositions – would make little sense if the graced individual did not still have to struggle, and struggle hard, against the temptations of sin. The recidivism of venial sin, then, does not of itself suffice to show that the infused virtues confer no facility of action.

Reply to (b)

While the first set of examples raises an issue which while true does not decide the case against facility, the second set of examples relies on a premise that runs directly contrary to Aquinas’ thought and should therefore be discarded altogether. The seminarian in the second set of examples is said to possess a very high degree of infused virtue simply because he receives the sacraments often. Thus, according to this line of thought, although he makes absolutely no effort to become a better person (aside from consistently attending mass and so forth) he continually grows in charity. Although Harvey cites this as certain fact, it is by no means uncontroversial that growth in grace occurs in this way. More importantly, it is certainly not Aquinas’ view that this is the case.

Garigou LaGrange, considering the question of growth in grace, acknowledges the above opinion, and attributes it to Suarez, but notes that Aquinas holds a somewhat different view.\footnote{La Grange, p.135} Indeed, when Aquinas’ position is considered in detail, it is clear that he
would not recognize the example of the lax seminarian. Aquinas’ initial response to the question of whether charity is increased by every meritorious act is to deny that this is the case, precisely because of the example cited in (b): “On the contrary, an effect does not exceed the strength of the cause. But sometimes the act of charity is performed with tepidity or slackness. Therefore it is not conducive to more excellent charity, but rather disposes one to a low degree.”

In the body of his reply, Aquinas provides a penetrating account of the process through which one grows in charity by comparing the development of charity to the growth of a body. A plant or animal does not increase every time it takes in nourishment, but rather has periods of growth and periods during which it becomes disposed for that growth:

The spiritual growth of charity is similar to the growth of a body. The bodies of plants and animals do not grow continually, such that if it grows so much in so much time, it is necessary that each part of it should increase proportionally in that time, as pertains to the motion of that part: but over a certain time nature disposes towards growth and nothing grows in fact, and after it produces in effect that to which it disposed, and the animal or plant grows in fact.

Like vegetative or animal growth, man does not increase in charity with each meritorious action, but disposes himself over time for that increase:

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112 Aquinas, II-II.24.6 sed contra: Sed contra est quod effectus non excedit virtutem causae. Sed quandoque aliquis actus caritatis cum aliquo tepore vel remissione emittitur. Non ergo perducit ad excellentiorem caritatem, sed magis disponit ad minorem.

113 Aquinas, II-II.24.6: augmentum spirituale caritatis quodammodo simile est augmento corporali. Augmentum autem corporale in animalibus et plantis non est motus continuus, ita scilicet quod, si aliquid tantum augetur in tanto tempore, necesse sit quod proportionaliter in qualibet parte illius temporis aliquid augatur, sicut contingit in motu locali: sed per aliquod tempus natura operatur disponens ad augmentum et nihil augens actu, et postmodum producit in effectum id ad quod disponuerat, augendo animal vel plantam in actu.
In the same way charity is not increased by any act of charity whatsoever: but each act of charity disposes to the increase of charity, inasmuch as by a single act of charity man is disposed to perform another act of charity; and this ability increasing, man breaks out into a more fervent act of love, and strives towards the increase of charity; and thus charity grows in fact.\textsuperscript{114}

It is clear from these quotes that Aquinas does not accept Suarez’s account of spiritual growth. To the contrary, an increase in charity does not occur until man “breaks out into an act of more fervent love, and strives to advance in charity.” On Aquinas’ own terms, then, it is incorrect to claim that the lax seminarian possesses a high degree of infused virtue, for he does not strive for its increase. One who wishes to examine whether a high degree of infused virtue confers facility of action, therefore, must find a different example.

\textit{Reply to (c)}

The third set of examples is less problematic than the second, but still requires qualification. Coerver, Harvey, and others cite the “doctrine of revival of merit” as if, because of this doctrine, it is a mathematical certainty that one who repents is granted precisely the same degree of infused virtue that he possessed prior to his fall from grace. Again, at least as far as Aquinas is concerned, this vastly oversimplifies the matter. First, the doctrine of revival of merit merely holds that whatever merit an individual possessed before his fall from grace is “revived” when he returns to the state of grace. It is a considerable leap to move from this doctrine to an assertion that the individual in

\textsuperscript{114}Aquinas, II-II.24.6 : \textit{Ita etiam non quolibet actu caritatis caritas actu agetur: sed quilibet actus caritatis disponit ad caritatis agumentum, inquantum ex uno actu caritatis homo redditur promptior iterum ad agendum secundum caritatem; et habilitate crescente, homo prorumpit in actu ferventiorem dilectionis, quo conetur ad caritatis profectum; et tunc caritas augetur in actu.}
question is granted the same degree of charity that he possessed prior to his fall from grace. Moreover, it is clear that Aquinas would deny this latter assertion. In fact, just as above, Aquinas heads his sed contra with a rejection of the very example cited by Coerver and Harvey.\footnote{Aquinas, III.89.2 OTC: Sed contra, caritas proficiens vel perfecta maior est quam caritas incipiens. Sed quandoque aliquis cadit a caritate proficiente, resurgit autem in caritate incipiente. Ergo semper resurgit homo in minori etiam virtute.} For Aquinas teaches that the quantity of grace bestowed upon the repentant sinner hinges not on the degree of merit possessed prior to one’s fall from grace, but on the quality of his repentance, which itself hinges on the movement of free will:

The movement of free will which occurs in the justification of the impious is the ultimate disposition to grace, whence the infusion of grace occurs in the same instant as the aforementioned motion of free will, as was said in the second part. The act of penance is constituted by this motion, as has been said. But it is clear that forms which can be received in greater or lesser degrees, are held out or taken back according to different dispositions of the subject, as is said in the second part. And thus, according as the movement of free will is more or less intense, the penitent receives more or less grace.\footnote{Aquinas, III.89.2: motus liberi arbitrii qui est in iustificatione impii, est ultima disposition ad gratiam, unde in eodem instanti est gratiae infusio cum praedicto motu liberi arbitrii, ut in secunda parte habitum est. In quo quidem motu comprehenditur actus poenitentiae, ut supra dictum est. Manifestum est autem quod formae quae possunt recipere magis et minus, intenduntur et remittuntur secundum diversam dispositionem subjecti, ut in secunda parte habitum est. Et inde est quod, secundum quod motus liberi arbitrii in poenitentia est intensior vel remissior, secundum hoc poenitens consequitur maiorem vel minorem gratiam.}

Thus, one who makes only a half-hearted act of contrition might receive only a small fraction of the infused virtues he previously enjoyed, while another who is truly contrite might receive an infusion of grace that vastly exceeds anything he enjoyed previously\footnote{Aquinas, III.89.2: Contingit autem intentionem motus poenitentis quandoque proportionatam esse maioris gratiae quam illa a qua cecidit per peccatum; quandoque vero aequali; quandoque vero minori. Et ideo poenitens quandoque resurgit in maiori gratia quam prius habuerat; quandoque autem in}
Thus, here as above, Aquinas’ account is more nuanced than Coerver and Harvey imply. There is therefore no reason—textual or otherwise—to deny that the infused moral virtues confer at least some kind of facility. What remains, however, is the need for some conceptual model of what the “struggle” might look like, or at least some examples of how one who possesses the infused virtues but lacks the acquired virtues might nonetheless be capable of morally good action. Resources are hardly lacking in this regard, there are the examples of the saints and martyrs, many of whom were notoriously lacking in the acquired virtues. However, the discussion of such examples will be postponed until the next chapter.

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aequali; quandoque etiam in minori. Et eadem ratio est de virtutibus, quae ex gratia consequuntur.

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118 Sigrid Undset’s discussion of Ramon Lull in her book *Stages on the Road* is particularly helpful in this respect, as are St. Jerome’s infamously cranky letters to Augustine.
CHAPTER 4

INFUSED AND ACQUIRED VIRTUE IN THE TREATISE ON PRUDENCE

The structural differences between infused and acquired virtue outlined in the previous chapter should help to put the gap between the two sets of virtues into perspective. For it is now clear that the infused and acquired moral virtues not only involve specifically different kinds of action, but come to be, increase, and are destroyed in very different ways. On the basis of these differences it is at least theoretically possible that the infused virtues could not only exist, but exist with greater intensity, in someone who not only lacked the acquired virtues but had strong dispositions to the contrary vices than in another who possessed both the acquired and infused virtues. It is also theoretically possible, it seems, that an individual could diminish in acquired virtue and at the same time be granted an increase in infused virtue.

Given that there are substantial differences between the infused and acquired virtues, the question becomes how these differences are to be understood. For most of the discomfort surrounding the infused virtues seems to stem from the sense that they don’t play a distinct role in Aquinas’ philosophy. Perhaps Aquinas does define them in the *Disputed Questions on Virtue*; perhaps he even defines them in such a way that they
must be understood as an entirely separate set of virtues. But rather than alleviating the discomfort, this only seems to heighten it. For it raises two separate questions. First, if Aquinas makes this distinction in his general statements about the nature of virtue, shouldn’t this distinction be operative elsewhere in his writings, particularly in his detailed treatments of the individual virtues? Secondly, how does this distinction play out in practice? What would it mean for an individual to have one set of virtues and lack the other? What would it mean for someone to possess both the infused virtues and dispositions to the acquired vices?

The goal of the remainder of this chapter is to address both of these questions. I will argue that the distinction between infused and acquired virtue, at least as evidenced by the treatise on prudence, is indeed present in Aquinas’ lengthy treatises on the virtues, and further that his distinctions there provide important insights into the question of how one might possess the infused virtues but not the acquired. Finally, I will propose Graham Greene’s whiskey priest as a model of what it might mean to possess the infused virtues but lack the acquired.

In this chapter, I often refer to the fact that the infused virtues can and do exist, and even exist in a high degree of perfection, without the acquired moral virtues. It is not my intention to imply that the acquired virtues are therefore unnecessary. The acquired virtues are of crucial importance in the moral life. However, this chapter aims to salvage the reputation of the infused moral virtues, and I feel that the most expedient way to do so is to show that they not only can be present, but play a crucial role, even in those who lack the acquired virtues.
Aquinas’ discussion of the infused and acquired virtues in the disputed questions on virtue clearly shows that there is a gap between the two sets of virtues. The differences between the two sets of virtues indicate that it is possible, at least in theory, for there to be a large divergence among the individuals who possess the infused, as opposed to the acquired, virtues. Nonetheless, this may be a purely theoretical possibility. To salvage the reputation of the infused virtues, it will be necessary to demonstrate that they have a more than theoretical role, not only in Aquinas’ moral theory, but in practice as well. This chapter aims to demonstrate that, at least as evidenced by Aquinas’ treatment of prudence in questions 47-56 of the secunda-secundae, attention to the infused moral virtues and a real cognizance of their distance from the acquired moral virtues is a consistent theme in Aquinas’ description of the individual moral virtues.

Although this chapter primarily aims to show that large and important sections of the treatise on prudence –if not the entire treatise– are constructed with an eye to infused prudence, and moreover, that the infused prudence Aquinas describes can operate without acquired prudence, I will devote the first part of this chapter to a discussion of prudence in general. The general discussion of prudence is important, not only in order to establish the prerequisite ground for an examination of infused prudence, but also because Aquinas’ description of prudence deviates in surprising way from the typical understanding of prudence. Prudence for Aquinas is a virtue that belongs to the rational power, but it is rooted in the will, and as I will show, a proper orientation of the will is ultimately more essential to prudence than any degree of intellectual acumen. That this is
the case is evident not only from the fact that prudence is both an intellectual and a moral virtue, but also from the fact that the chief act of prudence is command: an imperative issued by the intellect which follows upon the will’s act of choice. Although prudence requires knowledge of the correct course of action, to have prudence is ultimately to be able to issue the commands that allow the injunctions of right reason to be carried out in action.

In the second part of this section, I will argue that a large portion of Aquinas’ discussion in the treatise on prudence is concerned with infused, not acquired prudence. In making this argument I will point to three sections of the treatise on prudence which I believe are explicitly concerned with infused prudence: (1) the discussion of “prudence simpliciter” in Aquinas’ discussion of prudence in general, (2) the gift of counsel, and (3) the discussion of the vices contrary to prudence.

4.1 Prudence in General

“The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is pure, your entire body will be illumined; but if your eye is worthless, your entire body will be dark. If therefore the light, which is in you, is darkness, what darkness there will be!”

Josef Pieper begins his discussion of the cardinal virtue of prudence by citing a verse from Matthew’s gospel: “if thy eye is single, thy whole body will be lit up.” Pieper then proceeds to describe prudence as the virtue that allows the eye to be “single” and

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Matthew 6:22-23: “Lucerna corporis est oculus. Si ergo fuerit oculus tuus simplex, totum corpus tuum lucidum erit; si autem oculus tuus nequam fuerit, totum corpus tuum tenebrosum erit. Si ergo lumen, quod in te est, tenebrae sunt, tenebrae quantae erunt!”
hence lights up the body. Pieper’s discussion emphasizes two facets in particular. First, prudence is the virtue that allows us to see the world “through the eyes of truth” – and hence, makes our eye single, and secondly, it is only through this kind of vision that the other virtues become virtues in the true sense and not merely brute inclinations – and thus prudence lights up the body.¹²⁰

Pieper’s explanation of prudence is important, as is his insight that there is an important connection between Matthew’s verses and Aquinas’ discussion of prudence. It is clear that prudence really is, for Aquinas, a kind of vision, for he draws analogies between prudence and sight throughout the treatise on prudence, and even bases his argument that prudence is a virtue of the cognitive faculty on the assertion that prudence is a kind of sight.¹²¹ But to get at the heart of the analogy of vision, it will be necessary to make some assertion about what it is that renders the “eye” that illumines the body pure or impure. Does one have a pure eye merely because one sees what ought to be done, or does true purity of vision belong only to those who both see and do the right thing? It is clear from the surrounding text that for Matthew the eye’s purity is tied to action. The purity of the eye stems from the removal of the things that impede the eye’s ability to focus on the one truly important thing, eternal life. For the statement comes at the close of the sermon on the mount, where Christ enjoins the crowd to separate themselves from other cares: not to be preoccupied by the pursuit of earthly treasures, or to pursue the


¹²¹Aquinas, I-II.47.1
honors of the world. The eye becomes worthless when man places inferior goods above
the one true good. Like Pieper, this chapter will characterize Aquinas’ treatment of
prudence in terms of the analogy of sight, and the assertion in Matthew’s gospel that the
eye illumines the entire body. But because the primary importance of Matthew’s text lies
in its emphasis on “uncluttered vision,” this account will emphasize slightly different
aspects of prudence than Pieper does.

The following will focus on two separate aspects of Aquinas’ treatment of
prudence, both of which indicate that prudence, the virtue of the practical reason, is more
dependent upon the rectitude of the will and less dependent on intellectual acuteness than
most realize. First, although prudence belongs to the rational faculty, it presupposes
rectitude of the will. Secondly, prudence for Aquinas is the ability to apply right reason to
action, and the ability to do so requires that an individual (a) be able to know the
appropriate course of action—through correct counsel and judgement and (b) be able to
issue an imperative to act upon it—through command, an act of the intellect that follows
upon the will’s choice. What is of interest here is the fact that, although there is an
instinctive tendency to think of prudence in terms of (a), for Aquinas it is (b) that
comprises the essential component of prudence. The absence of (a) impedes or blocks
prudence; the absence of (b) destroys it altogether. I will argue that both of these points
have important ramifications for Aquinas’ treatment of infused prudence.

122 Matthew 6: 16-21
4.1.1 Prudence, the Moral Virtue

Chapter one described the virtues as existing in the middle ground between the innate principles that give a thing its first, general direction towards its end and the actual attainment of that end. The virtues, by rendering the general principles of action (or the seeds of virtue) specific, enable an individual to apply the general principles to particular actions. The virtue of prudence plays the leading role in this business of rendering general principles specific, for it is prudence which, by determining the correct action in a given situation, allows acts of the moral virtues to occur.\textsuperscript{123} Prudence is a precondition for acts of the moral virtue, because it is only through prudence that one knows what acts moral virtue requires.\textsuperscript{124} This is because through the possession of a moral virtue one is properly ordered to the end, but it is only through prudence that one is able to discern what acts this order requires.

It should be clear from the above that prudence is concerned with means, not with ends. For prudence is concerned with action, and man acts according to principles that pre-exist in him; just as in speculative matters, he operates according to the first principles of reasoning – the principle of non-contradiction, for instance. The ends of

\textsuperscript{123}Aquinas, II-II.47.6: “Sicut autem in ratione speculativa sune quaedam ut naturaliter nota quorum est intellectus, et quaedam quae per illa innotescunt, scilicet conclusiones quarum est scientia, ita in ratione practica praeeexistunt quaedam ut principia naturaliter nota, et hujusmodi sunt fines virtutum moralium, quia finis se habet in operabilia sicut principium in speculativis, ut supra habitum est, et quaedam sunt in ratione practica ut conclusiones, et hujusmodi sunt ea quae sunt ad finem, in quae pervenimus ex ipsis finibus. Et horum est prudentia, applicans universalia principia ad particulares conclusiones operabilia.”

\textsuperscript{124}Aquinas, II-II.47.7: “Dicendum quod ipsum quod est conformari rationi rectae est finis proprius cujuslibet virtutis moralis...Sed qualifier et per quae homo in operando atingat medium rationis pertinent ad rationem prudentiae. Licet enim attingere medium sit finis virtutis moralis, tamen per rectam dispositionem eorum quae sunt ad finem medium inventur.”
man’s actions, therefore, already exist; what is needed is that he be able to realize those ends through his particular actions. Thus while prudence presupposes a knowledge of the ends of actions, it is specifically concerned with finding means to those ends. For this reason, Aquinas says that prudence both is and is not in man by nature. By nature man has the general principles that prudence renders particular, and in some instance man even has an aptitude for rendering those principles specific, but he does not by nature have the virtue of prudence.

The ability to find means to ends belongs to the part of reason concerned with action, or the practical reason, and hence prudence belongs to the practical reason. Because prudence belongs to the practical reason, Aquinas says that it must be a moral virtue. This is because the practical reason, unlike the speculative reason, is essentially ordered toward action. An individual embarks on the process of practical reason in order to decide what to do in a given situation. But because the practical reason is ordered towards action, Aquinas says that the correct exercise of practical reason depends on the rectitude of the will: “But it pertains to prudence, as was said, to apply right reason to action, which cannot be done without right appetite. And thus prudence not only has the character of virtue which the other intellectual virtues possess, but also has the character of virtue which the moral virtues have.”

Some qualities of the mind –i.e. those that have to do with art and science– dispose the mind to judge rightly, regardless of the rectitude of the will, but some qualities shape both the judgement and the appetite that

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125 Aquinas, II-II.47.5 : “Ad prudentiam autem pertinet, sicut dictum est, applicatio rectae rationis ad opus, quod non fit sine appetitu recto. Et ideo prudentia non solum habet rationem virtutis quam habent aliae virtutes intellectuales, set etiam habet rationem virtutis quam habent virtutes Morales.”
judges, and only the latter are true virtues. Because prudence involves both, it is a moral
and not merely an intellectual virtue.

There is hardly anything new in the claim that prudence is a moral virtue.
Nevertheless, it is easy to get the impression that Aquinas’ stipulation is a convenient but
ad hoc move. Why, after all, should a virtue of the intellect, a virtue that has merely to do
with finding the correct means to a given end, have to do with the will at all? Part of the
answer to this question requires a revision of our pre-conceived notions of prudence, a
discussion which I will postpone until the next section. An equally important part of the
answer, however, looks back to Aquinas’ account of the good human act. To be perplexed
about the status of prudence as a moral virtue is, at the end of the day, to assume an
overly intellectualist account of human action. To understand that the will’s choices are
not determined by the intellect is to understand why prudence must be a moral virtue.

It is axiomatic that for Aquinas the will, as a rational appetite, seeks the good of
reason. Because human beings by their very nature seek the good of reason, man chooses
nothing unless he chooses it under the aspect of the good. The reason, therefore, presents
possible courses of action to the will, and the will chooses. This seems to lead directly to
a determinist account of human action, because it seems that if the will chooses the good,
and the intellect presents the will with possible courses of action, the will must choose
whatever the intellect presents as the best course of action. But this deliberately
oversimplified account of human action is incorrect both in itself and as a statement of
Aquinas’ thought.
Although the will always chooses under the aspect of the good, the only thing that necessitates the will’s choice – the only thing, that is, that the will cannot not choose – is the beatific vision. This is due to the fact that the various things man chooses in his daily actions are not good without qualification. Each thing is good, under a certain way of considering the act, and not good, under another consideration. Thus though the will choose the good, it chooses the good under a certain aspect; and the aspect has to do with our willful deliberations. If an individual murders someone, he does so under the aspect of the good – perhaps he consider the things he will gain from the individual’s death. But that he chooses to focus on this aspect of the action is itself due to his own deliberation, and his very process of deliberation, importantly, involves the will.

Although the will chooses under the aspect of the good, and although the intellect presents the will with possible courses of action, the will also, as David Gallagher points out, controls the very deliberation of the intellect: “Thomas holds that the agent exercises control over the very act of reason which governs his or her choice. In other words, how objects appear, in terms of good and evil, is not simply a question of those objects taken independently of a particular agent, but rather depends in large measure on the agents themselves...Thus in Thomas’ theory of action, action follows a judgement of reason, but that judgement itself depends on the will.”

The intellect, through a process of deliberation, presents possible courses of action to the will, but this process is not conducted independently of the will. For the will determines the path the deliberation

\[^{126}\text{Gallagher, David “Free Choice and Judgment in Thomas Aquinas,” Archiv fur Geschichte der Philosophie 76 247-77}\]
takes, and directs the deliberation of the intellect towards certain aspects of the action rather than others.\textsuperscript{127}

The intimate involvement of the will in human action clarifies Aquinas’ assertion that prudence is a moral virtue. Prudence is in the intellect, but that the intellect is even capable of taking counsel, judging, and especially commanding is radically due to the will. To take counsel at all, let alone good counsel, presupposes a certain rectitude of the will, which ultimately controls the path intellectual deliberation follows. As the next section will show, this is even more the case with the essential act of prudence, command.

4.1.2 Command, the Essential Act of Prudence

The idea of prudence brings to mind the calculating aspect of prudence; the aspects that Aquinas calls counsel and judgement. Someone is called prudent when he is able to determine the appropriate course of action in uncertain situations; when he is farsighted enough to realize that a specific course of action is called for. This ability is certainly characterized by a clarity of vision. But when one thinks of the prudent individual, one don’t tend to focus as much on his actions, and insofar as this focus is absent, his understanding of prudence is precisely the inversion of Aquinas’. An example will help to put this in perspective. If one encountered an individual who was not only highly intelligent but was also intellectually honest enough to be fully aware, in any given situation, of what the correct course of action would be, but who simply failed to act

\textsuperscript{127}A detailed discussion of this point is beyond the scope of this paper. For an excellent exposition of Aquinas’ view, see Gallagher’s “Free Choice and Judgement in Aquinas.” Gallagher’s “Thomas Aquinas on the Will as Rational Appetite,” in The Journal of the History of Philosophy, O ’91 p.559-584 is also helpful in this regard.
accordingly, he would tend to call such a person prudent. Few would consider the failure to carry the action through to completion a negative reflection on the amount of prudence he possessed. These intuitions (assuming they are correctly described them) look back to the analogy between prudence and sight. If prudence is understood merely in terms of “acute” vision, then whether or not an action occurs as a result of that acuteness tends to fade from the horizon. But for Aquinas, this is an inversion of what matters most in prudence. To be prudent, for Aquinas, is not merely to have the ability arrive at the correct decision in every instance, but to have the capacity to do what it is one knows one ought to do. Aquinas’ account of prudence, insofar as it emphasizes this aspect of the human act, is novel. It both narrows the domain of those who can be called prudent and alters the concept of what it is to be prudent.

4.1.3 The Parts of Prudence

In the first question of the treatise on prudence, after showing prudence to be a virtue of the practical reason, concerned with finding the correct means to a predetermined end, Aquinas asks about the principal act of prudence. Aquinas replies that because prudence is concerned with right reason in action, the principal act of prudence will be that which is most ordered towards applying right reason in action: “Prudence is right reason in things to be done, as said above. Whence it is fitting that the principal act of prudence should be that which is the principal act of reason in things to be done.” 128

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128 Aquinas, II-II.47.8 : “prudentia est rect ratio agibilium, ut supra dictum est. Unde oportet quod ille sit praecipuus actus prudentiae qui est praecipuus actus rationis agibilium;”
There are three separate steps in reasoning about things to be done. First, the individual must take counsel, or consider the various courses of action open to him. Second, he must come to a judgement about the correct course of action. Finally, he must apply this judgement in action by issuing an imperative about what is to be done. However, both counsel and judgement, for Aquinas, belong to the speculative reason: “The first of these is to take counsel, which pertains to discovery, for to take counsel is to seek, as said above. The second act is to judge about what was found. And the speculative reason stops here.”

But prudence is a virtue of the practical reason, the faculty concerned with action, and hence its principal act must be an act of the practical, not the speculative reason. This act is “praecipere,” or command. Command consists of applying right reason to action, and hence is the principal act of prudence:

“But the practical reason, which is ordered to action, proceeds further, and its third act is to command; which consists in the application of counsel and judgement to things to be done. And because this act is nearer to the end of practical reason, it is therefore the principal act of practical reason, and consequently of prudence.”

To be prudent, one must know the correct course of action, but so long as one merely knows the correct course of action as something which follows from a certain course of reasoning, one is not prudent. One only becomes prudent when one can apply that right reasoning in action by issuing a command.

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129 Aquinas, II-II.47.8: “Quorum primus est consiliari, quod pertinet ad inventionem, nom consiliari est quarere, ut supra habitum est. Secundus actus est judicare de inventis. Et hic sistit speculativa ratio.”

130 Aquinas, II-II.47.8: “Sed practica ratio, quae ordinatur ad opus, procedit ulterior, et est tertius actus ejus praecipere; qui quidem actus consistit in applicatione consiliatorum et judicatorum ad operandum. Et quia iste actus est propinquior fini rationis practicae, inde est quod istes est principalis actus rationis practicae, et per consequens prudentiae.”

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So important is command to the act of prudence that one who has both correct counsel and judgement but lacks command is actually more imprudent than one who fails to do the correct action because he lacks knowledge or who fails to take counsel. Aquinas argues this point in two separate places, first in his argument that command is the principal act of prudence and secondly in his treatment of the vices opposed to prudence. The artist who errs deliberately is a better artist than the artist who errs unknowingly, because the former has correct judgement, and the perfection of the artist consists precisely in this, that he have right judgement. But with prudence, the reverse applies: “But in prudence it is the opposite, as is said in the Ethics; he who sins willingly is more imprudent than who sins unwillingly, as he is deficient in the principal act of prudence, which is to command.” In matters concerned with action, knowing the correct action is important only as a pre-requisite to actually doing the action, and the doing, at the end of the day, is what prudence is concerned with. It is important that one not overlook the ramifications of this argument. If I notice that my neighbor needs my help and fail to give it, I am more imprudent than I would be if I simply failed to notice that he needed my help.

Aquinas offers a similar line of argument in his answer to article 16 of question 47, which asks whether prudence may be lost by forgetfulness. Aquinas responds that it is not forgetfulness, but passion that destroys prudence. Forgetfulness destroys art and

131 Aquinas, II-II.47.8

132 Aquinas, II-II.47.8 : “Sed in prudentia est e converso, ut dicitur in Ethic; imprudentior enim est qui volens peccat quasi deficiens in principali actu prudentiae, qui est prcipere, quam qui peccat nolens.”
science, because art and science belong only to the reason. Prudence, on the other hand, belongs to both the appetitive and cognitive faculties:

“Forgetfulness only concerns inquiry; and thus through forgetfulness someone can completely lose art, and similarly science which belongs in the reason. But prudence is not found only in cognition, but also in the appetite, because as has been said, its principal act is to command, which is to apply the knowledge one possesses to desiring and acting.”

Because prudence does not consist in knowing, but in applying knowledge to action, it is not destroyed by forgetfulness, but by passion: “And thus prudence is not directly lost through forgetfulness, but rather is corrupted through the passions; for the philosopher says that delight and sadness pervert the judgement of prudence. Whence it is said in Daniel, ‘looks deceive you and concupiscence subverts your heart.’”

Prudence, therefore, is destroyed by passion, which prevents the issuing of the command. “Oblivio” impedes prudence, because it inhibits the knowledge on which command depends, but it does not destroy it. Rather forgetfulness impedes its use.

Aquinas’ strong emphasis on command as the principal act of prudence reaffirms the vital connection between the will and the intellect in the prudential act. For Aquinas, in describing the act of command, says it is an act of the practical intellect which

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133 Aquinas, II-II.47.16 : “Dicendum quod oblivio respicit cognitionem tantum; et ideo per oblivionem potest aliquis artem totaliter perdere, et similibet scientiam quae in ratione consistunt. Sed prudentia non constat in sola cognitione, sed etiam in appetitu, quia, ut dictum est, principalis ejus actus est praecipere, quod est applicare cognitionem habita ad appetendum, et operandum.”

134 Aquinas, II-II.47.16 : “Et ideo prudentia non directe tollitur per oblivionem, sed magis corrumpitur per passiones; dicit enim Philosophus, quod delectabile et triste pervertit existimationem prudentiae. Unde Dan. dicitur, Species decepit te et concupiscetia subvertit cor tuum;”

135 Aquinas, II-II.47.16 R.O.3 : “oblivio universalis cognitionis non corrumpit id quod est principale in prudentia, sed aliquod impedimentum ei affert, ut dictum est.” Additional remarks in support of this point can be found in the treatment of the vices opposed to prudence.
presupposes an act of will. The act of command occurs when the intellect issues an imperative about what is to be done. But this imperative follows the will’s choice. Unless the will actually chooses the course of action, the imperative is not issued by the intellect.

The role of the will in prudence, both insofar as prudence is a moral virtue and insofar as the principal act of prudence is command, also sheds light on the analogy between prudence and vision discussed at the beginning of this section. For prudence is not merely seeing clearly, if that sight is limited to knowledge of a hypothetical imperative. Such sight, or at least the ability to be guided by another’s clear sightedness, is required for prudence. But the real sight that prudence requires has more to do with the true sense of Matthew’s gospel. For, as pointed out earlier, if one reads the whole of Matthew’s gospel it is clear that the truly healthy eye is not merely an eye with acute vision, but an eye that sees only one thing. It is not distracted by the cares of this world; but seeks only its true end. It is this kind of sight that most requires rectitude of the will. And it is evident from Aquinas’ emphasis on the role of the will that it is this kind of sight that he sees as most important in prudence.

This description of prudence as a virtue that belongs to the intellect but which also depends on the rectitude of the will has interesting implications for our consideration of infused prudence, and particularly for the hypothesis that infused and acquired prudence differ. Particularly, if prudence consists of three acts, counsel, judgement and command, and if it depends on rectitude of the will, what happens if the will is ordered correctly with respect to the ultimate end, but incorrectly ordered towards other ends? Is this even possible? If it is possible, then how does one who is incapable of counsel and judgement
in lesser matters, take counsel and judge correctly in higher ones? The answers to these
questions will play a crucial role in determining whether infused prudence can exist apart
from acquired prudence, and in describing what such prudence would look like.

4.2 Infused Prudence

The account of prudence in the previous section made no attempt to distinguish
between infused and acquired prudence but attempted instead to offer a description
general enough to apply to both forms of prudence. Because Aquinas typically speaks
merely of “prudence” without stipulating whether the prudence in question is infused or
acquired, it may seem that he is not interested in the distinction. While Aquinas’ tendency
to simply speak of “prudence” does indicate that the two sets of virtues are closely
connected, it is also clear that he believes there are significant differences between the
two –very different– sets of virtues, and that attention to the details of Aquinas’ text
indicates that this distinction is not only present, but of obvious concern to Aquinas in the
treatise on prudence. This section will argue that a close reading of the questions on
prudence reveals (1) that Aquinas not only defines infused prudence as a form of
prudence which can exist independently of acquired prudence, but characterizes it as the
most important form of prudence, (2) that Aquinas’ treatment of the gift of counsel is
constructed with an eye towards explaining the operations of infused prudence, and (3)
that Aquinas’ primary concern in his discussion of the vices opposed to prudence is with
whether certain sins destroy infused prudence. Aquinas’ discussion of these three points
both serves to illuminate the nature of “infused prudence” and to explain how such prudence functions, even in the absence of acquired prudence.

### 4.2.1 Infused Prudence, Defined

Aquinas devotes the sixteen articles of question 47 to “prudentia secundum se,” or prudence in itself. After demonstrating that prudence is a virtue that belongs not merely to the cognitive faculty, but to the practical reason, Aquinas provides a detailed analysis of the parts of prudence (principal, subjective, and potential) and also defines the subject matter of prudence – who and what prudence is concerned with. But then, having considered what “prudentia secundum se” is, Aquinas raises the question of who can properly be said to possess “prudentia secundum se”. It is here, in his examination of who can be said to possess prudence, that Aquinas first makes the distinction between infused and acquired prudence. Careful attention to the two articles primarily concerned with this distinction reveals that (a) infused prudence is not only present in all who have grace, but is for Aquinas the only true form of prudence, and that (b) this form of prudence can exist independently of acquired prudence.

The first statements relevant to a definition of infused prudence are made in article 13 of question 47. In the context of a response to the question of whether sinners can be prudent, Aquinas distinguishes between three different kinds of prudence. The first kind of prudence is a certain shrewdness, an ability to achieve one’s purposes, that is possessed by some of those who seek bad ends. The sinner who is adept at achieving evil
ends is called “prudent,” not because he has genuine prudence, but because his ability has a certain resemblance to prudence:

“While the prudent man is one who orders well those things which are to be done for the sake of some good end, one who finds fitting means for some bad end has false prudence, inasmuch as he takes an end which is not truly good, but good according to some likeness, as someone is called a good thief; in this way it is possible to call one who devises ways agreeable to thievery a prudent thief.”

This prudence is not true prudence, however, and is possessed only by sinners.\textsuperscript{137}

The second form of prudence occurs when an individual has the ability to order himself towards genuinely good ends, but incompletely. Aquinas says that this ability may be incomplete for one of two reasons. First, it may happen that an individual can take good counsel, judge, and command with respect to certain genuinely good ends, but that the genuinely good end “is not the common end of all human life, but of some special activity.”\textsuperscript{138} Secondly, it may be that an individual is prudent enough to know the

\textsuperscript{136}Aquinas, II-II.47.13 : “Cum enim prudens sit qui bene disponit ea quae sunt agenda propter aliquem bonum finem, ille qui propter malum finem aliqua disponit congruentia illi fini habet falsam prudentiam, inquantum illud quod accipit pro fine non est vere bonum, sed secundum similitudinem; sicut dicitur aliquid bonus latro; hoc enim modo potest secundum similitudinem dici prudens latro, qui convenientes vias adinventit ad latrocinandum.”

\textsuperscript{137}It is important that for Aquinas, a habitual ability to achieve means to bad ends is necessarily a different habit from the habitual ability to find fitting means to good ends. That I am adept at finding ways to satisfy my sinful desires does not mean that, should I alter my end, I would therefore be adept and cunning at finding ways to achieve good ends. If this seems counter-intuitive at first, a little thought indicates that this is simply a more insightful understanding of human nature. Someone who is extraordinarily good at embezzling money might not be equally efficient, upon having a change of heart, at making money for his company. For while his embezzling was motivated by greed, he would not immediately have the relevant desire – the good of the company – characteristic of the contrary habit.

\textsuperscript{138}Aquinas, II-II.47.13 : “non est communis finis totius humanae vitae, sed aliquidus specialis negotii.”
appropriate course of action, but lacks the principal act of prudence, command. In both these instances, there is something of true prudence. In the first, a genuinely good end is sought and achieved. Nonetheless, the first instance is not true prudence, because the end sought is not the end of all human life. Aquinas says that this sort of prudence can be in either the sinner or the just man, though the second form of incomplete prudence, where man knows the appropriate course of action but lacks command, is only found in sinners: “But imperfect prudence is common to good and bad, especially that which is imperfect on account of a particular end: for that which is imperfect on account of a defect in the principal act cannot be except in sinners.”

Finally, Aquinas defines the third and highest form of prudence, prudence “simpliciter,” which cannot exist in sinners. This form of prudence is the prudence which is “both true and perfect, which counsels, judges and commands rightly about the good end of all human life, and this alone is called prudence simpliciter, which cannot be in sinners.” To have prudence “simpliciter” is to be well ordered with respect to the whole of life, “totius vitae,” which is to possess precisely what the sinner lacks – the rightly ordered affection for God, or charity, which is only bestowed with grace.

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139 Aquinas, II-II.47.13 : “Secunda autem prudentia est quidem vera, quia adinventit vias accommodatas ad finem vere bonum, sed est imperfecta duplici ratione. Uno modo quia illud bonum quod accipit pro fine non est communis finis totius humanae vitae, sed alius specialis negotii...Alio modo quia deficit in principali actu prudentiae, puta cum aliquid recte consiliatur, et bene judicat etiam de his quae pertinent ad totam vitam, sed non efficaciter praecipit.”

140 Aquinas, II-II.47.13 : “Prudentia autem imperfecta est communis bonis et malis, maxime illa quae est imperfecta propter finem particularem: nam illa quae est imperfecta propter defectum principalis actus etiam non est nisi in malis.”

141 Aquinas, II-II.47.13 : “Prudentia est et vera et perfecta quae ad bonem finem totius vitae recte consiliatur, judicat et praecipit; et haec sola dicitur prudentia simpliciter; quae in paccatoribus esse non potest.”
Though Aquinas does not use the infused/acquired vocabulary in this article, the categories of infused and acquired virtue are clearly operative in article 13. Specifically, it is clear that prudence simpliciter must be closely tied to, if not identical with, infused prudence. For the sinner is prevented from the possession of this kind of prudence precisely because, notwithstanding the ability he may have to order himself well with regard to assorted truly good ends, he does not have that ability with regard to the end “totius vitae”. He cannot do so because his affections are disordered, and his affections are disordered because he is not united to God in charity. The parallels between this statement and Aquinas’ distinction between infused and acquired virtue are obvious, for while the acquired virtues can exist in sinners and remain with the loss of grace, the infused virtues do not. That this is Aquinas’ intent in making the distinction between the various kinds of prudence is also indicated by his response to the second objection, which argues that since the sinner can possess faith he must also possess prudence. Aquinas replies that faith in its essence only involves knowing, and hence can be present without rightly ordered affection. Prudence, however, requires that man’s affections also be appropriately disposed.\footnote{Aquinas, II-II.47.13 R.O.2} If Aquinas’ stipulation that prudence simpliciter cannot exist unless one is rightly ordered with respect to the end of all life is not evidence enough that he is speaking here of infused prudence, his response to the objection about faith should settle the issue. For faith can be present in its essence without the rightly ordered affection that stems from charity; prudence simpliciter, says Aquinas, cannot.
If Aquinas’ definition of prudence simpliciter does indeed correspond to infused prudence, then Aquinas’ distinction between complete and incomplete prudence provides the first indication—an indication which he will treat more fully in article 14— that there is a real and important gap between acquired and infused prudence. Acquired prudence, recall, is a *habitus* man can achieve through his own powers, an acquired disposition to order oneself well with respect to a genuinely good end. It can exist without grace and is not lost with mortal sin. All of this has striking similarities to Aquinas’ discussion of “true but incomplete” prudence, the type of prudence that can exist in the sinner and the just man alike. For the sort of prudence that directs man well with regard to specialized ends but not with regard to the end of all human life sounds very similar to the sort of prudence that might be possessed by the individual who lacks grace.

One further point in article 13 that is especially relevant to the distinction between infused and acquired prudence. Aquinas’ definition of prudence simpliciter as “prudence with respect to the end of all human life” leaves room for it to be *disassociated*, in an interesting way, from the other forms of prudence. Prudence simpliciter may co-exist with the lesser form of prudence, but the lesser form of prudence can exist in sinners as well. The immediate question, of course, is whether prudence simpliciter can exist without incomplete prudence, and if so, what prudence simpliciter looks like. An answer to these questions, is provided in article 14.
The above implies that for Aquinas true prudence is the prudence that exists in all who have grace, and that this prudence must be infused prudence.\footnote{Note that it does not necessarily follow, from the fact that prudence simpliciter cannot be in sinners, that it in fact is in all who have grace. Nonetheless I believe this is implied by Aquinas’ explanation of why prudence simpliciter cannot be in sinners.} However, although article 13 seems to anticipate some distinctions between infused and acquired prudence, it raises as many questions as it answers. For questions about what prudence simpliciter does and whether it can exist without the lesser, incomplete form of prudence remain. Both of these questions are answered in article 14.

Article 14 asks whether prudence is in all who have grace, and Aquinas responds to this question with a brief, emphatic, “yes.” The readiness with which Aquinas affirms that prudence is in fact in all who have grace should serve to remove any residual doubt over the question of whether or not prudence simpliciter can be identified with infused prudence. While Aquinas responded to the question of whether prudence could exist in sinners by making distinctions between perfect and imperfect forms of prudence, he needs no distinctions to argue that prudence is indeed in all who have grace. The virtues are united, so that one cannot have one virtue unless he has all the others. But to have grace is to have charity, and hence all the virtues. Since prudence is a virtue, it necessarily follows that anyone who has grace has prudence as well.\footnote{Aquinas, II-II.47.14} The entire body of Aquinas’ reply to article 14 comprises no more than three sentences, and this in itself is significant, for it indicates that no distinctions –at least with regard to the completeness or
incompleteness of the prudence possessed—need to be made about the kind of prudence that is possessed by all who have grace. The prudence possessed by all who have grace simply is true prudence, because through it one is ordered correctly with respect to the end of all human life.\footnote{Indeed, those who comment on this article (Thomas Gilby, for instance) readily acknowledge that the article has to do with infused prudence. What they do not seem to consider is the location of this article, and the parallel discussion in article 13, which indicates that infused prudence is not an isolated or tangential consideration, but in fact prudence simpliciter—the only true form of prudence and the real focus of the treatise on prudence.}

In the replies to the objections, Aquinas offers helpful insights about how the prudence referred to in the body of the article differs from other forms of prudence, and these insights serve to answer the questions that article 13 raises. First and most importantly, he provides a definition of what infused prudence does. Infused prudence, Aquinas says, gives man the ability to take counsel, judge, and command in “matters necessary for salvation.” This characterization of infused prudence arises in Aquinas’ reply to the objection that many of those who have grace lack the industry that the acquisition of prudence requires. Because such people lack the necessary prerequisite for prudence, it seems that they could not possess prudence, even if they do have grace.\footnote{Aquinas, II-II.47.14}

In his reply, Aquinas returns once again to the idea of having prudence with respect to “totius vitae,” and what is especially interesting is that it seems possible to have such prudence without having prudence with respect to some genuinely good, but incomplete ends. To the objection that some of those who have grace lack the diligence that prudence requires, Aquinas replies that if one who has grace lacks the requisite
industry in many aspects of his life, grace which “teaches all things” provides man with the diligence he needs:

“Industry is twofold. There is one kind which is sufficient for those things which are necessary for salvation; and such industry is given to all who have grace, whose anointing teaches all things, as is said in John 1. But there is another fuller industry, through which someone is able to provide for himself and others, not only concerning those things which are necessary for salvation, but even about anything whatsoever pertaining to human life; and such industry is not in all who have grace.”

What is bestowed through infused prudence, then, is not prudence in all things, but prudence in matters necessary for salvation; or prudence with regard to the end of all human life.

Aquinas’ reply to this objection is important insofar as it serves to drive a wedge between infused and acquired prudence. Even a man who lacks prudence in other areas of life has, if he has grace, at least the prudence required to act rightly in matters necessary for salvation. Such a man might not even be able to deliberate well and hence not himself be of good counsel, but if he has grace, he at least knows that he must seek help in his deliberations, and he can discern good advice from bad. Prudence simpliciter, then, which is in all who have grace, is very different from the true but incomplete

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147 Aquinas, II-II.47.14: “duplex est industria. Una quidem quae est sufficiens ad ea quae sunt de necessitate salutis; et talis industria datur omnibus habentibus gratiam, quos unctio docet de omnibus, ut dicitur I Joan. Est autem alia industria plenior, per quam aliquis sibi et aliis potest providere, non solum de his quae sunt necessari ad salutem, sed etiam de quibuscumque pertinentibus ad humanam vitam; et talis industria non est in omnibus habentibus gratiam.”

148 For the purposes of this discussion, I will refrain from speculating on how “matters necessary for salvation” are to be distinguished from those that are not, for such a question clearly involves manifold difficulties. Luckily, the necessary distinctions can be made without speculating on this issue.

149 Aquinas, II-II.47.14 R.O.2: “illi qui indigent regi consilio alieno, saltem in hoc sibi ipsi consulere sciant, si gratiam habent, ut aliorum requirant consilia, et discernant consilia bona a malis.”
prudence that is acquired through time and effort and which can be in the sinner and the just man alike. This sort of prudence doesn’t give man the skills required for applying right decision to action in all areas of life nor even give him the ability to determine through his own reason the appropriate course of action in every circumstance. What it does do, however, no matter what his intellectual capacities, and whether or not he possesses acquired prudence, is give him prudence in matters necessary for salvation. And this means that any one who has grace is able to take counsel, judge and command rightly in matters involving the “finis totius humanae vitae.”

4.2.2 The Gift of Counsel

From the above, it should be clear that Aquinas believes true prudence – infused prudence – is not only present but operative in those who lack acquired prudence. Though one might have vague intuitions about what this translates to in practice – it might mean, for instance, that an individual who lacks prudence in ordering his monetary affairs or in the ordering of other aspects of his life has the prudence necessary to perform an act of martyrdom – just how this ability operates remains perplexing. How does a man who either lacks the ability or the “diligence” required to order the most basic of human affairs manage to “apply right reason to conduct” in vastly more difficult situations? Certainly, he is only able to do so because God bestows the ability and sustains him in the performance of it. But it is of primary importance that man’s free agency be preserved, and consequently it must be the case that God provides this assistance without vitiating free action. Aquinas’ treatment of the gift of counsel provides important insights
regarding just how this occurs. The gift of counsel, Aquinas shows, disposes man to be
prompted by the Holy Spirit in a manner suited to rational creatures.\textsuperscript{150}

After describing the nature and the parts of prudence and before considering the
vices which destroy prudence, Aquinas devotes a question to the gift of counsel, which
"perfects and completes" prudence. The gift of counsel, which is possessed by all who
have grace, comprises a crucial component of the treatise on prudence, for it is impossible
to understand the operation of infused prudence without considering the gift of counsel.
By introducing the gift of counsel as a component of acts of infused prudence, Aquinas
indicates an awareness of man’s dependence on divine aid in acts ordered towards his
true end, but at the same time demonstrates a concern to preserve the integrity of free
human agency. The gift of counsel assists the individual who has infused prudence
without forcing his actions.

Aquinas ties the necessity of the gift of counsel directly to the type of action
natural to man. Counsel, as the name implies, has to do with taking advice or
deliberating, and is the first of the three acts (counsel, judgement and command) involved
in prudence. The principal act of prudence is command because the act of the practical
reason is not successful unless it issues forth in action. Nonetheless, the ability to take
counsel is also crucial to the act of prudence, for unless one can consider the appropriate
aspects of the situation, or rather, see the situation in the correct light, one cannot arrive at
the correct action. But important as counsel is, it is also highly problematic, for man’s
finite intellect limits his ability to take counsel. Man cannot consider every aspect of a

\textsuperscript{150}Aquinas, II-II.52.1
given situation, and because he cannot his counsels are uncertain. Thus man needs divine assistance in order to arrive at the proper course of action, and this assistance comes in the form of the gift of counsel, whereby “man is directed as though he received counsel from God; even as in human things, they who are not themselves capable of counsel require counsel from wiser men.”

Aquinas clearly believes the gift of counsel to play an integral role in the activity of infused prudence. A lower principle of motion is perfected when it is moved by a higher, and it is in just this way that man’s reason is perfected when, through the gift of counsel, God aids its deliberations. Thus the gift of counsel is not separate from prudence, but perfects it.

In stipulating the gift of counsel as the means by which God moves man in acts of infused prudence, Aquinas demonstrates a concern for the preservation of free human agency. The gifts are dispositions that render man amenable to the divine motion, but God moves each thing in the manner appropriate to it. Since the type of action appropriate to rational beings is “to be moved to act through reasoned inquiry,” it is appropriate that God move man to acts of infused prudence by aiding the process of reasoning through the gift of counsel. Though prudence involves not only counsel, but

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151 Aquinas, II-II.52.1 : “homo dirigitur quasi consilio a Deo accepto; sicut etiam in rebus humanis, qui sibi ipsi non sufficiunt in inquisitione consilli a sapientioribus consilia requirunt.”

152 Aquinas, II-II.52.2

153 Aquinas, II-II.52.2 : “Principium motivum inferius adjuvatur praeceipue et perficitur per hoc quod movetur a superiori motivo principio, sicut corpus in hoc quod movetur a spiritu. Manifestum est autem quod rectitudo rationis humanae comparatur ad rationem divinam sicut pricipium motivum inferius quod movetur ad superius, et refertur in ipsum; ratio enim aeterna est suprema regula omnis humanae rectitudinis. Et ideo juvatur secundum quod regulatur et movetur a Spiritu Sancto; quod pertinet ad donum consili, ut dictum est. Unde donum consili respondet prudentiae, sicut ipsam adjuvans et perficiens.”
judgement and choice, it is fitting that man be moved through counsel, since judgement
and choice denote actions to which man moves himself. The gift of counsel thus makes
up for the infirmity of human reason without destroying free human agency. “The sons of
God are moved by the Holy Spirit according to their own mode, which is to say
conserving free will, which is the faculty of reason and will; thus inasmuch as the reason
is moved by the Holy Spirit, or instructed about what is to be done, the gift of counsel is
suitable for the sons of God.” 154 Through counsel God moves the mind to ponder certain
things, but he does not force the eventual act. 155

Aquinas’ final statement about the gift of counsel, and one which is especially
helpful in forming an understanding of what the act of infused prudence consists in, is
that the gift of counsel corresponds to the beatitude of mercy. Counsel guides and directs
mercy, (or grief for another’s distress) which is the effect of charity, and the greatest of
the virtues that relate to one’s neighbor. 156 Although Aquinas gives a number of reasons
for the relationship between counsel and mercy, he gives the most illuminating reason by

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154 Aquinas, II-II.52.1 : “fili Dei aguntur a Spiritu Sanctu secundum modum eorum, salvo scilicet 
libero arbitrio, quod est facultas voluntatis et rationis; sic inquantum ratio a Spiritu Sancto movetur, vel
instruitur de agendis, competit filiis Dei donum consilii.”

155 Nevertheless, it is also important to understand that God’s assistance in acts of infused virtue
does not end with the donation of the gifts. For it must be the case that man not merely has good counsel,
but acts, and that he acts is due to command. Thus, given that one who has infused virtue can command in
acts necessary for salvation and not in other areas, it would seem that God must assist him in this as well.
For more on this, see LaGrange.

156 Aquinas, II-II.30.3 Mercy, unlike joy and peace, is a distinct virtue from charity because while
joy and peace add nothing to charity, mercy adds a new aspect, “the misery of the person pitied.”
citing the following text from Augustine: “Counsel belongs to mercy, because the only remedy destroying such great evil is to release others, and to give.”\

Aquinas’ description of prudence simpliciter and the gift of counsel, yields a preliminary understanding of how infused prudence functions, even in those who lack the acquired virtues. Even if one lacks prudence in other aspects of his life, if he has grace he possesses the prudence necessary for salvation, which means that in matters concerning the end of all human life God infuses in him the ability to take counsel, judge, and command as he ought. Such an individual is able to take counsel, moreover, because he has the benefit of God’s advice in his deliberation and reasoning. Through the gift of counsel God enables man to see (at least some) situations in a different light. Moreover, the situations which are particularly suited for counsel, or at least, those where counsel is particularly appropriate, are those which require mercy.

### 4.2.3 The Preservation of Infused Prudence

Aquinas ends the treatise on prudence by addressing the three vices—imprudence, negligence, and false prudence— that are opposed to prudence. With regard to each vice, Aquinas considers first whether it is a sin and secondly, whether it is a mortal sin. Although the details of these three vices are interesting in themselves, my goal in this section is not so much to provide a thorough analysis of the three vices as to point out some features of Aquinas’ treatment of them. In what follows, I want to point out that

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157 Aquinas, II-II.52.4 : “Consilium convenit misericordibus, quia unicum remedium est de tantis malis erui, dimittere aliis, et dare.”

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Aquinas’ attention is consistently occupied by the question of whether an action opposed to prudence removes man from the life of grace and thereby destroys prudence altogether. That he does so both indicates that Aquinas has infused prudence at the forefront of his mind and sheds more light on the nature of infused prudence.

All three of the vices opposed to prudence are sins, at least in certain situations. To be imprudent is to either lack the prudence one ought to have or to act against the deliberation of right reason. \(^{158}\) The first type of imprudence is sinful insofar as one is responsible for not possessing the prudence he ought to have, while the second type is always sinful, because man’s action deviates from the standard of right reason. \(^{159}\) Negligence occurs when one fails to take counsel before acting, and is a sin, says Aquinas, because “every defect of a due act has the aspect of sin.” \(^{160}\) The various kinds of false prudence can be, but are not necessarily sins. Prudence of the flesh, for instance, is a sin only when goods of the flesh are made ends in themselves. \(^{161}\)

Aquinas’ discussion of each vice, however, carefully distinguishes between the instances in which the contrary action is a sin against prudence and instances in which the action destroys prudence altogether. An action may be opposed to prudence without “damaging what is necessary for salvation,” and thus without destroying the prudence that is bestowed by grace. Moreover, Aquinas consistently describes the actions which

\(^{158}\) Aquinas, II-II.53.1

\(^{159}\) Aquinas, II-II.53.1

\(^{160}\) Aquinas, II-II.54.1 : “omnis defectus debiti actus habet rationem peccati.”

\(^{161}\) Aquinas, II-II.55.1
“damage what is necessary for salvation” as those in which man chooses the contrary action out of contempt for God. If a man is imprudent or neglects to take counsel, but does so without contempt or scorn, his sin is a venial one, and his action does not render him incapable of participating in the divine life.

Aquinas’ distinction between mortal and venial sin indicates an awareness of the distinction between infused and acquired virtue, and also provides helpful insights regarding how the infused virtues might exist without the acquired. An individual who has grace may still be weak; and in his weakness he may act against the dictates of right reason. Yet it is possible that he act against these dictates without scorning God, and without contempt for God. What is implicit here, it seems, is the possibility that one can lack command with respect to some genuinely good end, but not lack command with respect to the end of all life. When such a man views a choice under the aspect choosing a genuinely good end which is not the end of all life, he fails. Yet so long as he does not fail to exercise command when presented with choices that concern the end of all life, he does not lose infused prudence.\(^{162}\)

In this section, I argued that Aquinas does devote a considerable amount of attention to infused prudence, and does recognize that infused prudence can operate in the absence of acquired prudence. To have infused prudence is to have prudence with respect to the end of all human life; in matters necessary for salvation, and this prudence is possessed by all who have grace. Those who have the prudence “necessary for salvation”

\(^{162}\)This is not to say, of course, that his venial sins do not make it more difficult for him not to sin mortally.
are guided in their deliberations by the gift of counsel, and thus are enabled to both know and do the correct action, at least in matters that have to do with the end of all life. Moreover, this infused aid is not withdrawn from those who fail to follow right reason, so long as they do not “destroy what is necessary for salvation.”

This description illustrates how one might simultaneously possess both infused prudence and acquired dispositions to vice. For one might, when he explicitly understands an action as one that requires him to choose between love of God and some lesser good, consistently choose the love of God; yet lack the command required to choose the good of reason in lesser instances. In the final section of this chapter, I want to offer an example of such a person.

4.3 The Whiskey Priest

On the basis of Aquinas’ text alone, it may be hard to understand the importance of the distinction between infused and acquired virtue. A conceptual account of the importance of the infused virtue, and a description of how this kind of virtue functions, even in one who clearly lacks the acquired virtues, is needed. For this reason, this chapter will close with an examination of Graham Greene’s whiskey priest, who exemplifies in a quite remarkable way Aquinas’ statements about the possession of infused prudence. Because Greene’s whiskey priest clearly lacks the acquired virtues, yet does seem to have infused virtues, he is extraordinarily suited to the present discussion.

Graham Greene’s novel *The Power and the Glory* tells the story of the last priest to remain in Mexico during a time of persecution. The once normal, clean living priest
has undergone drastic changes during the persecution. He has let himself become
controlled by fear, and in his fear he has begun to drink heavily; at some point he – in his
own words – gave into despair and fathered a child. The priest eventually repents his sins,
but he becomes a coward and a drunk. No longer rendered inactive by despair, he resumes
his priestly duties, but he is a thoroughly broken and miserable character, always
frightened and always drunk. The peasants who once revered him now refer to him,
derisively, as “the whiskey priest.”

Yet for all his timidity and drunkenness, Greene shows us that the priest has a
certain strength. For the same man who in most situations can’t turn down a drink proves
himself to be capable of heroically difficult actions, actions that many more temperate
and courageous men would be incapable of. More importantly, that he acts heroically in
certain situations is even more characteristic of him than his drunkenness and fear. The
priest continually turns away from opportunities to escape in order to fulfill his duties as a
priest, and at the end of the book he even returns from safety to what he knows is a trap
on the chance that a dying man might want to confess. Moreover, when he is focused on
his duties as a priest, even his fear and drunkenness count for little. He spends his last
peso not on brandy but on the wine that will allow him to say mass, and walks cheerfully
into a trap in the hopes of saving a soul. Most importantly of all, the priest by his own
account is somehow a better person than he was prior to the persecution. For although he
wasn’t weighed down by his vicious dispositions, he was also incapable of love. Now,
burdened by sin and constantly failing to overcome his passions, he feels a genuine love
for the people he serves. He sees good in places where he could not before, and comes to
believe that hate is nothing but a failure of imagination. He is even able to pity the dissipated mestizo who seeks to betray him, and realizes with delight that his executioner is a good man.

The whiskey priest thus presents us with a puzzle that perplexes even the characters in the novel. The priest is, in many ways, worthy of censure and contempt. Yet at the same time the priest does things that stronger men – men capable of far more self control in every other aspect of their lives – would be incapable of. And the priest does these things repeatedly. It is as much, or rather more, in character for him to give up a night’s sleep to hear a confession as it is for him to drink too much brandy. How is it that such a broken man, devoid of the characteristics necessary for a good and praiseworthy life, is capable of such heroically difficult actions? How is it that a coward and a drunk manages to be a martyr and a saint?

As the reader has most likely anticipated, I will claim that the priest is capable of these extraordinary actions because, though he lacks the acquired virtues, he possesses no small measure of infused virtue. I will make this argument by relating excerpts of the novel to my earlier discussion of infused prudence. I will argue that the priest’s heroic actions display prudence “in matters necessary for salvation,” and that they are particularly characterized by a certain kind of counsel, the counsel that “guides mercy.” The priest is capable of exercising command only when he views the action in the proper light. Finally, I will argue that even when the priest acts contrary to right reason, as he so often does, he does so without “damaging what is indispensable for salvation.”

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4.3.1 The Heroism of the Whiskey Priest

In this section, I want to focus on the instances in the novel when the priest performs good actions. These instances, at least those which Greene describes at length, follow along identical lines. The priest deliberates, and at a certain point in his deliberations, he sees the situation in a certain light, a light which enables him to feel pity for the person who needs his help. Having viewed the situation in this light, the priest is able to act as he ought, and even able to do so cheerfully. I will argue that these actions are best understood as displaying the presence of the gift of counsel. In what follows I will focus on two situations in which Greene’s description of the priest’s decision is particularly detailed.

In the first situation, the priest meets a woman whose child has been killed by a dangerous criminal, “the American.” It is night, and they are both in danger, not only of being caught in an approaching storm, but also of the American, who is still lurking in the area. The priest wants to take shelter, but the woman will not leave her dead child. The cowardly priest embarks on what is for him a typical train of thought: “The priest suddenly shivered: the ache which had pressed like a stiff hat-rim across his forehead all day dug deeper in. He thought: I have to get to shelter—a man’s first duty is to himself—even the church taught that, in a way...”\textsuperscript{164} But even as the priest begins to leave the woman, he is “tormented” by thoughts, not only of what might happen to the woman, but of the danger the woman poses to the American’s soul:

\textsuperscript{164}Greene, p.155
Concern, not only for the woman, but for his “brother,” the American, is instrumental in the priest’s return. When he is able to focus only on the dangers the situation poses to himself, he flees. But when he is able to see the situation in a different light, he is able to return.

The second situation occurs at the end of the book, when the priest is finally captured. The priest has reached safety, and is on his way to the capital, where he will finally have the opportunity to confess his sins and receive absolution. However, he has barely set out when he is approached by the “half-caste,” the mestizo who has sought throughout the novel to betray him. The mestizo gives the priest a note from the American. I have cited the entire passage, because it offers crucial insights into the priest’s thoughts:

“The priest turned the paper and read a single phrase written in English in blunt pencil: “For Christ’s sake, father...” The mule, unbeaten, lapsed into a slow heavy walk: the priest made no attempt to urge it on: this piece of paper left no doubt whatever: he felt the trap close again, irrevocably. He pulled the mule up and sat thinking, facing south. He was quite certain this was a trap—probably the half-caste had suggested it: he was after the reward. But it was a fact that the American was there, dying. He thought of the deserted banana plantation where something had happened and the Indian child lay dead on the maize: there was no question at all

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165Greene, p.156
that he was needed. A man with all that on his soul...The oddest thing of all was that he felt quite cheerful.”

Here as in the previous situation, the priest is able to act in spite of his fear. He returns to danger, here to certain death, and here as before the same kind of thought process occurs. When the priest sees that he is needed, when he realizes that without him someone will die “with all that on his soul,” he is able to return. He is even able to do so “quite cheerfully.”

These two situations are important, not only because they best exhibit the features that accompany the priest’s good actions throughout the book, but because they have striking similarities to Aquinas’ discussion of infused prudence, particularly with regard to the gift of counsel. For in each such instance, the priest’s deliberations take a marked turn once he is able to view the situation in a certain light. Until he is able to see the person who needs his help as a child of God, he is not able to feel love for them. And only when the priest is able to feel love for the person in question, is he able to see what the situation requires of him and exercise the command necessary to carry the action through to its completion. It seems odd that someone who cannot even be prudent about how much brandy to drink should be able to deliberate correctly in these more difficult situations, unless his thoughts are being guided, and thus, when he sees the situation in a certain light, he possesses the command he lacks in other situations. It is particularly interesting as well that the priest’s thoughts are guided in this way in precisely the

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166 Greene p.180
situations which Aquinas says are most suited to the gift of counsel: those that require mercy.

The priest not only has the gift of counsel, but is capable of exercising the principal act of prudence, command, in “matters necessary for salvation.” Whatever the priest’s weaknesses, when he is faced with a choice between fulfilling the duties of a priest and satisfying his passions, he chooses to fulfill his priestly duties. He tells the child at the banana plantation that he drinks because he is afraid, and that with enough brandy he’d face the devil himself, but when he must choose between buying brandy and buying communion wine, he buys the wine and even tries to give away his brandy to keep the police chief from drinking the wine. Instances such as these are repeated throughout the book. The priest is capable of any action, so long as he sees that his vocation requires it of him, or so long as he can see the recipient of the action as a child of God.

4.3.2 The Vices of the Whiskey Priest

No matter how spectacular his good actions, the priest still falls far short of the man he ought to be, and he himself is aware of this. That he falls short is due to his own failings; to bad dispositions that have gradually accumulate and which threaten, as he himself says to “one day grow up and choke off the source of grace.” Nonetheless, these bad dispositions and the acts they give rise to are such that they do not (immediately) destroy the priest’s infused prudence.

\[167\] Greene, p. 60
Although the priest sins continually, he does so without “contempt” and thereby avoids damaging what is essential for salvation. Consider a typical instance of the priest’s failure to adhere to right reason. When the priest reaches safety, before the mestizo lures him into the trap, he begins to fall back into his derelict ways. The tavern owner, knowing that he is a “whiskey priest” offers him a drink, and the priest after a brief battle, accepts:

“The priest drank. There was no point in not drinking. He had the habit now—like piety and the parish voice...“he told himself—in time it will be alright, I shall pull up, I only ordered three bottles this time. They will be the last I’ll ever drink, I won’t need drink there—he knew he lied.”

In this situation, the priest certainly acts badly. But it would be difficult to argue that his action exhibits “contempt for God”. The priest acts as he does here because he is weak. He knows what he should do, even if he lies to himself, but he lacks the command required to do it.

If the priest is understood to possess the infused virtues and lack the acquired, the apparently contradictory aspects of his life make much more sense. He is sinful, and he knows that he is sinful, but he also through God’s grace has the ability to overcome his sinfulness. Even if he cannot do this in every situation, he can at least do it in some, in the most important situations, and that he can is his salvation. Grace and the infused virtues enable him to struggle against the sin that is in him.

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168 Greene, p.170
CHAPTER 5

A READING OF THE TREATISE ON FORTITUDE

5.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapters, I argued both that Aquinas makes a clear distinction between the infused and acquired virtues and that this distinction is operative in his treatment of the virtues. In the previous chapter, I argued that significant sections of the treatise on prudence reflect a clear pre-occupation with prudence as an infused, not as an acquired, virtue. The very arguments which I raised there, however, anticipate a much stronger thesis. For if, as I argued in the previous chapter, prudence “simpliciter,” the prudence concerned with the end totius vitae, is identical with infused prudence, could it be that Aquinas’ primary concern, not merely in the treatise on prudence but in the entire secunda pars is infused virtue? Could it be that the true subject of his detailed treatises on the virtues is infused virtue, and not, as is commonly assumed, acquired?

In what follows, I wish to present a reading of the treatise on fortitude which, if correct, supports the above hypothesis. I shall argue that when the treatise on fortitude is
read as a whole, as Aquinas intends, it becomes clear that the fortitude he describes is an infused, not an acquired virtue.

5.2 The Treatise on Fortitude

“As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to behold? A reed shaken by the wind? Why then did you go out? To see a man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, those who wear soft raiment are in king’s houses. Why then did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, ‘Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee.’ Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has risen no greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and men of violence take it by force.”

In one of her letters, Flannery O’Connor responds to the charge that a mutual friend is “basically irreligious” with characteristic sharpness: “She may be basically irreligious, but we are not judged by what we are basically. The Lord is not interested in success or gracefulness. We are judged by how hard we use what we have been given. She tries, and she tries violently. The violent bear it away.” These powerful lines, which echo Matthew’s gospel, capture the heart of Aquinas’ treatise on fortitude. Fortitude as Aquinas is primarily concerned to understand it, I shall argue in this chapter, is about spiritual warfare – about the virtues required to “take heaven by storm.” Success in this new and most difficult battle comes, as Flannery O’Connor so insightfully saw,

Matthew 11, 7-12

169 Flannery O’Connor (Sally Fitzgerald, ed.), The Habit of Being, p.306

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only through violent effort: only through using what has been given, and using it hard. It is only when this sort of battle as the true subject of Aquinas’ statements on fortitude that his reason for positing martyrdom as the principal act of fortitude becomes clear. For it is not merely that martyrdom is a particularly glorious instance of courage; it is that martyrdom is, at the end of the day, the act that every other act of “spiritual warfare” looks to. For in every lesser act of true courage, there must be elements of the same subjugation of self to God, the same willingness to “use hard what we have been given,” and the same patient pursuit of a distant though much loved end.

The proposed reading of the treatise on fortitude may sound odd; more than odd, it may simply seem ridiculous. Where, one might well ask, are these glowing references to spiritual warfare, to taking the kingdom of heaven “by violence”? Is not Aquinas’ treatment of fortitude considerably more dry and considerably less exciting than I have made it out to be? Is it not, at most, a repetition of Aristotle’s remarks on the same subject with some few small albeit laudable alterations? The references are there, but they are understated, and they only come to the fore when the treatise on fortitude is read as a unified whole, as Aquinas himself intended.

Because my reading of fortitude is so foreign to standard accounts of the virtue, and because this reading hinges on texts which are not typically considered to be integral elements of the treatise, this chapter approach the virtue of fortitude in a rather backwards fashion. First, it will argue that attention to Aquinas’ introduction to the secunda pars indicates that, in his eyes at least, neither fortitude nor any other virtue can be fully
understood unless one attends to the gifts and precepts associated with it. Having established this, this chapter will then look to Aquinas’ discussion of the gift and precepts attached to courage in order to consider what, if anything, his discussion there might tell us about the virtue of fortitude itself. Then, in the bulk of this chapter, courage will be considered in terms of the four virtues which Aquinas posits as integral parts of it, and demonstrate that Aquinas’ discussion there, read in the proper light, supports the description of courage implied in Aquinas’ discussion of the gifts and precepts attached to it. Finally, the chapter will close with a consideration of martyrdom, the principal act of courage, and argue that in this act all of the parts of courage, together with its corresponding gift, are most fully exemplified. As will be evident from this discussion, for Aquinas the only truly relevant form of courage is the courage that looks to, and finds its fullest completion in, the act of martyrdom.

5.3 Reading the Secunda Pars

An author’s introduction is essential to any work, and in a work of such length and complexity as the Summa, an introduction is even more important. Although Aquinas provides introductions, not only for each part, but for each individual treatise, these introductions have received little if any attention. While it is true that many of these introductions simply seem to contain a list of the questions that comprise the treatise, it is also true that they often provide clues which are essential to an understanding of Aquinas’ broader goals. The introduction to the secunda pars is particularly important in this
regard. For in the brief introduction to his detailed accounts of the individual virtues, Aquinas provides not merely the reasons that motivate the structure he has chosen, but an indication of how the structure as a whole is to be read.

The first important point that emerges from Aquinas’ introduction to the *secunda pars* is the fact that, although a portion of the second part is concerned with “special cases,” the majority of the second part – the treatises on the virtues – is intended to apply equally to all. In his introduction to the second part, Aquinas notes that “moral matters” can be spoken of in two ways. They can be spoken of first as regards moral matters “in themselves,” in terms of the individual virtues and vices, and secondly as regards “the various states of man,” namely those states having to do with the active and contemplative lives, “or any other differences among men.” Aquinas then states that the second part will first consider “moral matters in themselves,” and secondly moral matters as they apply to the various states of man. When this assertion is compared with the outline of the second part, the division is evident. For after the treatises on the individual virtues, Aquinas turns to questions about the active and contemplative lives, about mysticism, the pastoral and religious lives, and so forth. The important point that results from this division is the fact that the treatises on the virtues are treatises about moral matters “in themselves” – these treatises, therefore, apply equally to all men, and are not intended, in part or whole, for some specific fraction of the population, or for some specific “point of view.” The special cases of morality, as it were, are reserved for the end of the second part.
The second important point that emerges from Aquinas’ introduction to the second part is that the individual treatises on the virtues are themselves intended to be read as coherent units. They are not fragmented discussions, where various things with some remote relationship to each other are lumped into the same treatise, but a cohesive set of questions, each of which can only be understood in and through the other. Each individual account of a given virtue includes not only an account of the virtue itself, but of the gifts and precepts attached to that virtue. Aquinas says has chosen this structure because any other system would have involved unnecessary repetition:

First, therefore, we will consider in a special way those things which pertain to all the states of man; second, those which pertain to some specific state. But as regards the first, it should be considered that, if we were to treat the virtues, gifts, vices and precepts separately, we would have to say the same thing many times.171

Treating the virtues, gifts and precepts separately would involve needless repetition, Aquinas explains, because it is impossible to understand any one of the three unless one also understands the other two: “For one who wishes to treat this commandment “thou shalt not commit adultery,” sufficiently must necessarily examine that adultery, which is a sin, the knowledge of which depends on the opposite virtue.” 172 Considering each virtue in conjunction with the gifts and precepts associated with it, then, is simply a means of

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171 Aquinas, II-II intro : Primo ergo considerabimus specialiter de his quae pertinent ad omnes hominum status; secundo vero, specialiter de his quae pertinent ad determinatos status. Est autem considerandum circa primum quod, si seorsum determinaremus de virtutibus, donis, vitiis et praeceptis, oporteret idem multoties dicere

172 Aquinas, II-II intro : qui enim sufficienter vult tractare de hoc praecepto, non moechaberis, necesse habet inquirere de adulterio, quod est quoddam peccatum, cuius etiam cognitio dependet ex cognitione oppositae virtutis.
stream-lining the discussion: “Therefore it will be shorter and more expedient if the virtue and its corresponding gift, and the opposing vices, and the affirmative and negative precepts, are considered in the same treatise.”

These two points, which Aquinas puts forth as the very groundwork of his project, provide essential information regarding how the treatises on the virtues are to be read. The statements Aquinas makes in the treatises on the virtues are intended to apply equally to all, and must be read in this light: neither the consideration of the virtue itself nor any part of that treatment is reserved for a special segment of the population. Insofar as moral matter is under discussion, the statements Aquinas makes are intended to apply. More importantly, the treatises on the virtue must be understood as coherent wholes, and when they are examined, they have to be examined as such. Aquinas’ statements above indicate that, were one to examine a virtue without examining the gifts and precepts associated with it, one would have left his job unfinished. The virtues, gifts, and precepts, are all elements of a cohesive whole and must be so understood.

If these introductory remarks are taken seriously – as they should be – they provide an ethic for reading the second part. Specifically, they require one to attempt to find a unified account of each individual virtue and of the virtues as a whole, an account which incorporates rather than excludes the relevant gifts and precepts. Moreover, reading the second part in this light should raise the question of whether important

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173 Aquinas, II-II intro: Erit igitur compendiosior et expeditior considerationis via si simul sub eodem tractatu consideratio procedit de virtute et dono sibi correspondent, et vitis oppositis, et praeeptis affirmatis vel negatis.
clues for understanding the virtue as a whole might be found in the sections typically considered irrelevant. Understanding the virtue as Aquinas intended it to be understood, and indeed as Aquinas may simply have assumed his reader would understand it, requires that one look for an account of the virtue which incorporates every question in the treatise.

5.4 The Gifts and Precepts Associated with Courage

Aquinas ends his lengthy treatise on fortitude with one brief question devoted to the gift of courage and one brief question devoted to the precepts associated with courage. That two of the three components of good action receive such short shrift (indeed, each question contains only two articles) is not entirely surprising, for as Aquinas has already indicated in his introduction, a large part of what is needed to understand the precepts and the gifts is gained through an understanding of the associated virtue, and the discussion of the associated virtue has already been conducted at length. One should expect, then, that the discussion of the precepts and gifts will serve to round off the treatise as a whole, and that much of what is required to understand the gift and precept has already been established in the preceding questions. What I wish to argue in this section is that, given the assumption that the questions devoted to the gift of courage and the precepts attached to courage are intended as the culmination of the entire treatise, there is good reason to read the treatise itself in a very different light.
5.4.1 The Precepts Associated with Courage

As noted above, Aquinas links the virtues and the precepts with the observation that one cannot understand a precept unless one understands the virtues and vices associated with it. To understand the precept “thou shalt not commit adultery,” one must understand “the adultery which is a sin,” and to understand the adultery which is a sin, one must understand the corresponding virtue. Precepts thus make sense only in conjunction with the notion of virtue. Given this, it is not unreasonable to expect the precepts Aquinas discusses to have a clear correlation – indeed, to be the logical consequence of – his treatment of the corresponding virtue.

If such a correlation exists, however, then the discussion of the virtue of fortitude must be viewed in a new light. For and examination of the question devoted to the precepts on courage reveals that Aquinas’ attention is exclusively occupied with the precepts of courage found in the divine law, and especially with those precepts found in the new law. The precepts Aquinas is interested in do not have to do with just any courage, but the courage required for “spiritual warfare”; for resisting the devil and for seeking eternal life. This fact, together with the fact that Aquinas consistently differentiates infused and acquired virtue on the grounds that the rule of infused virtue is the divine law, would seem to imply that it is infused, not acquired fortitude that has just been discussed at length.

Although Aquinas acknowledges that precepts pertain to all areas of human action, it is the precepts enjoined by the divine law that form the entire subject of the
question devoted to the precepts associated with courage. While Aquinas acknowledges
that precepts pertain to all areas of human action, both of the two articles of question 140
are exclusively concerned with whether the precepts having to do with courage found in
the divine law are fittingly given. Aquinas argues that the precepts of the divine law are
fittingly given because they are intended to direct man’s mind toward God. The precepts
of any law are given in accord with the aim of the law maker. Thus, while the precepts
concerning courage found in human law have to do with temporal aims, the precepts
found in the divine law concern the direction of the mind to God:

“the precepts of the divine law, both about courage and the other virtues, are given
with regard to what suits the direction of the mind toward God. This is why it is
written, in Deuteronomy, Do not fear them, for the Lord your God is with you,
and he will fight for you against your enemies. Human laws on the other hand, are
directed towards certain secular goods, and the precepts of courage are articulated
to meet their conditions.”

Insofar as the precepts concerning courage in the divine law serve to direct man’s mind
towards God, therefore, they are fittingly given.

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174 Aquinas, II-II.140.1: The precepts of the divine law, whether concerning fortitude or
other virtues, are given according praecepta legis divinae, tam de fortitudine quam de alis virtutibus,
dantur secundum quod convenit ordinationi mentis in Deum. Et propter hoc Deut. XX dicitur, non
formidetis eos, quia dominus Deus vester in medio vestri est, et pro vobis contra adversarios dimicabit.
Leges autem humanae ordinantur ad aliqua mundana bona. Secundum quorum conditionem praecepta
fortitudinis in humanis legibus inveniuntur.
Even beyond his explicit focus on the precepts of courage given in the divine law, Aquinas seems especially concerned to distinguish the precepts given in the old law from those given in the new, and he makes that distinction on the basis of the goods promised. The old law held forth the promise of temporal goods, and consequently under the old law men had to be taught to fight for earthly possessions. But the good promised by the new law is a “spiritual and eternal” good, and this sort of good is obtained via a very different form of combat:

the old testament promised temporal goods, but the new, spiritual and eternal goods, as Augustine says. And thus in the old law it was necessary that the people be instructed how to fight even in corporeal battles, that they might acquire earthly possessions. But the new teaches men how, by a spiritual struggle, they might come to possess eternal life.

The new law, then, teaches a different kind of strength – the spiritual strength needed to pursue eternal life. Consequently, the new law contains different precepts than the old.

If the new law contains different precepts, it is also apparent that the “spiritual combat” taught by the precepts of the new law requires a very different kind of courage. The courage of the new law has to do, on the one hand, with resisting the assaults of the devil, and on the other, with violently pursuing the kingdom of heaven:

In the new law, however, men are taught how, through a spiritual struggle, they come to possess eternal life, according to Matthew 11, “the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent plunder it.” And Peter teaches, “your enemy the

175 Aquinas, II-II.140.1 RO.1: vetus testamentum habebat temporalia promissa, novum autem spiritualia et aeterna, ut Augustinus dicit, contra Faust. Et ideo necessarium fuit ut in veferi lege populus instrueretur qualiter pugnare deberet etiam corporaliter, pro terrena possessione acquirenda. In novo autem instruendi fuerunt homines qualiter, spiritualiter certando, ad possessionem vitae aeternae pervenirent
The courage enjoined by the new law is a qualitatively different kind of courage, precisely because it has to do with a markedly different endeavor – the battle for eternal life. Such a battle does require that man not be unduly weighed down by temporal evils, but it most of all requires that man withstand the assaults of the devil and strive violently for eternal life.177

What is one to make of Aquinas’ marked focus on the divine law, and his deliberate distinction between the kinds of courage enjoined by the old and new laws? Why does Aquinas only consider the precepts of courage which concern the direction of the mind to God, and why does he take care to establish that the precepts of the new law concern not merely the direction of the mind to God, but the unification of God and man? What, if anything, does Aquinas’ clear preoccupation with these precepts mean for the rest of the treatise? One option, of course, is to simply deny that the topics Aquinas chooses to discuss here do in fact have any ramifications for how one ought to understand the remainder of the treatise. If one keeps Aquinas’ introduction to the second part in mind, however, it is increasingly difficult to make such a claim stick. For, to return once again to Aquinas’ brief introduction, Aquinas argues that the precepts related to certain

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177 Aquinas, II-II.140.1 RO.1
actions cannot be understood unless the virtues that correspond to them are also understood. Why, then, focus exclusively on the precepts intended to unite man to God -- the precepts whose rule is divine law -- unless the rule of the virtue whose discussion has comprised the rest of the treatise is also divine law -- i.e. unless the virtue under discussion in the rest of the treatise is infused virtue? Why, moreover, take care to describe the new, different form of courage enjoined by the precepts of the new law, unless the virtue that gives rise to these precepts has already been discussed at length? Aquinas’ preoccupation with the precepts of courage enjoined by the divine law, together with his assertion that the discussion of the gifts and precepts is intended to complete the discussion of a given virtue, should at least render plausible the possibility that the courage under discussion in the remainder of the treatise is the courage that renders man capable of “spiritual warfare.”

5.4.2 The Gift of Courage

Aquinas’ account of the gift of courage, viewed in light of his introduction, also raises interesting questions about the virtue of courage.

The gift of courage completes the corresponding virtue. While the virtue of courage enables man to face any given danger, he cannot resist every danger without the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Only through the motion of the Holy Spirit is man able to
have unshakeable confidence in the end he seeks. Through the gift of courage, the holy spirit moves the soul, giving man confidence in eternal life.

The motion of the Holy Spirit through which man comes to have this confidence is tied up with his desire for eternal life. While it goes without saying that courage concerns difficult actions, for Aquinas the courageous man finds the actions he undertakes difficult for a very specific reason: he hungers and thirsts for eternal life:

As said above, fortitude consists in difficult things. But it is more difficult that man not only do virtuous works, which are in general called works of justice, but that he act with a certain insatiable desire, which can be indicated by hunger and thirst for justice.

The quote from Augustine which forms the body of the sed contra indicates even more than this, namely that the very motivation of the courageous man’s actions, the very factor that causes him to “work hard,” is his longing for eternal life: “On the contrary is what Augustine says, “fortitude corresponds to those who hunger, for they work, desiring the joy of true goods, eager to avert their love from earthly things."

Both of the texts cited above look back to the quote from Matthew’s gospel and Flannery O’Connor’s

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178 Aquinas, II-II 139.1

179 Aquinas, II-II.139.2 : Quia sicut dictum est, fortitudo in arduis consistit. Est autem valde arduum quod aliquis non solum opera virtuosa faciat, quae communitur opera iustitiae; sed quod faciat ea cum insatiabili quodam desiderio, quod potest significari per famem et stim iustitiae.

180 Aquinas, II-II.139.2 SC : Sed contra est quod Augustinus dicit, in libro de Serm. Dom. in monte, fortitudo congruit esurientibus, laborant enim, desiderantes gaudium de veris bonis, amorem a terrenis avertere cupientes.
defense of her “basically irreligious” friend. For the work of a life, the work specific to
courage, has to do not merely with facing difficult things, but with an intense combat for
the kingdom of heaven. The gift of courage, by giving man confidence in end he longs
for, gives him the strength to struggle towards that end.

What is interesting about the discussion of the gift of courage is that the gift is
described as something which completes the virtue. There is no indication that man’s end
has altered, that he seeks something different through the gift of courage than he does
under the influence of the corresponding virtue, or that the activity of the one is in
anyway separate from the other. To the contrary, the gift of courage completes the virtue;
by giving man confidence in the end he longs for, it makes it possible for him to
persevere in the virtue over the course of a life.

The last two questions of the treatise on fortitude, then, describe a different,
“other-worldly” form of courage. The virtue that appears to be reflected here is a spiritual
strength, a strength necessitated by man’s very longing for eternal life, a strength through
which man is not only made capable of resisting the assaults of the devil and earthly
cares, but also of striving violently for eternal life. Aquinas is clearly concerned with the
precepts attached to courage only insofar as they are designed to turn man’s mind to God,
and he is clearly concerned with the gift of courage insofar as the Holy Spirit, through
that gift, leads man to eternal life.

If Aquinas’ true concern in the last two questions is with the courage that leads
man to eternal life, then what is to be made of the preceding sixteen questions in the
treatise on courage, especially given his assertion in the introduction to the second part that to separate an account of a virtue from the gifts and precepts associated with it would involve needless repetition? One option is to again assume that Aquinas is simply unclear, or that he has neglected to discuss all the precepts concerning courage that ought to be discussed. Another far more interesting possibility, however, is that the kind of courage described in these two questions, the courage which is motivated by a thirst for God and which involves a fierce spiritual battle, simply is the main subject of the entire treatise on courage. The virtue, that is, whose rule is reasons of divine law – the infused virtue of courage. It is this possibility the remainder of this chapter will explore.

5.5 The Virtue of Courage

The remainder of this chapter will argue that questions 123-138 of the treatise on fortitude, like the questions raised at the end of the treatise, have as their true subject the courage concerned with spiritual warfare, or infused courage. Any project such as this, however, must grapple with the ambiguity of Aquinas’ language. For Aquinas typically speaks of “virtue” and “courage” without specifying whether the virtue under consideration is infused or acquired. Aquinas appears, in fact, to simply assume his reader knows what kind of virtue he is referring to, and consequently most of those schooled in the Aristotelian tradition have taken his descriptions as references to acquired virtue. Any argument in favor of the contrary assumption, therefore, must struggle both with the vagueness of Aquinas’ language and the considerable weight of tradition.
In spite of these difficulties, there is considerable textual evidence for the interpretation of the virtue of courage that will be defended in this section. However, as before, seeing Aquinas’ true intent requires that the questions on virtue be read as a cohesive whole. The treatise on courage consists of a question on courage in general, in which Aquinas argues that courage consist partly of an act of endurance and partly of an act of daring. Aquinas then devotes the remainder of the questions concerning the virtue of courage to an analysis of the four virtues related to the acts of daring and endurance: magnanimity, magnificence, patience, and perseverance. Moreover, Aquinas labels these virtues as “integral” parts of the virtue of courage – that is to say, insofar as one is engaged in an act that involves the dangers of death, these virtues are required. It should be clear, then, that if, in examining the virtues which are integral parts of courage, it becomes apparent that Aquinas is discussing infused, not acquired, virtue, this will necessarily affect the interpretation of the virtue of courage. Consequently, rather than begin with Aquinas’ general question on courage, the following will first examine the four principal parts of courage and argue that Aquinas’ discussion of those parts – especially his discussion of magnanimity, patience, and perseverance – appears to be a discussion of infused virtue.
5.5.1 Magnanimity

Although Aquinas’ descriptions of the two virtues connected to endurance, the principal act of courage, contain the most overt references to infused virtue, it is his account of the virtue of magnanimity – an account which contains no explicit mention of infused virtue – which, when properly understood, emerges most forcefully as an infused virtue; a virtue concerned exclusively with the battle for eternal life. Although the other principal parts of the virtue of courage are equally, if not more, important, magnanimity will receive more attention in what follows, because it is through understanding how the notion of infused virtue pervades the discussion of this virtue, even while its presence goes unmentioned by Aquinas, that one is most able to see both that infused virtue is the primary theme of the second part and that Aquinas seems to take this point as so basic that he assumes his reader knows that this is the case.

The following will argue that Aquinas understands magnanimity in a deeply theological sense, and that the deeply theological nature of magnanimity stems from the deep connection between magnanimity and the infused virtue of humility. However, because the radical character of Aquinas’ account is most visible only when one realizes the extent to which he departs from Aristotle’s account of the same virtue, this section will begin with a discussion of Aristotle’s magnanimous man. Aristotle’s magnanimous man, this section will argue, is one who makes a fundamental choice about the kind of life he wishes to live – a life worthy of his own greatness – and who orders everything in his life, even his death, towards the fulfilment of that goal. The second part of this section
will argue that when Aquinas’ account of magnanimity and its companion virtue, humility, is considered against this background, it is clear that the one who possesses these virtues also makes a fundamental choice, but one which is far different and far more radical than that of Aristotle’s magnanimous man. To possess the virtues of humility and magnanimity, for Aquinas, is to recognize both that the divine good is the only good worthy of pursuit and that it is utterly beyond human power. Recognizing this, man makes an all or nothing choice; but unlike Aristotle’s magnanimous man, he chooses God’s greatness rather than his own. Aware of his own inability to achieve the one good that truly matters, he throws himself before God, freely choosing to become God’s instrument. Viewed in its proper context, Aquinas’ virtue of magnanimity thus emerges as an infused virtue. Finally, the third part of this section will raise the question of why Aquinas, in spite of the fact that, under his account, both magnanimity and humility are and must be infused virtues, never explicitly argues for this point.

5.5.1.1 Aristotle’s Magnanimous Man

The virtue of magnanimity, which Aristotle describes as the “crown” and “adornment” of all the other virtues, poses notorious difficulties for anyone wishing to appropriate an Aristotelian virtue ethics. For the man who Aristotle describes as the best of all men hardly seems like someone worth emulating. Recent scholars, aware of this, have noted approvingly that Aquinas’ description of the same virtue contains some
laudable alterations. Perhaps, these scholars suggest, Aquinas’ account provides us with a means of salvaging Aristotle’s infamous virtue.

While it cannot be denied that the virtue which Aquinas calls magnanimity is a vast improvement over the set of character traits which Aristotle calls by the same name, it is questionable whether, at the end of the day, the two share anything but a name. For, as this section will argue, the magnanimous man’s life and actions are colored by a fundamental realization: the recognition of his own greatness and the desire to live a life that reflects his true capacity. It this very characteristic, as the next section demonstrates, which is destroyed by the infused humility that necessarily accompanies magnanimity as Aquinas understands it.

Aristotle describes the magnanimous man as one who “thinks himself worthy of great things and really is worthy of them.” Unlike the vain man, who thinks he is worthy of something he is not, or the pusillanimous man, who thinks he is worthy of less than he is actually capable of, the magnanimous man correctly assesses his capacities, and as a result of this accurate assessment, finds that he is capable of the greatest things. It is every bit as important, moreover, that the magnanimous man actually be capable of great things as it is that he correctly assess his capacities: “someone who is worthy of little and thinks so is temperate, but not magnanimous, for magnanimity is found in greatness, just
as beauty is found in a large body, and small people can be attractive and well-proportioned, but not beautiful.”

Because the magnanimous man is capable of the greatest things, Aristotle argues that he also possesses the greatest virtue. The better the man, says Aristotle, the greater the things he is capable of: “For in every case the better person is worthy of something greater, and the best person is worthy of the greatest things.” Thus the magnanimous man, who is worthy of the greatest things, must also be the best person. Magnanimity, therefore, is an “adornment” of the virtues, a quality which makes every virtue greater.

The true character of magnanimity, however, does not become apparent until Aristotle embarks on a description of the actions of the magnanimous man. It does not—at least initially—seem so appalling to say that it is a virtue to be worthy of great things, and know it. When one considers Aristotle’s description of how the recognition of one’s own greatness ought to alter one’s actions, however, one can see why the magnanimous man has caused such squeamishness. In what follows I will point out two ways in which the recognition of one’s own greatness alters one’s actions.

The first, most evident characteristic that emerges from Aristotle’s description is the magnanimous man’s pre-occupation with self sufficiency. The magnanimous man, who is capable of great things, does not want to receive anything from another, lest he
appear inferior. He neither needs help from any one else nor wants it. He does good, but does not like to have good things done for him, and when something good is done for him, he reverses the debt by returning more good than he received: “He is the sort of person who does good but is ashamed when he receives it; for doing good is proper to the superior person, and receiving it to the inferior. He returns more good than he has received; for in this way the original giver will be repaid, and will also have incurred a new debt to him, and will be the beneficiary.”¹⁸⁵ The magnanimous man does not ask for help from other people, and though he remembers the good he does, does not remember the good that is done to him, since “the recipient is inferior to the giver, and the magnanimous man wishes to be superior.”¹⁸⁶

The second characteristic of the magnanimous man that emerges from Aristotle’s account is the fact that the magnanimous man, conscious of his own greatness, is unwilling to undertake any action which does not adequately reflect his true worth. Because there are few actions that truly reflect his greatness, the magnanimous man is inactive: “He stays away from what is commonly honored, and from areas where others lead; he is inactive and lethargic except for some great honor or achievement. Hence his actions are few, but great and renowned.”¹⁸⁷ This attitude is reflected in the magnanimous man’s willingness to face danger. The magnanimous man is no coward, but at the same
time, he is unwilling to risk his life unless the occasion truly warrants it: “He does not face dangers in a small cause, and does not face them frequently, since he honors few things, and is no lover of danger. But he faces them in a great cause, and whenever he faces them he is unsparing of his life, since he does not think life at all costs is worthwhile.”

Both of the above traits demonstrate that the magnanimous man’s entire life is geared towards the recognition of his own greatness and the desire to live in a way that adequately reflects that greatness. Aware that he is capable of the most spectacular deeds, the magnanimous man reserves himself for those and those alone. Confident in the sort of life he ought to have, he is unwilling to settle for anything less.

5.5.1.2 Thomistic Magnanimity

The preceding section explored Aristotelian magnanimity at length because Aquinas’ departure from the Aristotelian tradition appears most vividly when one understands how distant the paradigm of Aristotelian virtue is from those who possess the virtues as Aquinas understands them, most especially magnanimity and humility. For if the very characteristic that renders an ordinary virtue extraordinary becomes so altered as

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NE 1124b5; It is worth noting the parallel between Aristotle’s description of the magnanimous man’s attitude towards danger and his earlier description of the “bravest” man in his account of courage. While the majority of the section on courage describes those characteristics which make for the best soldier, in the last few paragraphs Aristotle shifts to a description of one who can be none other than the magnanimous man. To be brave is to stand firm because it is fine to do so, but this trait alone does not make one the bravest of all. Rather, the bravest man is the one who possesses every good and virtue: for it will be most difficult for such a one to face death, and it will hardly ever be fine for him to do so. Yet when he must, he does, and his act is the most spectacular of all acts of bravery.
to be virtually unrecognizable under Aquinas’ account, then one must ask if his entire
treatment of courage doesn’t deviate more drastically from Aristotle’s account than most
are inclined to believe. In what follows, I will show that, like Aristotle’s magnanimous
man, Aquinas’ magnanimous man is shaped by a fundamental realization, and that this
realization is at the root of his every endeavor. For Aquinas, however, this realization
consists not in the perception of one’s own greatness, but in the realization of the primacy
of the divine good and one’s own utter inadequacy with respect to it. This realization; the
realization that lies at the heart of the infused virtue of humility and which grounds the
virtue of magnanimity, so alters Aristotle’s virtue as to render it un-recognizable. The
difference between the two types of magnanimity, then, only becomes apparent when one
understands how the introduction of the virtue of humility affects the confidence with
which man pursues the difficult good.

In both question 129, which is devoted to magnanimity, and in question 161,
which considers humility, Aquinas cites humility and magnanimity as two different
features of the same action. The man who pursues a difficult good must possess both
restraint, so that he does not “press forward immoderately to high things,” and strength of

Many scholars, in fact, find close similarities, similarities which are even tantamount to identity, in
the two accounts. Reginald Hall, for instance, claims that Aquinas “fixes” Aristotelian magnanimity without
ever considering whether Aquinas and Aristotle are even discussing the same sort of virtue. (Horner, David
“What It Takes to Be Great: Aristotle and Aquinas on Magnanimity” Faith and Philosophy 0 98; 15(4):
415-444

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mind, “strengthens the soul against desperation, and impells it to pursue great things according to right reason,”\textsuperscript{190} The former requires the virtue of humility, and the later, magnanimity. Aquinas gives a similar description in the two other texts where he compares the two virtues. Humility keeps man’s desire for great actions in check, while magnanimity urges him on to do the things he ought.\textsuperscript{191} The pursuit of the good, then, consists in a delicate balance, and this balance is achieved on the one hand by humility, and on the other by magnanimity. However, even beyond the fact that man needs both virtues, he cannot possess one virtue without the other. As will become clear in what follows, magnanimity as a virtue can be present only when man is in the right relation to God, and this relation cannot exist without humility.

5.5.1.2.1 Humility

Humility does not appear to be among the more glamourous of the virtues, nor under a certain light does it even appear choice worthy. The appellation “humble” typically brings to mind one who is timid and self-effacing, loathe to put his own claims forward – someone who neither is nor seeks to be great. While it is in some respect correct to attribute these characteristics – or at least some of them – to the humble man, to focus only on these characteristics is to miss the most important components of humility.

\textsuperscript{190} Aquinas, II-II.161.1 : \textit{Una quidem quae temperet et refrenet animum, ne immoderat tendat in excelsa, et hoc pertinet ad virtutem humilitatis. Alia vero quae firmat animum contra desperationem, et impellit ipsum ad prosecutionem magnorum secundum rationem rectam, et haec est magnanimitas.}

\textsuperscript{191} Aquinas, II-II.161.1, 129.3.4
The humble man does abase himself, but his very act of abasement springs from a choice whose nobility far exceeds that of Aristotle’s magnanimous man. The humble man recognizes the divine good, and sees that, in comparison with that good, no earthly good is worth pursuing. But he also realizes that, with respect to the one good that truly matters, he is nothing; of himself, he is utterly incapable of attaining it. Both drawn to the divine good and aware of his own inability to achieve it, the humble man makes a choice: he would rather be lowliest member of the house of the Lord than serve a false good. It is with this dual awareness that the humble man makes his choice: Like Aristotle’s magnanimous man, he will have a life that is worthwhile or none at all. Unlike such a one, however, the humble man seeks the worthwhile life, not by keeping himself aloof, but by relinquishing himself to God.

Though Aquinas initially defines humility as the virtue that keeps man from “pressing forward immoderately to high things,” he quickly revises his definition, and it is the revised definition that he uses throughout the remainder of question 161. Having asserted that humility is a virtue because it keeps one from striving immoderately for high things, Aquinas addresses the objection that humility is not among the virtues listed by Aristotle and hence cannot be a virtue. His reply to this objection gives the first indication that Aquinas has a very different conception of when and how one ought to strive for high things than Aristotle. For humility, says Aquinas, refers to something far removed from Aristotle’s concern:

Aristotle considered the virtues insofar as they were ordered to the civil life, in which the subjection of one man to another is determined according to the order
of law, and thus it falls under legal justice. But humility, considered as a special virtue, principally has to do with the subjection of man to God, on account of whom he also humbles himself to others.\footnote{Aquinas, II-II.161.1 RO.5 : \textit{philosophus intendebat agere de virtutibus secundum quod ordinantur ad vitam civilem, in qua subiectio unius hominis ad alterum secundum legis ordinem determinatur, et ideo continetur sub iustitia legali. Humilitas autem, secundum quod est specialis virtus, praecipue respicit subiectionem hominis ad Deum, propter quem etiam alis humiliando se subicit.}}

This text not only explains the absence of humility from Aristotle’s account, but provides one with a sense of what Aquinas means when he speaks of seeking high things immoderately. Under the Aristotelian schema, one need only respect the demands of legal justice, and hence one need only subordinate oneself to another insofar as the law requires it. Under Aquinas’ account, on the other hand, what matters is man’s subordination to God, and it is when man fails in regard to God, when he sets himself above or against God, that he will have “pressed forward immoderately towards high things.” Throughout the remainder of question 161, Aquinas re-iterates the definition of humility as the subordination of man to God, and he characterizes this subordination in very strong terms. Humility does not require mere lip-service to God’s omnipotence, or good natured deference to the creator, but the complete subjugation of man to God. Humility, says Aquinas, is “praiseworthy abasement,” the inward choice of the mind in which man subjects himself to God.\footnote{Aquinas, II-II.161.1 RO.3, see also 161.2, R.O.3; 161.3; 161.4 R.O.1 and 161.6}

It is precisely insofar as the humble man abases himself before God that he is able to refrain from the immoderate pursuit of high things. There are two aspects of man’s
subjection to God that are especially noteworthy in this regard. First, the man who subjects himself to God recognizes that, in comparison with the divine good, all other goods are utterly insignificant. The very act of self-abasement stems from a stark re-ordering of basic priorities. For the man who humbles himself realizes that God alone is great. Hence, in his estimation, worldly goods are vain and empty in comparison with the divine good: “The humble man is he who chooses to be debased in the house of the lord, rather than to dwell in the tents of sinners.” The humble man chooses lowliness in the house of the Lord because he recognizes that God is the only good worth pursuing. It is out of this recognition that he scorns worldly greatness.

One crucial characteristic of the humble man, then, is something not normally associated with humility at all. The humble man refrains from the struggle for earthly greatness, not because he thinks he is incapable of attaining it, but because he thinks that earthly greatness is an unworthy goal. Because the humble man places God above all else, he is not led astray by false goods:

Thus Christ especially commended humility to us, because through this the greatest impediment of human salvation is removed, which consists in this, that man strives for heavenly and spiritual things, from which man is impeded when he seeks to be great in the things of this world. And thus the lord, that he might

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194 Aquinas, II-II.161.2 OTC : humilis est qui eligi abici in domo domini, magis quam habitare in tabernaculis peccatorum.

195 Aquinas, II-II.161.5 RO.3
remove this impediment to salvation, showed through the example of humility that external glory is to be despised.  

It is because the humble man has a correct apprehension of worldly greatness, and not because he feels incapable of it, therefore, that he turns away from worldly goods.

The second and more important aspect of humility, however, concerns man’s relationship to the one good that he considers worthy of pursuit, namely God. The humble man, aware of the insufficiency of all other goods, scorns every good but the divine good. At the same time, however, he recognizes that he is nothing with respect to the one good that matters. It is here that the full force of Aquinas’ description of the humble man’s abasement before God becomes apparent. For under Aquinas’ account, while the humble man realizes that the pursuit of anything but God is vain and empty, he also realizes that he can do nothing, through his own powers, to achieve this good. It is thus that he “chooses to be lowly in the house of the Lord.”

It was noted earlier that the humble man has a proper estimation of his abilities, and that this proper estimation prevents him from pursuing those things outside his grasp. Part of that “proper estimation” would be better characterized as a scornful dismissal of those things which are not worth pursuing in the first place. The other part of that proper estimation, however, has to do with man’s awareness of his own inadequacy with respect

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196 Aquinas, II-II.161.5 RO.4 : ideo Christus praecipue humilitatem nobis commendavit, quia per hoc maxime removetur impedimentum humanae salutis, quae consistit in hoc quod homo ad caelestia et spiritualia tendat, a quibus homo impeditur dum in terrenis magnificari studet. Et ideo dominus, ut impedimentum salutis auferret, exterioarem celsitudinem contemnendum monstravit per humilitatis exempla.
to the one good that truly matters. When man, realizing that God is the only worthwhile object of pursuit, subjects himself to God, his subjection has the character of self-renunciation. For to have a proper estimation of one’s own abilities with respect to the achievement of the divine good is simply to realize one’s own nothingness. Aquinas, describing the extent of man’s subjection, does not mince his words: “In man two things can be considered, namely that which is of God, and that which is of man. Whatever is of man pertains to defect, but what is of God pertains to health and perfection, as it is written: “destruction is yours, O Israel, all your help is from me.” Aquinas puts the same point even more forcefully later in the same question, where he states that all the degrees of humility can be summed up as “the belief and manifestation and acceptance of one’s own abjection.”

The humble man sees the world in terms of two options: he can pursue false goods or he can pursue the divine good. Yet, even while realizing that the divine good is the only object worth pursuing, he sees that he is nothing with respect to it, that anything he has through himself is nothing, and that any good that is in him comes from God rather than himself. It is with this recognition, then that man abases himself before God. For the man who humbles himself makes a choice, a choice in favor of the divine good, and he

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197 Aquinas, II-II.161.3 : in homine duo possunt considerari, scilicet id quod est Dei, et id quod est hominis. Hominis autem est quidquid pertinet ad defectum, sed Dei est quidquid pertinet ad salutem et perfectionem, secundum illud Ossee XIII, perditio tua, Israel, ex me tantum auxilium tuum.

198 Aquinas, II-II.161.6 RO.3 : omnes gradus quos Anselmus ponit, reducuntur ad opinionem et manifestationem et voluntatem propriae abjectionis.
quite literally throws himself on God’s mercy. Indeed, he must do so, for if he is to achieve eternal life, it will be God’s doing and not his own.

When the recognition that characterizes humility is contrasted with that which grounds Aristotelian magnanimity, it is clear that humility renders magnanimity as Aristotle understood it impossible. For humility requires that man do exactly what Aristotle’s magnanimous man does not – instead of embracing his own greatness, the humble man must reject it. He must recognize that he is nothing, that God is everything, and give his entire life over to God. Rather than reserve himself for high things, he must will to become God’s instrument, to do anything whatsoever in service of the only thing that is truly great.

The distance between humility and Aristotle’s magnanimous man is perhaps most evident in Aquinas’ description of the humble man’s interactions with others. The humble man realizes that he is nothing of himself and that everything good in him is of God, and he realizes that this is also true of others. Consequently, the humble man is deferential to everyone, for God’s sake, out of reverence for what is of God in others. Cognizant of the presence of God in others, he not only defers to them but is quite willing to believe them better than himself. With regard to what is in him of himself, the humble man must indeed take the lowest place. In response to the objection that it does not belong to virtue

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199 Aquinas, II-II.161.3 RO.2: *si nos praeferamus id quod est Dei in proximo, ei quod est proprium in nobis, non possimus incurrere falsitatem. Unde super illud Philipp. II, superiores invicem arbitrantes, dicit Glossa, non hoc ita debemus aestimare ut nos aestimare fingamus, sed vere aestimemus posse aliquid esse occultum in alio quo nobis superior sit, etiam si bonum nostrum, quo illo videmur superiores esse, non sit occultum.*
to think oneself worse than other men, Aquinas asserts that this is precisely what the
virtue of humility requires:

Someone without falsity can believe and pronounce himself worse than all,
insofar as he recognizes an unseen defect which is in himself, and gifts of God
which are hidden in others. Whence Augustine says “believe that those whom
you surpass in things that are seen, surpass you in things that are unseen.”
Similarly without falsity it is possible for someone to confess and believe himself
to be worthless and undeserving, according to his own strength, that he might
refer all his sufficiency to God.  

Like Aristotle’s magnanimous man, the humble man correctly appraises his own worth.
The difference is that under Aquinas’ account, to correctly appraise one’s own worth is to
realize one’s own nothingness. Thus, whatever the source of Thomistic confidence, it
cannot stem from the belief that greatness is one’s “due,” not, at least, as long as that
confidence is accompanied by humility as Aquinas insists.

5.5.1.2.2 Magnanimity

When one grounds Aquinas’ discussion of magnanimity in the context of the
humility which necessary accompanies it, a drastically different image of what it is for
one to be “confident” in the pursuit of the difficult good emerges. Aristotle’s
magnanimous man realized that he was worthy of great things, and really was worthy of
them, and recognizing this, he simply reserved himself for those actions which suited his

\[\text{Aquinas, II-II.161.6 RO.1 : aliquis absque falsitate potest se credere et pronuntiare}
\text{omnibus viliorem, secundum defectus occultos quos in se recognoscit, et dona Dei quae in aliis}
\text{latent. Unde Augustinus dicit, in libro de Virginit, existimate aliquos in occulto superiores, quibus estis in}
\text{manifesto meliores. Similiter etiam absque falsitate potest aliquis confiteri et credere ad omnia se inutilem}
\text{et indignum, secundum proprias vires, ut sufficientiam suam totam in Deum referat.} \]
abilities. Moreover, such discretion both makes his courageous actions more spectacular and more rare, for it is not often fitting for him to face death, and when he does face it, it again seems to be out of a desire to have a life worthy of himself, or else not live at all.

But Aquinas pairs magnanimity with an odd virtue, the virtue through which man realizes his complete dependence upon God. This realization drastically alters the motivation with which man pursues “high things”.

How does the presence of humility, which keeps man from striving immoderately for great things, affect the virtue which “stiffens his spirit” in regard to those things which it is fitting for him to pursue? Humility, it will be argued, alters the nature of a man’s confidence. For although Aquinas’ magnanimous man possesses the confidence he needs, he does not place his confidence in himself, but in God.

Because the humble man realizes that he is nothing in himself, and that any good that he possesses is from God, he has a peculiar kind of confidence. Although the humble man is neither afraid or unwilling to take on difficult tasks, he does so with the full realization that success in any endeavor must come from God:

To strive towards greatness in something from confidence in one’s own strength is contrary to humility. But it is not contrary to humility for someone to strive towards something great from confidence in divine help, expecially as the more someone subjects himself through humility, the more he is exalted in the presence of God. Whence Augustine says, “one lifts himself up towards God, another raises himself up against God. Who lowers himself before him, is raised up by him, while he who resists him, is destroyed by him.”

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201 Aquinas, II-II.161.2 RO.2: tendere in aliqua maiora ex propriarum virium confidentia, humilitati contrariatur. Sed quod aliquis ex confidentia divini auxilii in maiora tendat, hoc non est contra humilitatem, praeertim cum ex hoc aliquis magis apud Deum exaltetur quod ei se magis per humilitatem subicit. Unde Augustinus dicit, in libro de Poenit., aliud est levare se ad Deum, aliud est levare se contra
Thus, the confidence that accompanies humility is not confidence in oneself, but confidence in God. If the humble man takes on a great thing, it is not because he believes himself worthy of it, but because he believes that God will sustain him in the performance of it. Even beyond this, the above quote implies that the more man understands his own inadequacy with respect to the task at hand, the more help he will receive from God. This account of why the humble man attempts difficult tasks implies a definition of magnanimity. For under such a description, it seems that the confidence exhibited in an act of courage, namely the magnanimity that accompanies humility, will be a sort of faith – a belief that, although the act in question is impossible for to perform alone, God will sustain one through the performance of it.

This account of magnanimity is born out in Aquinas’ actual description of magnanimity – of the confidence possessed by the courageous man. For although Aquinas describes magnanimity as “a certain aspiration of spirit to great things,” it soon becomes clear that this very aspiration stems from the trust man places in God. The first indication of this occurs in Aquinas’ initial description of the confidence that pertains to courage. Magnanimity, Aquinas says, gives man confidence, but it does not give him confidence in himself alone. Rather, through magnanimity man has “hope in himself, but under God.”

Anything great in man comes from the gift of God, and it is when he contemplates God’s gifts that the magnanimous man believes he can take on the most arduous tasks. At the

\[^{202}\text{Aquinas, II-II.128.1 RO.2 : homo habet spem in seipso, tamen sub Deo.}\]

\[^{202}\text{Deum. Qui ante illum se proicit, ab illo erigitur, qui adversus illum se erigit, ab illo proicitur.}\]
same time, however, the virtue of humility makes him recognize that he is capable of
nothing from himself:

In man there is found something great, which he possess as a result of God’s gift; and something of defect, which he has from the weakness of his nature. Magnanimity therefore causes it to be that man considers himself worthy of great things according to the consideration of the gifts he has from God, so that, if he has great virtue of soul, magnanimity makes him strive towards the perfect work of virtue. And the same applies to the use of other goods, whether of science or wealth. But humility causes man to think little of himself, according to the consideration of his own defect. Likewise the magnanimous man thinks little of others insofar as the lack God’s gifts, for he does not esteem others so much that he will do something evil for them. But the humble man honors others, and thinks them superior, insofar as he sees something of God’s gifts in them.\textsuperscript{203}

The virtue of magnanimity described by Aquinas, then, is in many ways the logical outcome of humility. The man who subjects himself completely to God, who realizes that the divine good is the only worthwhile object of pursuit, and who realizes his own inadequacy with respect to that good, places himself completely in God’s hands. Insofar as he is able to make progress in pursuit of that good, it will be through God’s doing and through God’s gifts, not his own. Aquinas’ magnanimous man thus takes on a higher object than any the man of Aristotelian virtue could contemplate, and yet finds himself far less equipped to do so.

\textsuperscript{203} Aquinas, II-II.129.3 RO.4 : \textit{in homine inventur aliquid magnum, quod ex dono Dei possidet; et aliquis defectus, qui competit ei ex infirmitate naturae. Magnanimitas igitur facit quod homo se magnis dignificet secundum considerationem donorum quae possidet ex Deo, sicut, si habet magnam virtutem animi, magnanimitas facit quod ad perfecta opera virtutis tendat. Et similiter est dicendum de usu cuiuslibet alterius bont, puta scientiae vel exterioris fortunae. Humilitas autem facit quod homo seipsum parvipendat secundum considerationem proprii defectus. Similiter etiam magnanimitas contemnit alios secundum quod deficiant a donis Dei, non enim tantum alios appretiatur quod pro eis aliquid indecens faciat. Sed humilitas alios honorat, et superiores aestimat, inquantum in eis aliquid inspicit de donis Dei.}
Although by this point the discussion has departed far from the paradigm of Aristotelian virtue, it may be beneficial to stop for a moment and consider just how far the paradigm has shifted. Two images go some way towards capturing the specifically Thomist view of magnanimity. The first image captures not magnanimity so much as a failure in it, but it nonetheless helps illuminate the virtue. The image occurs in Matthew’s gospel:

“Then he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat by this time was many distant furlongs from land, beaten by the waves; for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying “It is a ghost!” And they cried out for fear. But immediately he spoke to them, saying “Take heart, it is I, have no fear.” And Peter answered him, “Lord if it is you, bid me come to you on the water.” He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus; but when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out “Lord, save me!” Jesus immediately reached out and caught him, saying to him, “Oh man of little faith, why did you doubt?”

The example of Peter is particularly appropriate for a consideration of magnanimity, because it illustrates the utter dependence of man on God that necessarily lies at the heart of magnanimity as Aquinas understands it. Peter certainly doesn’t believe that he can walk on water through his own power, for he asks Christ to bid him come. It is Christ, not Peter, who will be the cause of Peter walking on the water. And yet, once Peter leaves the boat and sees the strength of the wind, he loses his confidence and begins to sink. The failure here is not that Peter fails to place enough confidence in himself, but

Matthew 14:28-34
that he has failed to place enough confidence in himself “under God.” Peter allows the things that would destroy him, were he to attempt to approach God through his own unaided efforts, to undermine his confidence in the things he can do with God’s help. The man who takes great things upon himself, under God, realizes that something great is required of him and does it, without looking back Part of what causes Peter to falter, it seems, is a failure to remember that it is not ultimately he who is responsible for his ability to walk on a stormy sea, but God.

A second, example, this time of the successful practice of magnanimity, can be found in the protagonist of Georges Bernanos’ novel, The Diary of a Country Priest. The country priest provides us with a helpful way of understanding the odd pairing of magnanimity and humility. Bernanos’ country priest is, by his own acknowledgment, nothing. He stands in awe of everyone in the village, most especially of the “petty gentry,” the local aristocracy of whom he is so in awe that he blushes when he sees them. And yet, at least in his capacity as a priest, the otherwise timid man is possessed of a fierce confidence. When the question is not one of social graces, but of sin, the priest has no trouble excoriating the same nobility to whom he feels so inferior. More interestingly, he does this, not out of a sense of his own superiority, but as God’s instrument. When the noblewoman accuses him of forgetting his place, he reminds her that he is simply her servant and God’s:

“Madame, I take nothing on me. That poker there is only an instrument in your hands. Had God endowed it with just enough consciousness to put itself into your
hands whenever you needed it, that would be more or less what I am for all of you – what I wish to be.”

The priest’s very humility, in fact, is the essence of his strength. It is only insofar as he realizes that he is nothing that he is capable of taking on the greatest task – of trying to bring a lethargic village to God. The priest is nothing, and he knows it, but as he himself recognizes, he has one strength, a strength which he describes as the strength “of children and weaklings” – he does not betray the confidence that another has in him. It is this, the willingness to take on whatever it is God asks, regardless of one’s own fears and weaknesses, that captures the heart of magnanimity as Aquinas understands it.

5.5.1.3 References to Infused Virtue in Aquinas’ Account of Humility and Magnanimity

It will be helpful at this point to raise the issue of infused virtue, particularly as regards its relationship to humility and magnanimity. While Aquinas never explicitly considers the question of whether humility and magnanimity are infused virtues, it is difficult to see how the virtues described above could be understood as anything but infused virtues. For both are oriented exclusively towards the divine good, and both virtues seem to have the attainment of the divine good as their true end. Indeed, neither virtue is even possible unless man makes God his end, and as the preceding chapters have exhaustively established, the virtues that pertain to man’s true end are necessarily

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205 George Bernanos, *Diary of a Country Priest* p.148

206 Bernanos, *Diary of a Country Priest*, p.59

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infused virtues. Aquinas does, in off-hand remarks, indicate that humility is an infused virtue, and given the necessary conjunction of humility and magnanimity, it seems clear that magnanimity is also an infused virtue. Nonetheless, it is instructive to consider what implications Aquinas’ silence about the infused nature of two virtues which are so clearly ordered to the divine good means for the rest of his treatment.

It seems obvious, given Aquinas’ description of the choice that serves as the foundation of humility – the free movement of the will through which man subordinates himself to God – that he understands humility to be an infused virtue. For Aquinas repeatedly states that one cannot order himself to a supernatural end through his own powers, and humility involves precisely this. Nonetheless, Aquinas does not explicitly establish humility as an infused virtue, and when he does indicate that it is an infused virtue, it is almost as an afterthought. In three different places in question 161, each time in the course of a reply to an objection, Aquinas indicates that humility is an infused virtue. In 161.4, in response to the objection that humility cannot be a function of temperance and modesty because it has God as its object, Aquinas asserts that the theological virtues are the cause of all other virtues, and hence the cause of humility as well.\textsuperscript{207} In the following article, again in the context of a reply to an objection, Aquinas makes a similar statement. In response to the objection that humility is the foundation of the other virtues and hence must be the “sovereign virtue,” Aquinas distinguishes two senses in which a virtue can be said to “come first.” In doing so, he indicates in an almost

\textsuperscript{207} Aquinas, II-II.161.4
backhand fashion that not only humility, but all the virtues it provides the foundation for, are infused virtues:

As the ordered collection of the virtues is likened to a building, so that which is first in the acquisition of virtue, is compared to the foundation, which is laid first in a building. But true virtue is infused by God. Whence what is first in the acquisition of virtue can be understood in two ways. In one way, what is first can be understood as that which removes the obstacles which prohibit virtue. And in this way, humility is first, insofar as it expels pride, which God resists, and it renders man submissive and always open to receive the influx of divine grace, inasmuch as it removes the inflation of pride; as it is said in Jacob 4, that “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

Although infused virtue is clearly not the intended nor even the main concern of the reply, it is clear that Aquinas believes humility to be not only one of the virtues that are “shed on us by God,” but the very foundation of those virtues, because it expels the pride that keeps man from God. The final indication that humility is an infused virtue occurs in Aquinas’ reply to the third objection of 161.6, where Aquinas distinguishes between the mere presence of humility and growth in it. Humility is in man first and foremost through the gift of grace, and in this respect humility as an inward disposition comes first. However, insofar as man must strive to grow in humility, and must alter his acts accordingly, growth in humility stems from man’s actions.

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208 Aquinas, II-II 161.5 RO.2 : sicut ordinata virtutum congregatio per quandam similitudinem aedificio comparatur, ita etiam illud quod est primum in acquisitione virtutum, fundamento comparatur, quod primum in aedificio iacitur. Virtutes autem verae infunduntur a Deo. Unde primum in acquisitione virtutum potest accipi dupliciter. Uno modo, per modum removentis prohibens. Et sic humilitas primum locum tenet, inquantum scilicet expellit superbiam, cui Deus resistit, et praebet hominem subditum et semper patulum ad suscipiendum influxum divinae gratiae, inquantum evacuat inflationem superbiae; ut dicitur lac. IV, quod Deus superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam.

209 Aquinas, II-II 161.6 RO.2
Thus, in three separate instances in question 161, Aquinas explicitly indicates what implicitly appears to be true in his entire discussion of humility: humility is an infused virtue. Given the necessary correlation of humility and magnanimity -- given, indeed, that magnanimity cannot exist as a virtue without humility -- one is warranted in concluding that Aquinas understands magnanimity to be an infused virtue as well. The very nature of these assertions, however, is itself revealing. For Aquinas’ backhanded reference to the presence of infused virtue, and the language which he uses in those backhanded references, imply that (a) all the virtues under Aquinas’ consideration are infused virtues and (b) that Aquinas simply assumes that his reader is aware of this.

That Aquinas considers not merely humility, but all the virtues to be infused virtues is obvious from the very language Aquinas uses to establish humility as an infused virtue. In each of the three instances in which Aquinas explicitly refers to humility as an infused virtue, Aquinas makes this point about humility insofar as it is a virtue like the other virtues. Humility has God as its true object because, like all the other virtues, it is caused by the theological virtues. Similarly, one is told that humility is the foundation of the Christian virtues, which are shed on us by God, because it expels the pride which keeps man from God. Humility, then, is an infused virtue, but this in no way differentiates it from the other virtues under consideration. To the contrary, the infused character of humility seems to be the one thing it shares with all the other virtues.

The second and more interesting point about the three passages in which Aquinas explicitly refers to humility as an infused virtue is his apparent assumption that the reader
is already aware that humility is infused. Aquinas nowhere argues that humility need be caused by the theological virtues, nor that humility is a “Christian virtue” that must be shed on man by God, but simply asserts this as a given. Moreover, even the assertions that reveal humility to be an infused virtue occur only in replies to objections. Why does the master of distinctions nowhere make an argument for the infused character of humility?

While it is possible that this is simply an area where Aquinas fails to make some necessary distinctions, the conclusion which is both more reasonable and more charitable is simply that the entire discussion of the virtues that occurs in the second part is a discussion of infused, not acquired virtue, and that Aquinas takes this point to be so basic that he assumes his reader is aware of it. In what follows, I will argue that the most charitable reading of the other three parts of fortitude warrants a similar conclusion.

5.5.2 Patience

In addition to the virtue of magnanimity, which gives man the confidence to take on the difficult good, Aquinas locates two other virtues -- patience and perseverance -- as integral parts of the virtue of fortitude. Both of these virtues belong to the second act associated with fortitude, namely endurance. An individual only endures present evils because he believes the good he seeks to be superior to the evils that oppose him. Yet it can be the case that the evils that stand between man and the good he seeks make it difficult for him to keep his eyes on the end goal. For intermediate evils can distract man
from the good he seeks, and they can do this in two ways. They can, on the one hand
weigh him down, causing sadness and dejection, or they can keep man from pursuing the
good he seeks. Thus man requires the virtue of patience, which keeps him from becoming
unduly saddened by present evils, and perseverance, which enables him to continue to
pursue the good in spite of all obstacles. Both of these virtues, I shall argue in what
follows, are best understood as infused virtues. The endurance properly constitutive of
courage, that is to say, is the endurance that enables us endure worldly evils for the sake
of eternal life.

Although Aquinas first describes patience as the virtue that keeps us from being
unduly weighed down by sadness, his most informative description comes later in the
article. Patience is the virtue that allows man to endure present evils for the sake of a
future good. Man only endures evil, says Aquinas, when he loves the good he seeks more
than he fears the evils he must endure to achieve that good. Patience is the virtue that
keeps man from paying more attention to the evils that beset him than to the good he
seeks.

Because the virtue of patience is not concerned with the good directly, nor even
with those objects directly related to the good, patience is a minor virtue. The theological
virtues seek the good directly, while the cardinal virtues are concerned with greater
hardships.\textsuperscript{210}

\textsuperscript{210} Aquinas, II-II.136.2
Such a description of patience, particularly so long as one neglects to specify exactly what hardships patience is concerned with and what good it seeks, could potentially apply to any pursuit. For surely an athlete is saddened when he considers the vast amount of exercise and training that he must endure in order to reach his goal, and surely it is patience that he exercises when he turns his mind away from the grueling work-outs, and from the pleasures he is forced to forego, and focuses instead on the end he seeks. A careful reading of Aquinas’ discussion of patience, however, indicates, that the patience of the athlete or the scholar, the patience acquired over long years of disciplined study, is not the patience Aquinas has in mind.

5.5.3.2.1 Infused Patience?

The general description of patience that I gave above was brief, and cited little or no text, precisely because I wished to keep the description general. For when one turns to the text itself, there are a number of indications that Aquinas has no intention of describing the patience required for an individual to become a good athlete, nor even the patience required for a soldier to stalwartly defend his homeland. There are two instances in particular in the treatise on patience that indicate that, helpful as these examples might be for explanatory purposes, they are not the true subject of question 136. The first indication occurs in Aquinas’ initial description of patience.

In the first article of question 136, Aquinas asks whether patience is a virtue. Although the markedly theological language of his reply should provide some indication
that he is not speaking of any ordinary patience, it does not become fully apparent that Aquinas is defining an infused virtue until the replies to the objections. When one reads the article as a whole, however, taking seriously Aquinas’ reply to the first objection, it becomes difficult to see the virtue Aquinas here defines as anything but an infused virtue.

Although the language of the first article of question 136 is strikingly theological, Aquinas gives no indication in the body of the reply that the virtue he is introducing is an infused virtue. Yet if Aquinas is offering a definition that could apply to an athlete or a Spartan soldier, then his choice of language is odd indeed. In the sed contra, replying to objections which argue against the possibility that patience is a virtue, Aquinas gives a markedly theological response: “The virtue of the soul which is called patience is so great a gift of God that it is predicated even of the one who gives it to us.”

Though Aquinas merely uses this quote to establish patience as a virtue, his quote taken at face value would seem to do a great deal more. For it is clear that the virtue Augustine is describing is no acquired virtue, but a gift from God; a virtue directed to a beatitude that exceeds any worldly happiness. The remainder of the reply only serves to further the sense that the virtue under examination has to do with a supernatural end. For Aquinas, describing the need for a virtue so that man is not unduly weighed down by sorrow, cites Paul’s letter to the Corinthians “worldly grief produces death.” Worldly grief causes death, as Paul’s letter establishes, because when man allows himself to be saddened by the worldly goods

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211 Aquinas, II-II.136.1 OTC: virtus animi quae patientia dicitur, tam magnum Dei donum est ut etiam ipsius qui nobis eam largitur patientia praedicetur.
he must forego in order to reach towards the divine good, he is drawn away from the true
good and falls into sin. Patience is quite simply the virtue that causes man not to become
dejected by the hardships he has to endure in pursuit of the good, but Aquinas’ reference
to Paul, like the quote he chose for the sed contra, seem to indicate that the virtue he has
in mind is the virtue which prevents man from becoming unduly dejected by the
hardships he faces in pursuit of the divine good. Aquinas’ language alone, even together
with the texts he cites, is of course no indication that the true subject of article one is
infused virtue. For Aquinas cites Cicero and other pagan philosophers with equal
frequency in articles that are clearly about infused rather than acquired virtue. It is only
the reply to the first objection that provides credible evidence regarding the subject of the
first article.

However compelling one finds the language of the first article, it does not become
obvious that the virtue defined in the first article is an infused virtue until the reply to the
first objection. The first objection argued that because patience has to do with enduring
hardships, and because there are no hardships to be endured in heaven, patience will not
remain in heaven. Since all the virtues remain in heaven, and patience does not, patience
cannot be a virtue. Aquinas replies that even though the act of patience is altered in
heaven, the virtue of patience remains:

The moral virtues do not remain according to the same act in heaven as on earth,
namely through comparison to the good of the present life, which does not remain
in heaven, but through comparison to the end, which will be in heaven. Justice in
heaven will not have to do with buying and selling, and other things which pertain
to the present life, but in this that it is to be subject to God. Similarly in heaven
the act of patience will not consist in enduring something, but in the fruition of those goods which we sought to attain by patience.\footnote{Aquinas, II-II 136.1 RO.1 : virtutes morales non remanent secundum eundem actum in patria quem habent in via, scilicet per comparationem ad bona praesentis vitae, quae non remanebunt in patria, sed per comparationem ad finem, qui erit in patria. Sicut iustitia non erit in patria circa emptiones et venditiones, et alia quae pertinent ad vitam praesentem, sed in hoc quod est subditum esse Deo. Similiter actus patientiae in patria non erit in sustinendo aliqua, sed in fruitione bonorum in quae pervenire volebamus patiendo.}

The patience possessed on earth is the same, then, as the patience that remains in heaven; its act is simply altered.

Does this reply indicate that the true subject of article one is infused virtue? This passage clearly indicates that the patience which is the subject of this article has a supernatural end, and this in itself should be enough to show that the virtue under discussion in an infused one. Yet it is only when one notes the parallel between this text and that of the Disputed Questions on Virtue, where Aquinas considers whether and how the virtues can be said to remain in heaven, that it becomes most apparent that Aquinas has infused virtue in mind.

Aquinas’ response to the argument that patience cannot be a virtue because the virtues remain in heaven has clear ties, as one might expect, to his earlier remarks on whether or not the virtues remain in heaven. When Aquinas considers this question in his Disputed Questions on Virtue, he replies with a qualified affirmative. The infused virtues remain in heaven, though their act is altered. The acquired virtues, however, do not:

It is clear that the acquired virtues, about which the philosophers spoke, are set forth insofar as they perfect men in the civil life, and not insofar as they lead to the attainment of celestial glory. And thus they said that virtues of this sort do not
remain after this life, as Augustine says about Cicero. But the cardinal virtues, insofar as they are gratuitous and infused, about which we are now speaking, perfect man in the present life with regard to celestial glory. And thus it is necessary to say, that the habit of these virtues is the same here and there, but that the acts are different: for here they have acts befitting those striving for the ultimate end; but there they have acts befitting those who rest in the ultimate end.\footnote{Aquinas, DQV 5.4 : \textit{Manifestum est autem quod virtutes acquisitae, de quibusc locuti sunt philosophi, ordinantur tantum ad perficicendum homines in vita civilis, non secundum quod ordinantur ad caelestem gloriam consequendum. Et ideo posuerunt, quod huiusmodi virtutes non manent post hanc vitam, sicut de Tullio Augustinhus narrat. Sed virtutes cardinales, secundum quod sunt gratuitae et infusae, prout de eis nunc loquimur, perficiunt hominem in vita praesenti in ordine ad caelestem gloriam. Et ideo necesse est dicere, quod sit idem habitus harum virtutum hic et ibi; sed quod actus sunt differentes: nam hic habent actus qui competunt tendentibus in finem ultimam; illic autem habent actus qui competunt iam in fine ultimo quiescentibus.\textit{emphasis my own} – the following text is also helpful: “If then the ultimate end attained by virtues in this life is ordered to the ultimate attained by the virtues in heaven, they must be specifically the same virtues, although their acts will be different. If they are not taken as ordered one to the other, then they will not be the same virtues nor the same act nor the same habit.”}

As this text makes unequivocally clear, the only virtues which even have the potential to remain after this life are the virtues infused by God. It is the infused moral virtues which remain after death, though their act is altered.

When the reply to the first objection is taken in conjunction with the text from the disputed questions on virtue, the only reasonable conclusion seems to be that the true topic of the first article is infused virtue, and more importantly, that Aquinas simply assumes his reader is aware of this fact. For Aquinas’ reply to article one clearly only succeeds so long as it is infused, not acquired virtue under discussion, and yet Aquinas never makes this distinction, as one would expect him to if the objection was directed at a different kind of virtue than the article itself. Aquinas makes this reply, however, as if no distinctions need to be made; as if it is simply obvious that the end of both earthly and heavenly patience is union with God. Moreover, read in light of Aquinas’ response to the
first objection, the markedly theological language of the first article no longer seems out
of place. The logical conclusion, then, is that the real question of article one is whether
patience is an infused virtue, and that Aquinas simply uses the term “virtue” because he
assumes his reader knows this.

There are, of course, objections that could be raised to this thesis. For instance,
one might reply that while the first objection and its reply may have to do with infused
virtue, there is no reason to conclude that this is the subject of the entire article. The
problem with such a reply, however, is that it forces us to attribute an almost cavalier
imprecision to a philosopher known for his careful distinctions. If the first objection
referred to a different kind of virtue than the one under consideration, one would expect
Aquinas to say so. Yet he says nothing. This is not only in marked contrast with Aquinas’
usual modus operandi, but in marked contrast with Aquinas’ references to acquired
virtue. For when an objection is made on the basis of something that applies to acquired
virtue, Aquinas does draw the distinctions one would expect. This is evident in the
second reference to infused virtue that occurs in question 136.

While one can only infer, on the basis of Aquinas’ remarks in his reply to the first
objection, that the true subject of the first article of question 136 has to do with infused
virtue, the third article is undoubtedly about, and only about, the patience that is an
infused virtue. Here as before, Aquinas raises issues that can only refer to infused virtue
without any indication that he is changing the subject or in any way deviating from the
topic at hand. This occurs in marked contrast to the references to acquired virtue that
occur in the replies to the objections. Aquinas makes the distinction between infused and acquired virtue in this article only to distinguish acquired virtue from the type of virtue under consideration.

After establishing that patience is a virtue, and after considering whether or not patience is the highest virtue, Aquinas turns in the third article to the question of whether or not an individual can possess patience without grace. The mere fact that Aquinas raises this question is no indication that the article that follows will be concerned only with infused virtue, for man cannot even possess the full good of acquired virtue without grace. There is, however, an important distinction between the kind of grace that man needs in order to achieve the full good of acquired virtue and the grace that he needs in order to possess infused virtue. In order to achieve the full good of acquired virtue man needs actual grace; but infused virtue requires habitual grace, for the end of infused virtue is union with God, and man cannot act in accord with this end unless he is elevated to the status of an adopted son of God through habitual grace. It is not whether or not grace is needed, therefore, but the kind of grace that man will need, that will determine whether the subject of article three is infused or acquired virtue.

Although it immediately becomes clear that Aquinas is speaking of infused virtue, he again raises the issue without any indication that the subject has changed, and again seems to assume that this has been the true subject of examination from the outset. Aquinas responds to the question of whether or not patience requires grace with an emphatic “yes.” In the *sed contra*, in reply to the objections which argue that patience can
be possessed without grace, Aquinas repeats the assertion which made in article one – patience is a gift from God: “On the contrary is what is said in the Psalms, “from him,” namely God, “is my patience.” The virtue of patience must come from God, Aquinas proceeds to explain, because men only endure evil in order to achieve some good. Hence no man will willingly endure evil unless he loves the good he seeks more than the goods he will have to relinquish in order to obtain it:

the soul abhors sadness and pain in themselves, whence noone chooses to suffer something for its own sake, but only for the sake of some end. Therefore it is fitting that the good on account of which someone chooses to endure evil, should be more desired and more loved than that good the privation of which causes the pain which we patiently bear.

But man cannot love his true end above every worldly good unless he is united to God in charity, and this union cannot occur without the gift of habitual grace: “That someone should prefer the good of grace to every natural good, whose absence is painful, pertains to charity, which loves God above all things. Whence it is clear that patience, insofar as it is a virtue, is caused by charity.” Thus patience, Aquinas concludes, can only be possessed through grace.

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214 Aquinas, II-II.136.3 OTC : Sed contra est quod dicitur in Psalmo, ab ipso, scilicet Deo, patientia mea.

215 Aquinas, II-II.136.3 : Et huius ratio est quia tristitiam et dolorem secundum se abhorret animus, unde nunquam eligeret eam pati propter se, sed solum propter finem. Ergo oportet quod illud bonum propter quod aliquis vult pati mala, sit magis volitum et amatum quam illud bonum cuius privatio ingerit dolorem quem patienter toleramus.

216 Aquinas, II-II.136.3 : Quod autem aliquis praefерat bonum gratiae omnibus naturalibus bonis ex quorum amissione potest dolor causari, pertinet ad caritatem, quae diliget Deum super omnia. Unde manifestum est quod patientia, secundum quod est virtus, a caritate causatur
The most interesting feature of article three is the fact that, although its subject is clearly infused patience, Aquinas simply appears to assume that his reader is aware of this. Although only infused patience requires habitual grace, and although it is habitual grace that charity requires, Aquinas never even raises the distinction between actual and habitual grace – and when he does raise this issue in his replies to the objections, it is only to exclude the patience that merely requires actual grace. To the contrary, Aquinas simply asserts that patience requires grace. Yet because it is habitual grace which he argues for, it is clear though never stated that Aquinas has infused patience in mind. Again, the entire article simply seems to assume that the patience in question is infused, not acquired patience.

Aquinas’ backhand references to infused virtue; his apparent assumption that the reader knows this to be the true topic of discussion, occur in marked contrast with the references he makes to acquired virtue in the replies to the objections. In reply to the objection that non-Christians exhibit patience in their willingness to endure evil “ne patriam proderent, aut aliquid aliud dishonestum committerent,” Aquinas raises the distinction between infused and acquired virtue, only to insist that there is “no parallel” between acquired patience and the patience that is the subject of 136.3:

- the good of political virtue is commensurate to human nature. And thus without the help of grace the human will can strive towards the good proper to it, though not without God’s help. But the good of grace is supernatural. Whence man
cannot strive for that good through his natural strength. And thus the reasoning is not the same.\textsuperscript{217}

Patience requires grace because man cannot relinquish all the goods of this world out of preference for a higher state without divine assistance. Thus the sort of patience under discussion is necessarily quite different from the habit that allows a man to defend his country.

Aquinas states the same point even more forcefully in his reply to the second objection. The objection argues that man if man can endure great evils for the sake of bodily health, there is no reason why he shouldn’t be capable of enduring great evils for the health of his own soul. In his reply Aquinas distinguishes between man’s ability to act out of love for his own flesh and his ability to act out of love for God: “toleration of the evils which one endures on account of bodily health procedes from the love which man naturally feelss for his flesh. And thus it is not the same ans the patience which procedes from supernatural love.”\textsuperscript{218} Man can make all sorts of sacrifices without assistance, so long as the good he seeks is a “natural” one. But when the good in question is man’s true good, he needs to be sustained in his pursuit by a virtue bestowed from

\textsuperscript{217} Aquinas, II-II.136.3 RO.2 : Ad secundum dicendum quod bonum politicae virtutis est commensuraturn naturae humanae. Et ideo absque auxilio gratiae gratum facientis potest voluntas humana in illud tendere, licet non absque auxilio Dei. Sed bonum gratiae est supernaturale. Unde in illud non potest tendere homo per virtutem suae naturae. Et ideo non est similis ratio.

\textsuperscript{218} Aquinas, II-II.136.3 RO.3 : Ad tertium dicendum quod tolerantia etiam malorum quae quis sustinet propter corporis sanitatem, procedit ex amore quo homo naturaliter diligit suam carnem. Et ideo non est similis ratio de patientia, quae procedit ex amore supernaturali.
without. He can only forego the goods of this world in favor of another with the help of infused patience.

Again, both this objection and the reply Aquinas makes to it seem to take for granted that the end sought in patience is eternal life, and that the patience in question will spring from supernatural love. Aquinas raises the very different acquired patience only in order to dismiss it from consideration; to distinguish it from the patience that is bestowed by God.

It is clear, then, that two of the five articles of question 136; one of which is the very article that defines patience as a virtue, have to do with infused patience. Moreover, it is clear in these articles that Aquinas not only believes that he has not deviated from the topic at hand, but that he simply assumes his reader understands that he is referring to infused patience. It is, in fact, almost by accident that one comes to see that it is infused, not acquired patience that is under discussion -- only the reply to the first objection forces this conclusion in article one, and only attention to the distinction between actual and habitual grace allows this conclusion in article three. Although there are hints in the other three articles -- in the second article, for instance, Aquinas ranks patience below the theological virtues, arguing that faith hope and love order one to the good directly, while patience only removes obstacles such as hatred which keep one from good, and argument which would seem to imply that patience and charity share the same ultimate end-- Aquinas in the remaining articles simply speaks of “patience” and “virtue” without distinguishing between kinds of patience. What is one to conclude on the basis of this?
Although it is possible that Aquinas simply changes the topic, the most charitable conclusion would seem to be that Aquinas simply has infused patience in mind from the outset. The hypothesis that the truly tangential virtue is infused virtue would require us to interpret Aquinas’ remarks in article one as simply inconsistent, and his entire discussion in article three as markedly unclear. One would have to hypothesize that Aquinas oscillates between the types of virtue without warning; though – as evidenced by his clear desire in article three to distinguish patience from acquired patience – only sometimes. All of these conclusions require markedly more mental gymnastics and a markedly less charitable reading of Aquinas than the thesis that he simply has infused patience in mind from the outset.

5.5.3 Perseverance

The second component virtue of the act of endurance is perseverance, and this virtue is the subject of the four articles that comprise question 137. The pursuit of a distant goal requires continual effort, for even when one loves the end in question, it is difficult to consistently strive towards that end, particularly if the goal in question is a distant one. Thus it is not surprising that Aquinas, in his initial definition of the virtue of perseverance, speaks of it as a habitus or disposition towards what one should or shouldn’t pursue: “perseverantia est habitus eorum quibus immanendum est et non immanendum, et neutrorum.”

Perseverance, it seems, is a virtue that concerns the
mental state with which man approaches his goal. It is not surprising, given this, that some translate the “habitus” of the above quote as “attitude.” For perseverance seems to have much to do with a habit of mind; it allows man to pursue a good over a long period of time.

Again, perseverance in many respects seems to be a virtue that is particularly applicable to a soldier on a long campaign, or to an athlete; though again one has to acknowledge that the virtue of perseverance is particularly necessary for any one who shoulders the demands of the Christian life. For if one needs perseverance in order to survive a long battle, surely one needs an even greater and different kind of perseverance in order to pursue union with God through the course of a life. Which type of perseverance is the topic of question 137? Although here as before Aquinas simply refers to “perseverance” without making this clear, it is evident that at least a full fourth of question 137 is devoted exclusively to infused perseverance, and as before Aquinas’ language in this portion of the text implies that this is the true topic of the remainder as well.

In the fourth and final article of question 137, after having established that perseverance is a virtue, that it is a part of courage, and that it includes the virtue of constancy, Aquinas raises the question of whether perseverance needs the help of grace. As in the parallel article in the question devoted to patience, Aquinas simply seems to assume that it is infused perseverance which has been the subject of discussion from the outset. After asserting in the sed contra that perseverance is “a gift of God, through which
one remains in Christ until the end,” Aquinas answers the title question by
distinguishing between two ways of understanding the virtue of perseverance. The natural
thought, given the question, would be that Aquinas intends to distinguish between
acquired and infused perseverance, but this exactly what Aquinas does not do. Rather,
Aquinas distinguishes between perseverance as a disposition and perseverance as an act.
While the disposition requires only habitual grace, the act of perseverance requires both
actual and habitual grace:

perseverance can be said in two ways. In one way, as regards the habit of
perseverance itself, insofar as it is a virtue. And in this way it, like the other
infused virtues, requires the gift of grace. In another way, perseverance can be
understood in terms of the act of perseverance continuing unto death. And in this
second way, perseverance requires not only habitual grace, but also the gratuitous
help of God conserving man in the good until the end of life, as said above.  

For Aquinas, it seems, the real question is not whether habitual grace is necessary – for
indeed, all the virtues infused by God require habitual grace – but whether perseverance
requires some additional grace. It is the need for additional grace in the act of
perseverance that gives rise to the need for the distinction. For although through grace
man has the power to choose the good in any given instance, he does not have the power
to “remain immovably in the good.” In order to persevere in the good until the end of life,

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Aquinas, II-II 137.4 SC : asserimus donum Dei esse perseverantiam, qua usque in finem
perseveratur in Christo.

Aquinas, II-II 137.4 : perseverantia dupliciter dicitur. Uno modo, pro ipso habitu
perseverantiae, secundum quod est virtus. Et hoc modo indiget dono habitualis gratiae, sicut et ceterae
virtutes infusiones. Alio modo potest accipi pro actu perseverantiae durante usque ad mortem. Et secundum
hoc indiget non solum gratia habituali, sed etiam gratuito Dei auxilio conservantis hominem in bono usque
ad finem vitae, sicut supra dictum est, cum de gratia ageretur.
man needs more than simply an infused habitual disposition. As in question 136 then, Aquinas simply seems to assume that the perseverance he speaks of here is an infused virtue, and it makes sense, on the basis of this apparent assumption, to question whether the true subject of the entire discussion of perseverance isn’t also infused perseverance.

5.5.4 Magnificence

The only integral part of courage that remains to be considered is the virtue of magnificence. Of the four principal parts of courage, magnificence contains the least obvious references to infused virtue. In fact, the only text that in which Aquinas even appears to hint at infused virtue in connection with magnificence occurs in the first article, where he argues that magnificence is a virtue because human virtue is a sharing in divine virtue, and magnificence is attributed to God. Nonetheless, if there are no texts that explicitly establish magnificence as an infused virtue, neither are there any texts which imply the contrary. Given this, together with the clear focus on infused virtue throughout the remainder of the treatise and the vagueness of Aquinas language (which has been emphasized throughout this chapter) there is no reason to believe that magnificence Aquinas speaks of in question 134 is not an infused virtue.

5.6 Martyrdom as the Principal Part of Courage

In his encyclical, Veritatis Splendor, Pope John Paul II cites martyrdom as the act that every other act of courage looks to:
“Although martyrdom represents the high point of the witness to moral truth, and one to which relatively few people are called, there is nonetheless a consistent witness which all Christians must daily be ready to make, even at the cost of suffering a given sacrifice. Indeed, faced with the many difficulties which fidelity to the moral order can demand, even in the most ordinary circumstances, the Christian is called, with the grace of God invoked in prayer, to a sometimes heroic commitment. In this he or she is sustained by the virtue of fortitude, whereby, as Gregory the Great teaches, one can actually “love the difficulties of this world for the sake of eternal rewards.”

Though man is not necessarily called to face death, the fortitude he is called to looks towards martyrdom, for it involves the same willingness to endure the trials of this world for God’s sake, the same “heroic commitment,” and the same subjugation of the self to God. If the reading I which I gave of the parts of courage is correct, Aquinas’ understanding of the relationship between fortitude and martyrdom mirrors that of Pope John Paul II’s. For when the principal parts of courage are understood as themselves concerned with the traits that allow man to wage a spiritual battle, one is in a much better position to understand why Aquinas cites martyrdom as the principal act of courage. One sees, moreover, that each of the principal parts of courage finds its fullest expression in the act of martyrdom.

Aquinas cites witness to the Christian faith as the essential component of martyrdom. For the martyr, the divine good is so important that he considers all other goods, even his own life, unimportant. Hence the martyr willingly faces and endures the most fearful evil of all, death, for the sake of the divine good. When one considers the role of courage in martyrdom, one can consider courage either as one of many
components: a disposition whose presence allows an individual to perform the action, or one can consider courage as the only true component of the action. If one considers courage in the first way, martyrdom would count as the principal act of courage only in terms of its difficulty: giving one’s life for a cause is the most difficult of all actions and hence requires the most courage. On the other hand, if the courage connected to martyrdom is considered in the second way, the act of martyrdom and the act of courage would not be separable in this way. Martyrdom would not be an action which happened to require courage, it simply would be the fullest expression of courage. If this latter understanding is correct, however, something about every act of courage would itself be a lesser form of martyrdom. Although it should be clear that my reading of the parts of courage favors the latter account of the relationship between courage and magnanimity, there are two points of contact which are especially noteworthy.

**Magnanimity**

The earlier sections characterized magnanimity as the virtue which stems from a fundamental choice – the free motion of the will in which man subjects himself to God. The man who subjects himself to God is willing to take on any task, but he does so “under God.” Magnanimity, rather than a virtue possessed by the proud, is rather a virtue that reflects supreme obedience. Man subjects himself to God and in doing so becomes God’s instrument. When one turns to Aquinas’ description of martyrdom it is clear that this supreme obedience is most fully expressed in the martyr’s act. The martyr sees that only one good is worth pursuing: “‘Martyr’ is said about a witness to the Christian faith,
which tells us that visible things are to be despised on behalf of invisible things.”\(^{223}\) In this recognition, the martyr subjects himself to God so completely that he counts even his own life as little. His obedience, says Aquinas, is so complete that he is “obedient unto death.” It is only in the act of martyrdom that complete indifference to earthly goods is illustrated, because, “so long as life of the body remains in man, he has not yet shown himself to despise all temporal things.”\(^{224}\) It should be clear, then, that the martyr’s act exhausts the notion of magnanimity, not merely because the martyr takes on great things, but because his act so fully exemplifies the humble obedience to the will of God that comprises the act of magnanimity.

**Perseverance**

Aquinas’ description of perseverance is also reflected in his account of martyrdom. As noted above, man perseveres because he loves the good he seeks more than he loves the goods he must forego in order to obtain that good. Martyrdom requires perseverance in the extreme, because it involves the greatest sacrifice of all:

Among all virtuous acts, martyrdom best demonstrates the perfection of charity. Because someone is shown to love something to the extent that on behalf of that thing he thinks little of other loved things and chooses instead to suffer something evil. But it is clear that among every other good of the present life, man loves his own life most, and hates most his own death...and thus it seems that among the

\(^{223}\) Aquinas, II-II.124.4 : *martyr dicitur quasi testis fidei Christianae, per quam nobis visibilia pro invisibilibus contemptenda proponuntur*

\(^{224}\) Aquinas, II-II 124.4 : *Quandiu autem homini remanet vita corporalis, nondum opere se ostendit temporalia cuncta despicere*
other acts of man martyrdom is more perfect according to its genus, because it is a sign of the greatest love.\footnote{225}
CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

The preceding chapters argued that – at least as regards the treatises on prudence and fortitude – the detailed treatment of the virtues in the second part are primarily descriptions of infused virtue. This reading, if correct, raises the following questions. First, can one show that infused virtue is the true subject of the entire second part? That is, can it be shown that the treatises on temperance and justice are also primarily concerned with the infused versions of those virtues, and not their acquired counterparts? Second, given that the role of the infused virtues is much larger than most imagine, what if anything can be said about the relationship between the infused and acquired virtues? Although both of these questions lie outside the scope of this dissertation, it is fitting to offer, by way of conclusion, some thoughts on how one might go about answering them.

6.1 The Treatises on Temperance and Justice

In at least one respect, the treatises on temperance and justice should pose little difficulty. For Aquinas uses the same basic methodology, the methodology laid out in his introduction to the second part, to analyze all the virtues. Thus it is clear that for Aquinas
the gifts and precepts are as important to an understanding of temperance and justice as they are to an understanding of prudence and fortitude. Moreover, as with fortitude and prudence, the only precepts Aquinas considers in his discussions of temperance and justice are those precepts prescribed by the divine law. It seems, then, that the basic structure of these accounts is at least open to interpretations similar to those given of prudence and fortitude.

Nevertheless, the treatises on temperance and justice pose more problems than the treatises on prudence and fortitude did. First, the treatises on prudence and fortitude both contain articles which clearly concern infused, and only infused, virtue – namely articles which ask whether a certain virtue can be possessed without grace. These articles provided us with a “way in,” as it were, to the treatise as a whole. Because the treatises on temperance and justice do not contain such articles, they are that much more difficult to navigate. A second, even more complicated problem lies in the fact that the treatises on temperance and justice both contain discussions of virtues (fasting and religion) which one might intuitively think of as infused virtues, but which Aquinas clearly locates as natural, rather than supernatural, virtues. Although neither of these difficulties are insurmountable, they do render the treatises more problematic. While I do believe a reading similar to those given of prudence and fortitude can be given of temperance and justice, I also believe that a careful and detailed analysis of those treatises must precede any such reading.
6.2 Questions of Connection

A different and more pressing issue concerns the question of the relationship between the infused and acquired moral virtues. For given that the second part’s primary focus has to do with the infused virtues, the question of what the acquired virtues do remains. Are they a mere heuristic device? If not, then what if any positive role do they play in the moral life? While such questions lie outside the scope of this dissertation, one can at least provide some hypotheses about how one might begin to address these questions. The following discussion will make three points. First, given the previous work of this dissertation, at least one set of hypotheses about the connection between infused and acquired virtue cannot be true: namely the hypothesis that acts of infused virtue somehow require or presuppose the presence of acquired virtue. Second it will be argued that two positive hypotheses can be posited, with a high degree confidence, about the relationship between the infused and acquired virtues. These hypotheses are that (1) the acquired virtues aid the act of infused virtue at least insofar as they remove the dispositions that incline toward sin, but that, this fact notwithstanding, (2) the sole aim of the justified individual must be the cultivation and increase of the infused, not the acquired, virtues. Finally, a text will be addressed, the understanding of which, it will be argued, will be pivotal to any further inquiry into the relationship between the infused and acquired virtues.
6.2.1 “Strong” Connection Theories

The work of the preceding chapters allows us to dispense with at least one hypothesis that has been put forward about the connection between the infused and acquired virtues, namely that the successful act of infused virtue “presupposes” the presence of the acquired virtues. Although the most straightforward statement of this claim is made by Lee Yearley, a number of other scholars at least imply that something like Yearley’s account of the connection must be true. Still more, insofar as they cite Yearley as an authority on Aquinas’ treatment of the connection between the virtues, are in tacit agreement with his claim. However, because Yearley appears to be the only scholar who explicitly states and defends such a thesis, it is his view which the following will address.

In his paper, “The Nature-Grace Question in the Context of Fortitude,” Lee Yearley argues that, with the exception of a few miraculous cases such as the conversion of St. Paul, the infused virtues “presuppose” the acquired virtues. Yearley puts forward two arguments in support of this thesis. First, he argues that the absence of acquired fortitude would “vitiate or destroy” the supernatural act of martyrdom. Secondly, he argues that the development of natural fortitude represents a “necessary first step” in the

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226 Coerver, Mirkes, and Klubertanz all, in one way or another, appear to be sympathetic to such a claim.
227 Stanley Hauerwas, for instance, cites Yearley’s account of the virtues as evidence for his view.
sequential development of man. Neither of these claims, as will be shown in what follows, are consistent with the actual teaching of Aquinas.

Yearley’s first argument hinges on the notion that an incorrect appreciation of worldly goods would vitiate the act of martyrdom. Acquired fortitude, Yearley points out, allows man to appreciate the true value of worldly goods: “natural fortitude sets one into right relation with goods in the world by enabling one to recognize their value.” Yearley acknowledges that supernatural fortitude can require that one give up worldly goods, but argues that the very difficulty experienced by the person who possesses acquired fortitude and hence loves the goods of this world captures the essence of the martyr’s act. Someone without acquired fortitude, he claims, would value worldly goods too little. This failure to appreciate the true value of the goods that martyrdom requires one to forego would in turn, Yearley argues, make martyrdom too easy and hence vitiate or destroy the act of martyrdom:

“The tension here pointed to [i.e. the difficulty of renouncing worldly goods] is, of course, even more acute and significant in supernatural fortitude since it may reject all natural goods. But that very tension arises because natural fortitude is presupposed, that is, the just demands of other objects or goods in life like the family or the state are recognized. Without that presupposing, the complex density of the act of martyrdom would be vitiated or even destroyed for there would be no real difficulty to overcome. Rather than an act defined by the overcoming of difficulty, martyrdom would instead be characterized by ease and lack of tension.”

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229 Yearley, p. 574.
230 Yearley, p. 573
231 Yearley, p. 573
The martyrdom of a social pariah, then, or of an individual estranged from his family, would for Yearley be diminished: such a person would value the goods he relinquished too little, with the result that the action itself would lose its “complex density.”

One familiar with Aristotle’s description of the “most courageous” man will quickly recognize that Yearley is simply appropriating Aristotle’s view of the factors that make one man braver than another. Aristotle spends the majority of his treatment of courage discussing what it is that makes a man a good, as opposed to a bad soldier, and the good soldier, as one might expect, is characterized by his willingness to face danger because it is fine to do so. Only such men, as opposed to those who face danger only under compulsion, out of passion, or when they are certain of emerging victorious, make good soldiers. But then, at the end of his treatment, Aristotle says that the “ bravest” man and the good soldier are not identical, for the bravest man will be he who has every other good and who is hence loathe to face danger. The best soldier, on the other hand, will be he who has nothing to lose and is hence willing “to sell his life for small gains.”

Yearley seems to have simply adapted this notion to fit his account of infused virtue. The more painfully aware man is of the goods martyrdom requires him to sacrifice, the greater his act of martyrdom becomes. Yearley’s account of martyrdom is certainly Aristotelian. But this does not suffice to make it Thomist.

Even bracketing the question of whether Yearley has an accurate conception of the act of infused virtue, his claims above should strike us as unsettling at best. In the first

\[232^2\] \[NE\ 1117b15\]
place, although his ostensible claim is that the true difficulty of infused virtue is felt only by the man who also possesses the acquired virtues, his argument seems to make the worth of the act of infused virtue depend more on luck than on anything else. For suppose an individual possesses the acquired virtues, but due to contingent circumstances, has no family and no *polis* in which to exercise those virtues. Surely he would have equally little to lose in the act of martyrdom? Would the absence of goods to be relinquished not also vitiate or destroy *his* act? In the second place, Yearley’s contention that the “true” act of martyrdom presupposes acquired virtue seems to rule out far too many martyrs. For Yearley’s account forces us to impugn the sacrifice of anyone who lacks the acquired virtues. Yet the examples of saints who seem to have lacked acquired virtue are manifold, and they seem most manifold among the martyrs. Are *all* of these instances are irregularities? Finally, Yearley’s claim runs counter to one’s intuitions. For it would seem that the acquired virtues, if anything, would *remove* obstacles to infused virtue; that they would make those acts less difficult. Surely it is vice, not the lack of it, that renders meritorious action difficult?  

The true problem, of course, is that Yearley simply misunderstands infused virtue, and most importantly, misunderstands what it is that makes one act of infused virtue “better” than another. What renders an act of infused virtue more or less spectacular, as the second chapter of this dissertation demonstrated, is not the degree of acquired virtue an individual possesses, but the amount of charity his action exhibits. Moreover, as

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233 This is, at least, Aquinas’ view of the matter.
chapter two also demonstrated, no clear correlation can be drawn between the amount of
charity an individual possesses and the amount of virtue he has acquired.

Yearley’s second argument, though less strange, is also questionable. Yearley
argues that the recognition of worldly goods is a necessary “first step” in supernatural
action. In order to have to proper relationship to the infused virtues, man must overcome
his “fearful subjection to sense,” and Yearley maintains that in the typical case, man
overcomes his passions through the acquired virtues. Without this control, Yearley
argues, man will not be properly related to the infused virtues:

“Without the kind of guidance and control that is represented by the fulfillment of
the natural virtues, man’s relation to higher objects will at best probably be a
febrile one, passionately involved at times, unrelated at others, and always likely
to fail him at the most crucial points.”

Yearley’s point seems to be that man cannot turn his mind to heavenly things unless he
first puts himself in the appropriate relation to natural things. This second argument is far
more convincing than the first, and, on one reading, makes a perfectly reasonable claim.
If man is distracted -- if his soul is cluttered by all kinds of bad dispositions -- he will
have trouble turning his heart and mind to God. Man must work, therefore, to rid himself
of those inclinations that draw him away from his true end. However, while it is true that
man must “overcome his subjection to sense,” it is questionable whether the Christian
does so by “shelving,” as it were, the infused virtues and focusing instead on the acquired.

234Yearley, p.574
If one focuses on the process through which the pagan becomes disposed for the gift of grace, then Yearley’s point is valid. For Aquinas asserts, time and time again, that the cultivation of the acquired virtues disposes man for the gift of grace, and it seems fair to assert that the pagan, by cultivating the acquired virtues, disposes himself for the initial gift of grace. But is it possible to make the same claim about the Christian?

When one focuses on individuals who are already in a state of grace, Yearley’s claim becomes more problematic. For it is not at all clear that the aim of one who is in the state of grace should ever be the cultivation of the acquired virtues. Rather, as noted above, the sole aim of the individual justified by grace should be to perform acts of infused virtue so that through these acts he might dispose himself for growth in charity and the other infused virtues. It is certainly true that, in the event man fails to perform a meritorious action, it is better that he perform an act of acquired virtue than otherwise. Yet his aim must be the meritorious act, and Aquinas is emphatic on this point: if an act is meritorious, then it involves the infused virtues. Given this, it certainly seems that one in a state of grace does not act as he should if, instead of attempting to turn himself to God, he simply goes about cultivating the acquired virtues. Thus, while Yearley is certainly correct to claim that disordered dispositions draw one away from the supernatural life, it is unclear how to make sense of his further thesis that one must rid oneself of bad dispositions before one can even participate in the supernatural life. If he means that the individual in the state of grace should not even attempt to perform supernatural acts until he first acquires the virtues, then his claim is certainly false.
6.3 Two Hypotheses about the Connection between Infused and Acquired Virtue

If it is incorrect that the successful act of infused virtue “presupposes” the existence of the acquired virtues, then there remains the question of how the acquired virtues affect the act of infused virtue. While it is impossible in this limited discussion to settle the myriad questions surrounding the relationship between the infused and acquired virtues, this section will argue that one is at least justified in positing the following two hypotheses. First, whatever else may or may not be true of the relationship between the infused and acquired virtues, it is at least true that the acquired virtues remove bad dispositions -- namely, those dispositions that draw man away from acts of infused virtue and into mortal sin. The second and equally important point, however, is that acquired virtue should not and cannot be the goal of the individual in the state of grace.

While Aquinas says little if anything about the connection between the infused and acquired virtues, it is clear from the little that he does say that an integral component of the moral life is the struggle to remove vicious dispositions from one’s soul. In his *Disputed Questions on Virtue*, Aquinas points out that although venial sins do not destroy the infused virtue, repeated venial sins cause bad dispositions, which in turn make man more prone to mortal sin:

“It should be said that, although infused virtue is not caused by acts, still acts can dispose to it, hence it is not unfitting that it be corrupted by acts, because form is
taken away by the indisposition of matter, as the soul is separated from the body
because of the indisposition of matter."\textsuperscript{235}

Aquinas clearly does believe that the acquired virtues counter the “indisposition of
matter,” for he describes the acquired virtues as dispositions that help man turn from sin,
at least “for the most part.”\textsuperscript{236} The acquired virtues dispose us towards genuinely good
actions, if not actions ordered toward the end of all human life, and insofar as they at least
order us towards good, as opposed to bad actions, they are a considerable asset. For in the
event that one does not act in accord with the end “totius vitae,” it is better that he at least
avoid sin.

While it is clear that the acquired virtues are beneficial, it is not at all clear that
they should be a “goal” of the moral life, and the distinction between a beneficial
disposition and the virtues that one ought to strive for leads us to our second hypothesis.
Although it is certainly better to have the acquired virtues than to possess vicious
dispositions, Aquinas nowhere indicates that the justified individual ought to consciously
strive for the acquired virtues. To the contrary, the only reasonable conclusion would
seem to be that the \textit{sole} goal of the individual in the state of grace ought to be to grow in
charity and the infused virtues. For as we have seen, grace puts an individual in right
relation with regard to the end of all human life; it renders him capable of acting in accord
with his true end, whereas before he could only order himself towards ends which, though
genuinely good, were not the end of all human life. Now, it is certainly true that such an

\textsuperscript{235} Aquinas, DQV 1.10 ad 17
\textsuperscript{236} Aquinas, DQV 1.9 ad 5
individual must continue to struggle against his vicious dispositions, but it seems that even this struggle ought to be motivated by the desire for eternal life. It would be odd at best to conclude that one in the state of grace ought to put the quest for eternal life “on hold,” so to speak, while he first pursues the acquired virtues.

c. The Connection of the Virtues

Even if one grants the two hypotheses proposed above, and even if one agrees that the infused virtues cannot be said to presuppose their acquired counterparts, a great many questions about the connection between the infused and acquired virtues remain unanswered. What, for instance, happens to the acquired virtues with the infusion of grace? Do acts of infused virtue somehow “create” acquired dispositions? While answers to these and other questions lie outside the scope of this dissertation, it is fitting that we conclude by pointing to some texts which will be central to any attempt to resolve these questions. In what follows, I will cite a text which I believe must be understood before one can tackle questions of connection with any degree of success.

Although Aquinas says virtually nothing about the connection between the infused and acquired virtues, there is one text in the *Disputed Questions on Virtue* where he explicitly addresses this question. In this text, Aquinas indicates that the act of acquired virtue can be “ordered” by the infused virtues:

“since there is no merit without charity, the act of acquired virtue cannot be meritorious without charity. But other virtues are infused along with charity; hence, the act of acquired virtue can only be meritorious by the mediation of infused virtue. For the virtue ordered to an inferior end does not produce an act
ordered to the superior end without the mediation of the superior virtue. Just as
courage, which is a virtue of man as man, does not order its act to the political
good except by mediation of the courage, which is the virtue of man insofar as he
is a citizen.237

Acquired virtue, therefore, can be meritorious through the mediation of infused virtue. If
infused virtue can “mediate” the act of acquired virtue, then it seems that the infused
virtues can somehow make use of or appropriate the acquired virtues. But just how do
they make use of them, and just what does this appropriation consist of?

If the text cited above does not explain just how the infused virtues make use of
the acquired, it does provide us with a clue. For Aquinas, explaining that the act of
acquired virtue can only be meritorious through the mediation of infused virtue, uses the
example of lower and higher forms of courage. The courage of man as man is only
ordered to the good of the city through the mediation of that courage, “which is the virtue
of man insofar as he is a citizen.” If we wish to explore the details of the connection
between infused and acquired virtue, then, we might do well to study Aristotelian
courage. For if we can understand just what is involved when the good citizen makes use
of the lesser form of courage, and what it means for one virtue to be “ordered” by another,
we will be in a position to better understand the relation between the infused and acquired
virtues.

237 Aquinas, DQV 1.10 ad.4
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