

**‘The Cardinal Virtues as a Way to the Theological Virtues and Vice Versa’
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THE CARDINAL VIRTUES AS A WAY TO THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES AND VICE VERSA

Tomáš Machula

Status quaestionis

The philosophy of Thomas Aquinas is based especially on Aristotelian concepts, where the priority of sensual knowledge over intellectual knowledge importantly takes place. This is not only a question of epistemology, but also of metaphysics, natural theology and, of course, ethics. The classical principle, that *grace does not destroy nature*, but presupposes and perfects it,¹ is a very good example of it. Consequently, a human being seems to be naturally disposed for the reception of supernatural divine influence or gift. This presupposition seems to be in accord with the Sermon on the Mount, where people pure in heart are blessed, because they shall see God. Whereas the vision of God is definitely a supernatural divine gift, the purity of heart seems to be rather a matter of the natural disposition of the human being, as well as the poverty in spirit or gentleness that are blessed by other blessings.

In the following text we will pay attention especially to Aquinas' writings where the question of acquired virtues as a disposition for infused theological virtues is explicitly solved. They are *Summa Theologiae* and the *Commentary on the Sentences*. In both writings he asks the same question but the answers remarkably differ. Comparing these positions and considering both argumentations we will reach the proposal of an acceptable solution that is able to harmonise both arguments.

In this context we will investigate some more arguments from the *Summa*, *Commentary on the Sentences* and *Disputed Questions on Virtue*,² where there are some inspiring thoughts that

¹ Cf. *STh* I, q. 1 a. 8 ad 2.

² I have used following English translations of Aquinas' works: St. Thomas Aquinas, *On Love and Charity. Readings from the Commentary on the*

offer a deeper insight into the above mentioned topic. Finally, we will pay attention to the inverse relationship between acquired and infused virtues, specifically the importance of infused virtues for acquiring and deepening the acquired virtues.

Natural dispositions: *Summa Theologiae* versus *Commentary on the Sentences*

As I have said above, it is possible to presuppose the importance of natural training for receiving infused virtues. The whole question, however, is not clear enough. In his *Summa Theologiae*,³ Aquinas explicitly deals with the question of whether charity is infused according to the natural capacities (*secundum quantitatem naturalium*) of human beings and he answers in the negative. In the “response” of the article the quantity or capacity of natural abilities is not important at all for the infusion of this theological virtue because the theological virtue of charity only depends on the grace of the Holy Spirit and not on natural disposition. As Aquinas points out: “the Spirit breathes where he will” (Jn 3: 8). Thus, the infusion of theological virtues is a matter of God’s free decision and not the logical consequence of some natural human effort. Aquinas says that the theological virtue of charity exceeds the capacity of human nature and that’s why its infusion does not depend on our natural powers, but only on the grace of the Holy Spirit who infuses it. The measure that was given to us is not the measure of our virtue, but the measure of the giving of Christ (see Eph 4, 7).⁴

Sentences of Peter Lombard, transl. by P. A. Kwasniewski, T. Bolin and J. Bolin, Washington D. C.: CUA Press 2008; Sancti Thomae Aquinatis *Summa Theologiae*, literally translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Second and Revised Edition, 1920; Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on Virtue*, transl. by J. Hause and C. Eisen Murphy, Indianapolis: Hackett 2010.

³ Cf. *STh* II-II, q. 24 a. 3.

⁴ *STh* II-II, q. 24 a. 3 resp.: “Caritas autem, cum superexcedat proportionem naturae humanae, ut dictum est, non dependet ex aliqua naturali virtute, sed ex sola gratia spiritus sancti eam infundentis. Et ideo quantitas caritatis non dependet ex conditione naturae vel ex capacitate naturalis virtutis, sed

“Now, since charity surpasses the proportion of human nature, as stated above it depends, not on any natural virtue, but on the sole grace of the Holy Ghost who infuses charity. Wherefore the quantity of charity depends neither on the condition of nature nor on the capacity of natural virtue, but only on the will of the Holy Ghost who divides His gifts according as He will. Hence the Apostle says (Eph 4, 7): *To every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the giving of Christ.*”

In the *Commentary on the Sentences*,⁵ however, there is a more detailed argumentation. It is based on the presupposition that God measures out equally to all human beings. If it is true, then the variety of God’s gifts must depend on the variety on the part of human beings. And this variety is determined by the measure of their preparedness to accept these gifts.⁶ Aquinas compares it to the similar condition of natural forms, where matter is more or less prepared to accept another form by its accidental dispositions. Similarly, the soul, as a form of living being, is more or less prepared for the acceptance of some perfection by its activities. He distinguishes between naturally acquired and infused perfections. The acquired perfections belong to the natural capacity of the soul (as *actus secundi*). In the case of moral virtues, the right order of reason is a potentiality of the soul or something like a “seed”,⁷ which the actual virtue can grow from. The soul’s actions that lead to the acquiring of virtues are both the dispositions for the acquiring of virtues and the active principles that lead the soul to virtuous

solum ex voluntate spiritus sancti distribuentis sua dona prout vult. Unde et apostolus dicit, ad Ephes. IV, *unicuique nostrum data est gratia secundum mensuram donationis Christi.*”

⁵ Cf. *In I Sent* d. 17 q. 1 a. 3 resp.

⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*: “Diversitas donorum receptorum ab ipso, attendatur secundum diversitatem recipientium. Diversitas autem recipientium attenditur, secundum quod aliquid est magis aptum et paratum ad recipiendum.”

⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*: “Virtutes morales sunt in ipsa rectitudine rationis et ordine, sicut in quodam principio seminali.”

perfection.⁸ In the case of infused theological virtues, the soul's actions are only dispositions, but they are not in the place of an active principle.

“Infused perfections, on the other hand, are in the nature of the soul itself as in a potency that is material only and in no way active, since they elevate the soul above all of its natural action. Hence the soul's operations stand to infused perfections as dispositions only.”⁹

	in natural capacities of soul	disposition	actualization
acquired perfections	yes	human action (capability of it)	human action (repeated)
infused perfections	no	human action	God's action

Consequently, the principal difference between acquired and infused virtues is on the side of the active agent and not on the side of the passive receiver, according to Aquinas. Whereas in the acquired virtues it is the human being who is both the active and passive principle, in the infused virtues it is God who is active and the human being is only their receiver. At the very beginning of this question, Aquinas stressed that God measures out equally to all human beings so that the variety of God's gifts depends on their receiver.¹⁰ If it is so, then it is clear that the crucial factor in the

⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*: “Operationes animae se habent ad perfectiones acquisitas, non solum per modum dispositionis, sed sicut principia activa.”

⁹ *Ibid.*: “Perfectiones autem infusae sunt in natura ipsius animae sicut in potentia materiali et nullo modo activa, cum elevent animam supra omnem suam actionem naturalem. Unde operationes animae se habent ad perfectiones infusas solum sicut dispositiones.”

¹⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*: “cum Deus habeat se aequaliter ad omnia, oportet quod diversitas donorum receptorum ab ipso, attendatur secundum diversitatem recipientium.”

receiving of infused virtues is the preparedness of the human soul. Aquinas says this preparedness is given both naturally and morally (by the dispositions that are the effects of our actions).¹¹ A mutual proportion of these presuppositions influences the capacity to accept the infused virtue. He who has better natural endowments can have more than the one who has less natural endowments even though both of them do their best. And similarly, he who has less natural endowments, but who strives more, can obtain the greater perfection than the one who has better natural dispositions, but neglects their cultivation and development.

“And because a better nature is more disposed for one and the same effort than the inferior nature, it follows that the one who has better natural endowments, when there is an equal effort of works, will receive a greater share of infused perfections than the one who has inferior natural endowments, and the one who has inferior endowments, if there be a greater effort in the work, will sometimes receive more than the one who has better natural endowments.”¹²

The whole matter can be depicted by the following simple equation that shows the proportion of the infused virtues to the acquired ones.

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Capacity} \\ \text{for} \\ \text{infused} \\ \text{virtues} \end{array} = \begin{array}{l} \text{natural} \\ \text{dispositions} \end{array} + \begin{array}{l} \text{acquired} \\ \text{virtues} \end{array} - \begin{array}{l} \text{(acquired)} \\ \text{vices}^{13} \end{array}$$

¹¹ Cf. *Ibid.*: “Dicendum est igitur, quod mensura secundum quam datur caritas, est capacitas ipsius animae, quae est ex natura simul, et dispositione quae est per conatum operum.”

¹² *Ibid.*: “Et quia secundum eundem conatum magis disponitur natura melior; ideo qui habet meliora naturalia, dummodo sit par conatus, magis recipiet de perfectionibus infusis; et qui pejora naturalia, quandoque magis recipiet, si adsit major conatus.”

¹³ In the case of vices, of course, it is not possible to speak about infused vices.

We have here two different answers from Aquinas to the same question. The answer in the *Summa* is more recent, so it has priority from the historical point of view. On the other hand, if the principle idea is the pursuit of truth (and it corresponds with Aquinas style of thinking), the important issue is not chronology but the force of the argument. Moreover, it is highly probable that if Aquinas had completely changed his former position, he would have explained this about-turn at least implicitly in the context of the objections and answers in the above mentioned article of the *Summa*. However, there is no discussion of this kind.

Quite the opposite takes place: in the earlier text (*Commentary on the Sentences*), Aquinas uses a more sophisticated argumentation regarding the same question. In the first objection in the text of the *Summa*, he quoted the text of Mt 25: 15, where there is the following text in Latin: *Dedit unicuique secundum propriam virtutem*, which means: he gave each in proportion to his virtue. Before the infusion of God's gifts there are (or can be) only acquired virtues in the human soul; that's why God gives his gifts with respect to them. Aquinas answers that this infusion of divine virtues really depends on the preparedness (or virtue) of the receiver, but this preparedness or disposition itself depends on a movement by the Holy Spirit.¹⁴ In the *Commentary on the Sentences*, Aquinas begins with the same quotation of Mt 25: 15, but he adds the words of the Jerome's gloss: "Not on account of liberality or frugality do different men receive more or less, but according to the power of the recipients." In the response to this objection, Aquinas points out that the power of the recipient depends not only on his nature alone, but also on the disposition of the effort added to nature.

¹⁴ Cf. *STh* II-II, q. 24 a. 3 ad 1: "Sed hanc etiam dispositionem vel conatum praevenit spiritus sanctus, movens mentem hominis vel plus vel minus secundum suam voluntatem."

“The recipient’s power is not to be considered according to nature alone, but also according to the disposition of the effort added to nature.”¹⁵

In the *Summa*, Aquinas distinguishes between natural dispositions (i.e. acquired virtues) and dispositions preparing the human soul for the gift of habitual grace, but in the *Commentary on the Sentences* he distinguishes between only natural disposition and the disposition acquired by human effort. Aquinas describes the relationship of nature and grace in the context of the answer to the third objection in the text from the *Commentary on the Sentences*. Glory presupposes grace and grace presupposes nature. Hence charity is infused in the manner of grace. Grace itself is the disposition of nature for glory. And the disposition of nature for grace (or charity) is human effort (*conatus medius*).¹⁶

In the fourth objection, Aquinas compares human beings and angels. The parallel argumentation can be found in the third objection of the above mentioned article of the *Summa*, but it is less developed and, besides, it seems to be in accord with the answer from the *Commentary on the Sentences*. The difference between human beings and angels lies especially in the fact that an angel does not have anything that fights against its intellectual nature. Humans, on the other hand, have the sensual powers that deviate human beings from their way by the pressure of sensual pleasures. Human intellect is not in full harmony with human sensuality. The variety of angels in perfection is only based on their nature. In human beings, however, human effort following various natural powers must be added. So that a man who has greater natural conditions can have a lesser disposition for the infusion of charity than a man with lesser natural conditions who is able, however, to

¹⁵ *In I Sent* d. 17 q. 1 a. 3 ad 1: “Virtus recipientis non est consideranda secundum naturam tantum; sed etiam secundum dispositionem conatus advenientem naturae.”

¹⁶ Cf. *In I Sent* d. 17 q. 1 a. 3 ad 3: “Ipsa gratia est dispositio naturae ad gloriam. Unde non requiritur quod interveniat alia dispositio inter caritatem et gloriam: sed inter naturam et gratiam cadit conatus medius, quasi dispositio.”

use them better, just as Aquinas discusses in the response. The same thought is expressed in Aquinas' words: "Charity cannot essentially decrease, except perhaps by succession (namely, in such a way that the charity that was in someone is destroyed) through mortal sin, and afterwards a lesser charity is infused owing to a lesser preparation for receiving it."¹⁷

To sum up both of the discussed texts, we can conclude:

1. The primary presuppositions for divinely infused perfections are the powers of human nature as such.
2. Human nature, however, is composed of several powers that can fight amongst them. Therefore, the ability to harmonize these natural powers (in order to use the full capacity of the nature) depends on the effort of each particular man.
3. Long-term and sustainable cultivation of these powers is the acquiring of moral virtues.
4. The measure of the preparedness or the capacity to receive divinely infused perfections is the sum of natural human powers, the virtues acquired by human effort, and the vices that are the opposite of virtues, so they diminish the above mentioned capacity.
5. Under usual conditions, the theological virtues are infused in the human being according to the disposition of his nature and his moral disposition through acquired virtues.

¹⁷ *In I Sent* d. 17 q. 2 a. 5 resp.: "Caritas non potest diminui essentialiter, nisi forte per successionem, ita scilicet quod destruaturs caritas quae inest, per mortale peccatum, et postmodum minor infundatur per minorem praeparationem."

6. God can, however, give his gifts according to his free will, so that this dependence of divinely offered perfection on the natural condition and effort allows for exceptions.

Points 5 and 6 enable us to harmonise Aquinas' conclusions from the *Summa* and the *Commentary on the Sentences*.¹⁸ If we exaggerated the ideas from the *Summa* and completely refused any connection between natural effort and infused perfections, we would fall into contradiction with many Scriptural texts as well as with traditional Christian morality. If we exaggerated the *Commentary on the Sentences*, however, we might fall into semi-pelagianism. The moral appeals to our effort would be meaningless. It is possible to look at the dependence of God's gifts on human effort in the same way as at the dependence of God's grace on the sacramental signs. Whenever we perform the sign of baptism with the proper intention, God gives the grace of new birth. So we have a certainty that God has fulfilled what he had promised, and that the neophyte has received the baptismal grace. In other words God is positively bound – whenever we perform the sign, God's grace is coming. But God is not bound by this sign negatively, as though our arbitrary refusal of baptism could prevent God from giving his grace in an extra-sacramental way. And, like in our question, we can presuppose that, in the usual conditions, God gives his gifts to everybody who is receptive and who opens his soul for them. It should be true at least about his gifts necessary for salvation and that is the case of theological virtues. This receptivity, of course, means the preparedness of the soul or a cultivation of natural power that is appropriate for receiving supernatural gifts. In this case we also have a certainty that is based on God's justice and his promises.

¹⁸ Henri Bouillard summarizes the history of the exegesis of this contradiction between the *Summa* and the *Commentary on the Sentences* in: H. Bouillard, *Conversion et grace chez S. Thomas d'Aquin. Étude historique* (Paris: Aubier, 1944), pp. 4-16. According to Bouillard's view this problem cannot be solved by harmonizing of these positions but it should be considered as a shift to more Augustinian understanding of the relationship between nature and grace. My paper is an attempt to find a way of harmonization despite Bouillard's view.

If it were not so, it would throw our desire for perfection into confusion. It is in accordance with Aquinas' argumentation in the *Commentary on the Sentences*. On the other hand, we cannot place obstacles to God's action. He can give these supernatural perfections in another way, according to his inscrutability. And that is the point Aquinas stresses in the *Summa*.

In comparing the moral virtues as a presupposition of the theological virtues to the ordinary or extraordinary reception of God's grace, we do not want to say that the infusion of theological virtues in a human being without acquired moral virtues is an absolute exception. We undoubtedly know many people who acquired Christian faith but their moral life was not really virtuous.¹⁹ A radical conversion of our opinions is not automatically connected with the acquiring of any moral habit. A man believes, and he wants to act well, but he does not succeed in it because he is only at the beginning of his moral growth. The preparatory formation of the soul by the acquired habits of virtues makes receptivity for theological virtues easier, but it is not a condition "sine qua non". The above-mentioned cultivation of the soul's powers helps in the reception of theological virtues, thus it can have various degrees and the fully virtuous nature is its most high, but it is not the only grade.

For the sake of completeness we have to say that the text of the *Summa* offers an even more radical interpretation by which natural human effort is important but this effort itself is an effect of Holy Ghost. We can see here the Augustine-inspired germs of an idea of the relationship between nature and grace that will be later developed by Domingo Bañez,²⁰ and that will turn out to be one of two competing concepts in the *De auxiliis* controversy. Since Aquinas never explicitly rejected his concepts from the *Commentary on the Sentences*, this harmonising interpretation seems to be correct and not far from the truth.

¹⁹ Cf. *STh* I-II q. 113 a. 10.

²⁰ Cf. Domingo Bañez, *Scholastica Commentaria in primam partem Summae Theologiae Divi Thomae Aquinatis*, Lugdunum 1588.

Free will and virtues

One of the arguments supporting this interpretation is based on the role of freedom in the process of the reception of infused virtues. The argument follows thus: if the infusion of theological virtues is not necessary or deterministic, it must be accepted by free human will. Otherwise man could not refuse faith, hope and charity, which contradicts both our experience and divine Revelation. However, if freedom is needed for the reception of theological virtues, then we must acknowledge that the cultivation of our freedom helps us with the reception of theological virtues. Freedom follows intellect,²¹ so that qualities that enable the will to follow the intellect better result in human beings becoming freer. Consequently, they will be better prepared to open their souls for the offer of infused theological virtues.

If we refused the importance of the cultivation of our will for the reception of theological virtues, we would have to say that the infusion of theological virtues is a determination from God's side. Such an idea is, of course, unacceptable because man would be determined to salvation or reprobation. It is the infamous concept of *praedestinatio gemina*. That's why we consider the meaning of the free will for the reception of theological virtues to be convincingly proved.

Aquinas dealt with the free will, e.g. in the context of the question of whether theological virtues can grow or diminish.²² According to him, charity cannot diminish. Acquired habits grow or diminish depending on actions pertaining to these habits. But as charity does not come from our actions, these actions do not influence it in the same way as they influence the acquired habits. The only thing that is within the power of man regarding this is the decision as to whether to accept the gift or not. It means that charity can be diminished only by God's intervention or by sin²³ or by

²¹ Cf. *STh* I, q. 83 a. 1.

²² Cf. also the text on the free will in the context of justification (*STh* I-II, q. 113, a. 3).

²³ Cf. *STh* II-II, q. 24 a. 10: "Caritas non causatur ab humanis actibus, sed solum a Deo, ut supra dictum est. Unde relinquitur quod etiam cessante

succession of particular infusions.²⁴ However, God does not cause any evil in the human soul. He only takes his gifts away, when man renounces them. A man renounces charity by sin. Venial sin is not so strong as to damage charity. It must be mortal sin that completely destroys charity, because it is the very abandonment of God's love.²⁵ Aquinas thus concludes that charity can be diminished neither by God nor by venial sin, but it can be destroyed and removed by mortal sin.

On the other hand, venial sins restrict charity indirectly, because they are dispositions for mortal sin.

“The consequence is that charity can by no means be diminished, if we speak of direct causality, yet whatever disposes to its corruption may be said to conduce indirectly to its diminution, and such are venial sins, or even the cessation from the practice of works of charity.”²⁶

Resistance to the formation of the disposition for mortal sin is the resistance to the diminishing of charity. But such an effort is a natural activity that disposes the human being to maintaining the

actu, propter hoc nec diminuitur nec corrumpitur, si desit peccatum in ipsa cessatione.”

²⁴ Cf. *In I Sent* d. 17 q. 2 a. 5 resp.: “Caritas non potest diminui essentialiter, nisi forte per successionem, ita scilicet quod destruaturs caritas quae inest, per mortale peccatum, et postmodum minor infundatur per minorem praeparationem.”

²⁵ Aquinas develops the detailed argumentation for this idea in *v De Virt* q. 2 a. 6: “Ex hoc autem aliquis mortaliter peccat quod aliquid magis eligit quam vivere secundum Deum, et ei inhaerere. Unde manifestum est quod quicumque mortaliter peccat, ex hoc ipso magis amat aliud bonum quam Deum. Si enim amaret magis Deum, praeeligeret vivere secundum Deum quam quocumque temporali bono potiri. Hoc autem est de ratione caritatis quod Deus super omnia diligatur, ut ex superioribus patet; unde omne peccatum mortale caritati contrariatur.”

²⁶ *STh* II-II, q. 24 a. 10: “Potest tamen indirecte dici diminutio caritatis dispositio ad corruptionem ipsius, quae fit vel per peccata venialia; vel etiam per cessationem ab exercitio operum caritatis.”

theological virtues. The best means for sin prevention, however, are the acquired moral virtues that are the relatively permanent abilities to act in the right way, i.e. not to sin. Of course, it is an indirect impact, but definitely a real impact.

In the *Commentary on the Sentences*, Aquinas discusses it very thoroughly. Charity, according to Aquinas, can be limited or interrupted by inner disorder of the human soul, regarding either the goal itself or the means for reaching it. As the goal of charity is God, the disorder deviating the soul from its goal is mortal sin. It absolutely destroys charity. Disorder concerning the means is a more complicated issue. The goal is untouched, but the human powers that perform the orientation towards the goal are disrupted. This is venial sin, which does not hit charity itself, but disrupts the dispositions for charity.

”Still, it is true that just as things directed toward the end are dispositive to the end, so correspondingly, inordinateness in them is dispositive to inordinateness about the end itself, and for this reason we say that venial sin is dispositive to mortal sin. Hence, by venial sins of this kind, a man is disposed to the loss of charity.”²⁷

In this context, Aquinas says that charity diminishes, not essentially, but with respect to its roots. The contrary disposition that arises in the soul is an obstacle for charity.²⁸ The will begins to put created things first, instead of God. It destroys the inclination to charity that a mankind has so far possessed.²⁹

²⁷ *In I Sent* d. 17 q. 2 a. 5 resp.: “Sed verum est quod sicut ea quae sunt ad finem disponunt ad finem, ita inordinatio in eis est dispositio ad inordinationem quae est circa finem, secundum quod dicimus, quod veniale peccatum est dispositio ad mortale. Unde per huiusmodi venialia disponitur quis ad amissionem caritatis.”

²⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*: “Et inde est quod caritas dicitur diminui quantum ad radicationem et fervorem, et non quantum ad essentiam. Quantum ad radicationem quidem, secundum quod fit dispositio ad contrarium, unde minuitur firma inhaesio caritatis.”

²⁹ Cf. *In III Sent* d. 31 q. 1 a. 1 resp.: “Quando ad particulare descenditur, tentatio aliqua inclinationem praedictam caritatis absorbet.”

Aquinas comments on the role of freedom for the infusion of God's gift of charity in the following way:

The justification of the ungodly is brought about by God moving man to justice. For it is He "that justifies the ungodly" according to Rm 4: 5. Now God moves everything in its own manner, just as we see that in natural things, what is heavy and what is light are moved differently, on account of their diverse natures. Hence He moves man to justice according to the condition of his human nature. But it is man's proper nature to have free-will. Hence in him who has the use of reason, God's motion to justice does not take place without a movement of the free-will; but He so infuses the gift of justifying grace that at the same time He moves the free-will to accept the gift of grace, in such as are capable of being moved thus.³⁰

In this text there are again some elements of the later controversy regarding the relationship between God's grace and human freedom. Nevertheless, the most important issue for our discussion is the fact that both freedom and God's moving are the crucial factors for the reception of God's gifts. In the response to the third objection, Aquinas stresses that free will ("a proper movement of the human soul") is needed here. He rejects the parallel between the reception and the preservation of God's gifts. While the infusion of

³⁰ *STh* I-II, q. 113 a. 3 resp.: "Iustificatio impii fit Deo movente hominem ad iustitiam, ipse enim est qui iustificat impium, ut dicitur Rom. IV. Deus autem movet omnia secundum modum uniuscuiusque, sicut in naturalibus videmus quod aliter moventur ab ipso gravia et aliter levia, propter diversam naturam utriusque. Unde et homines ad iustitiam movet secundum conditionem naturae humanae. Homo autem secundum propriam naturam habet quod sit liberi arbitrii. Et ideo in eo qui habet usum liberi arbitrii, non fit motio a Deo ad iustitiam absque motu liberi arbitrii; sed ita infundit donum gratiae iustificantis, quod etiam simul cum hoc movet liberum arbitrium ad donum gratiae acceptandum, in his qui sunt huius motionis capaces."

grace is a transformation of the soul where human assent is needed, the preservation is not a transformation so that God's activity only continues. If it were not so, God's grace would not remain in sleeping people, which is obviously absurd, as Aquinas shows in the other text of the *Summa*.³¹ The movement of the human will is also necessary for the loss of charity that is the effect of mortal sin, as it was said above. In the Disputed Questions, Aquinas says that "God infuses humans with charity. But that which divine infusion causes needs divine action not just at its origin, in order to begin existing, but for its whole duration, in order to be preserved in existence."³²

To sum up the above mentioned argumentations, we can see that according to Aquinas the reception of theological virtues needs free human assent. The ability of free choice is, of course, cultivated by acquired virtues that can be a useful means for the soul's receptivity for theological virtues. Besides, acquired virtues are a prevent of mortal sin, which destroys at least charity in human soul, as well as venial sins, which do not destroy charity, but dispose the human soul for a fall into mortal sin and the consequent loss of charity.

Infused virtues as a support of acquired virtues

We have dealt with the connection between the virtues in the direction from acquired virtues to theological virtues. Now, we will attend to the direction from theological virtues to acquired virtues.³³ According to Aquinas, it is possible to be virtuous on a natural level

³¹ Cf. *STh* II-II, q. 24 a. 10 ad 3.

³² *De virt* q. 2 a. 6: "Caritas enim hominibus a Deo infunditur. Quae autem ex infusione divina causantur, non solum indigent actione divina in sui principio, ut esse incipiant, sed in tota sui duratione, ut conserventur in esse."

³³ For order of acquiring of virtues cf. R.K. DeYoung, C. McCluskey, C. Van Dyke, *Aquinas's Ethics. Metaphysical Foundations, Moral Theory, and Theological Context* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), pp. 149-151.

even without infused supernatural virtues, but such virtuosity is not perfect.

It is charity that elevates the naturally acquired virtues to the level of perfection. This elevation is described in the concept of charity as the form of other virtues. Aquinas speaks about charity not only as a form, but also as a mover and a root of virtues,³⁴ or even as a mother of virtues.³⁵ The acts of all moral virtues are directed to the good. It is possible to describe various kinds of good in the following scheme:

- | | |
|------|--|
| Good | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) ultimate (universal) – communion with God b) near (particular) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) real – it can be directed to the ultimate good ii) imaginary – it takes human being away from real good³⁶ |
|------|--|

On the natural level of acquired virtues there are created goods, i.e. real but particular goods that tend to the universal goal, which is the highest good. And this highest or ultimate good is the goal of charity.³⁷ Thus, charity seems to be the form of other virtues. In the moral sphere, a form is determined by its goal because the principle of morality is the will and the will is directed to the goal. That which determines the goal gives also the form of corresponding activity or its habit. Virtue becomes real and perfect through its direction to

³⁴ *De virt* q. 2 a. 3: “Caritas est forma virtutum, motor et radix.”

³⁵ Cf. *In III Sent* d. 27 q. 2 a. 4 qa. 3: “Et ideo dicitur caritas mater aliarum virtutum, inquantum earum actus producit ex conceptione finis, inquantum ipse finis habet se per modum seminis, cum sit principium in operabilibus, ut dicit philosophus.”

³⁶ Cf. *STh* II-II, q. 23 a. 7.

³⁷ Cf. *Ibid*: “Manifestum est autem quod actus omnium aliarum virtutum ordinatur ad finem proprium caritatis, quod est eius obiectum, scilicet summum bonum. Et de virtutibus quidem moralibus manifestum est: nam huiusmodi virtutes sunt circa quaedam bona creata quae ordinantur ad bonum increatum sicut ad ultimum finem.”

the highest good. And this direction is the goal of charity, so that we can speak about charity as a form of other virtues.³⁸

If we have charity, all our good works are directed to the highest goal, i.e. to God. Our virtues are real and perfect. They are perfected by charity. If we do not have charity, and our activities are directed to real but created goods only, then we have real but only imperfect virtue. On the other hand, mankind who is directed to imaginary good has only false virtue. A good example can perhaps be the “prudent” miser.³⁹

Thus, every moral virtue receives its perfection by participation in charity as the highest perfection. It is the participation of the lesser in the higher that is the same as formation by the higher. Similarly, charity is a participation in grace.⁴⁰ That is why Aquinas considers acquired virtues perfected by charity as meritorious.⁴¹ In this sense it is obvious that merit from good works is possible only if it is formed by higher perfection, that is not purely human merit, but God’s gift.

That is how infused theological virtues help acquired virtues. If all the virtues become perfect only when they are formed by charity, it is obvious that no matter how good acquired virtues are, they need some elevation by theological virtues to be perfect.

³⁸ Cf. *STh* II-II, q. 23 a. 8 resp.: “in moralibus forma actus attenditur principaliter ex parte finis, cuius ratio est quia principium moralium actuum est voluntas, cuius obiectum et quasi forma est finis. Semper autem forma actus consequitur formam agentis. Unde oportet quod in moralibus id quod dat actui ordinem ad finem, det ei et formam. Manifestum est autem secundum praedicta quod per caritatem ordinantur actus omnium aliarum virtutum ad ultimum finem. Et secundum hoc ipsa dat formam actibus omnium aliarum virtutum. Et pro tanto dicitur esse forma virtutum, nam et ipsae virtutes dicuntur in ordine ad actus formatos.”

³⁹ Cf. *STh* II-II, q. 23 a. 7.

⁴⁰ Cf. *In III Sent* d. 27 q. 2 a. 4 qa. 3 ad 2: “Et ideo gratia, quae est perfectio essentiae animae, constituens ipsam in esse spirituali, est forma et caritatis et prudentiae et temperantiae; nec caritas esset virtus si esset sine gratia, sicut nec prudentia si esset sine caritate.”

⁴¹ Cf. *In III Sent* d. 30 a. 5 ad 3: “Actus aliarum virtutum non sunt meritorii nisi inquantum sunt informati caritate.”

Hence the virtuous pagan really is admirable, but he is not yet perfect.

Conclusion

This is how the interconnection between acquired and theological virtues can be recognised. For the sake of receiving infused theological virtues, the formation of the human soul by acquired moral virtues (together with innate natural conditions) is very useful and usually required. These are both acquired natural dispositions of the human being, enabling the reception of infused virtues, and are an effective defence against the danger of mortal sin, which is the fatal obstacle for charity, deflecting away from the direction towards the ultimate goal. If a naturally moral man obtains the infused virtue of charity, his moral virtues become perfect because their direction to good is “stretched” beyond the horizon of the temporal and particular as far as to the highest and transcendental goal. Human good works become meritorious because they are oriented directly to God.⁴²

⁴² The paper has been elaborated with the support of the Czech Science Foundation (Grant Project. No. 401/12/1704).