The Ethics of Aquinas

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Overview of the Ethics of Thomas Aquinas

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INTRODUCTION

Thomas Aquinas worked and thought first and foremost as a theologian. Aquinas wrote an extensive commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, but he never produced a counterpart. Nor did he conceive of his work as "moral theology," an independent discipline that arose as such only in the modern era.[1] He was a pious scholar seeking to understand more deeply what he affirmed in faith as a member of the believing Christian community. For this reason, his treatment of morality is fundamentally theological. This overview seeks to communicate the structure and content of the ethics provided in his most famous theological work, the *Summa theologiae*.

Structure and Content of the *Summa*

Aquinas wrote the *Summa theologiae* to provide a concise but comprehensive summary of Christian theology.[2] He organized his great text into three major Parts, each of which is devoted to a major theological theme. The First Part or *Prima pars* (Ia) begins with God and with realities as they are created by God. The Second Part or *Secunda pars* (IIa) examines the human acts by which rational creatures return to God. The Third Part or *Tertia pars* (IIIa) presents an analysis of Christ and the sacraments.[3] This overarching structure represents Aquinas's creative adoption of the Neoplatonic emanation and return (*exitus-reditus*) motif within his Christian depiction of the emergence of all creatures from God the Creator and the return of creatures to God the Redeemer.[4]

Thomas matched form to substance: his pedagogy followed from his theology, according to which God is both the source and the destiny of all things. The prologue to the *Prima pars*, Question 2, explains this order. "Sacred doctrine" is God's teaching, the knowledge of God, which includes both knowledge of God as He is in Himself, but also as "the beginning of things and their last end, and especially of rational creatures."[5] The *Summa* thus first discusses God, then the rational creature's advance toward God, and finally Christ, our way to God.

This suggests that the First Part concentrates on God, the Second on humanity, and the Third on Christ. The *Prima pars* devotes forty-two Questions to God, examining first the divine essence and its attributes (qq. 2–26) and then the Trinity (qq. 27–43). Question 44 initiates a lengthy examination of creatures, lasting up to Question 119, precisely as they proceed from God. This section of the *Prima pars* is subdivided into discussions of creation in general (qq. 44–46), the distinction of creatures (qq. 47–102), and the divine governance of creation (qq. 103–19).

The *Secunda pars* focuses on the human being as returning to God. Its analysis depends upon the preceding anthropological section of the *Prima pars* that runs from Question 75, on the soul, through Question 102, on the human abode in paradise. The account of human nature provided earlier in the *Prima pars* thus complements that developed in the *Secunda pars*. The prologue to the *Secunda pars* explains that whereas the prior treatment given in the *Prima pars* had examined God and things precisely as they proceed from *God's* intellect and will, the *Secunda pars* investigates more precisely humanity as created in the image of God and human actions as they proceed from the *human* intellect and will.[6] God and human nature are related analogously as exemplar to

image. The exposition of the divine exemplar and of God's relation to creation elaborated in the *Prima pars* prepares for the parallel investigation of human nature as an image of God and its expression in human acts in the *Secunda pars*. To be a person, to be made in the "image of God," is to act freely and intelligently as the principle of one's own acts. "As God creates the world," Gilson explains, "a human being constructs his life."[7]

The *Secunda pars* constitutes the most extensive discussion of ethics in Thomas's *corpus*. It is divided into two sections. The First Part of the Second Part, or the *Prima secundae* (Ia IIae), concerns general topics pertaining to human nature and conduct: the purpose or end of human life (qq. 1–5), human acts (qq. 6–21), the passions (qq. 22–48), habits (qq. 49–89), law (qq. 90–108), and grace (qq. 109–14). The Second Part of the Second Part, or *Secunda secundae* (IIa IIae), provides the "special" or "particular" consideration of morality. This section examines a vast array of virtues and vices, in part reflecting the influence of the earlier *Summa de vitiis et virtutibus* of the Dominican theologian Peraldus. Thomas organized this extensive body of ethical material within an overarching framework provided by the virtues. His treatment of each virtue typically examines the virtue itself, the vices opposed to it, the appropriate gift of the Holy Spirit, and the precepts or norms related to it. The order of presentation always begins with the virtue itself, but the location of the other topics varies from case to case. For example, the gift of Wisdom (IIa IIae, q. 44) follows the treatment of the vices against charity, but the gift of Counsel (q. 52) precedes Aquinas's treatment of the vices opposed to the virtue of prudence.

The *Secunda secundae* opens by revisiting the question of beatitude previously examined at length in the *Prima secundae* (qq. 1–5), but now considers it in light of the doctrine of grace just completed (in Ia IIae, qq. 109–14). Eschmann points out that "there is not a line in the Second Part that is not 'theological.'"[8] The *Secunda secundae* thus begins with an elaborate discussion of the grace-infused theological virtues of faith (qq. 1–16), hope (qq. 17–22), and charity (qq. 23–46). After having established that the Christian moral life is only made possible by grace, it then reincorporates the classical cardinal virtues of prudence (qq. 47–56), justice (qq. 57–122), courage (qq. 123–40), and temperance (qq. 141–70). The *Secunda pars* then concludes with a discussion of charisms and special states in life (qq. 171–89).

The *Tertia pars* continues to examine the movement of the person to God, but focuses explicitly on the mediation of Christ (the "*reditus per Christum*").[9] The Christian becomes more deeply the image of God in and through Christ. Christ and the sacraments are the way to beatitude (Thomas did not then proceed to elaborate a theology of the church, a topic given systematic development only later in the history of theology).

The first major section of the *Tertia pars* discusses Jesus Christ, the Savior, both in the Incarnation (qq. 1–26) and in terms of what Jesus did in the flesh for our salvation (qq. 27–59). It next examines the sacraments as the means of salvation. As instrumental causes of grace (IIIa, q. 62, a. 1), sacraments are the foundation of the church (IIIa, q. 64, a. 2 ad 3). They are examined first in general (qq. 60–65), and then in particular, beginning with baptism (qq. 66–71), then proceeding to confirmation (q. 72), Eucharist (qq. 73–83), and finally penance (qq. 84–90). (The *Tertia pars* remained incomplete at the time of Aquinas's death.)[10]

Theological Purpose and Character of the *Summa theologiae*

The *Secunda pars*, then, is not, and was never intended to be, a self-contained moral theory of the sort constructed by modern moral philosophers. Aquinas was a theologian who thought about moral questions in light of God, grace, and sacraments; he was not a professional ethicist merely drawing upon theological claims to resolve moral dilemmas.[11]

Standard treatments of ethics in Thomas's day focused primarily on resolving specific practical moral problems.[12] Inheriting a special concern with the morality of specific acts, Aquinas strove to provide a broader and more profound account of the underlying theological context, meaning, and foundation of the Christian moral life. As Leonard Boyle explains, Thomas began writing the *Summa* in part to provide students in the Dominican

order with a more coherent and comprehensible theological grounding for the pastoral work that would occupy them in their future work as clerics. The first prologue offers a concise explanation of Aquinas's rationale for writing the *Summa*, a text intended to present more helpful instruction to beginners often hampered in their study by conventional texts flawed by useless questions and arguments, poor organization, and frequent repetition. Thus before arriving at moral questions proper, Aquinas believed, students ought to proceed through a clear exposition of central themes of theology. This is the goal of the *Prima pars*.

The *Prima pars* discusses the unity of the divine essence, the existence and perfections of God (Ia, qq. 1–26), and the nature of God as Trinity (qq. 27–43). Whereas essence and existence in creatures are distinct, God's essence *is* God's existence (q. 3, a. 4). The mystery of God as Triune is the foundation of all the other mysteries of the Christian faith. The Word is eternally generated by the Father, and the Son and the Spirit proceed from the unbegotten Father. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the mutual love of the Father and Son (q. 37).

God is the first cause of everything that exists (q. 44). God creates in order to communicate the divine goodness to creatures. Moreover, because God's goodness could not be adequately represented by one creature alone, God produced many and different kinds of creatures, "that what was wanting to one in the representation of divine goodness might be supplied by another"[13] (q. 47, a. 1). These include both immaterial creatures (angels; qq. 50–64), and material creatures (qq. 65–74), the most noble of which are human beings (qq. 75–102). Human beings are composed of an intellectual soul united to a body (qq. 75–76) and made in the "image of God," and are therefore called to know and love God in a special way (q. 93). The divine goodness is also manifested in the governance of creation (q. 103, a. 1; see also q. 44, a. 4; q. 65, a. 2).

Ethics is a practical form of knowledge. As "science" in the Aristotelian sense, ethics addresses human conduct generally and therefore cannot be expected to render concrete and specific advice for individuals struggling with personal moral decisions. Practical moral choices are guided by the virtue of prudence (IIa IIae, q. 47, a. 8), not by the discipline of theology. This having been said, as practical, ethics provides an account of the general ordering of daily life and its activities to God. It is not reducible to knowledge of the commands of God the Lawgiver but more importantly offers a wisdom that makes possible a deepening of friendship with God the loving Father.[14] The intrinsic dynamism of practical action thus leads toward contemplative love. Even in its most practical moments, Aquinas's theological ethics, as Torrell explains, "does not lose its contemplative aim. It is still and always directed by the consideration of God, since he is the End in view of which all decisions are made and the Good in connection with which all other goods are situated."[15]

THE *PRIMA SECUNDAE*

The *Secunda pars* develops the ethical implications of the theological and philosophical anthropology introduced in the *Prima pars* (especially in Ia, qq. 75–102). The *Prima secundae* first examines the intrinsic principles of human acts (power and habit [Ia IIae, qq. 1–89]) and then the extrinsic principles of human acts (law and grace [qq. 90–114]). The former include human happiness (qq. 1–5), the will and its acts (qq. 6–17), goodness and malice (qq. 18–21), the emotions (qq. 22–48), habits, virtues, and vices (qq. 49–89). The latter concern law (qq. 90–108) and grace (qq. 109–14).

Happiness

The explicitly moral section of the *Summa* begins not with the question, "What moral laws must I obey?" but rather with the question, "What is true happiness?" This starting point accords with Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, but also, and more importantly, with Scripture, especially the Psalms, and the fathers of the church.[16]

Aquinas's ethics is founded upon a profoundly teleological view of created reality in general and of human nature in particular: everything that exists acts purposefully for an end. Thomas's universe, as Gilson puts it, was "saturated with finality."[17] To understand anything, humanity included, depends on comprehending its end or purpose. Aquinas's vi-

sion of life was thus teleological in the sense of "goal-directed" (as distinct from the ethical "teleology" of consequentialism).

Aquinas regarded human acts, as Chenu observes, as "so many steps by which human nature on its journey back to the source of its being, realizes its end, thereby achieving happiness and perfection."[18] Everyone desires happiness and seeks it in some fashion, and the quality of one's life depends on the content of the happiness sought. It is fundamental to Aquinas's theology that one can only be satisfied by the universal good, that is, by God, who alone gives true and perfect happiness. Those who pursue happiness in possessions and status, for example, obtain true goods but mistake subordinate goods for the ultimate good—thus generating their own dissatisfaction.

The normative significance of the human desire for happiness underscores Thomas's profound difference from philosophers who identify morality with obligation, duty, or command.[19] For Aquinas, the major question for morality concerned "being" rather than "doing."[20] Virtues are more fundamental than either external acts, the moral laws by which they are judged, or particular choices determining behavior in concrete cases. This is why Aquinas did not dwell on moral dilemmas, hard cases, or moral quandaries.

The Will

The *Summa's* analysis of human acts begins with an examination of the nature of the will as voluntary (q. 6) and then focuses more precisely on the constituent elements of its acts (qq. 7–17). Senses orient us to concrete goods that can satisfy specific needs, such as those for food, drink, and others that we share with animals. The will as "rational appetite" differs radically from sense appetite in its orientation to the *universal* good. The will necessarily seeks the universal good. But since it is not determined to choose particular goods in concrete circumstances, it can ignore or violate what is judged to be morally good in this or that concrete case. Alcoholics continue to drink alcohol, for example, despite full awareness of the destructive effects of so doing. This position thus rejects the thesis that "no one deliberately does wrong."[21] Each person bears the responsibility for directing all of his or her choices to the universal good and to resist being driven by impulse, social pressure, or other influences.

An act can be said to be morally good only when it fulfills three conditions: when the act itself is morally good or indifferent in kind, when it enacts a good intention, and when it is done in a way that is morally appropriate given the circumstances. It is bad if one or more of these aspects of the act are bad. An act can be bad "in itself," such as murder or theft. A kind of act that is good or indifferent in itself can be bad in a specific instance if done with the wrong end in mind or in the wrong way, such as giving money to a needy person out of vainglory. Moral actions take their "species," the kinds of acts they are, from their end. An agent's intention determines the kind of act he or she does; for example, lying in order to attain career advancement is a sin of ambition more than it is a sin of lying (although it is of course both; see q. 43, a. 4).

Emotions

The emotions (*passiones animae*) are natural ways in which one is moved by one's surroundings; they are also termed "passions" because in feeling them agents are moved as a result of having been acted upon by some external agency. Emotions involve bodily responses to situations. They include love (qq. 26–28), hatred (q. 29), concupiscence (q. 30), delight and pleasure (qq. 31–34), sorrow or pain (qq. 35–39), hope and despair (q. 40), fear (qq. 41–44), daring (q. 45), and anger (qq. 46–48). Thomas distinguished between the "concupiscible passions," which are moved by goods of sense as such, from the "irascible passions," which are moved by goods of sense which can only be obtained through the overcoming of some kind of resistance. Love is the most basic of the concupiscible passions and all the other passions can be understood in relation to it.

Because the emotions are part of our creaturely nature and therefore good in themselves, the key moral challenge they present lies in their proper ordering rather than in their repression. Thomas's extensive treatment of the emotions, taking up twenty-six

questions, indicates their importance within human life. Thomas discussed the will before he treated the emotions because the latter are shaped and guided by the former. This order of presentation helps to underscore the difference between distinctively human emotions and those displayed in animal behavior. The unity of the body and soul implies that people are emotional as well as rational beings. Yet what they feel is a matter of identity and character, and not derived exclusively from anatomy and physiology. How one functions emotionally, in other words, results in part from what one has freely chosen and guided oneself to have become through the cumulative history of antecedent acts of the will.

Habits and Virtues

After discussing human acts and passions in the first major sections of the *Prima secundae*, the *Summa* turns to the *intrinsic* principles of human acts—power and habit. The *Prima pars* already examined the powers of the soul—vegetative, sensitive, appetitive, locomotive, and intellectual (see Ia, qq. 77–90)—so this section of the *Summa* begins with the topic of habit.

Both acts of the will and the emotions must be given direction, order, and guidance; they do not automatically unfold in morally mature directions. Human capacities can be either developed or corrupted by the acquisition of habits, permanent dispositions to act in characteristic ways. It is important not to confuse Thomas's notion of "habits" with its conventional usage as thoughtless routine.[22] A "habit" in Thomas's sense is a quality in the soul that orders human conduct in a way that contributes to the human development of the person (Ia IIae, q. 49); habits are developed human capacities. A habit can come from repeated action ("habituation"; q. 49, a. 2), but also from nature (q. 51, a. 1) or from God (q. 51, a. 4), as in the case of what the scholastics called "infused virtues."

"Virtues" are simply stable dispositions to act in ways that are good; "vices" are stable dispositions to act in ways that are bad (q. 54, a. 3). Intellect, will, and emotions are all potential subjects of vices and virtues. One can thus grow intellectually by developing a firmer grasp of first principles of a science, a more refined capacity to reason to conclusions from these principles, a deeper understanding of life, a more discerning sensitivity in making practical judgments, and a more adept skill at making things. One grows morally by becoming habituated to treating people justly and to making the right choices about how to respond to one's own desires. The good life is one guided by "right reason," a distinctive accomplishment made possible by employing one's natural capacity as a "rational animal." Reasonableness is displayed in intellectual virtues (qq. 57–58), but also when human beings properly will what is truly good and exercise the moral virtues (qq. 58–61).

Most important, however, are not the classical cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude, but the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. The *Secunda secundae* (IIa IIae, qq. 1–46) thus first examines the latter and only then engages in an extended discussion of the former (qq. 47–170). The theological virtues are caused by divine "infusion" rather than by the gradual process of habituation. In fact, the cardinal virtues are also "infused" by divine grace in those who have been blessed with the theological virtues. The Christian moral life is thus rooted in an appropriation of God's gifts and responds appropriately to God with gratitude, trust, and love.

Sin and Vices

Just as virtue disposes the agent to its ordered and proper acts, so vice disposes the agent to engage in disordered acts (Ia IIae, q. 71, a. 1). Sin is found where a person voluntarily engages in a bad human act, that is, in an act that does not conform to its proper measure as determined either by human reason or divine reason (q. 71, a. 6). Although the effects of sin are felt in the body, the seat of sin is the *will*; it exists in the passions or in the intellect insofar as they operate under the influence of the will (q. 74, a. 2). Sin in the formal sense is essentially a corruption or privation of what belongs to a person naturally. It always involves a kind of imbalance, inordinateness, or deviation from what is good for the person. For this reason, Aquinas held that "we do not offend God except by doing something contrary to our own good."[23]

The internal sources of sin include ignorance (q. 76, a, 4), passion (q. 77, a. 8), and, worst of all, because most deeply rooted in the will, malice (q. 78, a. 4). The external cause of sin is the devil, who by "outward suggestion," causes sin indirectly by temptation (q. 80, a. 1). As a consequence of inherited "original sin" (as distinguished from the "actual sin" of the person; q. 81, a. 1), human nature suffers from "concupiscence" whereby the disorder of the will corrupts the other powers of the soul. This flaw is felt most poignantly in disordered appetites (q. 82, a. 3), but its corrupting power lies in the *soul*, not in the body *per se*. So, for example, the moral problem of gluttony lies in a disordered will and not in the need for food (q. 83, a. 1). Sin leaves the natural powers of the soul intact, dulls the natural inclination to virtue, and entirely destroys the gift of "original justice" (q. 85, a. 1). The inclination to evil constitutes a form of "servitude" to sin that hinders the person's ability to obtain his or her own good (IIa IIae, q. 183, a. 4). Therefore, while Aquinas is sometimes criticized for being excessively optimistic, the eighteen questions dedicated to examining the nature of sin indicate a realistic view of the various levels of human disorder.

Law

The *Prima secundae* next discusses the extrinsic principles that move a person to what is good. The extrinsic principle moving us to good is God, who instructs humans through law and supplies the ability to adhere to this instruction through grace. The preceding analysis of sin called attention to the daily need all people have for practical instruction, guidance, and divine aid. Law explicitly teaches one how to act and grace grants the power to do so. The *Prima secundae* draws attention to the innate tendency all people have to their ultimate end, their capacity for acting intelligently, and their attraction to the good. The explicit treatment of natural law in these questions builds on these themes. It examines the essence, kinds, and effects of law (Ia IIae, q. 90–92), eternal law (q. 93), natural law (q. 94), human law (qq. 95–97), the Old Law (qq. 98–105), and the New Law of the Gospel (qq. 106–8).

"Law" as such is defined as "an ordinance of reason for the common good, made by him who has care of the community, and promulgated" (q. 90, a. 4).[24] Eternal law is the providential government of the universe, and all that is in it, by the Divine Reason (q. 91, a. 1). God governs creation through ordering all creatures to their good (q. 94, a. 2). All other creatures move toward their proper good by acting spontaneously on their God-given natural inclinations, but the "rational creature" acts freely on the basis of reason and therefore is, "subject to divine Providence in the most excellent way, in so far as it partakes of a share of providence, by being provident both for itself and for others" (q. 91, a. 2).[25]

Natural law is the "participation" of the intelligent and free human being in the eternal law by living according to "right reason." The first principle of practical reason is that "good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided" and all other precepts of the natural law are in some way based upon this principle (q. 94, a. 2).[26] The first principle of practical reason is formal—that is, it does not communicate the content of what is good, which can only be determined by intelligently reflecting on the various natural inclinations and the goods by which they are satisfied.

Thus, every person shares with all beings a natural inclination to preserve his or her own existence, and this inclination issues in a precept to preserve his or her own life. Every person also shares inclinations with other animals to reproduce, and this inclination issues in standards governing sexual intercourse, marriage, and family. Finally, every person shares distinctively human inclinations to live with other people and to know the truth about God, and these inclinations generate standards for appropriate conduct in these spheres of action (ibid.). Natural law is "law" in that it orders the person to act in some ways and to refrain from acting in other ways; it is "natural" in that these requirements are derived from innate human inclinations and are integral to human flourishing. Obligation is thus not imposed arbitrarily on human life but rather receives its intelligibility from its promotion of the human good.

Due to the deficiencies of human reason and the impediments placed in its way by sin, natural law is by no means sufficient for the guidance of daily life (q. 99, a. 2, ad 2). Humans need divine law to be properly directed

to eternal happiness, clearly instructed on contingent and particular matters about which it is particularly difficult to judge, helped better to understand interior matters that would otherwise not be properly addressed and yet are essential for complete virtue, and, finally, know that all evil deeds, interior as well as exterior, are forbidden and punished (q. 91, a. 4).

Aquinas adopted the standard division of the divine law into the Old Law and the New. The Old Law commands ceremonial precepts governing worship, judicial precepts establishing justice within the community, and moral precepts required by the natural law (q. 99, a. 4). Whereas moral and judicial precepts received their moral authority from natural reason, the ceremonial precepts derived theirs from divine institution alone (q. 100, a. 11). The New Law thus replaced the historically contingent juridical regulations and ceremonial requirements of the Old Law while retaining the moral requirements based on the natural law. Drawing from St. Paul, Thomas held that the New Law is most fundamentally the grace of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the heart of the believer and only secondarily a written law (q. 106, a. 1).

The New Law fulfills the Old in two ways. First, it justifies the believer, thereby enabling him or her to obtain the ultimate end. Without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the commands and precepts of the New Testament would be, after all, "only another set of inefficacious regulations."[27] Second, it fulfills the precepts of the Old Law through explaining the deeper sense of the Law, showing the safest way of fulfilling its requirements (that is, through intention and not simply conduct), and by adding to the Law the counsels of perfection (q. 106, a. 2). The New Law establishes sacraments so that believers may be given much more explicit assistance in their growth in grace and love (q. 108, a. 3).

Grace

The *Prima secundae* culminates in questions on grace (qq. 109–114), the second of the two divinely given extrinsic principles of human acts. Grace, an effect of the divine love on the soul, is the means by which God leads us back to God (q. 111, a. 1). A moral philosopher might find it odd or quaint that Thomas's analysis of human acts reaches its climax in a topic that is so theological. Yet for the theologian grace is the "crowning glory of Christian ethics" because Christian life is "life in the spirit."[28] The first question thus establishes that grace is absolutely necessary if one is to know truth (q. 109, a. 1), to do good (q. 109, a. 2), to love God above all things (q. 109, a. 3), to fulfill the Law, in substance as well as in the mode of charity (q. 109, a. 4), to merit everlasting life (q. 109, a. 5), to prepare for grace (q. 109, a. 6), to rise from and avoid sin (q. 109, aa. 7–9), and to persevere (q. 109, a. 10).

Humanity exists now, after the Fall, in a corrupt state (q. 109, a. 2), yet human beings are not completely "depraved" by sin. Humans are still able to exercise their natural powers in many domains of ordinary life, so, for example, use intelligence to make bridges or to recognize how to treat this or that person justly. But "sick humanity" (*homo infirmus*) can only become truly virtuous if cured by the "medicine" of grace (q. 109, a. 2). This is why a person can do a particular act that is generically good on the basis of some good of nature, but cannot be said to exercise perfect virtue without charity (IIa IIae, q. 23, a. 7). Human nature "cannot do all the good natural to it, so as to fall short at nothing; just as a sick man can of himself make some movements, yet he cannot be perfectly moved with the movements of one in health, unless he be cured by the help of medicine" (Ia IIae, q. 109, a. 2).[29] As *homo infirmus*, the person loves himself or herself more than God and neighbor, and prefers his or her own private good to the common good (q. 109, a. 3). Grace, as "medicine," heals this disorder and enables one to love God more than the self and to love both neighbors and the self "in God."

Grace is a habitual gift, infused by God into the soul, that gives one a capacity to obtain the supernatural good. Grace bestows "certain forms or supernatural qualities, whereby they may be moved by Him sweetly and promptly to acquire eternal good" (q. 110, a. 2).[30] These forms or qualities are called "virtues," but "virtue" here connotes not only a perfection of nature that enables one to attain one's natural good, as in the case of the cardinal virtues, but also a disposition

that orients a person to God, the supernatural good (q. 110, a. 3). The natural quest thus examined in detail in the questions on happiness (qq. 1–5) finds its true satisfaction discussed in the section on grace (qq. 109–14). These two series of questions, the "bookends" of the *Prima secundae*, form an elegant pattern of question and answer that goes to the very core of human existence.

THE *SECUNDA SECUNDAE*

The *Secunda secundae* turns from general ethical considerations to the practical challenge of living a Christian moral life. In it, Weisheipl explains, Aquinas "completely revised Lombard's discussion of moral questions, synthesizing man's return to God through the virtues (*secunda pars*) in much the same order as Aristotle treats man's search for happiness in the *Nicomachean Ethics*."[31] Everything in the *Summa* to this point builds to the culminating discussion of this journey to God. The *Secunda secundae* can thus be read as essentially a long disquisition on the virtues or, just as aptly, though with a somewhat more explicitly religious emphasis, as an extended discussion of what is now called "spirituality."

Structure of the *Secunda secundae*

The *Secunda secundae* first examines specific virtues relevant to all human beings (IIa IIae, qq. 1–170) and then those virtues pertaining to particular callings (qq. 171–89). Most of this section of the *Summa* is concerned with the former, which consists of the three theological virtues of faith (qq. 1–16), hope (qq. 17–22), and charity (qq. 23–46) and the four cardinal virtues of prudence (qq. 47–56), justice (qq. 57–122), fortitude (qq. 123–40), and temperance (qq. 141–70). The treatment of acts pertaining only to certain individuals examines first the diversity of gratuitous graces of prophecy, rapture, tongues, preaching, and miracles (qq. 171–78), then the diversity of active and contemplative lives (qq. 179–82), and finally the diversity of states of life, especially the acts of those seeking to live a life of charity through serving the church (qq. 184–89). While Aquinas referred to the latter as "the state of perfection," this language should not be confused with moral perfection (q. 184, a. 4). "States of perfection" include the episcopal state (q. 185) and the "religious state" of those who have been professed in religious orders (qq. 186–89), which Aquinas described as "a school for attaining to the perfection of charity" (q. 186, a. 3).[32]

From beginning to end, the *Secunda secundae* conceives of the Christian life as essentially one of growth in faith, hope, and charity. The cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude are discussed after the theological virtues because they are understood to be retained and perfected within the Christian life. Because nature is perfected by grace (Ia, q. 1, a. 8), the will is perfected by charity, reason by faith, and the cardinal virtues by the theological virtues. One moves toward the ultimate end most *commonly* through growth in the virtues but in the most *excellent* way through the gifts (Ia IIae, q. 69, a. 1)—dispositions through which one is made more readily amenable to the movement of the Holy Spirit (q. 68, a. 1). Although the sequence of treatment varies from virtue to virtue, each virtue is examined in terms of the same standard conceptual categories. These include the virtue itself, its distinctive acts, its subject and its object, its causes and its effects. After examining its basic identity, Aquinas expounded the virtues associated with it, the vices opposed to it, and the precepts to which it gives rise. The late treatment of the precepts in this order of presentation indicates that they exist to serve growth in virtue and not vice versa. Each virtue is complemented with a corresponding gift, or gifts, of the Holy Spirit.

Aquinas coordinated the seven central virtues of the Christian life with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, long associated by St. Gregory with the Book of Job and by St. Augustine with the seven virtues of the Holy Spirit mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew (ibid.). Faith is complemented by the gift of *understanding* that perfects the apprehension of truth in speculative reasoning and the gift of *knowledge* that perfects good judgment in speculative reasoning; hope by the gift of the fear of the Lord; charity by the gift of wisdom; prudence by the gift of counsel; justice by the gift of piety; courage by the gift of fortitude; temperance by the gift of fear (the last is discussed in Ia IIae, q. 68, a. 4, but

not actually in the treatment of the virtue of temperance).

The Theological Virtues of Faith and Hope

Aquinas examined faith in light of his standard categories: faith itself (IIa IIae, q. 1), the act of faith (qq. 2–3), the virtue (q. 4), those who have faith (q. 5), its cause and effects (qq. 6–7), and the gifts of understanding and knowledge (qq. 8–9). He next turned to what is opposed to the virtue of faith: unbelief in general (q. 10), heresy (q. 11), apostasy (q. 12), blasphemy (qq. 13–14), and the vices opposed to the gifts of knowledge and understanding (q. 15). He concluded with an examination of the precepts relating to faith, knowledge, and understanding (q. 16).

Faith is a gift of grace that allows for an assent of the mind, commanded by the will, to propositions on the basis of divine authority (q. 1; q. 2, a. 2). Such faith generates a firm conviction of the truth of what is believed. This "inner act of faith" is complemented with an "outer act of faith," the public confession of what one believes as a matter of Christian faith (q. 3, aa. 1–2).

Hope, which receives the briefest treatment among the theological virtues, is examined first as the virtue itself (q. 17) and its subject (q. 18), the gift of fear (q. 19), the opposing vices of despair (q. 20) and presumption (q. 21), and finally the precepts related to hope and fear. Through the theological virtue of hope, the Christian believes that he or she will be granted the good of eternal happiness that lies in the vision of God (q. 17, a. 2). Hope strives for the enjoyment of God Himself and ought not be confused with the "mercenary love" (*amor mercenarius*) that uses God as a means to other goods (q. 19, a. 4, ad 3). Hope gives the believer a confident movement toward the future that enables him or her to overcome everything that restricts this movement to God. Hope moves the believer from the desire to avoid punishment that characterizes "servile fear" (*timor servilis*) to the love of God that marks "filial fear" (*timor filialis*; q. 19, a. 5). Grace-inspired confidence leads the Christian away from the twin evils of presumption and despair (q. 21).

The Theological Virtue of Charity

Faith precedes hope and hope precedes charity (q. 17, aa. 7–8)—hence the order of Aquinas's presentation. Yet the *Secunda secundae* gives more attention to the theological virtue of charity (qq. 23–46) than to the other theological virtues (qq. 1–22); indeed, it devotes roughly the same number of questions to charity as to the other two virtues combined. The significance of the length of treatment should not be overemphasized, of course. Thomas devotes only nine questions to prudence (qq. 47–56), which he considers foremost among the cardinal virtues. Yet the virtue of charity clearly plays a central role in the schema of the *Secunda secundae*. In charity, people attain the end for which they exist; in this virtue, the human desire for happiness is satisfied completely; it alone, among the theological virtues, is retained in eternal life. Thus, whereas the *Prima secundae* examines the essential components that play a dynamic role in the human quest for happiness (the will, emotions, habits, law, grace), the *Secunda secundae* explains how grace brings these elements into a dynamic and transformative unity in the infused virtue of charity, the "form of all the virtues" (q. 23, a. 8).

The *Summa* examines, first, charity in itself (q. 23), its subject (q. 24), object (q. 25) and its acts, including love (q. 27), and its effects (qq. 28–33). It treats first its interior effects in joy (q. 28), peace (q. 29), and mercy (q. 30), and then its exterior effects in acts of beneficence (q. 31), almsgiving (q. 32), and fraternal correction (q. 33). This discussion is followed by an inquiry into the four kinds of vice opposed to charity: first, hatred, the vice opposed to charity itself (q. 34); second, the vices opposed to joy: sloth (q. 35) and envy (q. 36); third, the vices opposed to peace: discord (q. 37), contention (q. 38), schism (q. 39), war (q. 40), strife (q. 41), and sedition (q. 42); and last, the vice opposed to beneficence: scandal (q. 43). After the virtue and its opposite vices, this treatise examines the precepts of charity (q. 44) and then completes this analysis with a discussion of the gift of wisdom (q. 45) and the vice opposed to it, folly (q. 46).

Charity is fundamentally the grace-inspired friendship of the human person for God (q. 23, a. 1). It is not to be confused with what

modern philosophers came to call "altruism," and even less with philanthropic "charity." The love of friendship includes three marks: benevolence, mutuality, and communication in a shared good (q. 23, a. 1). Aquinas adopted these traits from Book VIII of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, but its unmistakably Christian character is seen in the affirmation that God wills fellowship with humans, and that, through grace, people can become friends with God.

Charity is something created in the soul, and is thus not simply the direct action of the Holy Spirit in the person (q. 23, a. 2); it generates a special kind of love that has as its object divine good (q. 23, a. 4). Charity is the greatest of all the virtues because it enables us to rest in God—the ultimate and principal good (q. 23, a. 7). *God* is the primary object of charity, and through it one loves all that God loves. It therefore embraces the neighbor (q. 25, a. 1), the soul (q. 25, a. 4), and, indirectly, the body (q. 25, a. 5). Charity respects the natural order inclining us to love friends and family, parents and children (q. 26, aa. 6–11), while also inspiring love for wrongdoers (q. 26, a. 6) and enemies (q. 26, a. 8).[33] The primary act of charity is the voluntary act of love, which gives rise to the internal blessings of joy (q. 28), peace (q. 29), and the virtue of mercy (q. 30)—the greatest of the virtues that unites a person with a neighbor (q. 30, a. 4)—and to external acts of charity exemplified in corporal works of mercy (such as feeding the hungry and clothing the naked [see Mt 25:31–45]) and in spiritual works of mercy (like comforting those who sorrow [q. 32, a. 2]).

The vices against charity constitute assaults either on charity itself, as in hatred (q. 34), or on the divine good, in the case of sloth vis-à-vis the spiritual life (q. 35); on the neighbor's good, in the case of envy (q. 36); or on the peace that binds neighbors together, by intentionally sowing discord (q. 37), stirring up trouble by speech (q. 38), breaking the unity of the church by schism (q. 39), instigating an unjust war (q. 40), harming others out of personal animosity or strife (q. 41), or plotting sedition against authorities responsible for the common good (q. 42).

Given these and other forms of opposition to charity, it is abundantly clear why charity would be commanded, a matter of precept (q. 44), and not left up to spontaneous inspiration. Yet the climactic expression of charity is found not simply in firm obedience to moral law but in the gift of wisdom (q. 45). The Holy Spirit inspires acute and penetrating judgment by creating in a person an internal and non-discursive "connaturality" with what is demanded in concrete situations (q. 45, a. 2). The inner promptings of the Spirit enable a person to act in a manner that goes beyond, but not against, the kind of moral excellence found in acquired virtue.

The gift of wisdom does not pertain to all domains of practical knowledge, from baking bread to automobile mechanics, but rather to specific activities of spiritual discernment: "it contemplates divine things in themselves, and it consults them, in so far as it judges of human acts by divine things, and directs human acts according to divine rules" (q. 45, a. 3).[34] The gift of wisdom corresponds to the seventh beatitude, that of the peacemaker, who sets things in due order and in so doing becomes a child of God (q. 45, a. 6). The disordered life of the fool, in contrast, is marked by the dulling of the spiritual sense. Here inordinate attachment to temporal goods corrupts one's own best judgment, even to the point of creating a distaste for God, and rendering one unaware of one's own foolishness (q. 46, a. 3).

Prudence

Immediately after discussing the gift of wisdom, Aquinas turns to its more familiar counterpart, the virtue of *prudence*. Prudence in the Thomistic sense refers to the virtue of practical wisdom, which should not be confused with the "prudential" pursuit of enlightened self-interest found in the modern usage of this term.

Thomas's introduction of this topic begins an extensive discussion of the cardinal virtues that comprises the bulk of what remains of the *Secunda pars*. Were Aquinas building from the natural or acquired to the supernatural, he would have examined first the cardinal and then the theological virtues. The reverse order employed in the *Summa* underscores the fact that the Christian moral life is based first and foremost on grace and the theological virtues; indeed, faith is the first of the virtues to be generated and the last to be lost (IIa IIae,

q. 162, a. 7, ad 3; also Ia IIae, q. 62, a. 4). Yet the gift of wisdom does not render the virtue of prudence unnecessary. A person blessed with faith, hope, and charity still needs the virtue of prudence to address the usual array of practical moral difficulties that are part of the human condition.

Following the standard procedure, the *Summa* examines first the virtue of prudence in itself (IIa IIae, q. 47) and then its "parts," those traits that must exist for the complete act of the virtue. These consist of three categories: first, "integral" parts of prudence, for example, memory and docility, which are necessary for its exercise in the full sense (q. 49); second, its various species or "subjective" parts, such as political prudence and domestic prudence (q. 50); and third, the dispositions connected with it—its "potential" parts—like the ability to identify exceptions in cases of law (q. 51). This "treatise" then discusses the corresponding gift of counsel (q. 52); the vices contrary to prudence: imprudence (q. 53), negligence (q. 54), and the vices resembling it (q. 55), such as craftiness (a. 3) and duplicity (a. 4); and finally the precepts as enumerated in the Old Law (q. 56).

The virtue of prudence is unique among the cardinal virtues precisely as a perfection of the intellect rather than of the will or sense appetite (q. 47, a. 2). Defined as the ability to apply right reason to action (q. 47, a. 4), prudence enables one to know how to act in the midst of the contingencies of particular situations (q. 47, a. 5). Aquinas believed that all normally functioning human beings have a natural habit (Ia, q. 79, a. 12) of *synderesis* (q. 47, a. 6, ad 1), an immediate, non-inferential grasp of principles, the foremost of which is that one ought to do good and avoid evil (q. 79, a. 12; Ia IIae, q. 94, a. 2). This natural moral knowledge directs one formally to the ends of the moral virtues: that is, it tells a person to be just, temperate, courageous, and so forth, and indicts actions that violate these standards. When someone engages in practical moral reasoning, one reflects on how these given ends might pertain to the concrete situation faced here and now. The person exercising the virtue of prudence, for example, does not ask *whether* to be just, but *what it means* to act justly in this specific situation. Prudence, of course, cannot stand alone: it needs the other moral virtues to exercise its most distinctive act, which is not only to deliberate effectively but even more to command the proper act in light of the preceding process of deliberation (q. 47, a. 8).

Prudence is not defined as simply finding the best means to any end whatsoever, as the false prudence of the "good crook" or the "worldly wise." As a moral virtue, it takes its bearings from the good. It reflects not only on the end of this or that act (as, for example, how to treat justly a needy but dishonest employee) but also about how all of one's acts considered as a whole fit into the end of human life. Because of their disordered ends, sinners can never have the virtue of prudence (q. 47, a. 13). Conversely, those who have grace always have prudence (q. 47, a. 14), in the sense that infused prudence enables them to make wise decisions with regard to matters necessary for their salvation. Perfect prudence commands the proper means to a particular good end and does so with regard to the good end of the person's whole life (q. 47, a. 13). The relation between the infused virtues and particular acts develops over time. Thus, the infused virtue of young children comes slowly into act and increases gradually as they mature and come into the full use of their reasoning ability (q. 47, a. 14, ad 3).

Justice

Justice is examined in sixty-five questions (qq. 57–122), the most extensive coverage of any virtue in the *Summa*. This kind of attention is to be expected, since Thomas wrote for Dominican students of theology, who, in the course of their pastoral work, would be confronted by practical problems of people buying and selling in the marketplace, going to court, and struggling to support their families under difficult economic circumstances. This lengthy discussion is organized into the following categories: first, justice in itself (qq. 57–60); second, the parts of justice (qq. 61–120); third, the gift of piety (q. 121); and last, the precepts of justice (q. 122).

Justice regards rectitude in external relations between people. This rectitude is called *right* (*ius*; q. 57, a. 1), language that should not be confused with modern individual "rights."[35] *Positive right* results from agree-

ment between parties (q. 57, a. 2), as in the case of private contracts. *Natural right* is rooted in the very nature of things as created by God. Creatures have inherent needs and desires whose fulfillment constitutes their flourishing, the reason for their existence in the divine plan. Right exists when one creature's relations to other creatures allow for the satisfaction of their natural needs. This is why, in human communities, taking what belongs to another under extreme stress of need does not constitute theft (IIa IIae, q. 66, a. 7) and also why the rich sin when they fail to give to the poor (q. 66, a. 3, ad 2)—the former fulfills, and the latter violates, what is right.

The strong sense of natural right is seen in the raising of children by their natural parents, (q. 57, a. 3), whereas the weaker sense of natural right is illustrated in legitimacy of the institution of private property, whose social usefulness and common status in the "law of nations" (*ius gentium*) indicate its appropriateness to human nature (q. 57, a. 3, ad 2). What is right constitutes the deepest intelligibility of human laws, and it is the task of human law to render specific formulations of what is right in particular contexts.

Human laws ought to serve the common good (Ia IIae, q. 90, a. 2; q. 96, a. 1), and that is why violations of right always attack the common good, either directly or indirectly. Aquinas had, as Porter explains, "a great awareness of the communal contexts of the moral life, and more specifically, of the ways in which one can injure another through damaging her standing within the community."[36] Yet for all the significance of the common good, the individual cannot be treated unjustly for the benefit of the wider community (IIa IIae, q. 68, a. 3; although we would of course object to some practices that Aquinas considered to be just, e.g., slavery, as in Ia IIae, q. 94, a. 5, ad 4). Inherently wrong legal arrangements cannot be made just simply by the arbitrary declaration of those in power (IIa IIae, q. 57, a. 2, ad 2); hence, the famous axiom that an unjust law is no law at all (Ia IIae, q. 96, a. 4).

There is a sense in which every virtuous act can be said to be just, but Aquinas distinguished, in more precise terms, general justice (*iustitia generalis*), which orders the agent to the common good (also called legal justice [*iustitia legalis*]; IIa IIae, q. 58, a. 6), from particular justice (*iustitia particularis*), which directs the person to particular goods (q. 58, a. 7). Particular justice, which orders a part to the good of a whole, is composed of two species (subjective parts): commutative justice, concerning part to part, and distributive justice, concerning the relation of whole to part (q. 61, aa. 1–2). Just as the heightened respect given to a wise political leader is proportionately equal to his or her contribution to the common good, so the payment of just wages for honest labor respects the equality between what has been given and received by both employers and employees.

Favoritism (q. 63) is the vice opposed to distributive justice. The *Summa* treats in extensive detail the vices opposed to commutative justice (qq. 64–78) through deeds, including murder (q. 64), theft, and robbery (q. 66); words, both inside the court (qq. 67–71) and outside the court (qq. 72–76); and unjust economic transactions (qq. 77–78), including fraud (q. 77) and usury, the charging of interest on money lent (q. 78).

This analysis of the virtue of justice is completed with a lengthy discussion of the virtues "annexed" to justice (its potential parts): religion (qq. 81–100), piety (q. 101), respectfulness for those in authority (qq. 102–5), gratitude (qq. 106–7), vindication (q. 108), truthfulness (qq. 109–13), friendliness (qq. 114–16), liberality (qq. 117–19), and equity (q. 120).

Thomas condemned as unjust a wide range of acts that range from thinking ill of another person without sufficient reason (q. 60, a. 4) to the taking of innocent life (q. 64). Injustice is found in wrongful imprisonment (q. 65), theft (q. 66), backbiting (and even consenting to backbiting as a listener [q. 73, a. 4]), and perjury (q. 98). As indications of his own cultural context, Aquinas regarded as just the practices of maiming criminals (q. 65, a. 1), whipping children and slaves (q. 65, a. 2), and executing heretics (q. 11, a. 3; but not the forced conversion of unbelievers [q. 10, a. 12]).

Readers may expect to find religion treated under the discussion of charity or faith, but the *Summa* instead treats it as a requirement of justice. Justice renders to another person what is his or her due, so in religion believers give to God what is God's due. Yet though justice requires a kind of equality of return (q. 58, a. 11),

there is no equality between the creature and God and we can never return anything equal to the benefits we have received from God (q. 81, a. 5, ad 3). Nor can God ever be a debtor to us (Ia, q. 21, a. 1, ad 3). This radical asymmetry accounts for why religion is not one of the integral parts of justice. Religion, however, shares with justice a willingness to repay a debt, specifically the debt of honor to, or reverence for, the first principle of creation and government of all things (IIa IIae, q. 81, a. 3). Devotion (q. 82), prayer (q. 83), sacrifice (q. 85), religious vows (q. 88), and other acts of service and worship that endeavor to give God what is God's due are also morally virtuous (q. 81, a. 5). Yet because of the utter inequality between the worshiper and God, who "infinitely surpasses all things and exceeds them in every way," religion has nothing like the *quid pro quo* reciprocity that characterizes strict justice and is therefore simply an approximation to it, that is, as a virtue "annexed" to justice (q. 81, a. 4).[37]

In order to understand properly the importance Aquinas attached to religion, it might be helpful to recall his view of the human condition. The state of "original justice" was one of harmony, concordance, balanced proportion, and right relation between humanity and God (Ia IIa, q. 82, a. 3), within the soul and body of each person (Ia, q. 94, a. 1; q. 95, a. 1; q. 97, a. 1) and between the members of the wider human community (Ia IIae, q. 85, a. 3). The prideful attempt of humanity to grasp more than its due (q. 84, a. 2) destroyed "original justice" and "wounded" human nature (q. 85, a. 3). Our original natural inclination to the good of virtue was diminished but not destroyed by the fall.

Grace not only works to repair injustice and to restore justice in human society but, even more, to reestablish the justice (or right relation) between human beings and God. The proper justification of the sinner takes place only through the gift of grace accepted freely in faith and with the love of charity. How this is accomplished through the work of Christ is the topic of the *Tertia pars*. The *Secunda secundae*, however, is concerned with religion as the way in which conduct is directed to God. By showing proper honor to God, religious acts are properly proportioned to God (q. 81, a. 2).

The requirements of religion are given precedence to other laws in the Scriptures because they are of the greatest importance, even more so than those of the other moral virtues (q. 81, a. 6, *sed contra*; on the first three precepts of the decalogue, see q. 122, aa. 1–3). The rationale for this priority resides in the nature of virtue itself. Whatever is directed to an end takes its goodness from its relation to that end. The virtues are ordered to God as their end, and "religion approaches nearer to God than the other moral virtues, in so far as its actions are directly and immediately ordered to the honor of God" (q. 122, a. 6).[38] For this reason, religion is described as the greatest of the moral virtues (ibid.).

While internal acts of worship are more important than external acts, one ought not minimize the importance of the latter as "mere" ritual (q. 81, a. 7). Worship orders humanity to God through external acts, which engage bodies in movement and senses in images in order to draw the entire person into religious reverence (ibid.). Just as his account of our bodily nature led him to acknowledge our need for ritual, so Aquinas's recognition of our social nature encouraged his appreciation for common worship within an ecclesial community. These acts of reverence do not reflect the presumption that they do something for God, who after all is "full of glory to which no creature can add anything,"[39] but rather for our own sakes, because, "by the very fact that we revere and honor God, our mind is subjected to Him, and in this consists its perfection" (ibid.).[40] The desire for happiness, then, can only be adequately pursued on the basis of true worship, and especially in its highest form, the Eucharist (IIIa, qq. 73–83).

The gift of the Holy Spirit associated with the virtue of justice is piety (q. 121). Whereas the virtue of piety annexed to justice renders due honor to parents and country, and symbolically to one's human father (q. 101), the gift of piety is that whereby "we provide worship and duty to God as our Father through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit" (q. 121, a. 1).[41] The virtue of religion pays worship to God as Creator, but the excellence of the gift of piety resides in the fact that it inspires us to revere and worship God as Father, and, by extension, and on account of their relation to the Father, to honor all human beings, espe-

cially the saints in heaven, and the truth of Scripture (q. 121, a. 1, ad 3). Given this context, it makes perfect sense that the bulk of the final question here, dedicated to the precepts of justice in the decalogue, concentrates not on interpersonal justice but on the duties of religion (the first three precepts; q. 121, aa. 2–4) and the obligations of piety (the fourth commandment, treated in q. 121, a. 5). The remaining article (q. 121, a. 6) accords brief summary treatment to the remaining six precepts concerning justice between people.

Fortitude

The other two cardinal virtues pertain to the internal ordering of the agent, specifically with regard to ways in which the will might be hindered from following right reason. The virtue of temperance enables one to respond reasonably to what presents itself as attractive and the virtue of courage enables one to respond reasonably to what evokes fear.

The *Summa's* discussion of courage begins with the virtue itself (q. 123), its principal act, martyrdom (q. 124), and its opposing vices, which include disordered fear (q. 125), fearlessness (q. 126), and irrational daring (q. 127). It then examines its parts in general (q. 128) and its parts in particular (qq. 129–38), including confidence or magnanimity (q. 129), magnificence (q. 134), patience (q. 136), and perseverance (q. 137). It concludes with a discussion of the gift of fortitude (q. 139) and its effects (q. 140).

As a general virtue, courage gives the emotional stability required for the exercise of each and every virtue. As a special virtue, it enables the agent to endure or resist challenges to steadfastness of mind, especially in situations involving mortal danger (q. 123, a. 2). The last qualification indicates the special character of courage, its reasonable refusal inappropriately to withdraw from or to be controlled by what generates fear (q. 123, a. 3). Courage is not to be confused with foolish indifference to danger; Aquinas would concur with Mark Twain: courage is "resistance to fear, mastery of fear—not absence of fear."[42] Far from being the same as courage, fearlessness is one of the vices opposed to courage because it lacks proper love of temporal goods (q. 126, a. 1). The courageous person loves life and other temporal goods in due measure and recognizes threats to personal well-being, yet he or she faces danger for the sake of higher goods. The soldier in battle, for example, risks losing his own life for the sake of defending the common good of his country (q. 123, a. 5).

Courage, however, is displayed not only in martial contexts, but wherever people remain steadfast in the danger of death on account of virtue. Abelard, Cicero, and Macrobius divided courage in two: courage as attacking evils and courage as enduring the onslaught of evils (q. 128, a. 1). Thomas clearly believed the latter to be its more important expression.[43] Aquinas maintained that, as it is more difficult to control fear than it is to act aggressively, courage is more characteristically disclosed in endurance than in attack (q. 123, a. 6). Martyrdom, in which one endures the greatest of physical evils, constitutes the supreme act of courage, an act of the highest perfection, which among all the acts of the virtues exhibits most completely the perfection of charity (q. 124, a. 3).

How could the endurance of evils be a cardinal virtue, since virtues move one toward the good? The phrase "cardinal virtue" applies to habits exhibiting characteristics necessary for the exercise of any virtue whatsoever, and Aquinas maintained that the steadfastness of courage is required for the exercise of *any* of the virtues when they are threatened. The final end of the virtue of courage is thus not evil *per se*, but the good of reason for the sake of which it resists or endures physical evils (q. 123, a. 11, ad 2). And because the fear of death provides the most powerful motive for withdrawing from good, the virtue which properly subordinates this fear to reason is the greatest of the cardinal virtues concerned directly with the emotions (q. 123, a. 12).

Courage faces chiefly the danger of death, but responds in proper measure to other dangers as well. It inspires a balanced, ordered love for temporal goods that overcomes disordered fear concerning their loss (q. 125, a. 1), just as, conversely, it corrects insufficient love of temporal goods and generates a proper appreciation for their place in life (q. 126, a. 2). The activity of other virtues exercised in the face of less extreme kinds of hardships are its "potential" parts. Lesser dangers must still be met with confidence in planning to act and

then in being resolute in action, but in neither an ambitious (q. 131) nor a vainglorious way (q. 132). In its more passive mode, courage endures these dangers with patience (q. 136) and perseverance (q. 137).

The gift of courage so inspires the mind with confidence that it refuses to submit irrationally to fear (q. 139, a. 2). Indeed, it generates confidence of escape from every danger (q. 139, a. 2, ad 1), thus bestowing a special kind of freedom from evil (q. 139, a. 2, ad 2). This gift thus has an affinity with the fourth beatitude—"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness"—in which "hunger" and "thirst" represent the employment of strenuous effort exerted to overcome obstacles to attaining the good (q. 139, a. 2).

Not everyone is blessed with the gift of courage, but every Christian is made aware of the precepts of courage revealed in divine law. Whereas the Old Law instructed the Israelites how to fight for the sake of temporal goods, the New Law teaches spiritual combat for the sake of obtaining eternal life (q. 140, a. 1, ad 1). Such precepts as Jesus's, "Do not fear those who kill the body" (Mt 10:28) thus command endurance of temporal evils for the sake of the ultimate end.

Temperance

The treatise on the virtue of temperance begins with a discussion of the virtue in itself (qq. 141–42), then its parts (qq. 143–70), both in general (q. 143) and in particular (qq. 144–69), and its precepts (q. 170). It attends to the parts in particular, which encompass three major categories: first, the "integral" parts of temperance, shame (q. 144) and honesty (q. 145); second, the "subjective" parts of temperance, those concerning the pleasures of food (qq. 146–50) and sex (qq. 151–54); and third, the "potential" parts of temperance: continence (qq. 155–56), clemency and meekness (qq. 157–59), and modesty (qq. 160–69).

Temperance is both a general virtue and a special virtue. As general, of course, it is found in all actions exhibiting moderation. As special, the virtue of temperance characteristically orders the sense appetites, especially in matters pertaining to pleasures of touch, such as, food, drink, and sex, desires that are especially difficult to control (q. 141, a. 7). Whereas the appetites of animals are regulated by their intrinsic natural ordering, human appetites attracted to the same kinds of goods must be deliberately regulated by reason. Sensible goods offer the greatest pleasures to the sense of touch and often threaten to disturb the reasonable ordering of human action. The virtue of temperance, then, empowers the agent reasonably to use pleasurable objects as needed in this life (q. 141, a. 6)—"need" including not only the bare necessities of life but also the things that make possible a decent life according to one's place in the social order (q. 141, a. 6, ad 2). The meaning of temperance, of course, cannot be set in stone since "the practice of temperance varies according to different times . . . and according to different human laws and customs" (q. 170, a. 1, ad 3).[44]

Rather than the particularly abstemious mindset of the emotionally constricted, as that name sometimes suggests, the virtue of temperance leads to the moderate fulfillment of natural desires. The *Summa* notes the need to be alert not only to the vicious nature of unchecked sexual desires, but also of insensibility—the rejection of pleasures attending natural operations that are necessary for self-preservation (q. 142, a. 1).

The integral parts of temperance, those necessary for any case of its proper exercise, include shamefacedness, repulsion from the disgrace of acting contrary to temperance (q. 144), and "honesty," the spiritual beauty manifested in the clarity and due proportion of the well-ordered life (q. 145). Thus, the virtue of temperance, more than any other virtue, manifests a certain beauty, just as the vice of intemperance exceeds others in disgrace (q. 143, a. 1).

The subjective parts, or "species," of temperance are differentiated according to the kinds of objects to which they are directed. The virtue of abstinence concerns the proper use of food (q. 146). This includes consumption that observes the mean (q. 146, a. 1, esp. ad 3), as well as acts of fasting for the sake of moral discipline, spiritual growth, and making satisfaction for sins (q. 147, a. 1). Abstinence is contrasted with the vice of gluttony (q. 148). Pleasures of drink are moderated and restrained by the virtue of sobriety just as they are used sinfully in drunkenness (q. 150).

The pleasures of sexual activity are ordered by the virtues of chastity and purity. These virtues properly fall under the cardinal virtue of temperance; however, they also pertain to the virtue of justice when the conduct in question has impact on others, as, for example, in cases of rape and adultery.

Chastity, which "chastises" concupiscence, is a special virtue concerned with disordered sexual desires (q. 151, a. 2). The virtue of chastity concerns sexual acts themselves, whereas the virtue of purity regards the external signs of sexual interest. Virginity as a moral rather than simply physiological condition is a virtue only when embraced for the right reason, that is, for the good of the soul and its spiritual growth, and so that one may have the leisure to be devoted to divine things (q. 152, aa. 3–5). The virtue of chastity is not to be confused with avoiding all sexual pleasures through what would now be described as neurotic psychological aversion. Nor does Aquinas praise a person who avoids sex simply because he or she is, as he puts it, "insensible as a country bumpkin" (*insensibilis, sicut agricola*; q. 152, a. 2; also q. 153, a. 3, ad 3).

Lust, of course, is the vice opposed to chastity. Given the importance of reason, the somewhat suspect status of sexual desire is signaled in the observation that, "venereal pleasures above all debauch a person's mind" (q. 153, a. 1).[45] Indeed, the *Summa* argues that even within the morally legitimate context of marriage, sexual intercourse still has some degree of shame because the "movement of the organs of generation is not subject to the command of reason, as are the movements of the other external members" (q. 151, a. 4).[46] Yet, it is important to distinguish lust, which by definition violates the order of reason, from sexual desire *per se*, which is a created good. Sexual acts in themselves are not sinful, as long as they are directed in the right manner to their proper end, procreation, rather than to the experience of sexual pleasure for its own sake (q. 151, a. 2). The disordered satisfaction of sexual appetite follows not from anything evil in the body but from a refusal of the *will* to be ordered by right reason.

Finally, the "potential" parts of the virtue of temperance are secondary virtues moderating and restraining desires for less powerful pleasures. One set of these virtues controls the inward movements of the will. In this category, the virtue of continence enables the will to stand firm in the face of vehement desires or immoderate concupiscences (q. 143, a. 1). Whereas the intemperate person feels no qualms over the choice of wrongdoing, the incontinent person feels guilt over the wrongdoing he or she has done out of disordered passion (q. 156, a. 3). Strictly speaking, continence is not a perfect virtue because it only exists in the presence of an underlying internal struggle, thus signifying the presence of vehement disordered desires. Continence does have "something of the nature of a virtue, in so far as reason stands firm in opposing the passions" (q. 155, a. 1).[47] The root cause of incontinence is not sexual desire but the *will* refusing either to think about its acts (the sin of impetuosity) or to abide by its own best judgment (the sin of weakness; q. 156, a. 1).

The other potential parts of temperance include the virtues of clemency and meekness. Clemency mitigates external punishment, whereas meekness moderates the passion for revenge (q. 157, a. 1). Note that anger, defined as the desire to punish or to have revenge (*appetitus vindictae*), is not necessarily evil (q. 158, a. 1). Anger is legitimate when emotionally moderate and in accord with right reason ("zealous anger"), that is, when it promotes justice and the true correction of the offender. Like other emotions, it can be evil by either excess or deficiency (q. 158, a. 2).

A set of secondary virtues, those concerned with less difficult matters, belong to the virtue of modesty, which governs the external actions of the body. Humility is essentially the reverence through which people are properly subject to God (q. 161, a. 1, ad 5; q. 161, a. 2, ad 3). In humility, every person, "in respect of that which is his own, ought to subject himself to every neighbor, in respect of that which the latter has of God" (q. 161, a. 3).[48] Humility should not be confused with humiliating self-abnegation before others. The vice directly opposed to humility is of course pride, the disordered desire for exaltation (q. 162, a. 1, ad 2). Pride consists essentially in the willing refusal to be subject to God and the divine rule (q. 162, a. 6). As aversion that amounts to contempt for God, pride is the most grievous of all sins as well

as the queen and mother of all the vices (q. 162, a. 8).

Other parts of modesty include studiousness in the pursuit of knowledge (q. 166), opposed by the vice of curiosity by which one pursues knowledge sinfully (q. 167), and the extension of modesty in our conduct toward other people (q. 168) and in our outward apparel (q. 169).

This treatise concludes with a brief discussion of its precepts as indicated in the decalogue. Among all the vices opposed to temperance, Aquinas held, adultery would seem most opposed to the love of our neighbor, and for this reason the divine law rightly condemns not only adultery itself but even the intention to commit adultery (to covet; q. 170, a. 1). Similarly, not only is the sin of murder condemned, but also the vice of daring that sometimes leads to murder. More positive common requirements of temperance, Aquinas noted, could not have been given, since the practice of temperance varies according to different times, laws, and customs (q. 170, a. 1, ad 3).

Acts Pertaining to Certain People

This final section of the *Secunda pars* addresses an array of topics that pertain especially to certain vocations, especially as concerns the soul's habits and acts (q. 171, Prol.). There is no one correct answer to the Socratic question, "How ought I to live?" Theologically, the diversity of duties and functions within the church results from the plenitude of the grace that flows from Christ to his "body" (q. 183, a. 2, drawing on Rom 12:4–5; see also IIIa, q. 8, a. 3).

Here, the *Summa* examines first the diversities found in various "gratuitous graces" or "gifts" (*gratiae gratis datae*, based on 1 Cor 12:8–10; qq. 171–78), then the diversities among active and contemplative lives (qq. 179–82), and finally the diversities among various duties and states of life within the church (qq. 183–89).[49] Under the first heading, it investigates graces pertaining to knowledge (prophecy [qq. 171–74] and rapture [q. 175]), to speech (the gift of tongues [q. 176] and the gift of "the word of wisdom and knowledge" [q. 177]), and to miracles (q. 178). Under the second heading, it discusses the division of lives into active and contemplative (qq. 179–82). Finally, under the third, it examines what constitutes diversities among human beings generally (q. 183) and among those seeking spiritual perfection (qq. 183–89), including bishops (q. 185) and members of religious orders such as the Dominicans (qq. 186–89).

Why do these topics belong in the "moral section" of the *Summa*? First, one must recognize that just as the *Prima secundae* opens with the question of human happiness and closes with a culminating discussion of grace, so the *Secunda secundae* begins by exploring the nature of Christian faith and ends by examining the diversity of ways in which grace is active in the lives of faithful Christians. The "moral section" of the *Summa* is concerned with the human movement to God and so fittingly takes up various ways in which people proceed on the journey to God and, through the grace of God, assist others in doing so. Structurally, the examination of grace at the end of the *Prima secundae* finds its counterpart in this discussion of the states in life in which grace is manifested concretely throughout the Christian community at the end of the *Secunda secundae*.

Gratuitous graces are freely given by the Holy Spirit so that one person can aid another to be brought to God (Ia IIae, q. 111, a. 4). The prophet is thus given special knowledge of supernatural things and called to communicate this knowledge through speech (IIa IIae, q. 171, a. 1). Rapture constitutes a special way in which God draws certain people to Himself (q. 175, a. 1), even, as with Moses and St. Paul, in a kind of vision of God's essence that transcends the state of the "wayfarer" (q. 175, a. 3). The gift of tongues allows one to preach throughout the world (q. 176, a. 1). The gift of miracles produces acts that confirm the knowledge received from God, thereby adding to its credibility in the eyes of the faithful (q. 178, a. 1).

This discussion reflects the standard distinction between active and contemplative lives. Some people delight more in contemplation of truth, and so organize their lives around it, whereas others are more intent on external actions and direct their lives to it (q. 179, a. 1). This accords with the distinction between speculative and practical reason, the former concerning itself with knowledge of

the truth *per se* and the latter with practical action of one kind or another (q. 179, a. 2). There are also "mixed" ways of life that, like Aquinas's own, incorporate active and contemplative dimensions; these ways of life can be characterized by whichever of the two fundamental traits is predominant. The contemplative life leads to a knowledge and love of God that permeates primarily the intellect in its consideration of truth, but also the will and affections (q. 180, a. 1). The moral virtues dispose the person to embrace contemplation by providing its preconditions, such as self-restraint, internal ordering of the affections, and so forth (q. 180, a. 2). The present experience of imperfect contemplation and its kind of "inchoate beatitude" (q. 180, a. 4; q. 180, a. 7, ad 3) will be surpassed by the ultimate happiness given in the perfect contemplation of the beatific vision in the life to come. Even this imperfect form of contemplation yields the greatest delight possible in this life, for "the love whereby God is loved out of charity surpasses all other love" (q. 180, a. 7).[50] Because contemplation is the end of human life, the contemplative life is in itself superior to the active life.

In producing external works, active occupations draw most directly on the moral virtues. The chief moral virtue of the active life is justice, since it governs our relations with one another (q. 181, a. 1, ad 1), but of course prudence also pertains directly to the active life (q. 181, a. 2). It is important to note, though, that the active life consists primarily but not exclusively in external actions, since no human life can be decent, let alone Christian, without some contemplative activities, such as conversation, prayer, and worship. Although modern ethicists are accustomed to assigning the greatest value to practical action, Aquinas taught that the love of God pursued in the contemplative life is, in principle at least, more excellent than the life dedicated to good works. Because the contemplative life draws on what is highest in human nature (viz., the intellect), it is intrinsically more delightful than the latter and it is loved for its own sake (q. 182, a. 1). In the concrete, however, Aquinas, echoing Augustine's "compulsion of love," recognized that the urgency of human needs can give an existential moral priority to the active life (q. 182, a. 1, ad 3).[51] It is better to give a starving person a loaf of bread than a lecture in philosophy, even though the latter is a more excellent good in itself.

The third major subsection of this treatise examines various duties and states within the church. This variety of duties and states contributes to the church's perfection, makes possible various actions in service of the multiplicity of human needs, and constitutes an order that reflects the church's dignity and beauty (q. 183, a. 2). Differences within the church are thus directed to perfection, action, and beauty, and distinctions among the church's members can be described in terms of "perfection," duties to action, and the order of "ecclesiastical beauty" (q. 183, a. 3).

"Perfection" is the state in which an agent attains his or her proper end (q. 184, a. 1). Human perfection therefore consists most radically in charity that "unites us to God, Who is the last end of the human mind" (ibid.).[52] The perfection of Christian life consists in love. There are significant limits to the perfection of love in this life, but Christians must at the very least strive to eliminate all obstacles to their movement toward God and, as much as possible, to remove from their affections "whatever hinders the mind's affection from being wholly directed to God" (ibid.).[53]

Of course, it is possible to have degrees of charity without its full perfection. Ongoing conversion from cupidity to charity proceeds through beginning and intermediate stages before reaching the proficient stage exemplified in the life of the saint. The perfection of love consists minimally in having nothing in one's affections that contradicts charity. More positively, it is exemplified in the radical extension of love to strangers and enemies, in the intensification of love that leads to the sacrifice of external goods, physical well-being, and even life itself for the sake of the neighbor, and in the productive love that surrenders temporal and even spiritual goods for the neighbor's sake (q. 184, a. 2). Obedience to the commandments helps first of all to remove obstacles to charity and to avoid occasions of sin, such as adultery and greed. The "counsels of perfection"—forms of goodness that are not morally compulsory for every person—call one to renounce limited but real goods, such as marriage, possessions, and

worldly concerns, in order to grow in the love of charity.

The "state of perfection" does not refer to a person's internal holiness; rather, it is concerned with his or her external actions as they pertain to the church. Therefore, a person enters into the state of perfection by "binding himself in perpetuity and with a certain solemnity to those things that pertain to perfection" (q. 184, a. 4).[54] Recognizing that wicked bishops can exist alongside holy lay people, Aquinas observed that, "nothing prevents some people who are not in the state of perfection from being perfect, or others from being in the state of perfection who are not perfect" (ibid.).[55] It is in this precise sense that bishops and members of religious orders exist in the "state of perfection." The former give themselves to demanding pastoral duties for the sake of God and the latter take solemn and perpetual vows of voluntary poverty, continence (or chastity), and obedience (q. 186, a. 6). Employing an "antonomastic" use of the term "religion," the virtue in which a person offers what is due to God (recall IIa IIae, q. 81, a. 2), Aquinas argued that those who take up life in religious orders (the "religious") do so in order to "give themselves up entirely to the divine service, as offering a holocaust to God" (q. 186, a. 1).[56] A bishop is called to be of service to the church (q. 185, a. 1) and to the common good (q. 63, a. 2). It is for this reason that the religious state is described as "a school or exercise for the attainment of perfection, which people strive to reach by various practices, just as a physician may use various remedies in order to heal" (q. 186, a. 2).[57]

Religious perfection consists primarily in the vow of obedience, the fulfillment of which imitates the obedience of Christ himself (q. 186, aa. 5, 8). Obedience, though, is not an end in itself, but rather a means of ordering one's will to God. The same general rule applies to other activities associated with religious orders, including teaching, preaching, involvement in necessary secular business, manual labor, begging, and wearing coarse clothing (q. 187). This is true of hermits who live in holy solitude, for as they grow in holiness they benefit us by their prayers and by their example of radical devotion (q. 188, a. 8, ad 4). Fulfillment of the requirements of religious life exceeds the human will; it is only made possible by grace (q. 189, a. 10).

The focus on grace also accords with Aquinas's theology of the church, which he understands primarily as the community of the faithful who participate in the grace of Christ. The church is the effect of grace, the New Law given to those who follow Christ (Ia IIae, q. 106, a. 1). It is not to be identified with the clergy or hierarchy, but rather as encompassing the community of all believers. Aquinas held a vastly comprehensive vision of this community, which includes not only those living now who are united to Christ by faith and love (IIIa, q. 8, a. 3, ad 2), but also believing sinners who have faith but not the theological virtue of charity (ibid.), those who have died and are united with Christ in glory, the souls in purgatory, and angels in heaven (q. 8, a. 4). The body of Christ also potentially includes non-believers, who in the present life have the potentiality to be united to Christ in the future (q. 8, a. 3). Gradations exist within the Christian community, but the most important gradations concern not access to power within her government (ibid.) but degrees of participation within the "mystical body" of Christ. Institutional structures, political and social organization, visible government, and juridical norms are thus necessary and legitimate aspects of the church, but their function is not to serve the institution as an end in itself but to help people grow closer to God and to attain their ultimate end.[58]

CONCLUDING SUMMARY

The fundamental features of the ethics of Aquinas can be summarized in seven interconnected and mutually reinforcing themes. First, Thomas's ethics is grounded in systematic reflection on sacred doctrine, which considers God Himself and all things in relation to God (Ia, q. 1, a. 8). The study of theology views everything as emerging from and returning to God—the focal point of the Christian moral life. Ethics is rooted in the theological virtues, which take this name because through them humans are properly ordered to God, because God is their cause, and because knowledge of them is given explicitly through divine revelation in Scripture (IIa IIae, q. 62, a. 1).

Second, this vision of life is teleological in the sense that it is "goal-directed." It develops an ethic that is eudaimonistic, that is, an ethic intended to provide an answer to the fundamental question asked by every human being about the content and means of attaining human happiness. Life is a journey toward God, the highest good. Every human being, knowingly or not, desires complete and unending happiness that can only be satisfied when he or she attains the true ultimate end, eternal union with God. At the same time, this end is radically inclusive, encompassing the entire range of natural goods pertaining to soul and body. Human motivation is, then, relatively pluralistic, oriented to a variety of goods from the elemental and common to the most noble and transcendent.[59]

Third, this moral vision is theocentrically humanistic. The anthropology of the *Prima pars* reaches a climax in its discussion of the biblical doctrine of human beings as created in the image and (imperfect) likeness of God (Ia, q. 93). God is glorified in a special way through the flourishing and sanctification of human beings. So describing the person as the "image of God" refers to not only the natural human capacity for knowing and loving God (the "image"), but also its imperfect actualization through grace in this life ("re-creation") and its perfect actualization in the glory of the next ("likeness"; Ia, q. 93, a. 4). Humanity is depicted as the "image" manifested in freedom and responsibility, a special status that is further heightened in the discussion of the Incarnation and the redemptive work of Christ in the *Tertia pars*.

Fourth, this ethic is realistic. It accommodates the limitations of human finitude and weakness without being restricted excessively by them. It accommodates the real possibilities and needs of sensible creatures whose understanding requires contact with concrete, visible realities in the material world. Just as in sacramental theology, exterior, tangible objects and physical activities elevate the human spirit to higher, supernatural realities (IIa IIae, q. 81, a. 7), so in ethics the ordering of nature and the concrete ties of blood, community, and friendship form the matrix within which the virtues are acquired, practiced, and promoted (q. 26). Virtue develops, orders, and refines human desire. Moral reflection deliberates on the basis of general widely apprehended precepts, like the golden rule, and strives to determine the practical demands of right reason. In so doing, it accords with the essentially rational ordering (*ordinatio rationalis*) of the moral law (Ia IIae, q. 90, a. 4) and the intrinsic intelligibility of the natural law.

Fifth, the *Summa* assigns primacy of place to the virtues and to personal character formation, and a subordinate role to law. Every act and every habit ought to draw one closer to one's ultimate end. Both acts and habits are morally right when they relate a person properly to that end and they are evil when they do not (q. 21, a. 1). Moral law clarifies the parameters within which moral goodness operates, but it intends not just the specific and detailed enumeration of permitted and proscribed actions but the deepening of our humanity. This emphasis on the virtues accords with an attentiveness to human agency, desire, connaturality, intentionality, and interiority. One cannot expect to consult a fixed and comprehensive catalogue of moral rules that eliminates the need for moral deliberation. The moral law expresses the basic regulations of human action, to be sure, but, since the core of the good life consists in exercising the virtues, practical moral decisions are arrived at through the reflective power of the virtue of prudence rather than simply by means of any formal procedure or calculation of the consequences of various courses of action.

Sixth, this is a view of Christian morality as empowered by grace. Life is conceived not only as a journey to God, but also as a process of ongoing conversion and re-creation through grace. The correction and redirection of human nature is made possible only by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Human nature is so wounded by sin that its affections are inevitably disordered without grace. Aquinas's Christian awareness of human sinfulness penetrates more deeply into the nature of the psyche than do philosophical theories of moral weakness. Acknowledgment of sin, acceptance of God's offer of forgiveness, and commitment to spiritual discipline provide the deepest religious bases for moral correction. The greatest manifestation of Christian morality is therefore not seen in its moral treatises or ethical theories but in the lives of holy individuals and communities. While agreeing with Aristotle

that the virtues comprise the inner core of the moral life, Aquinas went well beyond the Philosopher in claiming that the theological virtues, made possible by the New Law of grace, constitute the inner core of the Christian moral life. The deepening of our humanity proceeds through the graced process of becoming more and more like God, in whose image we have been created.

Finally, Aquinas emphasized the "primacy of charity." His moral vision begins with an attraction to the true and good, leads to friendship, active service, and prayer, and culminates in loving union with God. He recognized, with Augustine, that every person's life is shaped by the objects of his or her love.[60] The virtues that direct love are inculcated through personal formation and training in good habits within various human communities, but they are also, and most importantly, produced by grace-inspired religious transformation. Religious practices, especially prayer and participation in the sacraments, contribute fundamentally to these processes of formation and transformation. Charity is thus a profoundly communal as well as an interpersonal reality. The Christian community is united by the loving activity of the Holy Spirit, who is also the ultimate source of the movement of human beings to God. The inner dynamics of the ethics of Aquinas, then, reaches its highest climax not in good works but more deeply in a penetrating and transforming appreciative love that finds its proper fruition in contemplation, mystical union, and, finally, the beatific vision.

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Notes

[1]See John Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology: A Study of the Roman Catholic Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987) and John A. Gallagher, *Time Past, Time Future: An Historical Study of Catholic Moral Theology* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1990).

[2]See M.-D. Chenu, *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas*, trans. A.-M. Landry, O.P. and D. Hughes, O.P. (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1963), 298–300. The debate over the structure of the *Summa* was initiated by Chenu's "Le Plan de la Somme Théologique de S. Thomas," *Revue Thomiste* 45 (1939): 93–107.

[3]Unfortunately, Thomas ceased working on the *Summa* after he completed IIIa, q. 90, one of the questions on penance. After his death, some disciples attempted to complete his work in the so-called *Supplement* based on his earlier commentary on the *Sentences*. The *Supplement* cannot be considered an authentic reflection of the mature mind of Aquinas. See Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *St. Thomas Aquinas, volume 1: The Person and His Work*, trans. Robert Royal (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 147.

[4]See Chenu, *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas*, chap. 11.

[5]"et non solum secundum quod in se est, sed etiam secundum quod est principium rerum et finis earum, et specialiter rationalis creaturae."

[6]See Ignatius Eschmann, O.P., *The Ethics of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Edward A. Synan (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1997), esp. 8–9 and 159–60.

[7]Cited by Eschmann in *Ethics of St. Thomas*, 160; an English translation from Etienne Gilson, *L'Espirit de la philosophie médiévale* (Paris: Vrin, 1948), 173.

[8]Eschmann, *Ethics of St. Thomas*, 5.

[9]Torrell, *St. Thomas*, 152.

[10]While the *Secunda pars* provides the most concentrated discussion of ethics, it is also important to realize that ethically relevant material is found virtually throughout the entire *Summa*. For example, in order to understand St. Thomas's view of gender and sexual ethics properly, one must consult his view of women in the *Summa*, Ia, q. 92, "On the Production of Woman," as well as the relevant questions on the virtue of temperance (IIa IIae, qq. 141–70). Similarly, someone wishing to understand Thomas's notion of sin needs to examine not only his analysis of "Vice and Sin" in the *Prima secundae* (qq. 71–89) but also, for example, the "Cause of Evil" in the *Prima pars* (q. 49) and perhaps also the analysis of "Penance as a Virtue" and "Of the Recovery of Virtue by Means of Penance" in the *Tertia pars* (qq. 85, 89). This kind of intertextual referencing pertains to all fundamental moral questions.

One should also note that while the *Summa theologiae* is Aquinas's principal work, a comprehensive examination of his ethics would have to be expanded to include his other texts as well.

Thomas developed his moral reflection in a wide variety of forms throughout his scholarly career, from the early commentary on Peter Lombard's *Books of Sentences* (*Scriptum in IV libros sententiarum*), through his more detailed and comprehensive academic disputations such as the *Disputed Questions on Evil* (*Quaestiones disputatae de malo*) and the *Disputed Questions on Charity* (*Quaestiones disputate de caritate*). While the commentaries on Aristotle's works, especially *On the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle* (*Sententia in X libros ethicorum*) are relevant, the biblical commentaries are of particular importance. Torrell suggests that, "If we wish . . . to get a slightly less one-sided idea of the whole theologian and his method, it is imperative to read and use in a much deeper fashion these biblical commentaries in parallel with the great systematic works" (*St. Thomas*, 55).

[11]See Thomas P. O'Meara, O.P., *Thomas Aquinas Theologian* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), and S. Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans. Sr. Mary Thomas Noble, O.P. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1995).

[12]See Leonard E. Boyle, O.P., "Notes on the Education of the Fratres Communes in the Dominican Order in the Thirteenth Century," in *Pastoral Care, Clerical Education and Canon Law, 1200–1400* (London: Variorum, 1981), study 6.

[13]"Produxit enim res in esse propter suam bonitatem communicandam creaturis, et per eas repraesentandam. Et quia per unam creaturam sufficienter repraesentari non potest, produxit multas creaturas et diversas, ut quod deest uni ad repraesentandam divinam bonitatem, suppleatur ex alia."

[14]See H.-D. Noble, O.P., *L'Amitié avec Dieu: Essai sur la vie spirituelle d'après Saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1932).

[15]Torrell, *St. Thomas*, 157.

[16]See August., *Conf.* 10.20.: "When I seek for you, my God, my quest is for the happy life. I will seek you that 'my soul may live' (Isa. 55:3), for my body derives life from my soul and my soul derives life from you" (*Conf.*, August., trans. Henry Chadwick [New York: Oxford University Press, 1991], 196). Also Servais Pinckaers, O.P., "La Beatitude dans L'Éthique de Saint Thomas," in *The Ethics of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Proceedings of the Third Symposium on St. Thomas Aquinas's Philosophy, Rolduc, 5–6 November 1983, *Studi Tomistici* 25, ed. L. J. Elders and K. Hedwig (Vatican City: Libreria Editroce Vaticana, 1984), 80–94.

[17]Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy* (Gifford Lectures 1931–32), trans. A. H. C. Downes (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 104.

[18]M.-D. Chenu, *The Scope of the Summa* (Washington, DC: Thomist, 1958), 36.

[19]Charles Taylor observes that, "Much contemporary moral philosophy . . . has tended to focus on what it is right to do rather than on what it is good to be, on defining the content of obligation rather than the nature of the good life; and it has no conceptual place left for a notion of the good as the object of our love or allegiance or, as Iris Murdoch portrayed in her work, as the privileged focus of attention or will" (*Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989], 3). Contemporary Anglo-American authors generally follow Immanuel Kant in this regard; see *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1953), A 800–801 and A 805. See, e.g., Alan Gewirth, *Reason and Morality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); R. M. Hare, *The Language of Morals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964); and John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971).

[20]This issue is developed carefully by James M. Gustafson, *Can Ethics Be Christian?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), chaps. 2–3.

[21]Pl., *Prt.* 358c.

[22]On the difficulties with the meaning of "*habitus*," see Yves Simon, *The Definition of Moral Virtue*, ed. Vukan Kuic (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), chap. 3. For a complete analysis of "habit," see G. Klubertanz, *Habits and Virtues* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1963).

[23]SCG III, 122, in St. Thomas Aquinas, *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith, Summa contra Gentiles*, trans. Vernon Bourke (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956), 143.

[24]"rationis ordinatio ad bonum commune, ab eo qui curam communitatis habet, promulgata."

[25]"Inter cetera autem rationalis creatura excellentiori quodam modo divinae providentiae subiacet, inquantum et ipsa fit providentiae particeps, sibi ipsi et aliis providens."

[26]"bonum est faciendum et prosequendum et malum vitandum."

[27]Ibid., 479.

[28]Pinckaers, *Sources*, 13.

[29]"non tamen totum bonum sibi connaturale, ita quod in nullo deficiat. Sicut homo infirmus potest per seipsum aliquem motum habere; non tamen perfecte potest moveri motu hominis sani, nisi sanetur auxilio medicinae."

[30]"aliquas formas seu qualitates supernaturales, secundum quas suaviter et prompte ab ipso moveantur ad bonum aeternum consequendum."

[31]James A. Weisheipl, O.P., *Friar Thomas D'Aquino: His Life, Thought and Works*, rev. ed. (1974; Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1983), 220.

[32]"disciplina per quam pervenitur ad perfectionem caritatis."

[33]On the order of charity, see Stephen J. Pope. *The Evolution of Altruism and the Ordering of Love* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1994) and idem, "The Order of Love and Recent Catholic Ethics: A Constructive Proposal," *Theological Studies* 52 (1991): 255–88.

[34]"conspiciendis quidem, secundum quod divina in seipsis contemplatur; consulendis autem, secundum quod per divina iudicat de humanis, per divinas regulas dirigens actus humanos."

[35]This distinction is the source of considerable debate within the history of philosophy, with some philosophers regarding Thomas as a precursor to modern rights theories and others regarding his notion of *ius* as contrasting with subjective rights.

[36]Jean Porter, *The Recovery of Virtue: The Relevance of Aquinas for Christian Ethics* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1990), 134.

[37]"inquantum omnia in infinitum transcendit secundum omnimodum excessum."

[38]"Religio autem magis de propinquo accedit ad Deum quam aliae virtutes morales: inquantum operatur ea quae directe et immediate ordinantur in honorem divinum."

[39]"in seipso est gloria plenus, cui nihil a creatura adiici potest."

[40]"quia videlicet per hoc quod Deum reveremur et honoramus, mens nostra ei subiicitur, et in hoc eius perfectio consistit."

[41]"secundum quod cultum et officium exhibemus Deo et Patri per instinctum Spiritus Sancti."

[42]Mark Twain, *Puddenhead Wilson* in *Mississippi Writings* (New York: The Library of America, 1982), 985.

[43]See P. G. Walsh, "St. Thomas and his Authorities," in *St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae*, vol. 42, *Courage* (2a2ae. 123–40), ed. Anthony Ross, O.P. and P. G. Walsh (London: Blackfriars, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1963), 241–43.

[44]"Non potuerunt autem aliqua praecepta communia affirmativa de temperantia dari: quia usus eius variatur secundum diversa tempora . . . "

[45]"Maxime autem voluptates venereae animum hominis solvunt."

[46]"motus genitalium membrorum non subditur imperio rationis, sicut motus aliorum membrorum."

[47]"habet aliquid de ratione vitutis, inquantum scilicet ratio firmata est contra passiones . . . "

[48]"Et ideo quilibet homo, secundum id quod suum est, debet se cuilibet proximo subiicere quantum ad id quod est Dei in ipso."

[49]On the distinction between gratuitous grace (*gratia gratis data*) and justifying grace (*gratia gratum faciens*), see ST Ia IIae, q. 111.

[50]"ipse amor quo ex caritate Deus diligitur, omnem amorem excedit."

[51]See August., *De civ. D.* 19.19.

[52]"Caritas autem est quae unit nos Deo, qui est ultimus finis humanae mentis . . ."

[53]"omne illud quod impedit ne affectus mentis totaliter dirigatur ad Deum."

[54]"ex hoc quod obligat se perpetuo, cum aliqua solemnitate, ad ea quae sunt perfectionis."

[55]"nihil prohibet aliquos esse perfectos qui non sunt in statu perfectionis: et aliquos esse in statu perfectionis qui non sunt perfecti."

[56]"se totaliter mancipant divino servitio, quasi holocaustum eo offerentes."

[57]"status autem religionis est quaedam disciplina vel exercitium ad perfectionem perveniendi. Ad quam quidem aliqui pervenire nituntur exercitiis diversis: sicut etiam medicus ad sanandum uti potest diversis medicamentis." Mark Jordan observes: "Thomas chooses to end the Second Part of the Summa with the comparison of active and contemplative lives and with the description of the states of perfection. He here exhorts the reader to take up a way of life that will lead to beatitude. Thomas is not describing religious life as an education in charity; he is proposing religious life as a response to the reader's desire for beatitude. Do you want to learn how to enact the coherent human life described in the *Summa*'s Second Part? Take up a way of life that is a school for charity" ("The Care of Souls and the Rhetoric of Moral Teaching in Bonaventure and Aquinas," *Spirit and Life: A Journal of Contemporary Franciscanism* 4 [1993]: 42).

[58]See Yves Congar, "The Idea of the Church in St. Thomas Aquinas," *The Thomist* 1 (1939): 331–59.

[59]Aquinas regards pleasure as a good, but, unlike the classical utilitarians, he does not think it is the only, let alone the highest, intrinsic good. See John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chap. 2. There are of course ambiguities in what Mill means by "pleasure" in this context, e.g., as physiological sensation, mental state, act of free choice, etc.

[60]See, *inter alia*, August., *De civ. D.* 14.6–7.

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