

VIRTUES -- St. Thomas, Summa Theologica, [Ia IIae] Qq. 55 to 70.

I. THE VIRTUES

A. Definition of Virtue:

a. Intellectual and Moral Virtues

B. Operative habit: doing not being.

C. Virtue is a good habit.

D. Virtue a good habit by reason by which we live rightly and which cannot be put to bad use. "Divinely infused supernatural virtue" is where God puts into us without our contributing to the gift.

II. THE SUBJECT:

A. Virtue belongs to the soul, it is perfection of a power of the soul, whether intellect or will. Virtue is a true habit. Proper subject of habits in a living being is the life principle.

B. Moral virtue, such as obedience, is in the will and not in any other power. The intellectual power has knowledge of the duty of obedience and of how to exercise it. This knowledge is not a virtue, but a condition precedent for the exercise of the virtue of obedience.

C. Virtue is the habit of reason. Reason is the thinking mind, and includes the will when practical reasoning. That virtue is a habit of reasons is to say that it is habit that belongs to the power of the soul. The mind, the intellect, has its virtues, as well as the will.

D. Concupiscible and irascible appetites are essentially of the sentient order, they are not subjects of virtue. [The concupiscible power is one through which the soul is simply inclined to pursue those things that are suitable according to the senses and to avoid those things that are harmful]. [The object of the irascible power is said to be the difficult (arduum) power, because the irascible power tends toward overcoming contraries and winning out over them].

E. These appetites in mankind rise to be a function of the intellect, being admitted by the will.

a. **Fortitude** which stands up against extreme of pain and danger, is a virtue of the irascible order, also it comes to full perfection as a will-virtue, it is a moral virtue.

b. **Temperance** is a tendency to use material goods in good measure, is of the concupiscible order, although in full perfection as a virtue, it belongs to the will.

F. Intellectual virtues, are of the order of understanding. Moral virtues are of the order of the will. Virtues of the appetites are reduced to moral virtues. The sentient knowing powers are not subjects of virtues, although they may be used in aid of moral or intellectual virtues, thus a person may preserve the virtue of **purity** by habitually imagining, in moments of temptation, the actual presence of Our Lord or of the Blessed Virgin.

G. Habit perfects an acting power. The will is an acting power. Hence the will has habits. In so far that good habits perfect the power of the will in directly a man's life, these are virtues. These are known as moral virtues.

III. INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES.

A. The intellect, mind, or understanding is speculative as it simply contemplates or knows what is known.

B. It is practical as its knowing guides the will's choice. The speculative intellect known what is so. The practical intellect knows what to do.

C. Virtues of the speculative intellect are **wisdom, science, and understanding**.

a. **Understanding** is the habit of first principles. It is the mind's understanding of self-evident fundamental truths, including existence, ability to think straight, that something can exist

or cannot exist. **Science** is the mind's habitual virtue of truth that has been thought out and evidenced and proved. **Wisdom** is the virtue of the deepest and most valuable knowledge.

b. There are many sciences but only one wisdom. However, the various characteristics of wisdom can appear in various areas of human activity, and is why we can say some people are wise in an area and unwise in another.

c. **Wisdom** in its perfection, is the deepest and most valuable knowledge of the mind to possess as it centers on the supreme Truth, as the truly wise person contemplates ultimates, and guides his life by that knowledge.

i. **Characteristics of wisdom** in various human activities, as we see persons wise in various particulars.

d. **Art**, is a virtue of the intellect, and is the acquired and habitual knowledge of how to make things rightly, and is a virtue of the practical order.

[**Practical intellect** is concerned with moral conduct. It is especially practical when it show the human will the way to righteous action (and even unrighteous)]. [Speculative intellect is guiding knowledge that refers things other than moral conduct].

e. Prudence is an intellectual virtue of the practical order. Not the same as art. This is the virtue of knowing how to act rightly. **Art** looks to perfection in the material world and its fruits, and **prudence** looks to perfection in its subject, that is in the person who possesses prudence. **Art** perfects the act. **Prudence** perfects the agent.

Prudence is a cardinal **virtue** and necessary to human acts, and reflects right knowledge of how human acts should be performed of first necessity for the living of a good life.

f. Virtues that are a part of prudence but distinct and subordinate to are virtues of the practical intellect.

i. Counsel on a proposed action;

ii. Practical judgment on how to perform or omit an action.

iii. After the virtues of counsel and judgment, prudence presents the proposed action to the will that is to be undertaken or avoided.

IV. MORAL VIRTUES AND INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES.

A. **Moral virtue** is a **will-virtue**. It is not part of the speculative or practical intellect. Moral virtue has to do with acting or choosing in the light of knowledge.

B. An intellectual virtue belongs to the order of knowing. It is not an appetite or tendency to action but they show the way to action. These give knowledge of what should be done, but the tendency, desire, and decision below to the will.

C. Every virtue is either an intellectual virtue or a moral virtue.

D. The intellectual virtues of understanding and prudence are necessary for every moral virtue.

E. Prudence is often listed as a moral virtue because even though it is an intellectual virtue, it cannot exist unless moral virtue accompany it.

V. MORAL VIRTUES AND THE PASSIONS

A. Passions are of the "sentient" order, moral virtue belongs to intellectual order, specifically to the will.

B. Passions are not necessarily good or bad in a moral sense, and moral virtues are necessarily good.

C. Passions of the soul' they arise to the intellect through the will's permission, and influence the person there.

D. Passions are compatible with the moral virtues as long as they remain in line with reason. When ordered, passions enhance the moral virtues, as manifested in the person who does works of justice with love and joy.

E. Sorrowful passion is compatible with moral virtue if the sorrow is for what thwarts or opposes the moral virtue.

a. Moral virtues can serve the will by giving right to direction to the person's actions that come under reason, this includes the passion of the soul and the intellect.

b. "Moral virtues bring the passions along with them or overflow into the passions. Thus perfect justice is not a thing coldly aloof, but joyous and joy is a passion."

VI. DISTINCTION OF MORAL VIRTUES.

A. Moral virtues are habits of the "intellectual appetency" called the will.

B. Moral virtues may be classified by those that control "operations" such as justice and those that control the passions (temperance). These may overlap, such as when a person acts justly with pleasure or joy, or performs his duty or job (justice) with courage.

C. There are various moral virtues, such as religion and piety, yet all are rooted in the virtue of justice.

D. Moral virtues that control passions, such as fortitude touches fear and courage, meekness moderates anger, temperance controls desire.

E. Moral virtues that control passions are distinguished from one another by the object of the passions involved in as much as they are subject to reason. Distinguish fortitude, liberality, temperance, friendship, truthfulness, etc.

VII. THE FOUR PRINCIPAL CARDINAL VIRTUES.

A. On these, all other virtues depend as a door depends on its hinges, ergo "cardinal." [cardines].

B. PRUDENCE, JUSTICE, FORTITUDE, AND TEMPERANCE.

C. Prudence is an intellectual virtue, and is virtue that habitual knowledge of how to act rightly, but prudence is bound up with the will, "that all moral virtues require its direction." {Emphasis added}.

D. Virtues direct good deeds and good lives. Now good is "in the reason by the virtue of prudence, it is carried into operation by the virtue of justice; it directs the passions of the soul by fortitude, and curbs them from excess by temperance."

E. All other virtues are subordinate to the key cardinal virtues.

F. Distinct habits, each with its own area of application, not four virtues of one master virtue.

G. Social virtues, as they are required to living rightly in human society.

H. Perfecting virtues in that they help man to perfect his character and attain his end. They are always found in perfected human nature.

I. Exemplar virtues, model or exemplar upon which human conduct is to be patterned, which is also found eminently in God, our divine Exemplar.

VIII. THE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES.

- A. Supernatural virtues that guide and direct us to God are called theological virtues. Faith, Hope, and Charity.
- B. These are not acquired by any act of man, but are supernaturally infused, poured into the soul by Almighty God. They are made known to us by divine revelation.
- C. These virtues are distinct from the moral and intellectual virtues, being that these are acquired by the theological virtues are infused.
- D. Be careful to distinguish the supernatural theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, from the natural virtues which are known by the same names.
- E. Faith enlightens the intellect by imparting knowledge of supernatural truths.
- F. Hope directs the will to its supernatural last end as to something that requires effort and cooperation with grace, but as something attainable.
- G. Charity unites the will with God, its end and object; charity sets the soul into the love and friendship of God.
- H. These virtues are infused into the soul as habits, they are infused by Almighty God; they are infused at one and the same instant.
- I. Priority of the virtues: Faith gives knowledge which arouses hope, and hope tends to set up union with the end desires. Thus faith precedes hope, and hope precedes charity. On the priority of perfection, charity comes first, for it is more noble and valuable to embrace the desired object than merely to know it or hope for it. As St. Paul says, "No, there remain faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest is charity.

IX. THE CAUSE OF VIRTUES.

- A. Virtues are not in man by his nature. The natural virtues are acquired by man's natural powers and efforts. For whatever belongs to the nature of man is found in all men, and is not lost by man's defection or sin.
- B. Virtues of the natural order are acquired through repeated good acts.
- C. Virtues of the supernatural order are beyond the nature of mankind, and therefore cannot be acquired by repeated natural acts, however good they may be.
- D. The supernatural virtues are infused by God, and these are faith, hope, and charity. He will also infuse other virtues to correspond to these three and renders them all effective in the life of man.
- E. Acquired virtues distinct from infused virtues. Of the infused, as St. Augustine says, "God works them in us without us." However, we must work to acquire the natural or acquired virtues.

X. THE MEAN OR MEASURE OF VIRTUE.

- A. The mean or measure is conformity with right reason. That which makes virtue show a sane balance, having neither excess nor deficiency.
- B. The mean or measure of a virtue is what determines its perfect practice. For instance, justice demands the exact rendering to everyone of what is due him. A debtor who does not pay his debt offends against the measure by defect, and one who pays in full but with boastfulness, offends against the measure of justice by excess. Justice cannot be excessive but the manifestation can be.
- C. With aspect to the moral virtues, the mean or measure is conformity with right reason.

- D. The mean or measure for the intellectual virtues of the speculative order is truth. The mean or measure of the intellectual virtues of the practical order is prudence.
- E. No excess is possible in the theological virtues themselves.

XI. THE CONNECTION OF VIRTUES WITH ONE ANOTHER.

- A. Moral virtues are connected with one another. "Whoever has one is seen to have several." "All moral virtues have their mean or measure in conformity with right reason, and virtue shines through virtue in the human conduct which is regulated by right reason."
- B. That is no supernatural moral virtue without charity which is an infused moral virtue of love and friendship with God. On the other hand, with charity, all supernatural moral virtues are given to man. Charity directs man to his last end: heaven.
- C. One cannot have charity without the moral virtues to accompany.
- D. Supernatural faith cannot be perfectly possessed without charity.
- E. Charity brings faith and hope along with it to the soul of man. "No one can love a being which he does not believe [to exist], nor can a person have true friendship for a being whose presence and favor he does not hope to share."

XII. EQUALITY AMONG VIRTUES.

- A. In itself, a virtue cannot be greater or lesser. In a person, a virtue can be greater or lesser at times, and in different persons.
- B. In comparison, virtues can be greater or lesser. Charity is greater than faith or hope. Virtues in a person are not to be compared and called greater or lesser.
- C. Intellectual virtues can be more excellent than the moral virtues, for they pertain to the intellect, but the moral virtues regulate the passions which are essentially of the sentient part. When considered of themselves, moral virtues do more good for mankind, in that they direct man to his end: Heaven.
- D. Justice is chief moral issue, regulates operation so that all gets what is exactly right and due. Closely allied with reason, which is the mean or measure of moral virtues. Other moral virtues are subordinate to justice, in descending order of excellence, it is justice, fortitude, temperance, of which all are suffused with prudence.
- E. Wisdom is the chief intellectual virtue, which exercises judgment over the other intellectual virtues, directs them, and builds with them.

XIII. DURATION OF VIRTUES

- A. When a good man dies, what remains in the separated soul? Justice remains as "justice is perpetual and immortal." Wisdom 1:15. The moral virtues which regulate the passions remain in the separated soul in their essence as perfection of the soul (do not need to regulate passions).
- B. Intellectual virtues remain in the separated soul, but in a manner that renders their use more perfect than it was during earthly life. The separated soul will not have the senses or images, nor will the soul require them.
- C. In the next life, Faith will be fulfilled in the more perfect habit of vision.
- D. Hope can have no place in the soul which possess all that it once hoped for, it will be crowned with fulfillment.

E. Charity will remain in the separated soul in glory. Charity never falls away. 1 Cor. 13:8.

XIV. THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

A. Gifts of the Holy Spirit are distinguished from the theological virtues. Gifts dispose us to obey divine influence and inspiration, whereas the virtues enable us to carry out the works of this obedience.

B. These gifts render a man amenable to grace. Mankind often needs to prompting of grace as well as the actual use of grace, hence gifts are necessary to man.

C. The gifts are habits that abide in man and make him tend to obey God.

D. They are:

i. wisdom and understanding (which perfect the speculative reason);

ii. Counsel and knowledge (which perfect the practical reason);

iii. piety (which perfects the appetitive powers with reference to other persons);

iv. fortitude (which perfects the appetitive powers with reference to danger threatening oneself); and,

v. fear of the Lord, (which perfects the appetitive powers by keeping them from inordinateness in their tendency to pleasures).

E. As moral virtues are united and focused in prudence, so the gifts are focused in charity, for without charity, no one can enjoy the active presence of the gifts.

F. In heaven, the gifts will remain as perfections, but will not render the service the same as on earth, for the soul that attains the Beatific Vision of God has all it needs. The gifts listed in Isaiah 11:2-3.

G. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are more excellent in all virtues other than the theological virtues.

XV. BEATITUDES.

A. Beatitudes are acts rather than habits of the soul, in which way they differ from virtues and from gifts, which are habits of the soul.

B. Blessedness as promised are not just for Heaven, and have a beginning in this life though imperfectly and not as they will be in Heaven.

C. Well explained in Scripture, and take persons from the things of sense, through the active life to contemplation.

i. First, persons are admonished not to seek happiness in things of sense, riches, honors, self-indulgence; for persons are to be poor in spirit, meek, and mourning.

ii. Second, persons are directed towards happiness in his activity with reference to his neighbor;

iii. People are to thirst after justice, he is to be merciful;

iv. And, many is to prepare for contemplation for seeing God, he is to be clean of heart, to be a peacemaker.

D. The rewards including the kingdom of heaven, land of the living, fullness of justice, mercy obtained, sight of God, full status as children of God, are to be obtained perfectly in Heaven.

XVI. THE FRUITS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

A. What proceeds from reason is the fruit of reason. What proceeds from mankind by the working in him of a higher power is the fruit of the higher power. What action of a man which proceeds from him as the product of what is planted in him, like a seed by the Holy Spirit, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

B. The Beatitudes are perfect words. The fruits are virtuous and delighted works. The Beatitudes are fruits but not all fruits are beatitudes.

C. The fruits are enumerated by St. Paul. Gal. 5:22-23. They are charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longsuffering, mildness, faith, modesty, continency, chastity.

D. The sensitive appetites draw man to goods lesser than himself, but the fruits tend to lift man to what is greater than himself, not only beyond the reach of sense, but beyond the reach of natural reason. "Hence, there is contrast and opposition between the works of the flesh and the fruits."

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