



Why Infusion of Virtue Matters? A Study on Thomas Aquinas's Virtues in a Person's Ethical Decision

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I discuss the importance of St. Thomas Aquinas's infused virtue in living an ethical Christian life, a critical element of church formation. The research question in this article answered the importance of infused virtue in understanding the goodness of a person's moral life as a church member. The method used in this article is a literature study that focuses on the work of Thomas on acquired and infused virtue ethics. Thomas's virtue ethics is demonstrated to be a complete set of ethics, that does not only focus on acquired ethics. Moral and intellectual virtues are not enough for human beings to achieve the proper purpose of their life by themselves. Therefore, human beings need the infusion of virtues as a part of God's grace that will elevate their understanding of God's universal moral order. There are three parts to this article, in the first part of the article, I present a critique of the belief that Christian ethics should rely only on habit as something that can be acquired through practice. In the second part of the article, I discuss Thomas's virtue ethics by briefly introducing his concept of natural law and its relation to virtue. In the last part of this article, I provide a conclusion on why I think infused virtue matters.

Keywords: Ethics, Acquired Virtues, Infused Virtues, Thomas Aquinas

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INTRODUCTION

This article discusses the importance of infused virtue as the key to understanding the goodness of a person's moral life. St. Thomas Aquinas (will be addressed as Thomas for the rest of the article) in the second part of his first book, *Summa Theologica*, discusses the importance of habit as a part of acquired virtue in moral life. However, he did not stop there; he thinks that there are virtues that humans cannot obtain by themselves which he calls theological virtues. Theological virtues can only be infused by God to us as finite beings. Infused virtue is the key to understanding the goodness of our moral life.

There are different ways to understand habit. Thomas does not think of a habit as a dull routine. Instead, he thinks of habit as something that we do consciously to achieve our ends. "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; habits are developed human capacities" (Pope, 2002, p. 34). For this reason, Thomas's ethics is very teleological concerning it is always leaning towards the end as the purpose of our existence.

There are several published articles that discuss Thomas's virtue ethics. First, Eitel (2023, p. 372) in "Humility, Fear, and the Relationship between the Gifts and Infused Virtues Thomas Aquinas" discusses humility as an infused moral virtue in relation to reverence and its development. Second, Stump (2023, p. 1) "Aquinas's Ethics: The Infused Virtues and the Indwelling Holy Spirit" explores Aquinas's claims on infused virtues and their impact on a person's moral life (2023, p. 1). Third, Decosimo (2023, p. 323) describes the compatibility of acquired and infused morals in relation to nature and grace in Christian Ethics. Older publications on the topic discussed in this article include: first, A Louth (2013, p. 351) who explores virtue ethics in comparison with St. Maximos the Confessor. Second, Jones (2015, p. 87) who analyzes the connection between human dignity and virtue ethics. Third, "A Commentary on Thomas Aquinas's Virtue Ethics by J Budziszewski" by R Hain (2017, p. 538). Fourth, Demaline (2020, p. 1047) discusses the need for Christian Virtue Ethics in the economic sector. Fifth, Daly (2021, p. 565) who explores the relation between virtue ethics and human action in general.

Based on previous research it is clear that the discussion on Thomas's virtues and its role in a person's ethical decision can provide an in-depth input on the topic. The research question addressed in this article is: What is the importance of Thomas Aquinas's infused virtue in understanding the goodness of a person's moral life? There are three parts of this article, in the first part of the article, I will present a critique to the belief that Christian ethics should rely only on habit as something that can be acquired through practice. In the second part of the article, I will discuss Thomas's virtue ethics by briefly introducing his concept of natural law and its relation to virtue. Additionally, I will explore parts of the *Summa Theologica* that discuss ethics in relation to virtue (Questions

55-66) and end the analysis by focusing on the importance of infused virtues. In the last part of this article, I will provide a conclusion on why I think infused virtue matters.

METHOD

This article uses an in-depth literature study to present a discussion on Thomas's virtue ethics, parts of the *Summa Theologica*, especially the *Prima Secundae* that discuss ethics about virtue (Questions 55-66), and an analysis of the importance of infused virtues. An in-depth literature study presented in this article is a systematic literature review that follows a logical, linear thinking process (Purssell & McCrae, 2020, p. 13). In the research and writing of this article, materials have been chosen selectively to describe and analyze the proposed context by comparing, contrasting, and summarizing resources. Thomas's virtue ethics in-depth literature study as a method of analysis has optimally been used by including primer publication and research on the topic. This research is crucial because it provides an exploration of theory and the practice of the theory in a person's ability to make ethical decisions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Problem with Acquired Ethics

In this part of the article, I discuss the problem of relying only on acquired ethics in developing a moral life. I present the perspective of two modern Christian virtue ethicists who support the importance of earned ethics: Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells. Hauerwas and Wells discuss habit as acquired ethics in different ways, but both agree that living a virtuous Christian life is mainly about practising what is right and that this can be achieved only through habituation (forming of habit). Hauerwas (1983, p. 55) believes that when we want to talk about Christian ethics, we must focus on the practical dimension of it. "For theology is a practical activity concerned to display how Christian convictions construe the self and world." It is our duty as Christians to be different from the world, and that distinction should be shown through the ethical practice of our daily life. Therefore, Hauerwas put much of his attention on the development of characters in practice. To repeat, Hauerwas believed that as Christians, the basis of our way of doing Christian ethics should not rely on the universal and final cause, but specifically in practising Christian ethics. Because of his focus on the context, Hauerwas disagrees that our moral life should be based on the objective moral order given by God.

Admittedly, Hauerwas (1983, pp. 63–64) provides seven reasons why the natural law cannot be the starting point for Christian ethics. These seven reasons can be classified into three groups, which are: the problem with the teleological God, one source morality vs. many source moralities, and the emphasis on the Christian narrative. He thinks that natural law is not reliable when it comes to the discussion about Christian ethics because

human beings should not be treated only as a means by a God who has a universal plan for them. Obviously, Hauerwas thinks that there is no such thing as a universal moral order; instead, we are now living in a fragmented world where every community has their own moral rules. Because of the fragmented world situation, what we can do is use the narrative in our community to give meaning to the practice of ethics. Hauerwas (1983, p. 62) states that “there is no point outside our history where we can secure a place to anchor our moral convictions. We must begin in the middle ... we must begin within a narrative.” For this purpose, Hauerwas thinks that instead of trying to understand the purpose of our existence through the universal law, we should do it amid history, as where we are now.

By disapproving of natural law as the starting point of ethics Hauerwas misunderstood the important aspect of Thomas’s approach, which is his ability to think universally and to interpret our nature using the ontological framework. Human beings are not merely tools in God’s hands because if we are just tools, it must also mean that God needed us to be used as tools. God as the first being did not need us; instead, God created us as beings with self-determinant nature so that we can freely move forward to God. Conversely, because of the limit of our reason, a different community might come up with a different source of moralities. However, all the sources of moralities that we acknowledge with our limited reason are parts of the creation of God and therefore are united in God. Natural law does not eliminate the importance of our personal or communal narratives, in contrast, it gives root to our narratives as a part of God’s perfect and eternal narrative.

Hauerwas (1983) is right to think that the practical aspect of ethics is important, but he is wrong to believe that it is the only important part. Without discernment of virtues, ethics that focus only on the practical aspects will fall into legalism, a set of rules and regulations with no deeper aim. This is why Thomas approaches the concept of virtue by supporting both acquired and infused ethics. For Thomas, on the one hand, we must practice and turn the practice into a habit. We must understand the values behind those practices so that the practice does not become thoughtless routines, but a series of developed characteristics. On the other hand, we must realize that as finite beings, our reason and understanding of God’s universal morality is limited. Consequently, we need the intervention of the Creator to lead us to our determinate ends as creatures.

To this point, I hope I have shown enough evidence on why I think ethics cannot be based on practical dimension alone, as proposed by Hauerwas. It is not because the practical side of ethics is not essential, but it is because it is important that we know why we must be ethical. Just like when an athlete forces her body to practice every day, she must understand two things: why the practice is essential (the cause) and what is the goal that she must achieve by exercising every day (the effect). Hauerwas (1983) thinks that the athlete’s goal of practising does not matter, as long as she is practising. For Hauerwas, what is important is that the athlete can swim well if she practices well; what is less

important is why she swims at all. On the contrary, for Thomas, questions such as “Why do we swim? And What is the primary goal of swimming for an athlete?” are basic questions that must be answered before the swimming practice takes place. Additionally, Thomas thinks that God did not just create us, some to be an athlete and some to be a teacher. Instead, God created us as creatures with a particular nature, which an internal principle to be and to act. We are created for a purpose, and for the fulfillment of that goal, we must follow the determinant nature that is placed in us by the Creator.

Similar but from a different perspective, Samuel Wells argues that what is important is not whether an athlete can swim well when she needs to swim. What is important is the training that she must go through to be able to swim well; certainly, the process determines the result. The training should include classes in swimming theories, swimming training, and mentoring in the swimming practice. Wells (2018, p. 75) is convinced that “ethics is not primarily about the operating theatre: it is about the lecture theatre, the training field, the practice hall, the library, the tutorial, the mentoring session.” Habituation and training are the keywords in Wells’ (2018) argument when it comes to living ethically. Wells uses the Waterloo analogy to show that success in the battle depends on the character formation of the soldier before the fight. Accordingly, for Christians, the stage of preparation took place in the practice of worship and other affiliated religious activities. When Christians are all well trained through the habituation and continue the practice, they will act according to the habit when facing a moral dilemma. In developing his argument, Wells (2018) seems to limit the application of Christian ethics into all the practices that can be predictable. Being ethical is nothing but repeating the habit that we have been prepared for throughout our life. As a result, ethics have only one dimension which is the practical dimension where one does something based on what one acquired in the process of preparation.

The approach that Wells (2018) took can be problematic because of the very fact that life is unpredictable. In other words, there are moral situations in life, which we cannot prepare ourselves for before they happen to us. Moreover, life should not be a series of preparations to conduct moral actions. Ethical decisions should not be just a series of repetition; in contrast, ethical decisions should have context and meaning in each situation. Thomas agrees with Wells that habituation and training are important in shaping one’s moral life, but more critical than habituation is the acknowledgment that human being cannot achieve goodness without the source of good itself, which is God. To think of ethics solely in relation to habit leaves no room for acknowledgment of God’s role in our ethical life. Besides, if we acknowledge that God created us for specific purposes, then we must always provide room for God to intervene in our ethical life. Consequently, we cannot rely only on acquired ethics to develop a good Christian life. If we think that Christian ethics is important, then we must acknowledge that focusing on practice and what we can acquire is insufficient. We ought to keep the balance between habit and

virtue, between acquired ethics and the role of God in enabling human beings to act in line with the purpose of their existence.

Habit for Thomas is the quality that is “not the very substance of man but a disposition added to his substance and modifying it” (Gilson, 1956, p. 256). Obviously, a habit did not exist in itself but added to being with the ability to change the being. “Habits are not only qualities and accidents, but they are the qualities and accidents which lie closest to the nature of a thing, and which come closest to entering into its essence and integrating themselves into its definition.” Virtue and habits that are related to each other will lead us to a good moral life. When a habit is not related to virtue, it becomes a bad habit and vice versa. Wells, in his argument, seems to focus only on the development of good habits, while failing to acknowledge the possibility of a bad habit. In comparison, from Thomas, we learn that good habit is the habit that will lead us to the fulfilment of God’s purposes and is also called virtue. A bad habit is taking us away from the purpose of God and therefore is called vice. To sum up, habit and practice alone are not sufficient in developing an ethical life.

Why Infusion of Virtue Matters? St. Thomas Virtue Ethics

For Thomas, it is impossible to understand virtue ethics without the understanding of natural law. Thomas Williams (2015, p. xvi), in *Thomas Aquinas’s Disputed Questions on Virtue*, argues that only those who understand the relation between natural law and virtue will be able to understand Thomas’s virtue ethics. Natural law is the principle or the starting point when it comes to Thomas’s virtue ethics because it assumes that human nature is God-given for a particular purpose. Similarly, there is an objective moral order in the universe with God as the source. Thomas believes acquired virtues operate exclusively at the ‘command’ of equally active infused moral and theological virtues (Decosimo, 2023, p. 325). Virtue is needed to support reason in leading our natural law towards God’s purpose for our existence.

In general, there are 40 questions on virtue and 170 questions on individual virtues and vices in the work of Thomas (DeYoung et al., 2009, p. 130). It is impossible to discuss them all in one article. Therefore, what I will do is to present ten questions from the second part of the first part of *Summa Theologia* (*Prima Secundae*) that discuss virtue. I am relying heavily on the writing provided by Thomas himself in *Summa Theologia* and the commentary on virtue ethics written by J. Budziszewski. Admittedly, the purpose of this part of the article is mainly to restate to understand better Thomas’s elaboration on virtues. I have classified the ten questions (Question 55-65) in *Summa Theologia* into four groups which are: first, the introduction of virtue, second, the types of virtue; third, the relation between virtues; and fourth, the theological virtues. In each section, I begin by restating the objections and then move to Thomas’s response to the matter.

The first group, which is the group of questions that discuss the introduction of virtue, includes question 55, 56, and 63. In question 55, Thomas discusses “Whether virtue is suitably defined?” and replies to the first objection in article 4 by confirming the definition of virtue (from Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*). Thomas's answers in questions 55, 56, and 63 are based on several parts of the Bible, which are 1 Corinthians 2:9, 13:13, 15:56, and 2 Corinthians 12:9. Thomas agrees that virtue is “a good quality of the mind, by which we live rightly, of which no one makes bad use, which God works in us without us” (*ST I-II, Q 55, A 4, arg. 1*).¹ There are six objections to this definition of virtue. The first objection is on virtue as not suitable to be the good quality because if virtue is the good quality of a person, then virtue must be within the person. The second objection is based on the argument that ‘good’ has a broader meaning than virtue. The third is a critique on the relation between reason and virtue, because there is a part of being (besides reason), that can also have virtue. The fourth is the complaint on the use of the word righteousness in defining virtue because righteousness is a part of justice, which is only one type of virtue. Fifth is the objection to the fact that pride and virtue are not equal, and therefore one cannot have pride and virtue at the same time. When one has pride and virtue at the same time, it becomes a vice. The sixth is the protest on the statement that “God brings it about in us, without us” (*ST I-II, Q 55, A 4, arg. 6*). This statement is confusing because even the Bible states that only those who believe in God will be justified.

In answering these objections, Thomas states that to thoroughly understand the definition of virtue, as presented by Lombard, we must understand the four causes that appear in the definition of virtue (*ST I-II, Q 55, A 4, co*). First is the formal cause (the form that makes a thing a thing), second is the material or exemplary cause (the model of something that we create), third is the final cause (ends as the goal), and fourth is the efficient cause (the cause of any cause). “The formal cause of virtue is the good quality or the good habit. The material cause of virtue must be understood in the third sense, which is the matter in which it exists, and the answer is in the mind. The final cause of virtue is always the good end since virtue cannot lead towards the vice. And the efficient cause of virtue is God” (Budziszewski, 2017, p. 18). Hence, virtue is relevant in that it allows God's power to be a primer in human action (Swanstrom, 2020, p. 261). Thomas believes that the definition of virtue as presented by Lombard is better suited in terms of theological virtue, whereby the statement “God brings it about in us, without us” does not mean that human beings cannot do anything in the process of the infusion of virtue. Instead “what St. Thomas writes is that God causes infused virtue in us without our *agentibus*—we are not the ones who generate, initiate, drive, or conduct the act” (2017, p.

¹ The citation of *Summa Theologiae* in this article will consistently follows the standard of citation as mentioned in <https://douglasbeaumont.com/2010/09/21/citing-thomas-aquinass-summa-theologiae/>

18). Consequently, when Thomas talks about theological virtues as infused virtues, what he means is that human beings are not the source of these virtues (Decosimo, 2023, p. 327). Obviously, Thomas is not claiming that human beings are expected to be passive in the process of Divine infused virtues because the process of infused virtue cannot take place without our consent (*ST I-II, Q 55, A 4, ad. 6*).

In question 56 article 3, Thomas discusses about “Whether the intellect can be the subject of virtue?” There are three objections to the discussion. First is that the intellect cannot be the subject of virtue because the subject of virtue is love, as stated by Augustine. Second is because virtue is determined as good, the intellect cannot be the subject of virtue because the subject of good is the appetite or desire. The third is that the intellect cannot be the subject of virtue because the intellect focusses on the work of reason that can be seen in science and arts (*ST I-II, Q 56, A 3, arg. 1.2.3*). Science and arts are intellectual products that cannot be categorized as good, and therefore intellectual cannot be the subject of virtue. Thomas answers these objections by stating that because the subject of virtue is the mind, then the intellect is the subject of virtue (*ST I-II, Q 56, A 3, co*). Thomas divides between what he called speculative intellect and practical intellect, to answer the objections. Speculative intellect is moved by reason, while practical intellect is moved by prudence. Both types can only be moved by the will, and therefore the subject of the moral virtue is the will. “Once the end is willed, it is an intellectual moral virtue which will deliberate and choose the means suited to that end” (Gilson, 1956, p. 263). The intellect is moved by the will to move towards the proper end. There is a clear assertion from Thomas when it comes to structured sequence of human moral virtue (Gui, 2022, p. 2).

In question 63 article 1, Thomas discusses “Whether virtue is in us by nature?” There are three objections at the beginning of the discussion which are: first, that virtue is in us by nature, as stated by John Damascene, Anthony, and Jesus, in the New Testament. Second, that because virtue is closely related to reason and can only be operated under reason, while reason is a part of our nature, then it can be concluded that virtue is a part of our nature. Third, that there is a virtue that we naturally have (we have them since we were born), such as mercy (*ST I-II, Q 63, A 1, arg. 1.2.3*). Therefore, it must be that virtue is a part of our nature. In response to these objections, Thomas states that if something is natural in us, it means that everybody has it. The problem is that not everybody has virtue; thus, it proves that virtue is not a part of our nature (*ST I-II, Q 63, A 1, co*). Thomas believes that the desire towards owning of virtues is located within our nature but that it is impossible for our natural ability to comprehend virtue by itself. Virtues cannot reach its proper form in the realm of nature, and therefore there must be infused virtues that will lift human nature and enable them to see in a clearer sense.

From the first group of questions, we can conclude that God as the efficient cause put in our nature the ability to reason, and therefore, enable us to acquired certain virtues,

but the perfection of these virtues can only take place with the help of infused virtue. Infused virtues do not imply the passiveness of human being; instead, it is focused on the activity of God as the source of theological virtue.

The second group, questions number 57, 60, and 61, discusses the types of virtues. In question 57, Thomas concludes that there are five intellectual virtues which are understanding, science, wisdom, art, and prudence. “Intellectual virtues are ... habits which perfect the intellectual power in the apprehension of knowledge, or in the application of knowledge” (Redpath, 1983, p. 66). Intellectual virtues require commitment in the cognitive part of a person (Stöpfgeshoff & Bobier, 2020, p. 39). It is interesting that Thomas includes art in the category of intellectual virtues because when we think about art, most people will refer it to as the aspect of feeling or appetite, where people get to ‘enjoy’ the product. In article 3, Thomas defines art as the work of reason in the form of both operative habit and speculative habit (*ST I-II, Q 57, A 3, co*). Just like a scientist is expected to demonstrate facts in her work, without the care of whether the facts will upset the audience, an art worker is expected to produce truth in the work, no matter how the art product will make the audience feel. Thomas also includes prudence in intellectual virtue. By prudence, he meant the “right reason in practice” (*recta ratio agibilium*) (Budziszewski, 2017, p. 25). Prudence is the reason that directed acts in the pursuit of the end.

In question 60 article 1, Thomas talks about “Whether there is only one moral virtue?” There are three objections to this discussion. All the objections state that there is only one moral virtue, which is prudence, because every moral act is based on it (*ST I-II, Q 60, A 1, arg 1.2.3*). There are more than one moral virtue and Thomas believe that this is something that is self-evident (Decosimo, 2023, p. 325). Something is self-evident when the predicate contains in the meaning of the subject. In terms of moral virtue, Thomas categorizes it as “habits of the appetitive faculty” (*ST I-II, Q 60, A 1, co*). Appetitive faculty differs in different species, and therefore moral virtues should be more than one depending on its relation to the reason of various species. “For St. Thomas there are three principal moral virtues because there are three appetites which can be directed by human reason. These appetites are the will, the propelling appetite and the contending appetite” (Redpath, 1983, p. 68). The three principles of moral virtues are based on the three appetites that can be directed by human reason, and known as justice, temperance, and courage (*ST I-II, Q 60, A 1, co*). Later in question 61, Thomas concludes that it is these three moral virtues and the intellectual virtue that makes excellent moral virtues or cardinal virtues.

In question 61 article 2, Thomas discusses about “Whether there are four cardinal virtues?” There are three objections in this discussion, first is the objection on the number of the cardinal virtues. Since prudence is the main virtue that controls other virtue, then there can only be one cardinal virtue. Second is the objection on which virtue should be

categorized as cardinal virtues. Admittedly, based on Aristotle's explanation, there are only two virtues, which are the practical reason and the right appetite. The third objection is about the possibility of having more than four cardinal virtues as the principal virtues (*ST I-II, Q 61, A 2, arg. 1.2.3*). Cardinal virtues as the excellent moral virtues should be understood in the light of the rational good as its formal cause (Gui, 2022, p. 3). Rational good (*rationis bonum*) refers to "the ordering of all goods according to the good of reason itself" (Budziszewski, 2017). Rational good is important in two ways, which is as "respect to the activity of reason and respect to the activity of bringing something else into rational order" (Budziszewski, 2017, p. 49). Justice, temperance, and courage belong to the second category while prudence belongs to the first category.

From the second category of questions, it can be concluded that there are several types of virtues. The first one is the intellectual virtues, which relies on speculative habit and can be differentiated into understanding, wisdom, science, art, and prudence. The second one is moral virtues, which is based on the appetitive aspect of human being. The appetites include will, propelling appetite, and contending appetite, that leads into three moral virtues which are justice, temperance, and courage. The third one is the combination of intellectual and moral virtues, which is the most excellent virtues that include prudence, justice, temperance, and courage. These four virtues are also known as the cardinal virtues.

The third group discuss the connection or relation between virtues, which includes question 58, 59, and 65. In question 58 article 4, Thomas convincingly states that moral virtues without intellectual virtues are impossible (*ST I-II, Q 58, A 4, pr*). There are three objections to this position which are: first, that moral virtue can be without intellectual virtue because it is possible to have a moral virtue that acts as a part of our inclination and therefore does not need a reason to operate. Second, that it is possible for people to pursue virtue and obey God even if they don't have the ability to reason well. In other words, one can be not intellectual but understands her purpose as God's creation. Third, that our inclination as a part of nature can lead us to do good, even without the help of reason (*ST I-II, Q 58, A 4, arg. 1.2.3*). In answering these objections, Thomas states that it is true that on the one hand, "not every intellectual virtue is necessary for moral virtue" (Budziszewski, 2017, p. 23). On the other hand, it is impossible for moral virtue to be conducted meaningfully without the existence of prudence, which is an intellectual virtue. Prudence refers to the right order of reason that will lead to the final good (Gui, 2022, p. 2).

"The reason why moral virtue cannot exist without prudence is that prudence is the disposition by which we make good choices" (Budziszewski, 2017, p. 24). To make a good choice we need our rational ability to direct us in the right way that will lead us to reach the proper end. Even when we have the right intention to do things, it cannot be

done without reason telling us to do it, and this is the role of prudence as ‘the right reason in practice’ in moving us towards the proper end.

If moral virtue cannot exist without intellectual virtue, can intellectual virtue exist without moral virtue? Thomas’s answer is the same, that prudence as the reason in practice cannot exist without moral virtue. “The reason for this is that prudence concerns not only with the right reason ... but right reason about what is to be done in particular matters” (Budziszewski, 2017, p. 37). By particular matters, Thomas meant the importance of moving towards our ends or purposes. To put it differently, both moral virtue and intellectual virtue are working towards the same particular matters as a part of our nature, which is to fulfil God’s plan through God’s creation.

In question 59, Thomas discusses the question of moral value in relation to passion. In article 1, he states that moral value is not a passion (*ST I-II, Q 59, A 1, co*). The objections include the assumption that moral value is a mean between two passions and therefore can be categorised as a passion; the fact that because some passions are vices, there must also be some passions that can be categorized as virtues; and the definition of pity as the care of being that reflects the passion and therefore can be categorized as moral virtue (*ST I-II, Q 59, A 1, arg. 1.2.3*). Thomas answers that moral virtue cannot be passion because of three reasons. First, moral virtue cannot be a passion because moral virtue and passion belong to different categories (*ST I-II, Q 59, A 1, co*). Moral virtue is a “principle of the movement” while passion is a “movement” of the appetite. Second, moral virtue cannot be passion because passion falls into the category of instrumental good, while moral virtue falls into the category of final good (*ST I-II, Q 59, A 1, co*). Moral virtues must be good in themselves; it cannot include vices. While passion can be good or bad depends on the reason. Third, moral virtue cannot be passion because there are some passions that can only be referred to evil, while moral virtue must always relate to good (*ST I-II, Q 59, A 1, co*). Therefore, moral virtues cannot be passion.

In question 65 article 1, Aquinas addresses the question of “Whether the moral virtues relate to one another?” There are four objections, which are: first is that moral virtues are not connected to each other because when we exercise an act that is based on certain virtue, we are not obligated also to exercise other virtue for the same act. Second is that one can have a virtue such as courage, without having the virtue of justice, and therefore moral virtues are not connected to each other. Third is that because intellectual virtues are not mutually connected, we can assume that virtues are not mutually related. Fourth is because moral virtues can only connect to each other under prudence, it is not a real connection; instead, it is a mutual dependence (*ST I-II, Q 65, A 1, arg. 1.2.3*). In response to the objections, Thomas states that “when we speak of the moral virtues, we must make clear whether we are speaking of fully developed virtues, or incipient and incomplete virtues” (Budziszewski, 2017, p. 120). In the level of fully develop moral virtues, it is impossible for them not to be connected to each other. For instance, a person

who is courageous must also be just, if she has fully developed her moral virtues. Moral virtues that do not relate to each other in its practice falls into the category of incomplete virtues (Decosimo, 2023, p. 324). For example, a married man who is a cheater with a kind heart. His kind heart is damaged by his unfaithfulness, and therefore, the virtue is not connected to each other. Moral virtues are also depending on prudence because it is prudence that provided the right reason in pursuing the proper end. Admittedly, “all moral virtues relate to all other moral virtues through their mutual dependence on prudence” (Budziszewski, 2017, p. 124). From the third category of questions (*ST* I-II, Q 58.59.60), we can conclude that moral virtues are related to intellectual virtues only when it is fully developed. Prudence is necessarily needed in moral virtues, because it provides the reason to do the right moral action.

Finally, the fourth group includes the discussion of theological virtue as presented in question 62 and 64. In question 62 article 1, Thomas discussed theological virtues by asking the question of “Whether there is any theological virtue as virtues that are different from moral virtues?” There are three objections in this discussion, which are: first, that the only virtue that exists is acquired virtue and therefore theological virtue as infused virtue cannot exist. Second, theological virtues reside in God and not in man, hence we cannot have theological virtues. The third is the objection to the need for theological virtue. There is no need for theological virtues because their role is the same as the role of natural law (*ST* I-II, Q 62, A 1, arg. 1.2.3). In answering these objections, Thomas talks about the imperfect happiness/natural happiness and the need of the virtue of God for man to accomplished complete happiness/supernatural happiness (*ST* I-II, Q 62, A 1, co). This differentiation is not new to Thomas’s writing, beginning in the first part of *Summa Theologia*, Thomas already differentiates between natural and supernatural experience. When Thomas talks about the possibility and limitation of human knowledge of God, he differentiates types of lights that include the light of nature (reason), the light of grace (faith), and the light of glory (seeing Divine essence) (*ST* I, Q 12, A 5, co). It is only with the light of glory that, human reason will experience the supernatural Divine essence; just like it is only through theological virtues that moral and intellectual virtues will reach complete/supernatural happiness. Theological virtues as the infused virtues depend on the belief that human beings as the creation of God are always in need of God; there is nothing we can do that we can do solely with our nature that will lead us to the ultimate ends (beatific vision).

Under the theological virtues, which are faith, hope, and love, cardinal virtues are also lifted up to aim for a better good. “Acquired prudence helps us to make good decisions for the sake of earthly life, such as marriage and education, but infused prudence helps us make good decisions for the sake of eternal life with God” (Budziszewski, 2017, p. 74). Additionally, Cardinal virtues can be categorized not only as acquired virtues but

also infused virtues when it is conducted with the acknowledgement of God as the efficient (the cause of any cause) and final cause.

In the fourth article of question 64, Thomas addresses the question of “Whether the theological virtues observe the mean?” The main objection states that theological virtues observe the mean because the good of virtue relies on the ability to observe the mean (*ST I-II, Q 64, A 5, arg. 1*). Thomas thinks that the answer to the question of mean must be approached from two perspectives, which are the perspective of an infinite being, which is God, and the perspective of a finite being, which is human. For God, theological virtues should not have any mean or excess because God’s love to us is beyond our comprehension, while we can never love God in the same way as God loves us (*ST I-II, Q 64, A 4, co*). For us, as finite beings, we can only love God as much as we can through reason, and therefore there is a possibility of meaning in theological virtues due to our human limitation (*ST I-II, Q 64, A 4, co*).

From the last category of questions (*ST I-II, Q 62-64*), where theological virtues are discussed, we conclude that infused virtues, both theological and cardinal virtues, are directed to the final good. The integration between virtue and grace is real in theological virtues. There is no other way to reach supernatural happiness but to live a life that observes cardinal virtues and theological virtues as infused virtues from God.

Now that we have discussed the ten questions in *Summa Theologica (Prima Secundae)* on virtue (questions 55-65), several important points should be made. First is that human beings are capable of acquiring certain moral virtues through practice, training, and habituation. However, these moral virtues are not enough to enable us to reach our final purpose as God created us to be. We need other types of virtues, which are the theological virtues that include faith, hope, and love. Second is that with the existence of theological virtues, moral virtues are elevated so that we can see the purpose of living a moral life clearer. The third is that there are levels in the development of virtue, which are fully developed virtues and incomplete virtues. Fully developed virtue is shown through the integrity among virtues, while incomplete virtue is marked by disconnection among virtues.

How does infusion work and what is the difference between infused moral virtues and theological virtues? Nicholas Austin (2017, p. 190), in chapter 11 of *Aquinas on Virtue*, thinks that the word infusion (*infusio*) even though useful, has a restricted if not a narrow meaning. *Infusio* draws the image of “pouring liquid into a container” (Austin, 2017, p. 190). This image is an analogy, and like any analogy, it refers to both similarities and differences among them. Austin (2017, p. 190) states that the analogy “succeeds in conveying the idea that virtues are sheer gifts from God; in other respects, it is a limited image, as virtue is not much like a pourable liquid.” The image of pouring liquid into a container did not represent another important part of Thomas’s virtue ethics, which is the relation between the infused acquired virtues and theological virtues. Jean Porter (1992,

p. 31) in “The Subversion of Virtue,” uses the word “subversion” to explain the process when theological virtues are infused into human beings, while we already acquired moral virtues through reason. Subversion strongly suggests that with the existence of theological virtues, moral virtues will be undermined or sabotaged into a different form of virtues. This is what it means when Thomas talks about the infusion of moral virtues: moral virtues cannot exist in themselves after the infusion of theological virtues within human beings. “Charity cannot function within the individual unless it can operate in and through intermediate virtues directed immediately towards created goods, which are pursued under the rubric of components of a life lived in orientation towards God” (Porter, 1992, p. 31). Infusion of virtue matters the most because it is only through this process that moral virtues can be arranged towards God’s ends. If acquired moral virtues can be obtained through habituation, infused moral virtue lifted what used to be only habit, into the practice of living a meaningful life towards God as the primary good.

CONCLUSION

Theological virtues can only be infused by God to us as finite beings. Infused virtue is the key to understanding the goodness of our moral life. Infusion of virtue matters the most because it is only through this process that moral virtues can be arranged towards God’s ends. Thomas’s virtue ethics is proved to be a complete set of ethics, that does not only focus on acquired ethics, as what Hauerwas and Wells did. The research question on “What is the importance of Thomas Aquinas's infused virtue in understanding the goodness of a person's moral life?” has been answered through a systematic analysis of Thomas’s writing where it proved that he was able to maintain the balance between different types of virtues by connecting them through the primary virtue which is love.

Understanding Thomas’s infused virtue is vital to living an ethical Christian life and critical to church formation. Moral and intellectual virtues are not enough for church members to achieve the proper purpose of their lives by themselves. Therefore, followers of Christ need the infusion of virtues as a part of God’s grace that will elevate their understanding of God’s universal moral order. All in all, Thomas has consistently shown that human beings, as a part of God’s creation, are always in need to be about God.

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