

THOMAS AQUINAS—CONSULTATION

Topic: Aquinas on Grace in the Soul
Convener: Gregory F. LaNave, Pontifical Faculty of the Immaculate Conception
Moderator: Stephen J. Pope, Boston College
Presenters: Jean Porter, University of Notre Dame
Mark Johnson, Marquette University

Jean Porter entered into the ongoing debate about infused moral virtues in Aquinas with a paper entitled “Acquired and Infused Virtues: A Reconsideration.” The question Porter posed is whether infused and acquired moral virtues can coexist in the same individual. Her approach focused on three points, drawn largely from the *Summa*. First, Aquinas (*STh* I-II, q. 63, a. 3) regards the theological virtues as principles whereby the soul is ordained to a supernatural end, and establishes that they have, as necessary concomitants, habits whereby the whole of human life is transformed through grace. The acquired virtues cannot fulfill this function, for they cannot be proportioned to a supernatural end. Instead, the theological virtues must work through infused habits which dispose the powers of the soul to be oriented to that end. Second, Aquinas makes this same point when he explicitly argues (*STh* I-II, q. 65, a. 3) that charity is not sufficient without other, moral virtues. The proper work of the virtues requires that they operate together. The moral virtues are oriented toward particular goods, and in order to be combined with charity those goods must be integrated into the orientation to the end of charity. The infused moral virtues are naturally so integrated, but the acquired moral virtues are not. This suggests, though Aquinas does not explicitly say so, that the acquired moral virtues do not continue to exist in the soul that has received charity. Third, when Aquinas considers the relationship of charity to the acts of the virtues (rather than the habit of the virtues), he argues that charity is the form of the virtues (*STh* II-II, q. 23, a. 8) not in an exemplary way, but in an efficient way; it commands acts of other virtues that are able to be oriented toward the end of charity. Thus, the acts commanded by charity are formally distinct from acts that pursue particular goods out of an orientation to a connatural final end.

The discussion that followed focused on implications of this view. Do the acquired virtues reappear if one sins mortally (i.e., loses sanctifying grace)? Do the acquired virtues continue to exist in the subject in some (latent) way? Can one have acquired vice and infused virtue? Porter also elaborated her claim with the example of Lucretia and her virtue of chastity, and the very different ways she might have regarded that virtue as a Roman (pagan) and as a Christian.

Mark Johnson’s paper, “Thomas Aquinas, Grace, and the Essence of the Soul,” looked at where grace is located in the soul, and why it matters. That grace must be in the soul is evident from Aquinas’s teaching that the love we have for God must, if it is to be meritorious, come from a voluntary movement within us (and therefore he rejects Lombard’s teaching that charity is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit). In his teaching on the soul Aquinas also distinguishes the essence of the soul from the powers and operations that flow from it. Habits in general pertain to the powers of the soul rather than its essence, but the character of the form that is the essence of the soul communicates itself to the powers and operations. Turning specifically to grace, Aquinas says that it is a quality coming from God, but it must be more than a virtue—

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more than a habit affecting the operation of a power. The human soul transformed by grace does not only do things like what God does; it is in some sense like God, and this divinization of the soul formally affects certain powers (intellect and will) that come from it. In the end, locating grace in the essence of the soul “allows Thomas to hold that humans exercising good deeds operate—cause, that is—divinized acts, which in their way compel a just God reward them with eternal glory.” The conversation that followed focused on the precise terminology necessary for the discussion.

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